To prove they were at the height of their powers, the party won the most votes in Sinn Fein have been the undoubted nationalist party of choice for the majority of however, ironically the agreement they helped to produce also set in motion events that would lead to an era of long term decline.

WHAT WAS THE PARTIES POSITION IN 1998?
In 1998 the SDLP seemed like they could do no wrong:
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2) Firm north south links (NSMC) supported by unionists
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The party has had an illustrious past. It has its 1970s civil rights roots but it also was a key architect of the ground breaking 1998 Good Friday Agreement. It’s leader John Hume was internationally recognised as an icon of peace.

The SDLP has its roots in the Northern Ireland Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and 70s. It was founded in 1970 in the midst of the beginnings of the Troubles.

It has based itself on moderate, non violent nationalism. The party aspires to a future united Ireland but is prepared to achieve this by winning over the people of Northern Ireland.

The party has struggled with numerous leaders, poorly thought out policies, community division and a general lack of clear direction. However, it has a long and proud history, which saw it prosper.

The SDLP is a moderate nationalist party and is the people of Northern Ireland. This was the case long before Sinn Fein was even founded. The SDLP have based themselves firmly within the nationalist community and have been key players in the politics of Northern Ireland.

The party has had a succession of leaders, including John Hume, Tomlinson, Durkan, Martin, Eastwood and Ritchie. The party has also had a number of prominent members, including Eamonn McCann, Martin McGuinness and Finian McGrath.

The SDLP have had a succession of quietly capable leaders. The first key element of weakness is leadership. The SDLP have had a succession of quietly capable leaders since 1998. Good administrators or capable politicians but they have clearly lacked the charisma and gravitas of John Hume or Seamus Mallon.

The achievement of the SFA saw Hume step back from politics due to health reasons and because he had achieved his goal. Hume was personally hugely popular within the party and with the voters and had a long history of helping the nationalist community. He was big shoes to fill.

The SDLP had a succession of leaders:
- Mark Durkan - capable and effective but not charismatic.
- Martin McGuinness - capable and effective but not charismatic.
- Peter Robinson - a capable minister and effective constitutional politician. He was a big shoes to fill.
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Weaknesses
1) Leadership
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