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The IRA's Role in Shaping Ireland's Political Voice:
Violence, Unity, and Division from 1916-1998

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER		PAGE #
1	Political Chasms: 1886-1914	2
2	Irish Upheaval and Unrest Leading to the 1916 Easter Uprising	8
3	Partition- A Crooked Cut in a Deeply Divided State	13
4	Peace Process of the Irish Civil War and Diplomatic Motives	19
5	Irish Free State After Civil War: Working Towards What?	25
6	Formation of Fianna Fáil in 1926	31
7	Diplomacy in North and South After WWII	37
8	The Troubles in Northern Ireland Leading to Direct Rule in 1972	42
9	Evolving Ideology of the IRA and Irish Public Opinion 1970-1980	49
10	Legacy of the IRA at the End of the 20 th Century	55
	Works Cited	60

Political Chasms: The British and Irish Attempts at Irish Home Rule Legislation 1886-1914

The relationship between the British Parliament and Irish Nationalists at the end of the 20th Century was dominated by veiled intentions, stubborn party lines, and political sabotage. Before the establishment of the Irish Republican Army in 1919 and the reign of violence that they utilized to get the attention of Parliament, Ireland's nationalist leaders made political efforts to create Home Rule in Ireland. Home Rule would have allowed the Irish to control their own parliamentary body in Dublin, no longer subordinated to Westminster Parliamentary control by England. An Irish Parliament had existed from 1297 until the British Parliament's passage of the Act of Union in 1800 abolishing the Irish governing body. For Home Rule to be instituted, the Irish and English would both have to make concessions and appeasements that would both help and hinder each state's national strengths. The inability of English and Irish politicians to make those concessions would set a trend for Anglo-Irish relations for the remainder of the 20th Century.

The Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) was the official voice for Ireland from 1882 until 1918 in dealing with the English regarding the reestablishment of Home Rule. The IPP was made up of Irish members of the British Parliament who held seats in Westminster. The precursor to the Irish Parliamentary Party was the Independent Irish Party, who fundamentally opposed cooperation with the British Parliament as a means to attain Irish independence. The Independent Irish Party had the simple goal of reviving the Irish protest to the Act of Union of 1800, an Act

formally joining Ireland to the United Kingdom.¹ Another Irish nationalist group emerged in November 1873 called the Home Rule League. The League had a British counterpart of Home Rule supporters called the Home Rule Federation which won 59 seats in Parliament in 1874. The members of the League spoke for the Irish farmers struggling with rampant evictions and still reeling from the famine that crippled Ireland from 1846 until the end of the decade. The Home Rule League consisted mostly of land-owning Catholics who represented the Irish tenant farmers whose support had gotten them into the party.² The League was led by a Catholic Irish lawyer named Isaac Butt. Butt was a man who respected the Parliamentary process and cared very much for political decorum and thus avoided aggressive antics towards Parliament, fearing counter-productive words and actions from outspoken members of his party.³ The League would ultimately fall to the wayside in the fight for Home Rule because Butt was unable to discipline his followers and because of his death in 1879. Butt's request for Home Rule was denied in March 1874 and his proposed Land Bill shot down in 1876 by a large margin in Parliament.

The Home Rule baton passed to Charles Stewart Parnell in 1879, a founder of the Irish National Land League.⁴ Parnell formed the Irish Parliamentary Party for Irish members of the Westminster Parliament in 1882. Like Isaac Butt, Parnell took a respectful position towards Parliament and held a similar concern for the maintenance of order in society. In 1881, English Prime Minister William E. Gladstone presented a Land Act (which Parliament passed that same year) that took some powers of eviction from landowners and imposed limits to the binding

¹ Alvin Jackson. *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond*. (Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 108.

² *Ibid.*, 111.

³ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴ The Irish National Land League was founded on October 21, 1879 to fight British limitations of Irish Catholic land ownership and eviction rights.

nature of land rental contracts.⁵ The more radical members of the Land League, including Catholic John Dillon, however, were not satisfied with the seemingly neutral acts, feeling that not enough of a concession was made to Irish farmers. There was also a strong sentiment against the Act by Irish Americans who did not want a concession by the Irish to end the “agrarian revolution” for which they hoped.⁶ The Irish Americans who had fled Ireland during the famine of the 1840s contributed to the nationalist Irish movement both monetarily and vocally during the fight for Home Rule.

Parnell was by no means seeking a revolution but he still found himself and other members of the League imprisoned in October 1881 by the Chief Secretary for Ireland, William Forster. They were detained for their plans to create a rent strike for tenant farmers in Ireland; Forster perceived the strike as an attempt to destroy the Land Act of 1881 (Parnell felt the Act was not enough to help Irish land tenants) and subsequently to create national disorder.⁷ Parnell was released from prison once Forster resigned from his position on May 1882. Only four days later, on May 6, 1882 the new Chief Secretary for Ireland, Lord Frederic Cavendish and T.H. Burke, Under-Secretary for Ireland, were murdered in Dublin by a group of extremist Irish nationalists. This event would become known as the Phoenix Park Massacre and it truly shocked the world with the violently antagonistic nature of the conflict. Parnell condemned the murders and in doing so discredited radical Irish nationalists. That opposition separated the radicals from Parnell and other law-abiding nationalists.⁸

⁵ Alvin Jackson. *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond*. (Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 119.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

In 1886, PM William Gladstone single-handedly wrote and proposed the first Home Rule Bill. He wrote it without involving his cabinet or any members of Parliament. The Bill was handily defeated by members of Parliament. Many conservative members of Parliament, like Joseph Chamberlain, opposed Gladstone's liberal plans to give Ireland an independent Parliament. A second Home Rule Bill was submitted in 1893 by Gladstone in which the Irish would have been given an independent Parliament and allowed to retain 80 seats in the Westminster Parliament. Gladstone once again penned the Bill himself and it contained errors in financial calculation and limited Ireland's self-governance by providing an executive that served under the (British) Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. The Bill passed in the House of Commons but was handily defeated in the House of Lords by pro-Union supporters. The House of Lords had strident supporters among the Ulster Unionists who did not want their Protestant majority ruled by a predominately Catholic Parliament in Dublin.

The defeat of the Bill led to a rift within the Land League, in which John Dillon and other liberals favoring a hard-edge approach to the British Parliament, moved away from conservatives like William O'Brien. Gladstone's failure to deal with issue of Ulster "reflected his wariness of the harm it might do to his relationship with the Nationalist Party and a complete inability to conceive of it as anything other than a Tory tactic to undermine his Home Rule bills."⁹ By clumsily ignoring North/South ideological divides, "Gladstone unwittingly helped create, shape and animate the Ulster question he so determinedly refused effectively to answer."¹⁰

The power of the conservatives in the English House of Lords was diminished by the Parliament Bill of 1911 that abolished veto power of the Lords over the House of Commons. The

⁹ *Gladstone and Ireland: Politics, Religion and Nationality in the Victorian Age*. ed. Boyce, D. George; O'Day, Alan. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 158.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 158.

Bill was drafted and introduced by Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and backed by John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and by John Dillon for its blow to opposition to Home Rule within the House of Lords.¹¹ A year later, Asquith created the third Home Rule Bill which was very similar to the Bill of 1893. Ulster Protestants pushed for amendment to the Home Rule Bill of 1912 and Redmond viewed it as a “bargaining position,” as did PM Asquith.¹² The Bill of 1912 would have allowed for the establishment of an Irish Parliament in Dublin and reduced the number of Irish seats in the Westminster Parliament.

The rising pitch of the Ulster voice was the first indication that a partition of Ireland was a real possibility. Younger Parliamentary leaders like liberal David Lloyd George and conservative Winston Churchill considered partition but wanted to keep this radical proposition to themselves in favor of allowing Ulster Unionist opposition to test its own bargaining power.¹³ John Redmond and the Irish nationalists feared partition because the resource that would have come from taxing Ulster industry would have been lost.

The bill was debated but another fight would take British attention away from Home Rule. In August 1914, England was pulled into war against Germany. Asquith and the English Parliament subsequently issued the Suspensory Act of 1914 delaying the resolution of the Home Rule Bill. General British opinion at the time held that the conflict with Germany would be a quick one. However, the long and costly war that lasted from 1914 to 1918 represented a fatal blow to the Home Rule movement. The rulers of the British Empire would not consider giving away any territory a time when the Germans and Italians were aggressively expanding pieces of

¹¹ Alvin Jackson. *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond*. (Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 161.

¹² *Ibid.*, 162.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 163.

their empires.¹⁴ It seems inevitable that Ulster, with its ruling class Protestant Unionist minority and strong industry, would be the ultimate undoing of Home Rule. Under Gladstone and the liberals from 1868 until 1898 “the Home Rule cause was recommended to the British democracy on the grounds that its success would make it possible to secure redress for other [Irish] grievances.”¹⁵ At the same time, by not expounding Home Rule, Conservative members of Parliament had to do little to instigate the Ulsterites. As the 19th Century ended, men like the rising young leader David Lloyd George recognized that Home Rule for all of Ireland would not be easily won with the inherent divisions in Irish society stemming from religious and national allegiances between north and south.

¹⁴ *Gladstone and Ireland: Politics, Religion and Nationality in the Victorian Age*. ed. Boyce, D. George; O’Day, Alan. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 281.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

Irish Upheaval and Unrest Leading to the 1916 Easter Uprising

The Irish rebellion in Dublin on Easter Monday 1916 was a violent upheaval committed by Irish separatists while the English imperial back was turned. The First World War provided both the motivation and opportunity for the Irish nationalist separatists to deliver a blow against English rule in Ireland while the English government's attention was fully focused on the grizzly struggle occurring across the European theatre. The same Irish forces that engaged the Irish Metropolitan Police and British forces on Easter week would form the militant ranks of the Irish Republican Army following the Rising.

In the years leading up to the Rising, political discontinuity and fragmentation was the norm for Irish nationalist politics. The war inspired patriotic sentiment in England that united conservatives and liberals in the English Parliament. The alliance that had existed pre-1914 in England between English liberals and Irish nationalists was replaced by an alliance between English conservative Tories and English liberals. A wartime alliance between Tories and liberals resulted in the further marginalization of Irish issues in Parliament.¹⁶

The alienation of many Irish nationalists was the result of political miscues committed by the leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP). John Redmond, leader of the IPP from 1900-1910, made a speech at Woodenbridge on September 14, 1914 in which he called for Irish National Volunteers to aid the English war effort by enlisting in the Royal military. His intention was to show that Ireland, if granted independence, could defend itself without the English having

¹⁶ Alvin Jackson. *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond*. (Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 194.

to worry about their neighboring nation being easily overrun by a foreign military.¹⁷ The immediate result in Ireland was the alienation of Irish nationalists who saw the British war campaign as the maintenance of English imperialism; the very same imperialism that kept Ireland under lock and key by the Crown. Redmond's call to arms was further tarnished when the English War Office declined his plan to create a distinct Irish battalion within the Royal military. The War Office did, however, allow the Protestant Ulster Volunteer Force to establish its own battalions within the British Army. The Ulsterites were viewed by the Crown as being inherently loyal as compared to the Irish nationalists who were labeled as rebellious subjects by the imperial government.¹⁸ While the Crown's judgment was both correct and reasonable, this constituted a grave insult to Irish nationalists and Irish Catholics.

The leaders of the Rising included Irish socialists, Fenians, members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and many young extremists.¹⁹ The rebellion signified a split between militant Irish separatism and constitutional Irish Nationalism.²⁰ Before the Rising, a split had already occurred, resulting from Redmond's support of the English war effort. The Irish Volunteers (a militant nationalist separatist group formed in 1914 in response to the formation of the Ulster Volunteers in 1913) split from Redmond's National Volunteers following his Woodenbridge speech. Eoin Macneil was the Chief of Staff for the Volunteers and Irish schoolteacher Patrick Pearse was also a member. Like many members of the Volunteers, Pearse was also a member of the militant Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). A smaller Irish separatist force, the Irish Citizen Army was led by James Connolly (also a member of the IRB and Sinn

¹⁷ Ibid., 195.

¹⁸ Ibid., 197.

¹⁹ Ibid., 200.

²⁰ Richard English. *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003),

Fein). Connolly served as one of the main military leaders during the Rising, guiding small factions of the roughly 1,000 (more would join over the span of the week) rebellious Irish forces in the occupation of the Dublin General Post Office and several other government buildings in Dublin for the duration of seven days.

Contact between groups like the IRB, Irish Volunteers, and the Citizen Army was disorganized and thus the plans for the Rising were equally disorganized. Plans to attain weapons from the Germans on April 9th were thwarted when the German ship, the *Aud*, was intercepted by the Royal Navy. However, the always militant IRB still had plenty of rifles as did the Citizen Army and the anxious leaders decided to still go ahead with the Rising on Easter Sunday as planned. Following a meeting at Liberty Hall, Connolly's headquarters, the day before the rebellion, Connolly was asked about the chances that the conspirators would have a military success. He responded very honestly when he remarked, "none whatever."²¹

Nevertheless, the Rising began as planned on April 24th. The first casualty of the insurgency was Dublin Metropolitan Police Officer Stephen Gwynn. Paradoxically, Gwynn was described by fellow officers as a Catholic Irish nationalist who was in full support of the Home Rule movement.²² Gwynn's death was an excellent representation of the complex and heavily entrenched battle that Irish Nationalists waged with imperialism.

Patrick Pearse acted as commander-in-chief as well as spokesman for the Irish insurgents. On the first day of the Rising, Pearse wrote and issued the first Proclamation of the newly declared Irish Provisional Government. In a moving piece of Irish nationalist sentiment, Pearse wrote, "in every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and

²¹ Alvin Jackson. *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond*. (Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 200.

²² *Ibid.*, 204.

sovereignty; six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish republic as a sovereign independent state.”²³ The second Proclamation made by Pearse on the second day of the Rising was characteristic of the disorder and lack of leadership during the rebellion. His Proclamation of April 25th called for maintenance of Ireland’s “new honour” by not committing “discreditable acts” like looting.²⁴

Fighting continued on and off until April 30th when the British military had taken back all of the occupied Dublin buildings. The inability of insurgents to take control of Dublin’s train stations and ports allowed the British to bring in thousands of military reinforcements every day. Defeat of the roughly 1,500 insurgents by nearly 20,000 British troops was inevitable. The Rising “was the work of a minority, and its historical importance as a representation of Irish political aspirations was established only by the Dublin Castle government, whose policy of executions, ‘a fresh batch every morning for breakfast’, made heroes of the rebel leaders and blacked the already tarnished name of English rule.”²⁵ Connolly and Pearse and sixteen other leaders were executed by firing squad after conviction by military courts in the days following the Rising. The British government of Ireland declared martial law and about 3,500 suspected Irish revolutionaries were arrested and 1,800 were sent to internment camps in England (170 were convicted following military court marshal).²⁶ English internment camps, like the Frongoch

²³ Richard English. *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4.

²⁴ Alvin Jackson. *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond*. (Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 203.

²⁵ John Turner. *Lloyd George’s Secretariat*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 83.

²⁶ Alvin Jackson. *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond*. (Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 204.

camp in Wales, acted as “revolutionary academies, helping to create valuable contacts and to offer opportunities for political education.”²⁷

Irish political upheaval followed the Rising. Most Irish Protestants viewed the Rising as “back-stabbing wartime treachery.”²⁸ The separatists succeeded at replacing the constitutional Irish Parliamentary Party with Sinn Fein in the Westminster Parliament. Sinn Fein was aided in 1918 by threats of conscription for Irish Catholics made by liberal PM David Lloyd George. Sinn Fein represented an open rebellion against the British parliament and imperial control. Hoping to tamp emotions and enmities, PM George attempted to mend North/South Irish relations in 1916 when he rallied for Ulster unionists and Irish Nationalists to agree to the reestablishment of Home Rule with the temporary exclusion of Ulster from Catholic Ireland. The attempt was vetoed by English Conservatives and Southern Unionists and resulted in another moratorium on the subject until the end of the war.²⁹

In 1917, W.G.S. Adams, head of PM George’s Secretariat, stated that “the settlement of the Irish question depends on the Irish themselves, and that what Irishmen will agree on England and the Empire will accept.”³⁰ It is readily clear that the English government was using Irish disunity and disorder to show that Ireland was not ready for Home Rule if the nation could not agree on any jointly accepted plan of action for statehood. As a consequence, this frustration and lack of compromise further fueled the intensity of Irish separatist nationalism. The IRA would tow that party line for the next century.

²⁷ Ibid., 205.

²⁸ Richard English. *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 11.

²⁹ John Turner. *Lloyd George’s Secretariat*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 83.

³⁰ Ibid., 88.

Partition- A Crooked Cut in a Deeply Divided State

The partition between Northern and Southern Ireland was inevitable in any plan for an independent Ireland. Protestants of Northern Ireland were not prepared to live under the power of a Dublin parliament controlled by Catholics. Diplomatic relations between Catholic Ireland and the British Crown from after the Easter Uprising in 1916 until the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 were marked by deception and aggression. Partition was a frustrated conclusion to an era of insurmountable differences. The split certainly divided Ireland between north and south. Another split occurred in Protestant Ireland between those who were willing to engage in a slow process of concessions with the Crown and others who were prepared to use force to make a clean break from imperial control.

In May 1917, following the bloody clash of the Easter Uprising, the first meeting of the Irish Convention for the creation of a compromise settlement was held at Trinity College in Dublin. As a sign of good faith, the English government released the remaining Irish detainees from the Easter Uprising. Many of those released Irish Nationalists subsequently became involved with Sinn Féin, the political arm of Irish Catholic separatism.³¹ The Convention was a wasted effort once Sinn Féin refused to attend. It was widely regarded that the Convention was merely an attempt made by Prime Minister David Lloyd George and the Crown to appeal to the public opinion of the United States.³² The United States was in a phase in which its citizens—particularly Irish Americans, rising in wealth and political power—questioned the ideology of imperialism following the imperial disaster of World War One.

³¹ Michael Hughes. *Ireland Divided: The Roots of the Modern Irish Problem*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 46.

³² *Ibid.*, 46.

David Lloyd George helped place the radical leadership of Sinn Féin on the rise to Irish political prominence when he threatened Irish citizens of the United Kingdom with wartime conscription as a pretext to the institution of Home Rule for Ireland in 1918. Additionally, he did himself no favors in the eyes of Irish Catholics when he threatened to institute martial law in Ireland (excluding Ulster) due to the threat of violent revolt among Southerners displeased with the lack of progress since the Easter revolt.³³ Sinn Féin moved to the helm of the Irish Nationalist movement with the death of John Redmond on March 8, 1918. The Irish Parliamentary Party was replaced by Sinn Féin with its leadership of Éamon de Valera (President) and Michael Collins. The change in leadership represented a transition to republicanism as opposed to the constitutional Nationalism under Redmond. In July 1918, Sinn Féin was formally banned by the Crown government upon British discovery of German plans to assist the Irish Nationalist effort. De Valera was arrested and imprisoned but escaped from the Lincoln gaol in February 1919.

Further defiance was demonstrated in the election of January 1919, in which Sinn Féin won 75 of 105 Irish seats in the Westminster Parliament and subsequently refused to accept the seats. Following that open act of rebellion, the southern Irish provinces declared independence from the Crown on January 21, 1919. The provisional government, of which de Valera was President, operated alongside the newly founded Irish parliament, Dáil Éireann. Michael Collins was the finance minister, but played an exceedingly active role because de Valera made frequent visits to the United States engaging in diplomacy and fundraising among the American supporters of the Irish Nationalist movement.³⁴ In the 1920s, Irish Nationalists made appeals to British and American public opinion “in the form of the boycott of Crown goods and popular

³³ Ibid., 46.

³⁴ Ibid., 48.

acceptance of republican order.” These actions “were more important in some ways than the actual campaign of violence itself.”³⁵

The Irish War of Independence was aggressively sparked on January 21, 1919 when Irish Republican Army members (formerly Irish Volunteers) ambushed and killed two Royal Irish Constables at Solaheadbeg.³⁶ Subsequently, the IRA targeted any servant of the Crown as a military target.³⁷ The threat of seemingly blind violence brought about attempts at compromise by the Crown. On November 11, 1919 the British Cabinet accepted a partition proposal which limited Northern Ireland to six counties, meeting Unionist demands, with the formation of two Home Rule governments (north and south) and a Council of Ireland formed from both governments to settle mutual problems. The plan was created to settle Unionist unrest over ties to the increasingly volatile and rebellious Irish Nationalists in south.³⁸ The Dáil declined to formally accept the act of partition but it held legality for the Crown government.

With unsuccessful Anglo-Irish diplomacy, blood ran rampant in Dublin. Once the violence between the Irish Republican Army and Crown forces escalated, the auxiliary force, later known as the Black and Tans, was recruited by the British from among British ex-World War One soldiers who did not want to do civilian work. Violent reprisals were common and

³⁵ Tom Garvin. *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*. (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1981), 127.

³⁶ De Valera was the president of the IRA while Collins was in charge of military strikes.

³⁷ Michael Hughes. *Ireland Divided: The Roots of the Modern Irish Problem*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 48.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

accepted by the Crown government because judiciary justice was being thwarted by the IRA's terrorizing of witnesses.³⁹

The most famous carnage of the War of Independence took place on November 21, 1920 following the October death of Cork Mayor Terrence MacSwiney, stemming from his hunger strike in a Brixton prison out of his opposition for English imperialism. In response to the Mayor's death, Collins and his IRA forces murdered twelve police and intelligence officers in Dublin. Reprisal came when Black and Tans opened fire on an Irish football match in Croke Park, Dublin in which fourteen civilians were killed. The increasing scope of violence (over 1500 deaths on both sides) scared Nationalists into compromise.⁴⁰ Collins feared splits in the now volatile Nationalist party. De Valera was allowed back into Ireland by the Crown as a good will gesture towards peaceful diplomacy.

Peaceful diplomacy was likely one of the last plans of action that Irish Nationalist leadership considered during the War of Independence. During the struggle, "the Dáil attempted not only to make the British government in Ireland unworkable, but to replace its apparatus."⁴¹ Collins and other Sinn Fein and IRA leaders could walk around openly without being reported, even by Protestants. The IRA did not have to use terrorist violence to control Ireland, as most Irish Catholics had accepted IRA quasi-local rule because they had dealt with other paramilitary local governments over the years.⁴² The power that the IRA wielded grew partially because the IRA felt superior to Sinn Féin and the Dáil as a result of the IRA being established first.⁴³ With a

³⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 49.

⁴¹ Tom Garvin. *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*. (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1981), 126.

⁴² Ibid., 127.

headstrong paramilitary organization developing an older brother complex, it became increasingly difficult to control. In that same breath of seniority, “IRA officers came to assume that they had the right to control the local Sinn Féin clubs and, as the war continued, their ability to do so became greater.”⁴⁴ The drive for rebellion was vast due in part to the youth of IRA leaders, many whom had fought under the British flag in World War One. In certain ways, they “were not unlike many of the young men in the British forces who had become militarized by the War and who had a contempt for politics, a distrust for civilian leadership and a warrior mystique.”⁴⁵

The War of Independence came to an end on May 1921 with private talks held between the PM of Northern Ireland, Sir James Craig, and de Valera in Dublin. A formal truce began on July 10th with the IRA badly depleted of arms and the Northerners and English aghast at the bloodshed. The truce was influenced externally from “British public opinion and American pressure” to end a stagnant conflict that occurred in such close proximity to World War One.⁴⁶

Once it was abundantly clear that Irish Nationalists would not be part of an English or Protestant state, negotiations for official partition and creation of an independent Irish state began in London on October 11th, lasting until December 6th. At the London conference, the Irish were represented by Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith (both Sinn Féin leaders). The Crown was represented by Lloyd George and Conservative member of the Westminster Parliament Winston Churchill. De Valera stayed in Dublin supposedly because once a compromise was

⁴³ Ibid., 128.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 128.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁶ Michael Hughes. *Ireland Divided: The Roots of the Modern Irish Problem*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 53.

reached, he wanted to be home “to hold the Nationalist movement together.”⁴⁷ Another common theory was that he expected an unpopular compromise from the meeting and did not want to be associated with the backlash against the authors of the compromise. Also controversial was that Collins and Griffith did not speak with de Valera before signing the Treaty. The Treaty was approved by the Irish delegates in London and then approved by the Dáil once it came back to Dublin. Following Dáil approval, de Valera resigned from the presidency. Under the Irish Free State Act of 1922, the Irish Free State was established and a constitution was published on June 16, 1922. The instruments of governance were a two-chamber parliament with Collins at the head of the provisional government.

“Almost every nationalist society and institutional structure split from top to bottom on the Treaty issue, creating a jungle of intra-organisational *coups*, duplications and secessions...the tradition of secrecy encouraged distrust and paranoia on both sides.”⁴⁸ The leaders of the IRA (excluding de Valera) voted for the Treaty, while the “rank and file” members voted against it vehemently.⁴⁹ Many of those young members had fought in the War of Independence and were not ready to abandon that fighting spirit. Collins had seen all of the bloodshed and understood that compromise represented the only means for an end to the conflict. De Valera appeared to be disillusioned with a vision of an immediately strong and entirely independent state. Collins was prepared to abandon the pragmatism of radical Nationalist rhetoric in favor of peace and stability for his homeland. That slowly-developed readiness to compromise would cost Collins dearly when he stood up to his Irish brethren in the ensuing conflict over the Treaty.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁸ Tom Garvin. *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*. (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1981), 129.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 131.

Peace Process of the Irish Civil War and Diplomatic Motives

Following the signing of the controversial 1921 Treaty ending the Irish War of Independence, Ireland spent two bloody years fighting a Civil War that pitted supporters of the Treaty (led by Michael Collins) against Éamon de Valera and the opponents of the Treaty. The Treaty had created a Provisional Government for Ireland that had dominion status under the Crown. The Provisional Government excluded the six northern Irish provinces of Ulster, which became known as Northern Ireland. Political allegiances that were dictated by the Treaty were backed by military allegiances and the bullets of the IRA from both sides of the Treaty debate.

The Irish Civil War was characterized by the disorder of the Republican (anti-Treaty) military forces, which committed incendiary violence against the forces of the Provisional Government (or Free State). Those actions were often not sanctioned by de Valera and the Republican political leadership. In February 1922, de Valera called for an IRA that was separate from the Provisional Government, saying, “I have sufficient faith in the Irish people to believe that they can divide without turning on one another.”⁵⁰ It is difficult to believe that de Valera held confidence in that statement or found *any* truth in it. The division within the Provisional Government was clear in 1922 when the parliamentary elections had to be delayed to avoid further splits in Sinn Féin and to allow Treaty delegates to draft a constitution. As opposed to the ever cynical de Valera, Michael Collins firmly believed in the Treaty. During a Waterford rally in March 1922, he claimed that “nobody knows better than Mr de Valera that the Treaty

⁵⁰ Ryle T. Dwyer. *Big Fellow, Long Fellow. A Joint Biography of Collins and de Valera*. (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1998), 269.

gives freedom to achieve freedom...He is already using the freedom won to shout for a Republic.”⁵¹

The physical split of the IRA resulted in pro-Treaty supporters keeping their old headquarters at the Beggar’s Bush Barracks in Dublin. The newly embattled anti-Treaty members (called the irregulars by the press and pro-Treaty members) set up their headquarters in Parnell Square, in a building they had taken by force from the Orange Order Unionists. In the north and south, De Valera began to lose control of the Republican supporters who were taking violent and extreme measures to disrupt rallies and meetings of Collins and his pro-Treaty followers.⁵² The violence intended to disrupt pro-Treaty activism appalled Winston Churchill, who was tasked by the Crown government with Irish diplomacy. In March 1922, Churchill exclaimed that “the Irish have a genius for conspiracy rather than government...The government is feeble, apologetic, expostulatory; the conspirators active, audacious and utterly shameless.”⁵³ One has to wonder if Churchill had any notion how inflammatory his comments were. Partisan violence in the first three weeks during February 1922 saw the deaths of 96 Catholics and 42 Protestants in Ulster. The Ulster Protestant Association, composed of only 150 members, was responsible for the Unionist violence against the IRA. De Valera declared that the killings made any treaty with the PM of Northern Ireland, Sir James Craig, merely a “scrap of paper.”⁵⁴

The Irish parliamentary election of June 16th was preceded by a May pact made between Collins and de Valera to create a joint party between pro and anti-Treaty supporters, who would then form a coalition government after election (with full support of the IRA). The pact was a

⁵¹ Ibid., 279.

⁵² Ibid., 281.

⁵³ Ibid., 279.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 292.

political attempt to make the election about issues other than the Treaty. Churchill and the Crown government were very uneasy about any coalition that would yield such power and ride roughshod through the elections.⁵⁵ An Irish coalition in London published a constitution directly preceding the election on June 16th. The document had a clause stating that “the legislative, executive, and judicial authority of Ireland shall be derived solely from the Irish people.” The document also stated that “only the Free State parliament could declare war on behalf of the country.” The constitution was not easily accessible to either the British or Irish general public before the election and on June 16th, pro-Treaty Sinn Féin won 45% of parliamentary seats while anti-Treaty representatives won only 28% of the seats.

The Civil War was sparked on June 22nd when English MP Sir Henry Wilson was assassinated in Dublin by two members of the IRA. Collins had directed the killing.⁵⁶ He believed that Wilson had been behind the recent killings of Irish Catholics in the north. On the anti-Treaty side, anti-Treaty IRA members had occupied the Four Courts government building in Dublin since April 14th. In late June, Collins declared that “the Provisional Government had two courses open to it; ‘either to betray its trust and surrender to the mutineers, or to fulfill its duty and carry out the work entrusted to it by the people.’”⁵⁷ After the Provisional Government’s ultimatum to abandon the Four Courts expired, backed by artillery given by the Crown, Provisional Government forces attacked the occupied building for three days until the Republicans surrendered. The destruction of the Irish national archives resulted from artillery shelling.⁵⁸ De Valera damned the pro-Treaty members’ actions. He occupied the Hamman Hotel

⁵⁵ Ibid., 299.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 307.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 308.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 309.

on O'Connell Street in Dublin with other Republicans, but soon left the Hamman for the southern province of Munster, a republican stronghold.⁵⁹

The Republicans were directed by the Provisional Government to bring all weapons to the National Armory until political flames were allowed to settle and stop the incitement of further violence.⁶⁰ Following this bold proposition, after only nine days of fighting at the beginning of July 1922, 654 casualties were recorded in Dublin.⁶¹ In an effort to further rein in the forces of the Provisional Government, Collins asked to be named Commander-in-Chief and gave ministerial duties as Chairman of Provisional Government to W.T. Cosgrave.⁶² In late July, Collins wrote that "if the so-called Government in Belfast has not the power nor the will to protect its citizens, then the Irish Government must find means to protect them. But we must show that we can protect our citizens in all parts of Ireland as we can and will."⁶³ Collins recognized the growing scope of the violence and understood the danger that such instability posed to the future of the Provisional Government and all of Ireland.

Only a month after speaking those words, Collins would see the escalating violence between Provisional and Republican forces take a turn for the worst. On August 22nd, Collins' convoy was ambushed by Republican forces in Cork. The ambush occurred while convoy members were disarming a land mine, installed intentionally by the attackers to halt the convoy. Collins was shot and killed after he ran up the road alone, chasing and firing at fleeing

⁵⁹ Ibid., 310.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 309.

⁶¹ Ibid., 312.

⁶² Ibid., 312.

⁶³ Ibid., 318.

Republican gunmen. Members of the convoy thought that drinking (the convoy had made several stops to have drinks) may have affected his judgment.⁶⁴

The next few months were full of disorder and disunity on both sides of the conflict. Bloodshed and reprisals continued on December 7th when two members of the Dáil (parliament) were shot by Republican belligerents. The Provisional Government responded by executing four of its most highly-ranked Republican prisoners. The prisoners had never been formally charged or given trials for their participation in the Four Courts occupation. Reprisal killings continued until April 1923 when Republican Liam Lynch, leader of the anti-Treaty IRA, was killed during fighting. Following the violence, “de Valera managed to persuade the IRA to call off the fight and dump their arms.” At the time, he was in hiding out of fear of imprisonment by the Provisional Government.⁶⁵ The informal truce was the result of seriously depleted forces and faltering morale among both armies.

De Valera was captured by Free State (Provisional Government) forces in August 1923 when he came to the Dáil to speak to the public. He was held in solitary confinement for six months. Minister of Justice, Kevin O’Higgins, justified his decision by explaining that “through him [de Valera], and at his instigation, a number of young blackguards had robbed banks, blown up bridges, and wrecked railways, and that in the name of the Irish Republic”⁶⁶. Once the Civil War ended, boundary determination was a paramount issue. PM Lloyd George declared that transferring nationalist Ulster areas to south would ruin Northern industry. A decision was made

⁶⁴ Ibid., 327.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 333.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 334.

to keep borders as they were and as persuasion, Britain waived “some of the Free State’s public debt.”⁶⁷

The Civil War killed Michael Collins, one of the only men capable of engaging in civil diplomacy with the Crown, while also carrying the favor of a majority of Irish Catholics. The gruesome war further alienated Winston Churchill and other Crown Conservatives from helping Ireland to find an independent identity. That identity would lead to more bloodshed and growing numbers of civilian casualties as the IRA worked both with and against the southern Irish government to forge an independent state.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 336.

Irish Free State After Civil War: Working Towards What?

This chapter in the study of the development of modern Ireland serves to take a step back and analyze the politics and ideology that worked together to shape Catholic Ireland directly after the Irish Civil War ended in 1923. Following the untimely death of Michael Collins, the Irish Free State was left in an ideological gray area. The pro-Treaty Irish Catholics had won the Civil War, but, at the cost of their bulwark of political and military stability, Michael Collins. The Irish Catholics still had Éamon de Valera, but his political record had been clouded by the Civil War. After fighting a losing battle, he would need a decade before he could, once again, stand at the helm of Irish politics.

The Civil War had shown the diverse face of Irish Catholic nationalism and “beneath the republican banner marched an array of persons who held viewpoints ranging from strict republicanism to a willingness to accept dominion status for Ireland.”⁶⁸ During the peace talks with Britain in 1921, following the Irish War of Independence, de Valera and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George each proudly lobbed demands at each other. De Valera worked to exclude anything that would limit the freedom of those Catholic Irish who, like him, wanted a republic; a lofty goal which he failed to achieve in his political tenure.⁶⁹ De Valera’s goal was to attain self-determination for an Irish republic, but he would have to settle for an Irish dominion under the Crown. Though Lloyd George and the other delegates for the British Crown would only concede dominion status, De Valera extracted as many concessions from them as possible –

⁶⁸ D.H. Akenson. “Was De Valera a Republican?” *The Review of Politics*. Vol. 33, No. 2 (April, 1971), 233.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 234.

concessions that pointed in the direction of De Valera's real goal, even greater freedom for the Irish Catholic in the future.

Unlike Michael Collins, who was a straight forward politician, de Valera turned political debates into battles of wit and deception. De Valera "combined sincere fervor with an ability to obscure issues behind rhetoric."⁷⁰ PM David Lloyd George remarked that negotiating with de Valera in 1921 was "like chasing a man on a merry-go-round while seated on the horse behind him"⁷¹ The determination of de Valera to keep his opponent on his verbal toes was very impressive, although, it was more of a personal showing of oral finesse than a bold performance of Irish strength against the British Empire. Perhaps that need for a silent victory of self satisfaction served to represent the attainable gains that Catholic Ireland could take from the Crown in 1921. De Valera and the "Irish representatives agreed to work within a framework of the Empire that implied some limits on their sovereignty, they would think of themselves as representatives of a sovereign power, but without asking the British to recognize them as such."⁷²

Preceding the peace negotiations of 1921, Prime Minister David Lloyd George was forced by de Valera to offer Ireland dominion status in order to even begin a formal peace settlement. That relatively hard fought gateway to peace talks was the result of the sharp tongue of diplomacy that de Valera loved to wield.⁷³ The hard edge that PM Lloyd George had to get past in order to make peace with Ireland represented the peaceful resistance that Irish Catholics could use in lieu of real bargaining leverage. In other words, "de Valera...did an excellent and hardheaded job of gaining the maximum possible recognition of Ireland's right to govern her

⁷⁰ Ibid., 235.

⁷¹ Ibid., 238.

⁷² Ibid., 242.

⁷³ Ibid., 243.

own affairs.”⁷⁴ At the same time, de Valera was forced to base peace talks on the ways in which Ireland would be connected to the Crown. This showed that “total separation from Britain was not being demanded.”⁷⁵ In that instance, his arrogance and stubborn debating techniques made clear to PM Lloyd George that maintaining any control held over the Catholics of Ireland would be an upward battle. The Irish Catholics would not roll over easily and Lloyd George could clearly see the aspirations that the Irish leadership still had for complete self-determination.

De Valera certainly won a personal victory in 1921 against the Crown; however, Catholic Ireland was still tied to the Crown in a very real way. In comparison to the headstrong de Valera, Michael Collins “was a realist and recognized how weak the military resources of the cause were...[he] was willing to compromise on the symbol of the republic in order to gain the substance of Irish freedom.”⁷⁶ That willingness to compromise would frustrate de Valera and his supporters to the point of igniting a civil war and only ended after the death of Collins. Before the Civil War was deemed necessary by Irish Nationalists, Irish Catholics took one last stab at attaining a stable peace by legal means, in cooperation with the Crown.

In December 1921, London and PM Lloyd George hosted a delegation for the signing of an Anglo-Irish Treaty. As mentioned in an earlier section, De Valera stayed in Dublin supposedly because once a compromise was reached, he wanted to be home “to hold the Nationalist movement together.”⁷⁷ Another common theory was that he expected an unpopular compromise from the meeting and did not want to be associated with the backlash against the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 243.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 243.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 245.

⁷⁷ Michael Hughes. *Ireland Divided: The Roots of the Modern Irish Problem*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 54.

authors of the compromise. In his place, “de Valera sent a delegation controlled by the moderate and pragmatic men to negotiate with the British because he himself desired a solution such men would naturally negotiate.”⁷⁸ Those moderate pragmatists were Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, both at the forefront of Irish nationalist politics.

Following the signing of a Treaty that was not to the satisfaction of de Valera, Civil War broke out and de Valera became an outlaw of the Crown and enemy of Collins. The vicious Civil War ended in 1923 and left Ireland without Michael Collins and thus, with no middle ground for nationalism. Before Collins was killed by anti-Treaty forces in 1922, Collins turned over his ministerial duties as Chairman of Provisional Government to William Thomas Cosgrave. The move was intended to give Collins a more clearly military role. However, following the end of the Civil War and Collins’ demise, Cosgrave was tasked with operating the extremely volatile Irish Free State.

Now at the margins of Irish political leadership, though not without influence, de Valera harshly criticized Cosgrave’s decision to end the land debate with Northern Ireland after the Civil war by leaving the borders of the six northern Irish provinces as they were before the War in exchange for some relief of the Free State’s debt to the Crown.⁷⁹ Essentially, de Valera was reduced to bickering and mockery of the active leader of the Free State while he sat on sidelines. For his part, Cosgrave operated the Free State with the burden of having to “build a government that would be credible to the Irish people.”⁸⁰ Acting with that enormous weight on his shoulders,

⁷⁸ D.H. Akenson. “Was De Valera a Republican?” *The Review of Politics*. Vol. 33, No. 2 (April, 1971), 245.

⁷⁹ Richard B. Finnegan. “Ireland: The Challenge of Conflict and Change.” (Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), 39.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

the Cosgrave administration ended in 1932 with a record of “stability rather than progress.”⁸¹ Many felt that his administration lacked progress towards independence from the Crown. However, under Cosgrave, the Free State took an active role in the League of Nations and maintained “a foreign policy position that was different from that of the United Kingdom” while dealing with the League.⁸² Further diplomatic success, seemingly progress, was accomplished under Cosgrave in 1931 when Ireland “worked with Canada to pass resolutions that gave the member states [Crown dominions] equal status. In 1931 these efforts were acknowledged by the United Kingdom in the Statutes of Westminster, which granted the dominions the right to reject the legislation of London.”⁸³ At this time, “the ‘empire’ became the ‘commonwealth,’ and the dominions were sovereign and equal states.”⁸⁴ Yet, despite his flourishing foreign policy, Cosgrave became unpopular in 1931 when he persuaded the Dáil to pass legislation that permitted military tribunals to “impose the death penalty on members of illegal organizations.”⁸⁵ “The IRA and other republican groups were soon declared illegal, and the law drove many republicans underground and out of Ireland.”⁸⁶

It is unclear if the successes of W.T. Cosgrave were more the result of freedom from the Crown gained after the Civil War or the result of his positive leadership. There is no doubt, however that after 1923, Irish Catholics were in a better position to determine their own fate in

⁸¹ Ibid., 40.

⁸² Ibid., 41.

⁸³ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 41.

Malamud 30

the world, regardless of whether de Valera's vision of the future destiny of Catholic Ireland had been met.

Formation of Fianna Fáil in 1926

The rise of Fianna Fáil in Irish Free State politics marked the return of Éamon *de Valera* to the forefront of Irish politics. The 1926 formation of Fianna Fáil stemmed from a split within Sinn Féin. In November 1926, the Dublin parliament accepted a boundary agreement with Northern Ireland that confirmed the partition between the 26 predominantly Catholic southern counties and the six predominately Protestant northern counties. Along with his failure to fend off the concession to partition, de Valera failed to convince the parliamentary members of Sinn Féin that they should only accept their seats in the Dublin parliament if the oath of allegiance to the Crown was removed. His motion fell five votes short and immediately after, he formed Fianna Fáil along with his republican followers.⁸⁷ In 1932, the first Fianna Fáil government was created in the Free State when de Valera won the presidency and Fianna Fáil members held a majority in parliament. The party would hold power for 16 years, until they were defeated in the 1948 elections.

The political rhetoric of Fianna Fáil was very progressive and bordered on radical at the time of its inception. Fianna Fáil proclaimed the goal of a 32 county Ireland (eliminating partition). The goal for a united Ireland was lofty and knowing such, members of Fianna Fáil held other, more realistic, party goals. Radical nationalist rhetoric was good for gaining the support of the Irish populace, but to gain legitimacy outside of Irish republican politics, Fianna Fáil had to address more attainable goals and practical issues. As the leader of Fianna Fáil, de Valera “recognised the dangers of republicanism becoming marginalised if it did

⁸⁷ Kieran Allen. *Fianna Fail and Irish Labour*. (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 14.

not address more immediate and pressing economic conditions. If this involved an ambiguous appeal to ‘the poor’ or ‘the workers and small farmers’, he was flexible enough to make it.”⁸⁸

The party made it clear that their main economic goal was to ““encourage native industries that minister to the needs of the people and to protect them by adequate tariffs’.”⁸⁹ In other words, their “real aim was national economic development through a withdrawal from the world economy and tighter control of the local economy by state control.”⁹⁰ De Valera’s vision of an ideal Irish economy was based around his belief that building up rural areas and supporting farmers with financial assistance could make “self-sufficiency” possible, as Fianna Fáil was very hostile towards foreign capital.⁹¹ That sentiment was a legitimate concern because in 1926 Free State exports were “exclusively directed to Britain and were almost entirely in primary produce.”⁹² In addition, “rural life was perceived as the embodiment of a traditional Ireland imbued with high moral codes: modesty, patriotism, industriousness and resilience.”⁹³

The party’s financial policies were largely directed towards the reform of national banking institutions. Former IRA Chief of Staff (and Fianna Fáil supporter), Frank Aiken was convinced that “banks should not exist to amass profits but should perform such functions as they were performing in France where they managed credit and issued money for the benefit of ordinary people.”⁹⁴ However, by 1932 Fianna Fáil was “more concerned to regulate government

⁸⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 16.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁹¹ Ibid., 16.

⁹² Ibid., 20.

⁹³ Donnacha Ó Beacháin. *Destiny of the soldiers : Fianna Fáil, Irish Republicanism and the IRA, 1926-1973*. (Dublin : Gill & Macmillan, c2010), 49.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 22.

spending rather than to restrict banks' profits or force them to invest in native industries."⁹⁵ De Valera's financial views on government spending led him to call for pay cuts for Irish civil servants who earned above £1,000 annually; he preached that no man "was worth more than £1,000 a year."⁹⁶

Fianna Fáil was established in the spirit of imperial disgust. That mood of rebellion was aided by the Ultimate Financial Settlement in 1926 between the Free State and English Crown. It included a "secret treaty" which provided that the Free State pay the Crown £ 5 million (Irish pounds) yearly (this included land annuities, Royal Irish Constabulary pension contributions, payments for damage done to Crown buildings during War of Independence, and payment towards the Unemployment Fund in the UK).⁹⁷ A year later, the Public Safety Bill of 1927 was instituted. It "empowered the government to declare organizations unlawful, membership of which would entail a maximum penalty of five years' penal servitude...unlawful on the grounds that it 'engages in, promotes, encourages, or advocates any act, enterprise, or course of action of a treasonable or seditious character."⁹⁸ Fianna Fáil was threatened by this because of their radical political literature that damned the Cosgrave government and the Free State government on a regular basis.

With the growing rebellious republican spirit in the Free State, the June 1927 election saw Fianna Fáil take 44 seats in Dáil. In the 1932 election it won 72 seats and took over control of parliament and de Valera became Prime Minister. Upon taking power on March 9th,

⁹⁵ Ibid., 39.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 19.

⁹⁸ Donnacha Ó Beacháin. *Destiny of the soldiers : Fianna Fáil, Irish Republicanism and the IRA, 1926-1973*. (Dublin : Gill & Macmillan, c2010), 71.

Fianna Fáil had the support of the Labour party and “strengthened its image as a radical force when de Valera and other ministers immediately took a cut in salary.”⁹⁹ In the same year, de Valera’s government released republican prisoners and lifted the ban on the IRA. However, the Public Safety Act remained in force.

Economic tensions with the Crown resulted in the start of the Anglo-Irish Economic War on July 1, 1932. The “immediate cause was a decision to stop paying the half-yearly instalment [sic] on land annuities which was due to the British government. They in turn replied by imposing a retaliatory duty of 20 per cent on Irish imports. Fianna Fáil then introduced an Emergency imposition of Duties Act which enabled them to impose new tariffs by statutory order.”¹⁰⁰ This non-violent war was waged partially by “mass street meetings” to support Dublin government. The “message at such meetings was one of equality between the classes in which all suffered in order to stand up for Ireland’s sovereignty.”¹⁰¹ Fianna Fáil saw the war as an opportunity to promote Irish goods and block foreign goods from domestic markets; “behind the wall of protectionism, it aimed to give maximum support to Irish employers.”¹⁰²

In the midst of the bloodless conflict, Fianna Fáil introduced the Control of Manufacturers Acts of 1932. The Acts “established a system of licensing to prevent foreign companies endangering the survival of Irish manufacturers. Foreign capital was not allowed to hold more than a 50 per cent stake in firms and a majority of a company’s directors had to be

⁹⁹ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰⁰ Kieran Allen. *Fianna Fail and Irish Labour*. (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 37.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰² Ibid., 39.

Irish.”¹⁰³ The Economic War ended in 1938, at which point the “Irish economy still remained largely dependent on Britain in terms of exports...nor was Irish agriculture transformed.”¹⁰⁴

Fianna Fáil had a strange relationship with the IRA, in which Fianna Fáil relied on IRA support to gain influence and legitimacy in republican politics at the outset of its political activities. However, “with a comfortable majority [in parliament]...there was a noticeable decline of tolerance towards the republican movement” and the IRA.¹⁰⁵ Before Fianna Fáil took power, Prime Minister William Cosgrave targeted “attempts by the IRA to obtain a basis of agreement with Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil to facilitate a common political platform for electoral purposes...[because he was certain]the party’s activities contributed to an environment conducive to violent revolution.”¹⁰⁶ That violent revolution never came but Cosgrave was correct in his concern that IRA collaboration with Fianna Fáil would gain enough support to take control of the Free State from his grasp.

In 1934, Fianna Fáil voted “in a Military Pension Act which gave pensions to republicans who fought against the treaty. It was designed to erode the base of the surviving IRA and to provide a form of patronage.”¹⁰⁷ The move was also made with the intention to build support among citizens of the Irish Free State for the police force and the army and attract more men to join them. In that way, “the net was slowly extended to take in an increasing number of

¹⁰³ Ibid., 39.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 42.

¹⁰⁵ Donnacha Ó Beacháin. *Destiny of the soldiers : Fianna Fáil, Irish Republicanism and the IRA, 1926-1973*. (Dublin : Gill & Macmillan, c2010), 133.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 52.

¹⁰⁷ Kieran Allen. *Fianna Fail and Irish Labour*. (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 43.

IRA members...by then many republicans had been sucked into the paid service of the state machinery through employment in the Free State army, the police and the civil service.”¹⁰⁸

Ideologically, Fianna Fáil felt that the members of the IRA were “Irish soldiers of freedom whom Cosgrave as well as his English friends...have forced from their homes.”¹⁰⁹ De Valera’s “efforts to dismantle the Treaty conformed to his own desires and those of his followers, but it was also hoped that they would promote his much-vaunted objective of ‘national unity’”.¹¹⁰ “In many ways this was shorthand for reconciling the IRA to the Free State...a short-lived honeymoon.”¹¹¹ The partnership between Fianna Fáil and the IRA was created upon the mutual ideal of Irish republicanism and the tarnishing of that relationship represented Fianna Fáil’s distancing itself from radical politics. It makes sense that the abandonment of the IRA by the Free State helped feed the growing separatist violence that the IRA engaged in during the proceeding decades.

¹⁰⁸ Donnacha Ó Beacháin. *Destiny of the soldiers : Fianna Fáil, Irish Republicanism and the IRA, 1926-1973*. (Dublin : Gill & Macmillan, c2010), 135.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

Diplomacy in Northern Ireland and the Republic During World War II

In 1937, President Éamon de Valera and his cabinet drafted a new constitution for the Republic of Ireland. It was smoothly ratified by the Dáil parliament. The document established the Republic as an independent state with a representative democracy and de Valera as the *Taoiseach* (the new Gaelic term for the office which was formerly called the presidency). His new position allowed de Valera to dismiss political ministers and dissolve the Dáil.

From his new seat of power, at the start of World War II in 1939 de Valera steered the Republic of Ireland to a neutral position with the Allied forces, who were at war with the Axis powers, led by Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. “The declaration of neutrality led to a fundamental rethinking of Ireland's relationship to European culture and politics and a new sense of national identity.”¹¹² In addition to shaping national identity, the issue of the north/south Irish border became a point of contention once the Republic government and Northern Ireland leadership fought to “define their opposing territorial states within the context of the European conflict.”¹¹³ The division of Ireland complicated British attempts to bring Irish politicians and public opinion to their side because they had to appease opposing ideologies and motives among the inhabitants of partitioned Ireland.

From the beginning of the war, de Valera balanced concessions to the Allies with stern resistance. The Republic government “offered guarded assistance to the allies” by “repatriating allied planes or forwarding information about the presence of U-boats” while staying far away

¹¹² Clair Willis. “The Aesthetics of Irish Neutrality during the Second World War.” *Boundary 2*. Volume 31, Number 31 (Spring 2004), 121.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 123.

from the active conflicts on the European mainland.¹¹⁴ Irish public opinion in the Republic of Ireland supporting neutrality was aided by strict censorship of any media in the Republic that supported either the Axis or the Allies, an effort to eliminate both anti-British and anti-Nazi sentiment.¹¹⁵ By doing that, de Valera “concentrated on Ireland’s destiny within a domestic framework far removed from the struggle of Great Britain against Nazi Germany.”¹¹⁶

The push by the government of Great Britain for the Republic of Ireland to cooperate with Northern Ireland fluctuated during the war, reflecting allied military successes and failures. With the German offensive failure to disable the air defenses of the Crown during the Battle of Britain (August-October 1940), the threat of German invasion in both Ireland and England faded.¹¹⁷ Also, the panic among British politicians to unite Northern and southern Ireland for the sake of national defense of all the British Isles settled back to its usual tense state. Following the December 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sent a telegram to de Valera, in which Churchill offered Ireland a sentimental message regarding Irish unification so it could be “a nation once again.”¹¹⁸ Churchill’s appeal to all of Ireland fell on mostly deaf ears and did little to ease the complications for British defense created by the partitioned states. As Irish historian Alvin Jackson points out: “Irish neutrality was a highly complicated political strategy, which was rooted in a concern for national unity and sovereignty, and which reflected a traditionally ambiguous response to Britain’s European wars.”¹¹⁹ The Irish

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Alvin Jackson. *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond*. Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 299.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

memory of the stagnant and bloody battles of World War One greatly added to Irish support of de Valera's neutrality. However, "neutrality did little to undermine the tradition of Irish service in the forces of the crown, and perhaps 50,000 Catholic and Protestant Irishmen and women were recruited to the British armed forces."¹²⁰ De Valera's policy of neutrality still provided the Crown with soldiers, resources, and the "wholesale export" of Irish workers to the British workplace.¹²¹ That strong connection to the Crown made the Republic much more susceptible to British and Irish "social and economic trends" than de Valera would have liked to claim.¹²²

The most pivotal point of contention between Churchill and de Valera was the use of the Irish ports of Queenstown, Berehaven, and Lough Swilly. "Britain's rights over their naval use, retained in the Irish Treaty of 1921, in the negotiation of which Churchill had been actively concerned, were surrendered in the new settlement of 1938 [with the drafting of the new Irish constitution] under which the Irish Free State was rechristened Eire."¹²³ With increasing German U-boat destruction of merchant and military ships, Churchill brought the issue of the ports before the War Cabinet again on Oct. 16th 1939; he urgently wanted the use of the Berehaven port to use as a wartime docking station for the British navy and eliminate the possibility that it would be used by Axis ships. To Churchill's disdain, the Cabinet did not have confidence that the Crown had the capacity to convince de Valera to give them use of the ports back and they had no intention of using force to gain free access to the ports.¹²⁴ Seemingly delusional, Churchill was under the impression that "'three-quarters of the people of southern Ireland are with us' and that

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 300.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Roy Jenkins. *Churchill: A Biography*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 565.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

it was only an ‘implacable malignant minority’ who intimidated De Valera.”¹²⁵ The British prime minister was unable to grasp the extent to which the forces of anti-Crown sentiment supported Irish neutrality, even in the face of a possible Axis victory.

The Crown made several attempts to dampen public support for neutrality within Eire. In June 1940, John Betjeman, a British reporter, traveled to Eire to develop a propaganda plan. He felt that it was “still not too late to bring the overwhelming majority in the south of Ireland on to our side by breaking down [the] partition barrier and overruling the extreme ‘loyalist’ element in the north.”¹²⁶ Claiming that, “our best propaganda would be in settling the Six Counties question,” Betjeman told his supporters that “it would take away the anti-British arguments of both the IRA and the Germans.”¹²⁷ Acting as the sensitive politician, a role he rarely played, de Valera understood that the Crown needed formal recognition from Eire that it would not become a base of ports from which the Axis could attack Britain. In August 1940, de Valera entered into secret cooperation with Churchill in addressing security issues for both Ireland and the Crown.¹²⁸ With that cooperation, propaganda from England to Eire largely ceased.

Churchill’s initial satisfaction with this direction that Eire was taking would prove fleeting, however. On November 5th 1940, Churchill made a speech to the House of Commons, stating “that the huge shipping losses in the Atlantic were directly attributable to the Irish refusal to allow Britain to use the Treaty Ports.”¹²⁹ Churchill appealed to Eire’s sense of mutual dependence on the Crown in emphasizing “that both Eire and Britain needed the food that was

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Edward Corse. “British Propaganda in Neutral Eire after the Fall of France, 1940.” *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (June 2008), 164.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 164.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 167.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

brought on the ships, and that the loss of the ports was ‘a most heavy and grievous burden, and one which should never have been placed on our shoulders, broad though they be.’”¹³⁰ His speech was followed by the emergence of an anti-Irish press campaign throughout the United Kingdom.

Churchill’s frustration was understandable. The extreme distrust that had been built up by Irish Catholics towards the Crown was demonstrated when Irish cinemas showed images of the Holocaust after the war ended and Irish viewers believed that they were viewing the product of a British propaganda ministry “using starving and emaciated Indian famine victims.”¹³¹ British efforts to mobilize Eire with Allied forces was alleviated after the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the shift of the European battle theatre to the eastern front. As a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the risk of Nazi invasion of Eire was lessened greatly. At that point, the Crown understood that Ireland could remain safely at the margins of the war with little detriment to the Allied war effort. Churchill recognized “the US with its vast resources was now in the war, and Britain, it appears, had recognised that to have Eire as a friendly neutral was better than as a ‘sullen and mutinous conscript’.”¹³² Characteristic of Anglo-Irish diplomacy between Churchill and de Valera, Churchill was forced to accept Irish neutrality by 1942.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 171.

¹³² Ibid., 175.

The Troubles in Northern Ireland Leading to Direct Rule in 1972

The partisan violence that characterized the violence in Northern Ireland beginning at the end of the 1960s was spurred by the violent intervention in a peaceful demonstration. As is so often the case when a peaceful movement is broken up with excessive force, the violently disbanded protest led to more violence and unrest.

On October 5, 1968 in Derry, The Campaign for Democracy in Ulster marched for Catholic civil rights.¹³³ The peaceful march was broken up by Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and their batons.¹³⁴ There was a good amount of public support for protesting in Ulster among the Catholic minority, in addition to inspiring counter-demonstrations from Protestant loyalists. The protestors were men who were part of the Catholic minority of Northern Ireland demonstrating against what they were certain were civil rights violations within housing and hiring for various jobs. They were mainly concerned with housing policies in which landlords would rent to Protestants, even if a Catholic applied first and was more financially stable. The protest was an act of defiance against the government because, at the time, public protest was banned by the Northern Ireland Office of Home Affairs.

The ban made any protest all the more effective and visible because the inciters knew that their demonstration would be broken up with force and that drew much public attention, even if not from their prime minister. Terrence O'Neill, the fourth Northern Ireland Prime Minister and leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, attempted to dismiss the news. When one of his secretaries

¹³³ The demonstrators demanded extended voting rights, an end to housing and job discrimination, and the disbanding of sectarian constabulary forces in Ulster.

¹³⁴ Anthony Craig. *Crisis of Confidence: Anglo-Irish Relations in the Early Troubles*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010), 39.

attempted to give him the news of RUC actions taken against protestors, O'Neill deferred being given the information because he did not want to have his lunch with a friend ruined by discussing the bad news.¹³⁵ Hopefully O'Neill did not understand the violence and unrest that the demonstration had spawned.

With growing tensions in the North, British PM Harold Wilson held a meeting with Eire's Taoiseach Jack Lynch (of Fianna Fail) on October 30th. Wilson was very concerned about his Loyalist subjects in the North and Lynch was attempting to protect the Irish Catholic minority that was in great danger. The subject of the meeting was supposed to be kept centered on economic issues between Northern Ireland and the Republic. However, Lynch told Irish media afterwards that Wilson "stated that the root cause of the problems *up there* was partition and that all other difficulties flowed from this, he [Wilson] said that he would be discussing these matters with Captain O'Neill."¹³⁶ Lynch sharing that information with the press greatly displeased the British PM and Lynch's action began another period of strained diplomacy between the partitioned Irish states and the Crown government.

Along with the diplomatic unrest would surely come civil unrest, a fact that the Northern Irish parliament at Stormont and Wilson's Crown government readily grasped. They recognized that growing numbers of demonstrations left Northern Ireland vulnerable to the violent upheaval that the IRA was so good at providing.¹³⁷ In the final weeks of 1968, Wilson's government was already drafting reactive plans to hypothetical scenarios in which civil war broke out in Northern Ireland, and how it would react to the IRA raising a Catholic nationalist army.¹³⁸ The Crown was

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 40.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 44.

very much tied up in Northern affairs because it remained a part of the United Kingdom and in 1968, Stormont could call for British troops to assist in maintaining security in the face of civil unrest. In 1969, however, the Crown changed that policy, making British troops harder to deploy without strict Crown government approval.

Prime Minister Terrence O'Neill resigned on April 28 1969 after growing party disunity and bomb attacks in Belfast by the IRA on electric and water supply infrastructure. Also, his "one man one vote" initiative was floundering.¹³⁹ He was replaced on May 1st by James Chichester-Clark, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party and a twelve year member of the Stormont parliament. On May 6th he announced amnesty for all "arrests linked to demonstrations since October 5th," a move he hoped would give him an appeal to the liberal Protestants in his party. Political appeal played a pivotal role in the unraveling of "The Troubles". The Troubles would tear Northern Ireland apart for nearly thirty years over the legal status of Northern Ireland in relation to the United Kingdom and the status of the Catholic minority. Wilson and the Crown government believed that they "faced a combination of internecine feuding" and "that by excluding the warring parties – including the Belfast and Dublin Governments – from any influence, London could portray itself as an independent arbiter."¹⁴⁰ On the other side of the English Channel, PM Lynch remarked on August 12th that, "it is clear that the Irish Government can no longer stand by and see innocent people injured and perhaps worse."¹⁴¹ He also called for the United Nations to bring in peacekeeping forces and claimed that neither the Stormont

¹³⁹ A political initiative that pushed to give more clear and equal representation to all Northern Irish citizens in terms of their representation at Stormont. At the time, voting was restricted to those who paid taxes and the initiative demanded that all men and women over the age of 21 be given a vote.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 49.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 50.

parliament nor the RUC forces could contain the threat of partisan violence. In response, on August 16th, on orders from PM Wilson, British troops were deployed to Belfast.

In 1970, a year later, Eire's Dublin parliament faced scandal in the form of the Arms Crisis. The Crisis involved the dismissal of two Republic cabinet ministers, Charles Haughey and Neil Blaney, for their alleged role in a case of arms smuggling. They were charged and subsequently dismissed from their cabinet positions for their supposed role in having arms shipped from the Republic to Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland. The two men were eventually cleared by the Republic judiciary because of disorder within the prosecution's case and a general lack of evidence. Despite the controversy, Haughey went on to serve three terms as the Republic Taoiseach between 1979 and 1992.

In 1970, the British Conservative party, led by Edward Heath as the new prime minister, took over the Crown government on June 19th. Shortly after, on June 27th the Provisional IRA "fought a prolonged gun battle with loyalist paramilitaries on the Lower Falls Road [in Belfast]". It would later be called the "Battle of St Matthew's" for the Catholic church that the Loyalists were attempting to burn down.¹⁴² The struggle lasted five hours and would become the IRA's first battle against the Loyalists (who were some of the main inciters of the Troubles with their attacks on Northern Catholics) of The Troubles. The RUC used poisonous CS gas (an especially painful form of tear gas) against the combative forces. The use of poisonous gas in the narrow streets of Belfast greatly angered both Catholic and Protestant residents, who were forced to deal with the tear gas in their homes. Following the quelling of the violence, the British Army conducted arms searches in the area and declared a curfew, but only in Catholic sections of

¹⁴² Ibid., 85.

Belfast.¹⁴³ The searches and intrusive actions taken by the RUC and Crown forces angered partisans to a great extent. However, Irish historian Dr. Anthony Craig argues that, “the IRA was trying to prod the British troops into acting like an army and, as this was the case, it was perhaps inevitable that the initial welcome the soldiers had in Catholic areas *would* chill. In essence, if it were not for the Falls Road Curfew, it would have been something else.”¹⁴⁴ The Northern Catholics viewed increasing British troop presence as a chance for partisan violence to get out of hand and become further ingrained into the city’s daily activities. This was opposite of the military’s intended effect, which was to protect the Catholic minority, as opposed to being seen as a “force of occupation” by residents.¹⁴⁵

In July 1971, under the Special Powers Act, the Crown reenacted internment (not seen since the Civil War). However, the IRA was not deterred by the threat of internment, as demonstrated from May to November 1971 in which “there were at least thirteen successful attacks on the main electricity distribution system of Northern Ireland.”¹⁴⁶ The attacks on Northern infrastructure were indeed crippling, but Craig explained that “the IRA seemed unaware of how close it had come to crippling the Northern Ireland government, but in any case, its focus shifted to increasingly open attacks on the security forces following the introduction of internment.”¹⁴⁷ With increasing violence, by December 1971, the death toll on all sides had reached 143, with hundreds more badly injured.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 86.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 85.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 88.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 89.

Among Northern Ireland Roman Catholics and the IRA, the theme of rebellion against the Protestant majority and the Crown was extremely strong at the time. The anti-internment song ‘Men Behind the Wire’ topped the Irish music charts for six weeks until January 1972, when it was replaced by Paul McCartney’s ‘Give Ireland Back to Ireland’.¹⁴⁹ The support for Northern Ireland Catholics in popular culture stood in stark contrast to the violent upheaval that was taking place on the streets of Northern Ireland. On Sunday January 30th, British Army soldiers fatally shot 14 unarmed Irish nationalist protestors in Derry. The day would come to be known internationally as “Bloody Sunday”.¹⁵⁰ In the three days following the shootings, the British Embassy in Dublin was occupied by protestors (some were IRA members) and was desecrated and completely burnt down by the third day.

Republic Taoisech Lynch reacted with a crackdown on the Provisional IRA , which resulted in the arrest of a few key figures. The prosecution failed to convict the men in trial but the Provisionals became prime targets of the Republic government following their arrests. The move also lost Lynch some vital support in his party for his actions that seemingly took protection away from Catholics in Northern Ireland.¹⁵¹ Lynch followed his actions with a speech in which he said that “the origin of violence in the North lies in the kind of treatment meted out by [the Northern Ireland] government authorities to the minority...the revulsion of [that] [Northern Ireland Roman Catholic] minority against such treatment has been met by...unbridled savagery to intimidate the population... and a hysterical attempt to shift the blame from the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 100.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 106.

¹⁵⁰ Other days of partisan violence in Ireland were labeled the same thing but the 1972 incident is the most popular usage.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 111.

Stormont regime's political bankruptcy."¹⁵² His speech concluded with his claim that "the North has suffered enough from the policy of trying to restore Unionism," seemingly a call for Crown intervention to safeguard the Catholic minority. His wish came true on March 28 1972 when the Crown imposed Direct Rule on Northern Ireland. Craig described the policy as "the inevitable result of the security situation becoming the predominant issue for the British."¹⁵³ It is unclear how pleased the Republic was with the Crown's move, but it is clear that the Northern Unionist politicians felt betrayed by the Crown because their capacity to form policy for the North was largely dissolved by the move to put nearly all operations of Northern Ireland at the discretion of Crown authorities.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 114.

Evolving Ideology and Policies of the IRA and Irish Public Opinion 1970-1980

Changing political ideologies are most clear when a fissure appears in the defining borders of an organization. Such a split was apparent in the Irish Republican Army (IRA) at the end of 1969. The IRA experienced a split in December 1969, revolving around the issue of abstentionism from the Dáil parliament. Abstentionism was the active nonparticipation of IRA members in parliament and their refusal to accept the seats to which they were voted into.

The split occurred following a vote during an IRA convention that resulted in a 39-12 decision in favor of ending abstentionism from the Republic's parliament. Expressing his concern for the fate of the IRA following the vote, IRA member Seán Mac Stíofáin broke down into tears, conceding, "This is the end of the IRA."¹⁵⁴ To the dismay of the misty-eyed republican, his prophecy was correct. A group of IRA members broke from their former comrades to form the "Official IRA" and still fiercely supported abstentionism from parliament. They were led by Cathal Goulding as Chief of Staff, a member of the IRA since he was 17. The IRA members who still remained formed the "Provisional IRA." They were led by none other than Seán Mac Stíofáin as their Chief of Staff. Mac Stíofáin's nationalist roots were fashioned in a very interesting upbringing. He was born in London to a British father and an Irish mother. The bulk of his nationalist indoctrination came from his mother, who instilled Irish nationalism in him at a young age. However, due to his geographical location, he joined the Royal Air Force

¹⁵⁴ Henry Patterson. *The Politics of Illusion: A Political History of the IRA*. (London: Serif, 1997), 140.

and served the Crown military until 1953 when he settled in Ireland and joined the ranks of the IRA.

Following the split, both factions of the IRA turned their full attention to reforming the political system of Northern Ireland. The IRA tasked itself with defending Irish Catholic nationalists who they perceived to be under an increasing threat from loyalist Protestants in the North. The Official IRA leadership was obsessed with the idea that the Crown was making strides towards bringing the Republic back under the ruling wing of the United Kingdom.¹⁵⁵ That notion appears to have been partially driven by paranoia and partially inspired by the lingering memory of past disputes with Crown forces. While the North had been subjected to Direct Rule, it has been shown that this was a desperate act by the Crown government to minimize civil unrest and reign back radical Protestant forces from inspiring further bloodshed. The Provisionals recognized the Officials' goal to fight those perceived attempts by the Crown as delusional. One Provisional quipped in 1970 that the Officials were trying to "reform the irreformable."¹⁵⁶

Henry Patterson, a historian of the IRA, in 1997 pointed out that the Officials were incorrect in their basic understanding of British leadership's desire to subjugate Northern Ireland to the Crown.¹⁵⁷ He explained that the incumbent British Prime Minister Henry Wilson was very resistant to Direct Rule. Wilson only instituted the drastic move when it was absolutely necessary. He had acted in desperation and similar to many other British politicians who became ensnared in Irish diplomacy, did not want to be dragged back into the "Irish bog."¹⁵⁸ An

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 147.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 149.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 150.

overarching issue that became central to the Official IRA's difficulty in attaining political legitimacy was their misunderstanding of the degree to which the Crown wanted to control Irish policy.

At that same time, Goulding and the Officials became worried that new members of the IRA were drawn to the organization by the prospect of change brought on by violent upheaval. Goulding was concerned that the new, often very young, members cared little for the political struggle that Goulding and other Officials were primarily concerned with. After all, working in the political arena was the only way in which the IRA would ever be recognized as a legitimate political party by the governmental institutions of Ireland and the Crown.

Regrettably for the idealistic Goulding, the Northern Ireland bombing campaign at the end of 1970 dissolved any real hope that the IRA could evolve towards primarily being concerned with politics. Although the Provisionals were the main perpetrators of the bombings, the intervention of British troops in Northern Catholic communities and competition with the Provisionals for notoriety, forced both the Officials and the Provisionals to step up their aggression against Unionists and British troops.¹⁵⁹ The Crown government took their usual approach to increased partisan violence in Ireland with the reinstatement of internment. British Prime Minister Heath, who had taken the office in June 1970 and was the leader of the Conservative Party, enforced internment in August 1971. He did so under immense pressure from Northern Irish Unionists.¹⁶⁰ Contrary to Heath's intentions, partisan violence grew like a cancer in 1971. "Prior to internment there had been 34 deaths in 1971; between internment and

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 151.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 151.

the end of the year there were 139.”¹⁶¹ Once again, the two factions of the IRA worked in a competitive and vicious cycle of destruction. Seemingly, the Official IRA was provoked to attack British soldiers and Unionists due to the pressure to keep up with violent and non-violent activism of the Provisionals.¹⁶²

Unfortunately, as the violence increased, the emphasis of the message of both factions of the IRA moved further away from the civil rights movement and any other political initiative.¹⁶³ It is easy to view both IRA parties as foolish for not recognizing and/or predicting that outcome but it is more of a testament to the frustration that Irish nationalists had developed by the 1970s. Violence was the only way that many nationalists felt that their message would be taken seriously by the governments of Northern Ireland, Eire, and the Crown. Sadly, that message grew to be one of pure violence and unrest because the earth-shattering bomb blasts drowned out any legitimate message.

By 1972, Goulding and the Official IRA had come to understand the folly of the violent campaign and announced a May ceasefire. However, they made it clear that they would still take up arms and defend themselves if provoked by violent attacks. The Provisionals continued their bombing campaign in the North and would not announce a ceasefire until 1975.

In 1973, the Official IRA attempted to make political strides with the goal of winning over the support of Northern Protestant Unionists (chiefly the working classes) and getting them to support republicanism against the Crown. This was a lofty and unrealistic goal by the Official leadership.¹⁶⁴ It once again stands as a testament to the desperation of the IRA in those years to

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., 152.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 153.

be become a legitimate political entity. At that time, Unionists were far from taking such a stance against the Crown. In the 20th Century, Unionist demands were largely limited to basic self-determination and the maintenance of their rights through the “constitutional status quo.”¹⁶⁵ Those narrow and reasonably static goals resulted in Unionists missing out on extensive social, political, and economic reforms. However, that lack of evolution was the result of their status in relation to the Crown and the Republic being under constant attack by their Catholic neighbors.¹⁶⁶ Northern Irish loyalists receded into their political shell because they had a strong feeling that they had been forcibly distanced and detached from their national ties to the Crown.¹⁶⁷ The IRA, however, did not suffer from ideological distance from their nation, and the absence of such a wedge tied IRA members to the organization over multiple generations. That is not to say that IRA membership was driven primarily by ideology. By the late 1970s, participation in the Official versus the Provisional IRA was dictated just as much by family and local membership as it was by ideology.¹⁶⁸

In February 1977, the “Research Section of Sinn Fein’s Department of Economic Affairs” drafted a document called *The Irish Industrial Revolution (IIR)*, blaming Irish economic shortcomings on industrial underdevelopment.¹⁶⁹ The response from hard-line nationalists and what Henry Patterson called “nationalist traditionalists” was that the IIR took the blame off of British imperialism. They believed that it blamed the “Irish Catholic bourgeois for ‘refusing’ to

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 159.

¹⁶⁵ Alan F. Parkinson. *Ulster Loyalism and the British Media*. (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd., 1998), 14.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 14.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁶⁸ Henry Patterson. *The Politics of Illusion: A Political History of the IRA*. (London: Serif, 1997), 166.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 168.

create an industrial revolution [in Ireland outside of Ulster].”¹⁷⁰ Contrary to that very negative response, the IIR actually “represented the appropriation of an expanding body of academic and serious journalistic analysis of the Irish economy since the 1950s.”¹⁷¹ Many Dubliners were excited by that new emphasis on social and economic issues and directly addressing them to create reform in the Republic. They felt that it was a move away from the long-standing obsession with Northern Catholic communities and the sentiment that fixing the North was a fix-all solution for Ireland.¹⁷² Patterson explained that “the IIR was the first major documentary evidence that a part of the ‘republican tradition’ was willing to accept popular opinion when it violated a central tenet of republican faith.”¹⁷³

That tenet was that the Irish Catholic community was constantly under threat from Protestants and that the ultimate defensive solution was to absolve all Protestant influence and unite all Irish Catholics. With that instilled paranoia, Irish Catholics would have great difficulty achieving progress while constantly looking over their shoulders for Protestant treachery.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 169.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 170.

¹⁷² Ibid., 171.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 174.

Legacy of the IRA at the End of the 20th Century

The struggle between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland came to an explosive climax during the 1970s that lasted through the 1980s during a time that would come to be known internationally as “The Troubles.” The 1990s saw the political settlement transition into another violent campaign that often found its participants alienated from any political diplomacy or peaceful alternative to the fighting between opposing ideologies and loyalties.

On August 31, 1994, the Provisional IRA (at that point the only remaining active IRA group) declared a ceasefire with Crown forces and the police forces of Northern Ireland. The IRA assured the politicians of the North and the Crown that the ceasefire was an end to the “full-scale” campaign of violence that it had waged for decades.¹⁷⁴ Even then, social unrest continued. Following Loyalist violence against Catholic Republican in a Dublin pub on June 2nd 1994 that left one dead, a Catholic Dublin man declared on a BBC television broadcast, “There are two lots of bigots up there... We just do not want to know about them... One is as bad as the other.”¹⁷⁵ A clear indication that the public distrust of the Irish political administrations was still prevalent. Unfortunately, the decades of explosive violence had hardened the Northern Irish civilian mindset and made it wary of the possibility of a stable peace. Yet only four years later, a formal political revelation took place.

In April 1998, negotiations led by U.S. Senator George Mitchell began between British Prime Minister Tony Blair of the Labour Party and delegates from the major political parties of Northern Ireland. The parties represented included Sinn Féin, the Ulster Unionist Party, and the

¹⁷⁴ Robert Perry. “Revising Irish History: The Northern Ireland Conflict and the War of Ideas.” *Journal of European Studies*. Vol. 40, Issue 4. (Dec. 2010), 332.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 333.

Democratic Unionist Party. At that time, the always vocal Sinn Féin was led by Gerry Adams, who first joined the Irish Catholic nationalists when he became a member of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association in 1967. He would be elected Sinn Féin President in 1983. The Good Friday Agreement was signed on April 10, 1998. The Agreement established that if a united Ireland was to be established, it would only be after a majority of representatives from Northern Ireland had agreed to accept such terms. The Agreement at its core was a written oath to work out future disputes in a peaceful and diplomatic fashion. The overarching goal was to keep violence out of politics, a radical new departure for adversaries in a part of the world where for decades it had been assumed that politics and violence went hand in hand. Subsequently, a British-Irish Council was created to reconcile issues between Northern Ireland and the Crown. Perhaps more importantly, a power-sharing assembly was created between the four largest parties of Northern Ireland. The two most influential parties were Sinn Féin and the Ulster Unionist Party. In this assembly, called the North/South Ministerial Council, decisions were discussed jointly but were ultimately decided independently by each State. The Agreement also created Human Rights and Equality Commissions which reformed the police forces of Northern Ireland to provide for greater restraint in the use of violence to cope with civil unrest. The Commissions also provided for the release of both Catholic Republican and Protestant Unionist political prisoners arrested during partisan violence.¹⁷⁶ Another goal of the Commissions was demilitarization. Disgusted, the leaders of the Democratic Unionist Party refused to be signatories and subsequently stormed out of the meeting. A contrastingly positive reaction was

¹⁷⁶ Neil Ferguson; Roger Mac Ginty; Orla T. Muldoon. "No War, No Peace: Northern Ireland After the Agreement." *Political Psychology*. Vol. 28, no. 1 (Feb. 2007), 6.

voiced by Sinn Féin President Adams, who proclaimed that “Sinn Féin believe the violence we have seen must be for all of us now a thing of the past, over, done with and gone.”¹⁷⁷

However, taking weapons from the hands of militant groups in Northern Ireland would prove to be a very complicated issue. The fact that the text of the agreement in regards to demilitarization of nationalist groups, like the IRA, was very unclear added to the difficulty. Also, the wording did not convey much urgency. The only thing that the Agreement did to decommission weapons was to commit all parties “to use any influence they may have, to achieve decommissioning of all paramilitary arms within two years following endorsement.”¹⁷⁸

As historian of Northern Ireland, David Mitchell, explains the vague wording was necessary to insure agreement between the parties, many of which had blood on their hands from The Troubles.¹⁷⁹ When the leaders of the Unionist parties of the North took it upon themselves to try and insure that the leaders of Sinn Féin moved ahead with the challenging task of disarming the IRA, which many Unionists believed still held close ties to the IRA, Gerry Adams and other Sinn Féiners assured them that they were no longer the political arm of the militant IRA. Adams and his lieutenants’ argument was that Sinn Féin did not feel obliged to take on the formal role of disarming the IRA because they were officially two separate entities. Adams claimed that they only shared certain political goals -- essentially they both sought the unification of Ireland. Unsatisfied with that sentiment, the Unionists made clear their certainty that Sinn Féin must be held responsible for the disarmament of the IRA.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ David Mitchell. "Sticking to Their Guns? The Politics of Arms Decommissioning in Northern Ireland, 1998-2007." *Contemporary British History*. vol. 24, no. 3 (September 2010), 342.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

As a result, the IRA leaders were able to hold off full decommissioning of their arms until 2005 when the IRA Army Council formally ended their armed campaign. However, in the spirit of the Agreement, after 1998 Sinn Féin launched a political campaign to promote peaceful progress. However, keeping alive the long tradition of political slander in Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin claimed that the Unionists were only hampering Ireland's progress towards national unity with their insistence on instant weapon decommissioning.¹⁸¹ The Crown, on the other hand, led by Prime Minister Blair, along with Northern Ireland's leadership allowed concessions to Sinn Féin and the disarmament process because they feared that Sinn Féin, under Adams' leadership, was losing its ability to keep political disputes peaceful and they "feared return to violence" that had run rampant during The Troubles.¹⁸²

Public approval of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement was apparent after a referendum was sent out to every single Northern Ireland household on May 22nd, 1998. Over 70% of households supported the Agreement. A referendum was also held in Eire and over 90% of households approved of the Agreement. Irish historian Neil Ferguson gives partial credit for the peace of the 1990s partially to the "intergovernmental relationship between successive British and Irish governments" and partial credit to the fear among all party leaders of a return to the open violence that was fresh on the Irish conscience from the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁸³

A symbolic victory produced of the Agreement was its granting of the right of all Northern Ireland citizens to claim Irish, British, or dual citizenship. This seemingly obvious ideological concession seems paramount to the quelling of unrest in the soul of Northern Irish

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 348.

¹⁸² Ibid., 350.

¹⁸³ Neil Ferguson; Roger Mac Ginty; Orla T. Muldoon. "No War, No Peace: Northern Ireland After the Agreement." *Political Psychology*. Vol. 28, no. 1 (Feb. 2007), 3.

citizens. Perhaps an overlapping identity for an island whose inhabitants have been divided along patriotic and religious lines is the only logical outcome. The division between Irish Catholics and Protestants has been clear for centuries and had long blocked diplomatic efforts to insure peace. Widespread public acceptance by citizens of Northern Ireland of all religions that their country could operate politically without violence through both catholic and Protestant parties is something that has been more easily accepted in the contemporary Irish world.

Partisan violence erupted in Northern Ireland throughout the middle decades of the 20th Century because of intolerance, frustration, and censorship of republican voices. And while terrorism and partisan violence still occasionally tear through the streets of Belfast the IRA is no longer an ideologically united militant organization with political backing. The terrorism in the North is much more fragmented; and political progress is now the goal of Irish politics.

Sadly, in 2011, burdened by an economic depression brought on by an international financial crisis, the futures of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are threatened by forces that have the potential to once again unleash civil unrest in both Dublin and Belfast.

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