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The Partition of Ireland: Anglo-Irish Relations as Reflected in a Political Idea

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Submitted in Partial Completion of the  
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Bridgewater State University

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*The Partition of Ireland: Anglo-Irish Relations as Reflected in a Political Idea*

In June of 2016, a British referendum decided that Britain would leave the European Union, and with it would go the six counties of Northern Ireland. After years of postponement, and at the time of writing, Britain is set to leave the European Union on December 31, 2020, after complications mainly due to the new-age “Irish Question:” how to handle the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the south? The reemergence of a hard political border seems to be a likely possibility for Ireland, which would be devastating to both Irish and British societies and economies with increased political violence, and the imposition of new trade customs in the North.

This “Irish Backstop” as Brexit politicians have coined it, continues to plague the Brexit process, and its effects can be seen across all of Ireland with a sharp increase in political support for the historic nationalistic Sinn Féin party, both North and South. Following the uncertainty of what Brexit has in store for the North, particularly regarding the border, a resurgence of partisan violence is occurring in the North, something which the Irish are all too familiar with by this point. Brexit is the latest thorn in the side of Anglo-Irish relations, and not since the Troubles of the late twentieth century has Ireland stood to be so divided. Britain leaving the EU puts the sovereignty of Northern Ireland in question, as the 2016 referendum stands to invalidate crucial elements of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which ended the Troubles. Anglo-Irish relations are again deteriorating, and to understand current Anglo-Irish relations related to the border issue between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, in the context of Brexit, it is first necessary to gain a better understanding of the origins of that border.

Many Irish are governed by the old adage ‘whatever you say, say nothing,’ born from a long history of oppression and abuse. In other words, topics that make one uncomfortable need

not be talked about. For this reason, partition as a topic sits on the periphery of modern Irish popular discourse, though it singularly defines Irish experiences throughout the twentieth century. The border in the North is not yet 100 years old, but has affected tremendously modern Irish history, and facilitates the deterioration of Anglo-Irish relations. Implemented officially in 1925, the Irish partition separates the six Northern counties of Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh, and Tyrone from the remaining 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland. The seemingly arbitrary demarcation follows no geographic landmarks, bisects roughly 270 public roads, and in some areas divided homes along the border, which led to some interesting and unfortunate run-ins with authorities on both sides of the border.

These counties were left out of the legislation which established the Irish Free State due to a complex minority issue: Protestants centered in the North perceived to be under attack by the Catholic masses attempting to form a government outside of the United Kingdom. This led to bitter contestation of the border between those who wished to dismantle it, and those who sought to defend it, with partisan violence plaguing Catholic and Protestant communities surrounding and within the border. This thesis brings partition to the front of an increasingly dynamic modern Irish history by tracing the idea of partition as a viable solution to the ever-changing “Irish Question” from its inception to its implementation. I will explore the complexity of the minority issues within Ireland, as well as explaining how Anglo-Irish relations deteriorated from the Act of Union of 1800, to the official partitioning of Ireland in 1925.

An analysis of legislation and newspaper articles about the Home Rule Movement during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries shows the evolution of partitioning Ireland moving from an idea to a reality. British parliamentary debates show the development of the several Government of Ireland (Home Rule) Bills, which later established the partition of Ireland as it

stands today. Finally, both British parliamentary and Dáil Éireann debates over the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921), which ended the Irish War for Independence and reaffirmed a partitioned Ireland, demonstrated the real points of contention among all political sects involved. All of this helps show how partitioning Ireland came to fruition as a British decision accepted by the Irish, in hopes of someday unifying their island. Tuning in to the historiography of the partition of Ireland generated a strong foundation upon which I launched my research. The long discussion of the Irish partition ranges from the nationalistic fervor of outright blaming Britain for “dismembering”<sup>1</sup> Ireland, to a more objective approach to how the inevitability of partition could not be avoided. Though as the publishing dates of the literature increases, so too does the objectivity of the discussion.

Published in the midst of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) Border Campaign in 1957, Frank Gallagher’s *The Indivisible Island* ironically starts by explaining how the Irish have seldom been a united people, and that England has had a large role in this. Gallagher, a former IRA volunteer, explains that British Conservatives used the idea of partition as a political play-thing to hinder Liberal efforts to grant Ireland Home Rule. Conservatives, such as the British Tory and Unionist parties, made the demand of a partitioned Ireland knowing that Nationalists and Liberals would never concede to such an idea. But to Gallagher, even entertaining the idea that partition was necessary or inevitable, as some historians continue to do, is “unjust” and “absurd.”<sup>2</sup> Gallagher claims that a national Irish (Catholic) government could protect and cherish Protestant interests. However, one can speculate just how protected these interests would be in a new nation where the Catholic clergy heavily influenced the state legislature for the decades presiding over Partition. For a man who spent many long stints behind bars for IRA activity, he

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Gallagher, *The Indivisible Island* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1957), 300.

<sup>2</sup> Gallagher, *The Indivisible Island*, 306.

must not have noticed how quickly Home Rule became ‘Rome’ Rule in the years following Partition. Nonetheless, Gallagher’s work influenced many Irish historians, politicians, and social activists of the twentieth century.

By the 1980s, historians had dug deeper into the divide as social tensions in Ireland, particularly in the province of Ulster, continued to flare between the Irish and British during the three decades known as the Troubles, 1969-1998. Published during the Troubles in 1983, Irish historian Michael Laffan’s *The Partition of Ireland* analyzes the social differences between the province of Ulster and the rest of Ireland. A more even-handed approach to a very sensitive topic at the time, Laffan explains that partition was a solution, *one of many*, to a centuries-old conflict between two separate ‘nations’ in Ireland.<sup>3</sup> Ulster has always been different from the rest of Ireland, most notably in the post-colonial English rule where it colloquially became known as a British, Protestant stronghold. Ulster maintained its connection to Britain via plantation efforts and Protestant Scottish lowland migrations, which helped to further distinguish itself from the rest of Ireland as predominantly British (Protestant).

Published in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, English historian Thomas Hennessey’s *Dividing Ireland* maintains the two-nationalities theory, claiming partition was *inevitable* as there were two distinct Irish nationalities in Ireland. This seems to be widely accepted as the end result for partition debates, as academics in recent years have turned to face the economic and social repercussions of a divided Ireland. Ultimately, partition boiled down to political decisions made by both British and Irish politicians during the tumultuous years that encompassed World War One. Hennessey undoubtedly proved the transformative powers of World War One on Irish nationalism, which encompassed the Dublin Easter Rising of 1916. He

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Laffan, *The Partition of Ireland, 1911-25* (Dublin, Ireland: Dundalgan Press, 1983), 1.

explains how Irish Nationalists moved from seeking a devolved form of government within the United Kingdom in 1914 to determinedly pursuing a free Irish Republic outside of the British Empire by 1918.

There is one indisputable factor that is thematic throughout the discussion of Anglo-Irish relations in regard to partition: by the twentieth century, Ulster was profoundly different from the rest of Ireland, and social, sectarian, and political divides between Ulster and the rest of Ireland persist into the present. The existence of this divide is centuries old and stems from the Norman invasions of the 1100s, but more prominently the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland in the mid 1600s, in which Oliver Cromwell hacked his way across Ireland mythically coining the slogan, ‘to Hell or to Connacht’ as he drove Irish Catholics in Ulster to the barren and boggy hinterlands. In Cromwell’s wake, a flood of lowland Protestant Scots entered Ulster with the support of the Elizabethan plantation schemes, ensuring Protestants owned the most valuable land in Ireland. This cemented the divide that would come in later years to be the backbone of Irish Nationalist opposition, and ultimately led to Ireland’s geopolitical sundering.

There is a degree of truth to the statement that Ulsterites are cut from a different cloth than those in the rest of Ireland. Midway through the Troubles, historians began to take note, and become more critical of, the population differences between Ulster and Ireland as a whole. R. F. Foster begins his anthology of modern Irish history with the chapter titled “Varieties of Irishness,” where he describes what he believes are three early variations of Irishness: the Gaelic Irish, the native inhabitants of Ireland; the Old English, the descendants of the first Anglo-Norman colonizers who became Gaelicized over time, termed “the English of Irish birth”; and the New English, the wealthier, Protestant landowners of various plantation schemes.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, UK: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1988), 12-3.

In 1998, both English and Irish historians became more critical of the nationalistic differences between the population in Ireland and Ulster in particular. In *Dividing Ireland*, Hennessey argues that ‘Britishness’ - what Unionists in Ulster referred to themselves as - was composed of multiple imagined communities, and involved building new national identities upon older ones.<sup>5</sup> He considered the British national identity to be over-arching and elastic: it allows the development of new national identities under the umbrella of British identity, superimposed on existing cultural identities. So long as one pledged allegiance to the Crown - the head of the British nation - and put that allegiance above all else, you could form your own individual national identity within. Hennessey states, “Britishness did not require the sacrifice of older national identities.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, Ulster Protestants possessed a constantly fluctuating dual national identity of being Irish beneath their Britishness.

This is what Irish historian David Fitzpatrick in *The Two Irelands 1912-1939* claimed led to a “dual revolution” in Ireland during the Home Rule crisis of 1912-1920.<sup>7</sup> Ireland’s desire for national self-governance caused Ulster Unionists to retaliate as they sought independence from a presumed Irish Home Rule, leaving each state after partition with a “dual political legacy.”<sup>8</sup> Each political legacy contains a minority crisis that partition was meant to solve: in the North, the Catholic minority, wanting to be included in Irish independence, lost having been left out of Home Rule against their wishes, while in the South, the Protestant minority, wanting to remain within the Union, lost having been taken out of the Union against their wishes. Both Irish Nationalists and Ulster Unionists resisted British authority in their own way, simultaneously

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War One and Partition* (London, UK: Routledge, 1998), xii.

<sup>6</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, xii.

<sup>7</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands*, 205.



trying to subvert British rule in Ireland.<sup>9</sup> Nationalists wanted Home Rule, with or without the six-county (Ulster) exclusion, while Unionists would not stand for Home Rule, or at least anything less than the six-county exclusion in the end.

The province of Ulster developed separately from the three other provinces of Ireland during the nineteenth century, mainly in that Ulster became heavily industrialized compared to the agricultural provinces of Leinster, Munster, and Connacht.<sup>10</sup> Industrialization was considered a mark of civilization by the British, and a key concept in both British imperialism, and what helped Ulster Protestants identify as British. This led to a stark class division in Ulster, in which Unionists of all classes successfully banded together using Protestantism, and loyalty to the Crown, as a socioeconomic adhesive, viewing themselves as a Protestant minority under Catholic siege, reminiscent of the 1688 Siege of Derry.<sup>11</sup> However, the demography somewhat defies this rhetoric, as the combination of imperialism and industrialization creates something that is at times difficult to understand. The last Irish census conducted within the British Empire helps to showcase the complexity of the minority issues Ireland faced during the Home Rule crisis of 1870-1920.

The 1911 census of Ireland puts the total registered population in Ireland at 4,391,412 of whom 1,147,579 (26 percent) identified as Protestant, making them a sizable minority throughout the country. The ‘Protestant stronghold’ of Ulster, however, showed a different sectarian dichotomy with the total population of 1,581,969 of whom 890,880 (56 percent) identified as Protestant, making them the majority, albeit slim. In the remaining provinces of Munster, Leinster, and Connacht, only 256,699 of the total 2,809,443 (9.1 percent) of the

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<sup>9</sup> Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands*, vii.

<sup>10</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Siege of Derry (1688-1689), when the Catholic forces of King James II were unable to retake the city from the Protestant defenders, an event which took on mythic status for Ulster Unionists, still celebrated annually.

population identified as Protestant.<sup>12</sup> Protestants in Ulster did not constitute as large a majority as Catholics did elsewhere in Ireland; and while Protestants could rightfully claim to be a minority in Ireland, Catholics in Ulster could rightfully claim to be part of the minority as well. This is the origin of what led to six counties in Ulster remaining within the confines of the United Kingdom, while the rest of Ireland became a dominion of the British Empire until complete independence in 1949. Portions of Ulster were already separated - socially, nationalistically, and religiously - before the time of partition.

The history of partition is rooted in the parliamentary quest to answer the “Irish Question” stemming from the Act of Union in 1800. The Act of Union came in response to the 1798 United Irishmen Rebellion,<sup>13</sup> and the larger British issue of pacifying the Celtic fringes of their Empire’s core. The Act of Union forcibly bound Ireland to the United Kingdom by turning Ireland into an overseas version of Scotland or Wales. But instead of becoming a full fledged member of the United Kingdom, Ireland became a lesser, incomplete member with minimal representation in Westminster. Viewed largely by Irish Catholics as incomplete, the Union repealed many of the Penal Laws that openly discriminated against Catholics. Catholics could now seek an education, build their churches with stone, and own a horse worth more than five pounds, but remained barred from holding any position of political power; those positions were reserved for the Protestant Ascendancy. Along with remedying the complete mismanagement of Ireland by the British, Catholic parliamentary emancipation, by repealing the Act of Union became the rallying cry of Irish Nationalists for decades to come.

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<sup>12</sup> National Archives of Ireland, Census of Ireland, 1911.

<sup>13</sup> 1798 Rebellion, staged by the republican revolutionaries of The United Irishmen, supported by French forces, against British rule in Ireland. The Rebellion saw initial success, but was then swiftly suppressed resulting in thousands of revolutionary and civil deaths, as well as the Act of Union in 1800.

Led by Daniel O’Connell,<sup>14</sup> the Repeal Movement ultimately sought to recognize the illegitimacy of the Union, and to find an alternative form of government in Ireland.<sup>15</sup> O’Connell vehemently opposed violence, striving instead for passive resistance, and used popular politics as his weapon by invoking the notion of Repeal to rabble-rouse the Irish against the Union. He ultimately succeeded in this, earning Catholic participation in Westminster, but the vast majority of the Members of Parliament opposed Repeal viewing the shrinking of the Empire as preposterous. They brushed O’Connell and his Repeal Movement aside, but O’Connell continued to use Repeal as a way to push for some form of subordinate Irish parliament. While O’Connell tried for decades to win enough support for this, Anglo-Irish relations continued to deteriorate, largely due to Britain's dependency on Irish goods.

Britain depended heavily on Irish agricultural and linen products both prior to, and briefly following the Union. With the ending of the Napoleonic Wars, European markets reopened and, with increased industrialization in Britain, came economic upheaval in Ireland. The prices of Ireland’s main exports plummeted as British demands for Irish goods waned. Britain subsequently underwent an industrial revolution during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, causing Irish industry in the north to all but disappear as cheap, machine-made products could be imported from Britain tariff-free as a member of the Union. Exacerbating the economic decline, Ireland’s population swelled, increasing from a mere half a million in 1745, to more than eight million in 1845.<sup>16</sup> An enormous population, with few jobs available, caused unemployment to skyrocket, and those with jobs did not fare much better, as wages across Ireland plummeted,

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel O’Connell, the firebrand political leader who mobilized the Catholic population of Ireland to repeal the Act of Union, to achieve Catholic parliamentary emancipation (achieved in 1829), and became the first Catholic elected in Westminster.

<sup>15</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 308-9.

<sup>16</sup> John Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking* (New York, NY: Picador, Henry Holt and Company, 2013), 8.

again thanks to British industrialization. With fewer jobs available, Irish peasants increasingly moved into the countryside for subsistence farming, mainly becoming tenants on larger, Protestant-owned plantations.

Most Irish lands had been confiscated from Catholics during the Elizabethan plantation schemes, and distributed to Scottish and English colonists. The Penal Laws prior to the Union prevented Catholics from owning property, and while the Union overturned this to an extent, Irish peasants could not afford to buy or rent lands at reasonable prices. Their small plots of land only shrank when land was distributed equally among families through inheritance or dowries. This subdivision of lands contributed to the fact that by the 1840's, nearly one million land holdings were smaller than ten acres.<sup>17</sup> Making matters worse, Protestant landlords rarely reinvested their agricultural profits in their Irish endeavours. Instead, they chose to live extravagantly abroad, or invest in their more profitable endeavors in South Africa or South America, and seldom visited their estates in Ireland.

By 1844, conditions in Ireland declined to such an extent that future British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, during the onset of famine in Ireland, described the “Irish Question” as it came to be known for the remainder of the nineteenth century:

A dense population, in extreme distress, inhabit an island where there is an Established Church, which is not their Church, and a territorial aristocracy, the richest of whom live in foreign capitals. Thus you have a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church; and in addition the weakest executive in the world. That is the Irish Question.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *The Famine Plot* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 21.

<sup>18</sup> The State of Ireland. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 16 February 1844, vol. 72, cc. 1016.

Disraeli, himself an older Tory, blamed a new type of “Toryism” for antagonizing Irish Catholics by perpetuating a political system that promoted Protestantism and excluded Catholics from positions of power or status, as it had for two centuries. In his speech to the House of Commons, Disraeli perfectly describes the environment in which violent nationalism ferments. The Young Irelander Rebellion, staged just four years after Disraeli’s speech, only proved his point further. Ultimately, the Irish Question boiled down to how the British could handle and dissipate Irish nationalism, while maintaining social order in Ireland. By the time of Disraeli’s speech, Unionists in the North were already considering their own solutions to this dilemma.

On 17 October, 1843, the first mention of partition as a solution to the increasingly complicated Irish Question appeared in an anonymous article published in the *Northern Whig* in Belfast. The author outlines notes of a possible petition to the Queen, which calls for the establishment of a kingdom in Northern Ireland should unrest in Ireland continue. This was in response to O’Connell’s call for repealing the Act of Union. It claimed the inhabitants of Ulster are of “a mixed race,” descending from, “Saxons, Danes, [and] Normans,” and are “far more intimately connected... with people of the neighboring shores in England and Scotland, than they are with the South and Southwest of Ireland.”<sup>19</sup> The author argues that in the event of repealing the Act of Union, Ulster should be made into “a separate kingdom, having a separate legislature,” to in some way maintain its connection with England and Scotland.<sup>20</sup>

Between 1845 and 1852, social tensions and nationalism continued to rise as Ireland suffered a catastrophic blight to the potato crop. With an increased amount of sustenance farming on nutrient deficient soil prior to the Famine, Irish paupers depended almost entirely on a diet of

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<sup>19</sup> Anonymous, “Petition in Favor of the Union, or of ‘The Erection of the Kingdom of the North of Ireland.” *Northern Whig*, Belfast, Oct. 17, 1843.

<sup>20</sup> Anonymous, “Petition in Favor of the Union” *Northern Whig*, Belfast, Oct. 17, 1843.

cheap, easy-to-grow potatoes. The failure of a majority of potato crops for multiple years in the mid-1840s wreaked havoc on the poor, and swollen Irish population. Oddly, throughout the Famine years no shortage of food actually occurred in Ireland, only a shortage of *affordable* food.<sup>21</sup> Food became unaffordable to the growing Irish pauper class as food prices and unemployment rose simultaneously, with those in work earning wages far smaller than those earned by their forebears.

British policy on dealing with the Famine lay in the laissez faire economic teachings of Adam Smith. Thus, British legislators, such as Lords Charles Traveyan and John Russell, actively prohibited any form of government intervention in Irish markets, believing that markets would sort themselves out. Britain continued to export Irish agricultural goods unabated throughout the Famine, while the Irish starved, because Britain profited more from selling Irish food abroad rather than in Ireland. Many Irish historians, including journalist Tim Pat Coogan, equate the ineffectiveness of British policy on handling the Famine to state sanctioned genocide of the Irish.<sup>22</sup> With more than a million deaths caused by starvation and fever, and another two million sent overseas via “Coffin Ship”<sup>23</sup> transport, Gaelic culture all but disappeared, and the Irish population has yet to recover to this day. By the end of the Famine, one in three Irish had left Ireland by either a coffin, or aboard a coffin ship, and the Irish population continued to decline for the following decades.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-49*, (London, UK: Harper & Row, 1992), 165.

<sup>22</sup> Coogan, *The Famine Plot*. 67.

<sup>23</sup> Coffin Ships were the cheapest mode of transportation Irish immigrants used as transport across the Atlantic to North America, the commissioners of which provided as little food, water, and living space as legally possible to the Irish immigrants. The overcrowded and disease-ridden ships resulted in thousands of deaths along their voyage, and a Typhus epidemic in Canada in 1847.

<sup>24</sup> Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking*. 2.

The Famine did succeed in cementing an Anglophobic outlook among the Irish, evident in the Fenian journalist John Mitchel's apocalyptic rhetoric in remembering the Famine: "the Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but England sent the famine."<sup>25</sup> This sort of resentment was already rooted deeply among Irish nationalist thinking by the time of the Famine, but Britain's genocidal policies during this period caused irreparable damage to Anglo-Irish relations, and formed a solid base for Irish resistance in the following decades. It took 150 years for British authorities to apologize for the atrocities during the Famine, when in 1997, in a step towards ameliorating Anglo-Irish relations at the tail end of the Troubles, British Prime Minister Tony Blair issued the first statement of apology for the Famine.

The United Kingdom was the integral core of the British Empire, itself a sort of preeminent dominion that ruled over the other dominions within the Empire. Ireland's position within the core of the British Empire became apparent during the Famine, as Britain steadily grew wealthier and more powerful, while Ireland descended into disorder and decay. During the Famine, former British PM Charles (Earl) Grey summarized Ireland's position within the United Kingdom in a speech made to the House of Lords:

Ireland is the one weak place in the solid fabric of British power—Ireland is the one deep (I had almost said ineffaceable) blot upon the brightness of British honour. Ireland is our disgrace. It is the reproach, the standing disgrace, of this country, that Ireland remains in the condition she is. It is so regarded throughout the whole civilized world.<sup>26</sup>

Grey explained that, even during the early onset of potato blight in Ireland, Britain's response to the Famine, "is of itself a complete and irrefutable proof of the misgovernment to which she

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<sup>25</sup> John Mitchel, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)*, ed. Patrick Maume (Dublin, Ireland: University College Dublin Press, 2005), 219. Originally published in 1861.

<sup>26</sup> State of Ireland. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 23 March 1846, vol. 84, cc. 1345.

[Ireland] has been subjected.”<sup>27</sup> The Famine was the nadir of British mismanagement of Ireland, known as such among prominent political figures during the time. The Tory Party had split following the repeal of the Corn Laws during the onset of the Famine, Disraeli leading the more conservative branch, and the remainder merging with the Whigs later on to form the Liberal Party. Ireland, before and subsequently after the Act of Union, was continually mismanaged: by 1876 the Irish population was in a steady decline, and its wealth so concentrated that fewer than 800 landlords possessed half of the land in the country.<sup>28</sup>

Irish nationalism struggled to shift towards parliamentary representation for Catholics in Westminster as violent nationalism rose in the wake of the Famine. The remnants of the nationalist movements who helped stage the Young Irelander Rebellion in 1848 reformed under the banner of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), then a secret society formed in 1858.<sup>29</sup> The same year, the Fenian Brotherhood, another secret society, was also founded by Irish immigrants in the United States who had emigrated during the Famine, with an aim at aiding Irish nationalism from abroad.<sup>30</sup> Both the IRB and the Fenian Brotherhood dedicated themselves to fomenting a nationalistic mentality among the Irish, and created a corpus of emotional writings published in newspapers and novels over the decades. The broader Fenian movement ultimately promoted a shift towards armed resistance and rebellion, and Fenians staged yet another abortive rebellion in 1867. For the remainder of the century, some nationalists followed in O’Connell’s footsteps, dedicating themselves to the nonviolent constitutional struggle, while others believed in the persuasive means of physical force.

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<sup>27</sup> State of Ireland. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 23 March 1846, vol. 84, cc. 1345.

<sup>28</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 375.

<sup>29</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 390.

<sup>30</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 391.



The alternative to O’Connell’s repeal movement came in the form of what became known as the Home Rule Movement. Granting Home Rule to Ireland would effectively turn Ireland into a British dominion outside the core United Kingdom of England, Scotland, and Wales, but still within the confines of the British Empire, similar to Canada, South Africa, and Australia.<sup>31</sup> O’Connell died in 1847, but not until 1870, when Isaac Butt founded the Home Rule Association, did Irish nationalists have a solid political outlet to seek political emancipation from the British. Home Rule - federalizing the United Kingdom by dominionizing Ireland - thus became thought of as the prominent way to answer the Irish Question.

The idiosyncratic Irish barrister Isaac Butt, himself originally an Orange Tory in party politics, had a soft spot for Irish nationalism, mainly caused from witnessing such an atrocious handling of the Famine.<sup>32</sup> He went on to found the Home Rule Association in 1870, which is viewed as the official start of the Home Rule Movement that would last until Ireland’s partitioning half a century later. Home Rule became the dominant political movement of Irish Nationalists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some in Westminster still thought in O’Connell’s terms of repealing the Union, but leaned more towards Butt’s Home Rule as the century came to a close.

Butt differed from O’Connell in that he strove for a type of federalization of the United Kingdom: a local parliament in Dublin subservient to the Imperial parliament in Westminster.<sup>33</sup> Butt was not the first to suggest federalizing the United Kingdom, just its most ardent advocate for the Irish cause. The first mention of a separate legislation in Ireland came in a response to

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<sup>31</sup> Attempts at federalizing parts of the British Empire began with Canada in 1867, becoming the first British territory to practice self-government under the British Executive, serving as an example for Irish Nationalists. The term “dominion” came directly from the Bible.

<sup>32</sup> Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking*, 200.

<sup>33</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 397.

O’Connell’s plea for repeal of the Union in a House of Commons speech by MP Thomas Macaulay in 1833. Macaulay claimed that, “if the advocates of Repeal wished to separate the Crowns of England and Ireland... a separation of the Legislatures of the two countries [is required].”<sup>34</sup> Macaulay spoke of federating the United Kingdom, but no minister took him seriously, claiming two independent legislatures under one executive, “opposed the first principles of the science of government.”<sup>35</sup> This effectively sidelined the repeal movement, and the anti-federalist argument, in its many forms, hindered Irish independence for the remainder of the century. But as unrest in Ireland increased as the Famine abated, the prospect of an Ireland outside the United Kingdom seemed more believable, and this frightened Unionists in the North.

Through the HRA, Butt attempted to attain some semblance of independence for Ireland, while appealing to Westminster by keeping Ireland in the Empire as a dominion through this federalist concept. In 1873, the HRA morphed into the Home Rule League, which was more of a political pressure group than a party, and a year later merged with Irish Nationalists in Westminster to form the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), which continued to be led by Butt.<sup>36</sup> However, Butt and his Home Rulers met stiff resistance: in their first action towards achieving Home Rule three years after the Home Rule Movement began, Butt attempted to form a parliamentary committee to “consider the present parliamentary relations between Great Britain and Ireland,” and failed spectacularly in the House of Commons.<sup>37</sup> This failure triggered a restructuring of Irish political leaders, as Butt came to be viewed as unassertive. Charles Stewart

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<sup>34</sup> Address In Answers To The King's Speech. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 06 February 1833, vol. 15, cc. 238-97.

<sup>35</sup> Address In Answers To The King's Speech. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 06 February 1833, vol. 15, cc. 238-97.

<sup>36</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 608.

<sup>37</sup> Motion for a Committee. Adjourned Debate. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 02 July 1874, vol. 220 cc. 874-969. Motion defeated 61-458.

Parnell replaced him as the leader of the Home Rule Movement by 1877.<sup>38</sup> Parnell brought with him a more aggressive stance in Westminster with varying degrees of parliamentary obstructionism, which included filibusters and staging walk-outs. Parnell headed the IPP by 1880 and took a more aggressive stance toward Irish nationalism. He ultimately succeeded in forcing Liberals and Conservatives to negotiate with his IPP on the Irish Question through these tactics.<sup>39</sup>

While Parnell climbed the political ladder to head the IPP, a Liberal government under the leadership of William Gladstone came to power in Westminster during this time on a ‘justice for Ireland’ platform, paving the way for collaboration between Irish Home Rulers and British Liberals. In 1886, Gladstone proposed the first Home Rule Bill, which failed in the House of Commons by only a slim margin, which showcased the growing support for Irish nationalism.<sup>40</sup> The bill proposed an independent and subordinate Irish parliament, but many Conservatives, as well as Liberals, saw the bill as flawed. Conservatives such as MP George Goschen argued in 1886 against the bill stating Gladstone had been influenced by the “dark subterranean forces” of what can only be speculated as Irish Nationalism.<sup>41</sup> Though not opposed to the establishment of a legislative authority in Ireland to deal exclusively with Irish affairs, then-Liberal MP Joseph Chamberlain thought the bill to be “very vague and indefinite, and would leave us all a very large discretion,” and likened the voting on this “dead bill” to a vote of no confidence in the Liberal government.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 359n.

<sup>39</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 404.

<sup>40</sup> Government of Ireland Bill. Second Reading [Adjourned Debate]. House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 07 June 1886, vol. 306, cc. 1145-245. Motion defeated 341-311.

<sup>41</sup> Government of Ireland Bill. Second Reading [Adjourned Debate]. House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 07 June 1886, vol. 306, cc. 1145-245.

<sup>42</sup> Government of Ireland Bill. Second Reading [Adjourned Debate]. House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 01 June 1886, vol. 306, cc. 675-780.

Gladstone refined the first Home Rule Bill and proposed a second Bill in 1893, which now contained provisions for a bicameral legislature in Ireland, and the retention of 80 Irish MPs in Westminster.<sup>43</sup> The First Home Rule Bill provided for a unicameral legislature, consisting of two Orders that could meet either together or separately.<sup>44</sup> This time, with more clarification, the bill passed in the House of Commons, moving onto the Conservative controlled House of Lords.<sup>45</sup> Once sent to the Lords, the bill failed to gain any political traction, receiving a similar amount of support to the ideas proposed by Butt during his HRA days.<sup>46</sup> The House of Lords was the greatest opponent to the Home Rule Movement, as its members refused to approve any semblance of a devolved Irish government, and this prompted action from the Liberals of the Commons.

The Liberal Party played a large role in Ireland's Home Rule struggle, and partition later on. From the beginning of the Home Rule movement, Liberals supported Irish Nationalists claiming that granting the Irish self-government would strengthen the United Kingdom. Starting in 1906, Liberals enjoyed such a large majority in the House of Commons that they did not need to form a coalition government in order to pass bills.<sup>47</sup> They further cemented their power in 1908 with the election of Liberal PM Herbert H. Asquith. However, they lost this majority in the general elections of 1910, which forced them to work with Irish Nationalists to keep a Liberal

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<sup>43</sup> Government of Ireland Bill [1893], Enhanced British Parliamentary Papers on Ireland. HMSO. Article 7, section 1; article 8, section 1.

<sup>44</sup> *What Home Rule Means Now [Reprinted from The Times With Special Permission] with an Appendix Containing The Home Rule Bill of 1886 and Sections 25 to 28 of The Land Purchase Bill of 1886.* Dublin, Dec. 29, 1893. Dublin: Liberal Union of Ireland, 1893. Article 9. 63.

<sup>45</sup> Government of Ireland Bill (No. 209). Second Reading [Adjourned Debate]. House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 21 April 1893, vol. 11, cc. 912-1007. Motion passed 347-304.

<sup>46</sup> Government of Ireland Bill (No. 265), Second Reading [Adjourned Debate], Fourth Night. Hansard, House of Lords Debates [Hansard] 08 September 1893, vol. 17, cc. 563-649. Motion failed 419-41.

<sup>47</sup> John M. McEwen. "The Liberal Party and the Irish Question during the First World War." *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 12, No. 1. Cambridge University Press (1972), pp 109-131. 99.

government in power.<sup>48</sup> The Liberal Party closely associated itself with the Irish Question, wanting to grant Home Rule as a way to pacify Ireland, thus strengthening the United Kingdom. To do so, Liberals would therefore need to fulfil Ireland's democratic demand for self-government.

In the interim, Nationalist MP John Redmond succeeded Parnell as head of the reunified IPP in 1900 after a political schism developed over Parnell's leadership abilities, following his failure to push through the previous Home Rule Bill.<sup>49</sup> Through Redmond, the IPP maintained that Ireland should become a dominion within the British Empire, gaining complete control over domestic affairs. He also believed that granting Ireland dominion status within the British Empire would foster loyalty for the Crown among the Irish.<sup>50</sup> However, this pitted Irish Unionists against Irish Nationalists in a bid for Home Rule, culminating in a near civil war in Ireland on the eve of the greatest conflict the world had yet seen. With the third Home Rule Bill in the works, and preempting the inevitable denial of it from the Lords, the Liberal majority in the Commons passed, and received the Royal Assent on, the Parliament Act of 1911. This legislation curtailed the power of the House of Lords, preventing its members from vetoing bills passed onto them by the Commons no more than three times, ensuring that so long as a bill passed in the Commons on the fourth try, it would receive the Royal Assent.<sup>51</sup> This set the stage for the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill.

On 11 April 1912, Asquith took up the reins of Gladstone and proposed the third Government of Ireland Bill.<sup>52</sup> Asquith made the Imperial argument that Westminster had too

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<sup>48</sup> Gallagher, *The Indivisible Island*, 78.

<sup>49</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 434n.

<sup>50</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Gallagher, *The Indivisible Island*, 79.

<sup>52</sup> Government of Ireland Bill. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 11 April, 1912 vol. 36 cc. 1399.

many issues to deal with the, “grotesquely impossible task, varying from the infinitely great to the infinitely small, of which the House of Commons under our present system requires ... to be constantly informed...”<sup>53</sup> Making decisions on territories, colonies, and dominions throughout the Empire became too much for Asquith and the Liberal Party. An overwhelming sense that the British Empire was growing too big to manage efficiently gripped the Liberals, and they believed shedding some territory might help solidify the Empire. By restructuring the Empire into dominions subservient to an imperial parliament, which controls internal trade and foreign relations, those promoting the federation hoped it would improve imperial defence and trade. However, the anti-federation argument still held strong in the opposition bench with fears of undermining the autonomy of colonies, and the perceived inevitability of the collapse of the Empire.

Tories and Unionists alike maintained that the prerogative power of the crown could not be delegated to another parliament, without first that very parliament bestowing its sovereignty to the Crown. The British viewed Ireland as a strategic asset to the Empire’s core, thus Conservatives in particular used the Irish Question as an example of what could happen to other (lesser) British holdings around the world. British Conservatives viewed any measure of Home Rule in Ireland as the breaking up of the United Kingdom which would lead to the disintegration of the British Empire.<sup>54</sup> Tories and Unionists thus aimed to use partition as a political tool in order to deter Home Rule as they knew Liberals, backed by Irish Nationalists, would never agree to such terms.

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<sup>53</sup> Course of Events Since 1893. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 11 April 1912, vol. 36, cc. 1399-404.

<sup>54</sup> Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1984), 75.

The Ulster Unionist Party was the most direct representative of the British establishment in Ireland. Unionists touted their connection with Britain, not only genetically as stated before, but also in equating the notions of nation and state, believing that the ultimate national goal should be the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland forming a single nation.<sup>55</sup> They viewed Home Rule as a direct affront to their broader British-Irish national identity for this reason. Ulster Unionist MP Ronald McNeill spoke for all Unionists in 1913 when he explained Home Rule to be “the degradation of their [Unionist] position from being part and parcel of the United Kingdom... it is that degradation of their position which they resent and which they will not allow to be perpetrated if they can help it.”<sup>56</sup> Unionists combined with the Tories in order to form the Conservative opposition to Home Rule.

Debate over the third Home Rule Bill gridlocked Westminster, as both Liberals and Conservatives entrenched themselves in their respective Irish policies; no party would budge on their proposed compromises. Liberals wanted to grant Home Rule to the entirety of Ireland, Tories did not. If Home Rule was implemented, Conservatives suggested retaining the province of Ulster within the United Kingdom, as Protestants who resided there feared life under a Dublin (Catholic) parliament. Meanwhile, Ulster Unionists prevented Home Rule from moving forward, while Irish Nationalists would not succumb to the status quo. Finally, on June 11, 1912, Liberal MP Thomas Agar-Robartes officially proposed an amendment to the Home Rule Bill which temporarily excluded the four counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, and Londonderry in Ulster.<sup>57</sup> This catered to Conservative wishes as a way out of the impasse. It also received an embarrassing amount of support from Liberals, and moved from a question of *whether* counties

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<sup>55</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Government of Ireland Bill. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 10 June 1913, vol. 53, cc. 1514.

<sup>57</sup> Government of Ireland Bill, Clause 1. House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 11 June 1912, vol. 39, cc. 744-824.

should be excluded to a question of *which* counties should be excluded, and for how long the exclusion should last.<sup>58</sup>

Agar-Robartes recognized the growing hostility between Nationalists and Unionists in Ireland, and moved into the camp that believed “Ireland consists of two nations different in sentiment, character, history, and religion.”<sup>59</sup> This concession enabled the Bill to be passed in the Commons, sending it to the Lords for the expected third-time rejection, which played out over the following two years. Debate raged in the meantime, particularly over the number of Ulster counties to be excluded, ranging from Agar-Robartes’ temporary four county exclusion to a permanent nine county exclusion proposed by the Conservative House of Lords.<sup>60</sup> The looming threat of Home Rule’s implementation, in any form, caused tension in Ireland to flare as both Unionists and Nationalists armed themselves in preparation to fight for their respective goals on Home Rule.

Paramilitarism in Ireland changed the political landscape of the Home Rule Movement with the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Irish National Volunteers (INV). The looming threat of the passage of the third Home Rule Bill for Protestant Ireland prompted an armed response in Ulster. In September 1912, Protestants began organizing en masse with the signing of the “Ulster Covenant,” which received nearly 500,000 signatures, including that of Unionist Leader MP Edward Carson.<sup>61</sup> Fears of discrimination against Protestants in the proposed Catholic state of an independent Ireland caused Carson to form the UVF in 1913, and sought to form a provisional government in Ulster should Home Rule be enacted.<sup>62</sup> Initial

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<sup>58</sup> McEwen. “The Liberal Party and the Irish Question,” 103.

<sup>59</sup> Government of Ireland Bill, Clause 1. House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 11 June 1912, vol. 39, cc. 744-824.

<sup>60</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 44.

<sup>61</sup> Robert Lynch, *The Partition of Ireland, 1918-1925*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 30.

<sup>62</sup> David Fitzpatrick, “The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918,” *The Historical Journal* 38, no. 4 (1995), 1030.



militant supporters of the UVF numbered near 200,000 Ulster Protestants, and in June 1914, a shipment of 35,000 Mauser rifles and 2.5 million rounds of ammunition landed at Larne, Donaghadee, and Bangor under the direct supervision of British General Sir William Adair.<sup>63</sup> In response to the formation of the UVF, Redmond formed the INV to help enforce Home Rule should it be passed. The INV similarly tried to import weapons and ammunition to arm themselves, but the British Army directly intervened by attempting to seize the arms shipment, causing 43 Irish casualties in total.<sup>64</sup> Ireland by 1914 was on the verge of a civil war.

Fiery speeches by Unionist MPs fanned the flames of the Protestant fears, and demonstrations of military drill accompanied by marches of paramilitaries brandishing Mausers became a regular occurrence in Ulster. The Curragh Camp Incident in early 1914 unequivocally proved that British forces would not be able to solve the Irish Question. With Home Rule set to become law later that year, Westminster aimed to use military measures to rein in paramilitarism in Ireland. But 60 British cavalry officers stationed in Curragh, County Kildare resigned from their positions rather than follow orders to reinforce British garrisons in Ulster, an order they believed to be aimed at coercing Ulster into accepting Home Rule.<sup>65</sup> With Ireland on the verge of civil war, the British Army proved to be ineffective at solving the problem, leaving British policy-makers to decide Ireland's fate.

The last desperate attempt at a compromise on the Bill came at the Buckingham Palace Conference on July 21, 1914 when leaders of all major parties, including Redmond and Carson, met to settle the Irish Question. The compromise discussed which counties in Ulster would be

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<sup>63</sup> Lynch, *The Partition of Ireland*, 30.

<sup>64</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 45.

<sup>65</sup> Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1984), 76.

excluded from Home Rule, but not for how long the proposed counties would remain excluded.<sup>66</sup> Redmond utterly rejected this as he strove for a united Ireland without an exclusion, while Carson insisted that the six counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone should be administratively autonomous.<sup>67</sup> Thus, after three days of meeting, the conference collapsed as no side could agree to a compromise. However, with escalating conflict in Europe threatening the stability of the Empire, Home Rule for Ireland became contingent on Britain's ability to wage international war.

World War One exacerbated the divide between Ulster and the rest of Ireland, prompting different responses from different political sects in Ireland. Though the war averted, or at least delayed, conflict between Irish paramilitaries, the war became a political tool for all Irish factions involved, similar to the way in which British Conservatives used partition during Home Rule to their advantage. The outbreak of the war proved to be a defining factor on the Irish political scene, as it put off decision making on Home Rule for a time. Asquith immediately sidelined it, and the accompanying Amendment Bill, to focus on the growing conflict in Europe.<sup>68</sup> This satisfied neither Nationalists nor Unionists, leaving the ball in the air until further notice. To complicate matters, Asquith's cabinet remained divided as to how to approach the Irish Question: Home Rule could neither remain indefinitely suspended for fear of a Nationalist response from the INV, nor could Home Rule be implemented for fear of a Unionist response from the UVF. The delay pitted Unionist and Nationalist factions against each other in a bid for British favor over Home Rule. Unionists wanted to shelve Home Rule and maintain their union

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<sup>66</sup> Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands*, 47.

<sup>67</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 45.

<sup>68</sup> McEwen. "The Liberal Party and the Irish Question," 110.

with Britain, while the Nationalists sought to implement Home Rule as soon as possible.<sup>69</sup>

However, Redmond's pledge of Nationalist support for the British war effort led to his faction splitting, further complicating the political battlefield in Ireland.

Redmond advocated for Home Rule and wanted Ireland to attain dominion status within the British Empire, while Irish Republicans believed that Ireland could not take part in foreign politics while under what they considered a foreign occupation.<sup>70</sup> Republicans unanimously condemned Redmond's pledge for Nationalist support once the war broke out.<sup>71</sup> This effectively split the Nationalist faction into Redmond's followers, on one hand, and the Republican nationalists of Sinn Féin, on the other. The two differed in that "Redmondites" of the IPP advocated political nationalism while Sinn Féiners advocated cultural nationalism. Redmondites wanted to achieve a representative national state that would guarantee uniform citizenship rights to that state's members.<sup>72</sup>

Redmond hoped that by supporting the British in their time of need, Westminster might grant Ireland Home Rule early.<sup>73</sup> "Whether Home Rule is to have a future will depend on the extent to which Nationalists... do their part on the firing-line in France."<sup>74</sup> Nationalists saw support for the war as a precondition to Home Rule, they enlisted in hopes of gaining political independence. Redmondites feared that a refusal to support the war by Nationalists would turn British opinion against them and reinforce Unionists' claims of a damaging Home Rule. Cultural

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<sup>69</sup> Catriona Pennell. *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 176.

<sup>70</sup> Tim P. Coogan, *Michael Collins* (London, UK: Arrow Book, 1991), 35.

<sup>71</sup> Pennell. *A Kingdom United*, 184.

<sup>72</sup> Hennessey. *Dividing Ireland*, 28.

<sup>73</sup> Alan J. Ward. "Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish Conscription Crisis," *The Historical Journal* 17, no. 1 (1974), 109.

<sup>74</sup> Independent MP William O'Brien quoted in, Pennell. *A Kingdom United*. 180.

nationalists believed that the altruism of Redmond and his IPP was hypocritical. Sinn Féiners sought the alternative to this by attempting to establish an independent Irish Republic.

Founded in 1906 by Arthur Griffith, Sinn Féin (we ourselves/ourselves alone) advocated for complete Irish independence, originally on a vague conservative platform of restoring a native Irish monarchy.<sup>75</sup> Sinn Féin came to prominence only after Redmond split the IPP in 1914, acting as a political magnet for many of his erstwhile supporters. Sinn Féin believed that the glory of a country came from the culture of its people, and with the near disappearance of Gaelic culture after the Famine, they sought the re-creation of Ireland's distinctive national identity; a "moral regeneration of Ireland's historic community."<sup>76</sup> To do this, Sinn Féin wanted nothing less than a completely united and independent Irish republic, free from all forms of British rule, and ultimately reversing Anglicisation in Ireland by severing all ties with Britain.

Sinn Féin rejected Redmond's attempts to grant Ireland self-government within the British Empire, wanting instead to build up Ireland materially and intellectually, and by April 1916 openly claimed its goal to be the establishment of an independent Irish Republic. To accomplish this, its members focused their political platform on abstention from Westminster politics, instead attempting to form their own provisional government.<sup>77</sup> Radical nationalists of Sinn Féin used the four years of hostilities in Europe to prove conclusively the old adage that 'England's difficulties are Ireland's opportunity.' Radical Nationalists became more vocal about their disdain of British rule after the outbreak of World War One, and secretly prepared themselves to secede from the British Empire altogether by fighting from within for their version of an independent Ireland.

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<sup>75</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 458.

<sup>76</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 28.

<sup>77</sup> Tim P. Coogan, *Eamon De Valera, The Man Who Was Ireland* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1993), 323.

Asquith eventually decided on a compromise to pass the third Home Rule Bill with an accompanying Suspensory Bill, which would postpone Home Rule's implementation until the end of the European conflict.<sup>78</sup> In September 1914, Asquith presented his compromise to the House of Commons, and Conservative Leader MP Andrew Bonar Law responded with a seething speech in opposition, which ended with a Conservative walk-out in protest.<sup>79</sup> This left the decision on passing an amended Home Rule (which included the four-county exclusion, and a proposal to suspend it until the end of the war) to the Liberals. The bills passed in the Commons and received Royal Assent through circumvention of the Lords granted by the Parliament Act. However, this decision backfired because it satisfied neither Unionists nor Nationalists, and Anglo-Irish relations continued to deteriorate. Though this decision provided both British parties with a brief respite from the Irish Question, the question was far from resolved, and Unionists and Nationalists now vied for British favor by contributing to the war effort.

Recruitment into the British army in Ireland became heavily politicized throughout World War One. Unionists and Nationalists used their involvement in the war as a means to achieve their respective political agenda. The Redmond split in the Nationalist party led only to further politicize the war in Ireland, pitting nationalist against each other as well as Ulster Unionists. Through their combined efforts, more than 200,000 Irishmen, both Catholic and Protestant, served in the British Army over the course of the war.<sup>80</sup> While Unionists and Nationalists competed for British favor over the implementation of Home Rule, Sinn Féin continued to defy British rule and fight for an independent Irish Republic. Ultimately, whatever

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<sup>78</sup> Suspensory Bill. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 15 September 1914 vol 66 cc881-920.

<sup>79</sup> Suspensory Bill. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 15 September 1914 vol 66 cc881-920.

<sup>80</sup> Keith Jeffery, *1916: A Global History* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2016), 111.

promise the 1914 Home Rule Bill held went out the window in April 1916 with the Easter Rising in Dublin.

On 24 April 1916, about 1,500 radical nationalists staged an armed rebellion in Dublin where they formally declared the formation of an independent Irish Republic ruled by the self-styled Provisional Government of Ireland.<sup>81</sup> Doomed from the start, the Rising lasted five days and ended with 16 leaders of the rebellion surrendering. Asquith quickly imposed martial law on Dublin, and a military court began hastily trying and executing leaders of the rebellion, which disturbed Liberal MPs in Britain, along with many others abroad.<sup>82</sup> The Rising was not generally well received at first among the Irish people, many of whom had relatives serving in the British Army, which Britain used to suppress the Rising. But Britain's harsh response of executing the leaders of the Rising is what ultimately turned the sympathies of the Irish toward Sinn Féin, strengthening the cultural Nationalist cause. This was a double-edged sword however, as the Rising only strengthened the Unionists' cries of disloyalty among Irish Nationalists.<sup>83</sup>

Britain's response to the Rising further complicated the political battlefield over the Irish Question as it moved back to the forefront of Parliamentary issues following the Rising. A rebellious Ireland posed grave danger to the British war effort and an Allied victory in Europe, so Asquith quickly imposed martial law in Dublin, and appointed Liberal MP David Lloyd George as Under-Secretary for Ireland to settle the Home Rule issue.<sup>84</sup> Lloyd George began meeting with Irish political leaders at once to rectify the situation. Along with Redmond and Carson, he agreed to grant Home Rule, with a temporary six-county exclusion, and only on the

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<sup>81</sup> Jeffery, *1916*, 97.

<sup>82</sup> McEwen. "The Liberal Party and the Irish Question," 114.

<sup>83</sup> Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands*, 63.

<sup>84</sup> Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands*, 34.

basis of negotiating further.<sup>85</sup> Lloyd George assured Carson that Ulster would not be forced into Home Rule with the rest of Ireland, while Redmond received no reassurance on how temporary the exclusion would be.<sup>86</sup> In the meantime, Redmond's grasp on the IPP was slipping, and agreeing to partition Ireland did not work in his favor.

The tumult caused by the Easter Rising essentially forced the IPP to seek terms with the government to reaffirm its loyalty to the British Crown, and restore calm over Ireland.<sup>87</sup> However, the swift executions of the rebel leaders caused most Irish Nationalists to side with Sinn Féin, further thinning the ranks of the IPP. With Home Rule teetering in the balance, and its outlet for support vanishing, the surge in Sinn Féin support threatened the longstanding relationship in Westminster between Irish Nationalists and British Liberals. In a further blow to the Liberal Party, Asquith enacted conscription in Britain in 1916, under great pressure from his opposition, which went against the very principles of voluntary service.<sup>88</sup> Anti-Liberal feelings in Ireland were compounded by martial law in Ireland following the Easter Rising, and the Liberal Party began to falter. Asquith lost a vote of confidence in the Commons in October 1916, with only three-fifths of Liberal MPs voting, though he had the backing of every Unionist MP.<sup>89</sup> In December, Asquith lost the premiership to his Liberal counterpart Lloyd George, who entered into a coalition with Conservative Leader Andrew Bonar Law, giving Conservatives more representation in the government.<sup>90</sup>

With Home Rule still on the sidelines, Lloyd George formed an Irish Convention in mid-1917 to assess the Irish Question, and charged it with finding the best form of Irish self-

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<sup>85</sup> McEwen, "The Liberal Party and the Irish Question," 116-7.

<sup>86</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 152.

<sup>87</sup> Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands*, 40.

<sup>88</sup> McEwen, "The Liberal Party and the Irish Question," 131.

<sup>89</sup> Ward, "Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish Conscription Crisis," 122.

<sup>90</sup> Ward, "Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish Conscription Crisis," 122.

government within the greater confines of the Empire.<sup>91</sup> The Convention essentially was a committee in charge of drafting up a new Home Rule Bill, and became a point of contention for all Irish parties involved; the IPP saw this as their moment for redemption, while Unionists opposed the convention maintaining that Home Rule should not be implemented, and Sinn Féin refused to participate altogether, based on their policy of abstention. The largely fruitless Convention dragged on for eight months, but a renewed German Spring offensive in 1918 shattered any hope of implementing the Convention's recommendations.

By March of 1918, the German Ludendorff Offensive nearly broke the Allied forces on the Western Front, and Lloyd George considered implementing conscription in Ireland to replenish the dwindling ranks of the British 5th Army. Unionists supported this motion touting their unyielding support for the British Crown, while Redmond, trying to hold the remnants of his party together, argued that the only way to conscript the Irish would be as a condition for granting Home Rule.<sup>92</sup> Thus, the Irish Question was complicated further as it turned to the question of mandatory military service in Ireland: Liberals and Nationalists wanted Home Rule without conscription, while Conservatives and Unionists wanted conscription without Home Rule.

It is difficult to say how beneficial conscripting the Irish into the British Army would be in early 1918 given the state of open rebellion in Ireland, but estimates at the time anticipated 150,000 recruits could be secured.<sup>93</sup> Lloyd George, more concerned with winning the war in France than the resulting disturbances in Ireland, enacted conscription in Ireland without Home Rule on March 26, acting on the advice of his War Cabinet.<sup>94</sup> This action went against the

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<sup>91</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 201.

<sup>92</sup> Ward, "Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish Conscription Crisis," 109.

<sup>93</sup> Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 220.

<sup>94</sup> Ward, "Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish Conscription Crisis," 108.



counsel of every Irish advisor Lloyd George had discussed it with, including the Chief Secretary of Ireland H. E. Duke, who told him bluntly “we might almost as well recruit Germans.”<sup>95</sup>

Attempting to conscript the Irish at the point of a bayonet only proved to work against the British by further bolstering the ranks of Sinn Féin, which used this opportunity to further its own political agenda.

Lloyd George sent the former British Expeditionary Force commander Lord John French to oversee conscription in Ireland with military force, and within days of his arrival he suggested that he might need to impose martial law over the entire country.<sup>96</sup> Catholic clergymen and Sinn Féiners preached open rebellion in the following months, which culminated with the arrest and deportation of 73 Sinn Féiners in May under the charge of plotting with Germany against Britain.<sup>97</sup> Once the tide of the war in Europe began to shift in favor of the Allies in June, Westminster abandoned conscripting the Irish, and the war ended a few months later.

By the end of the war in Europe, two Liberal PMs had proved unable to deliver on the promise of Irish Home Rule. Liberal Party leaders could not claim to support even their own values anymore, having enacted conscription in Britain and Ireland. Irish Home Rule continued to be a thorn in the Liberals side, which led to the demise of the Liberal Party.<sup>98</sup> At the outset of World War One, Home Rule was a uniting factor within the Liberal Party for decades: all Liberals could agree on the principle of Home Rule, but by the end of World War One they all varied in its implementation over the complexities caused by the Easter Rising, imposed martial law, and a conscription crisis in Ireland.

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<sup>95</sup> Chief Secretary of Ireland H. E. Duke quoted in Ward, "Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish Conscription Crisis," 109.

<sup>96</sup> Ward, "Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish Conscription Crisis," 117.

<sup>97</sup> Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 85-6.

<sup>98</sup> McEwen. "The Liberal Party and the Irish Question," 131.

The IPP all but disappeared in December 1918 when Sinn Féin seized landslide electoral victories across Ireland in the first (and last) all-Ireland election.<sup>99</sup> Redmond had died earlier in 1918, and the IPP failed to replace him with a competent leader. This resulted in Sinn Féin gaining support as the main Irish Nationalist party, with the only surviving leader from the Easter Rising, Eamon De Valera, as their newly elected president.<sup>100</sup> The IPP almost ceased to exist overnight, retaining only six of its original 80 seats in Westminster; out of the 105 seats possible for Irish MPs, Sinn Féin filled 73 of them, including the first woman elected to British Parliament, Constance Markievicz.<sup>101</sup> Likewise, Liberal parliamentary power significantly diminished after this election, but party members maintained that the Irish Question could be resolved indefinitely with the implementation of the third Home Rule Bill.<sup>102</sup> Very few Irish Nationalists remained in Westminster, so Liberals could not hope to have any real swaying power; instead they formed a coalition with Conservatives to form a government.<sup>103</sup> By this time, Irish nationalism had progressed significantly past old ideas of “dominion” Home Rule: it was on to complete independence. Sinn Féin ran on its platform of Westminster abstentionism, and after their victory in 1918 it practiced what it preached.

The elected Sinn Féiners refused to sit in Westminster, instead moving to form their own unicameral parliament, Dáil Éireann (Assembly of Ireland) in Dublin on January 21, 1919.<sup>104</sup> This occurred on the same day as the Soloheadbeg Ambush, in County Tipperary, in which a column of IRA volunteers ambushed a contingent of Royal Irish Constabulary officers, killing

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<sup>99</sup> Lynch, *The Partition of Ireland*, 48.

<sup>100</sup> Coogan, *Eamon De Valera*, 116.

<sup>101</sup> Coogan, *Eamon De Valera*, 116.

<sup>102</sup> McEwen. “The Liberal Party and the Irish Question,” 99.

<sup>103</sup> McEwen. “The Liberal Party and the Irish Question,” 122.

<sup>104</sup> Donnacha Ó Beacháin, “From Revolutionaries to Politicians: Deradicalization and the Irish Experience.” *Radical History Review* 85, 114-123 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 121n.

two of them.<sup>105</sup> Britain viewed these tandem actions as a *casus belli*, and responded by making all of South Tipperary a militarized zone, and declared the assembly of Dáil Éireann illegal.<sup>106</sup> Anglo-Irish relations deteriorated to a new low with the outbreak of the Anglo-Irish War that followed, pitting the infantile Republic of Ireland against the post-war British Empire. Now in the midst of widespread open rebellion in Ireland, Westminster continued to seek an answer to the Irish Question with the drastically altered political playing field.

The British Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) rose to prominence following the decline of the Liberal Party post-war, and became the main opposition to the Conservatives. The PLP promised “the fullest measure of Home Rule inside a federated United Kingdom” in their 1918 manifesto.<sup>107</sup> At the end of 1918, three options existed for Britain regarding the Irish Question: implement the suspended 1914 Home Rule Bill with the four-county exclusion, repeal the 1914 Home Rule Bill indefinitely, or supersede it with new legislation. Lloyd George decided on the latter option, and appointed Unionist MP Walter Long as chairman to a new committee intent on finding a settlement to which Conservatives would agree.<sup>108</sup>

In late 1919, the committee agreed to the necessity of two separate parliaments in Ireland, answerable to an all-Ireland Federal Council, and whose power would be delegated to by the two parliaments.<sup>109</sup> These two parliaments would effectively administer Home Rule separately to their respective jurisdictions, with the new Federal Council to help oversee partition. The fourth Home Rule Bill, drafted in 1920 based on this committee's findings, provided for this dual Home Rule option in order to satisfy all parties left involved: the remaining Nationalists would be

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<sup>105</sup> Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 105.

<sup>106</sup> Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands*, 87.

<sup>107</sup> Ivan Gibbons, “The British Parliamentary Labour Party and the Government of Ireland Act 1920.” *Parliamentary History* 32, pt. 3, 506-521 (London, UK: The Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 2013) 506.

<sup>108</sup> Gibbons, “The British Parliamentary Labour Party and the Government of Ireland Act 1920,” 508.

<sup>109</sup> Gibbons, “The British Parliamentary Labour Party and the Government of Ireland Act 1920,” 511.

granted dominion Home Rule, Ulster would have Protestant representation in Ireland, and Britain would not coerce Ulster into Home Rule. However, the committee suggested that all nine counties of Ulster be excluded from Home Rule with the explicit aim of eventually unifying North and South.<sup>110</sup> Unionists, reluctantly accepting the separation of Ulster, opted instead for excluding only the six counties they knew they could control with a Protestant majority, hoping they could remain outside of the Home Rule dominion indefinitely if they kept the majority.

The newest installment of the Home Rule Movement received flak from many MPs, mainly because it did not fundamentally answer the Irish Question. Labour MP John R. Clynes claimed the new bill would not generate unity or convince the (now openly rebellious) Irish to be loyal British subjects. “We ought, therefore, not to deceive ourselves with the thought that any such measure imposed on Ireland and forced by this superior Parliament will allay that patriotic demand or settle this century-old claim.”<sup>111</sup> Using this argument, the entire PLP abstained from voting, along with the entire Opposition, believing it to be fundamentally flawed.<sup>112</sup> Catering to the remaining Irish MPs in Westminster, the new committee on Ireland gave Unionists the six counties that had Protestant majorities, a decision more in line with the sectarian geography.<sup>113</sup> Unionists did not want to control areas with high numbers of Nationalists fearing that, in time, they may grow to outnumber Unionists in the region, leading to eventual unity with the South. The fourth Home Rule Bill received Royal Assent in December 1920. It passed, as had its predecessor, with all those opposed to it abstaining. However, Home Rule never went into effect in southern Ireland due to the ongoing Anglo-Irish War.

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<sup>110</sup> Lynch, *The Partition of Ireland*, 73-4.

<sup>111</sup> Government of Ireland Bill. Hansard, House of Commons Debates [Hansard] 29 March 1920, vol. 127, cc. 925-1036.

<sup>112</sup> Gibbons, “The British Parliamentary Labour Party and the Government of Ireland Act 1920,” 516.

<sup>113</sup> Lynch, *The Partition of Ireland*, 75.

Anglo-Irish antipathies raged on for more than a year of brutal guerilla warfare, and though casualties were relatively low, terror and atrocities gripped Ireland for the duration of the conflict. An event that epitomizes the brutality of the war occurred on ‘Bloody Sunday,’ November 21, 1920, in which IRA strategist Michael Collins helped conduct a large-scale assassination, which unintentionally provoked a British overreaction. Collins and his ‘Twelve Apostles’ hit squad, reinforced by elements of the Dublin IRA Brigade, conducted a massive synchronized retaliatory strike against the entire British Secret Service operation in Ireland. In a matter of minutes, Collins and his men assassinated all 16 of the British Secret Service leadership, effectively crippling their intelligence network in Ireland. The British responded in kind later that day when Black and Tans, Britain's auxiliary military police, drove an armored personnel carrier onto the pitch of a Dublin Gaelic Athletic Association Gaelic football match at Croke Park, and began firing into the crowd, killing 14 and wounding hundreds.<sup>114</sup> This sort of bloody tit-for-tat warfare wreaked havoc on the Irish population, both North and South, officially until mid-1921, and unofficially well into the 1970s.

Irish and British forces agreed to a ceasefire in July 1921, and started the long peace treaty talks that officially brought about the end of hostilities. Republicans knew the stakes, and would not stand for anything less than a united independent Ireland outside of the British Empire. De Valera appointed Collins to be one of the Treaty negotiators, and over months of negotiations, Collins made countless trips to London, negotiating with some of Britain's most influential politicians.<sup>115</sup> After long stressful months of negotiations, Collins and his fellow delegates, well informed on the terms of the Treaty, signed it as plenipotentiaries to the Dáil on December 6, 1921.

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<sup>114</sup> Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 159-60.

<sup>115</sup> Coogan, *Eamon De Valera*, 216.

The Treaty merely forced Irish Republicans into administering the fourth Home Rule Bill as enacted by the British the previous year, the only alteration was that the Provisional Republican government in Dublin could stay in power, and transition over to the dominion government.<sup>116</sup> It reinforced the six-county partition, and granted Northern Ireland one month to decide whether to opt in or out of the dominion Home Rule with the South.<sup>117</sup> This essentially charged both Irish parties to figure out Home Rule and border creation on their own. Collins knew this, but dominion status was the best he and other delegates could hope for. He also knew that returning with these terms would be perceived as a betrayal to the Republican cause.<sup>118</sup> This ideological betrayal would at best mean ruthless political in-fighting among Irish Republicans and former Nationalists, at its worst Collins suspected, “I may have signed my actual death-warrant.”<sup>119</sup> He could not have been more prescient. Collins died in an Anti-Treaty IRA ambush in the Irish Civil War that followed the Treaty signing.

The day after Collins signed the treaty the Dáil debated and approved the treaty by a slim margin of seven votes.<sup>120</sup> Two days later, De Valera resigned as President of Sinn Féin, and led the Anti-Treaty camp in walking out of an emotional, tear-filled Dáil, and the Provisional Government split.<sup>121</sup> With many IRA officers as Teachtaí Dála (Assembly Delegates) in the newly formed Dáil, the political split in the Dáil over the Treaty replicated itself in the military. De Valera traveled the country giving speeches to large crowds expressing his disapproval of the Treaty, enticing the “volunteers of the past four years [Irish Republicans]” to continue fighting

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<sup>116</sup> League of Nations Treaty Series: Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, signed at London, December 6, 1921. Article 17.

<sup>117</sup> League of Nations Treaty Series: Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, signed at London, December 6, 1921. Article 9.

<sup>118</sup> Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 242.

<sup>119</sup> Michael Collins quoted in Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 276.

<sup>120</sup> Debate on Treaty. Oireachtas, Dáil Éireann Debate 07 January 1922, vol. T, no. 18. Treaty approved 64-57.

<sup>121</sup> Coogan, *Eamon De Valera*, 301.

for the Republic, even if it meant wading “through the blood of some of the members of the Government in order to get Irish freedom.”<sup>122</sup> Civil war between the Pro-Treaty and the Anti-Treaty camps soon followed as the Pro-Treatyites began working with Britain on implementing dominion Home Rule.

Much of the controversy over the signing of the Treaty stemmed from Article 12, which established a Boundary Commission that would determine the future border between the North and South of Ireland.<sup>123</sup> Through this Commission, Irish signatories believed that they could win back the North by mobilizing the Nationalist majority there.<sup>124</sup> This ideology is exactly what worried Unionists, and while it was meant to be the coda of the Irish Question, the Commission proved horribly ineffective at settling the border issue. The Commission originally intended initiating a province-wide plebiscite to determine sectarian lines in Ulster, but backtracked on this, instead reverting to the outdated 1911 Census of Ireland.<sup>125</sup> Article 12 provided no timetable for the Commission to make a decision, which further stoked the fears among border communities where sectarian violence increased. Northern Irish historian Robert Lynch examined the violent after-effects of the proposed, then delayed border implementation:

Between 13 and 15 February [1922], thirty-one people were killed in Belfast, including six children after a bomb had been thrown into their school yard. The following month, the death toll reached unprecedented levels, principally due to the active participation of paramilitaries and new state police forces in the violence. In March... masked policemen [shot] six male members of the Catholic MacMahon household in their North Belfast home. The IRA would respond...

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<sup>122</sup> Excerpt from De Valera’s speech at Thurles, 17 March 1922, quoted from Coogan, *Eamon De Valera*, 310.

<sup>123</sup> League of Nations Treaty Series: Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, signed at London, December 6, 1921. Article 12.

<sup>124</sup> Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 342.

<sup>125</sup> Kieran J. Rankin, “The Role of the Irish Boundary Commission in the Entrenchment of the Irish Border: From Tactical Panacea to Political Liability.” *Journal of Historical Geography* 34, 422-447. Elsevier, Ltd., 2008. 429.

throwing bombs onto trams packed with Protestant shipyard workers, and...  
executing Protestant civilians lined up outside their burning homes.<sup>126</sup>

The Northern counties and surrounding border counties experienced ebbs and flows of this sectarian violence for the remainder of the twentieth century. The Commission failed to resolve the border issue, and failed to stem the sectarian violence which followed.

The Commission was composed of one delegate from each of the newly formed governments in the North and South, headed by a chairman appointed by the British government.<sup>127</sup> The Irish Free State appointed its education minister, Eoin MacNeill, as its representative to the Commission after the Civil War ended in 1923.<sup>128</sup> Britain appointed Richard Feetham, a member of the South African Supreme Court, as chairman of the Commission, and who was regarded as a neutral pick.<sup>129</sup> However, Feetham later in the negotiations unequivocally ruled out the counties Tyrone and Fermanagh from joining the Free State.<sup>130</sup> Compounding this, the government in the North refused outright to participate in both the all-Ireland Council (per Government of Ireland Act, 1920), and the Boundary Commission, leaving Britain to appoint a representative for it.<sup>131</sup> The British chose a Unionist, ex-Belfast newspaper editor Joseph Fisher, to represent Northern Ireland, and the Commission finally met for the first time on October 24, 1924.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Lynch, *The Partition of Ireland*, 140.

<sup>127</sup> League of Nations Treaty Series: Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, signed at London, December 6, 1921. Article 12, section 2.

<sup>128</sup> Rankin, "The Role of the Irish Boundary Commission," 434.

<sup>129</sup> Rankin, "The Role of the Irish Boundary Commission," 436.

<sup>130</sup> Anderson and O'Dowd, "Imperialism and Nationalism," 945.

<sup>131</sup> Lynch, *The Partition of Ireland*, 202.

<sup>132</sup> Rankin, "The Role of the Irish Boundary Commission," 436.



Outnumbered by the British 2-1 on the Commission, MacNeill attempted to work with them on a viable solution that would satisfy both parties involved. But a leaked document from the Commission, published in the Conservative *Morning Post* in Belfast, detailed the partition as largely unchanged from its establishment by the fourth Home Rule Bill.<sup>133</sup> This outraged MacNeill as the Commissioners were sworn to secrecy over partition, and he brought the document leak up at a Commission meeting in Dublin on November 21, 1925, where the other members down played it, or outright denied it.<sup>134</sup> This leak effectively sealed the Commission's fate, as MacNeill resigned from both the Commission and the Dáil soon thereafter, leaving the Conservative Commissioners to do as they pleased with the border.<sup>135</sup> The Boundary Commission succeeded only in wasting time, and further damaging Anglo-Irish relations. The (Free State-less) Commission established the border through the fourth Home Rule Bill, largely unchanged, and as it stands today.

By the end of 1925 an unsettling peace descended over Ireland in regards to partition, and both sides participated in a collective forgetting, during which neither side reconciled with the other. Those who refused to forget proceeded to construct a national narrative of revolutionary atonement in the South and patriotic resistance in the North, and succeeded in sporadically terrorizing border communities on either side of the partition. Partition utterly failed to resolve antagonisms between Nationalists and Unionists, leaving all parties involved more or less dissatisfied in the end.

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<sup>133</sup> National Archives of Ireland, *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*, Extract From Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Council, Dublin 10 November 1925. 2n.

<sup>134</sup> National Archives of Ireland, *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*, Extract From Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Council, Dublin 10 November 1925.

<sup>135</sup> National Archives of Ireland, *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*, "Resumé of a Statement by Eoin MacNeill at a Meeting of the Executive Council," Dublin 21 November 1925.

Anglo-Irish relations have been strained since they began, and antipathies between Ireland and Britain, Catholics and Protestants, run deeper than could be chronicled here. Understanding Ireland's history, both under the oversight of the British Empire, and briefly as an Independent Irish Republic, leading to the establishment of the Irish partition, helps to explain the course of Anglo-Irish relations. As a result of British mismanagement in Ireland, Irish Nationalists pursued various versions of self governance, through both peaceful and violent means over the course of a century.

The struggle for repealing the Act of Union and subsequent Home Rule movement illustrate why Anglo-Irish relations deteriorated over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and help to explain why relations continue to be strained over the course of current events, with the new-age Irish Question in the context of Brexit. Northern Ireland may be forced to reluctantly follow suit with whatever Britain decides on Brexit, just as Unionists reluctantly accepted partition as a condition to Home Rule, and let Britain decide the border for them.

The Irish Question plagued Westminster for decades, mutating like a virus with every new host of uncertainties brought upon by the threat of civil war in 1914, the outbreak of international war, or rebellious uprisings. British Conservatives first used partition as a deterrent for granting Ireland dominion status within the British Empire, attempting to preserve the Empire's holdings in fear of weakening the Empire. Their Liberal counterparts, originally appalled at the idea of partition, reluctantly accepted the idea in order to grant at least part of Ireland dominion status later on. It provided for the longstanding Liberal Party a fall from grace, and brought to the center stage the most prominent Irish political party to exist within the British Empire, and beyond.

Meaningful legislation on Ireland only passed in Westminster when large portions of the opposition abstained, leaving the majority to do as they pleased with decisions on Ireland, such as the Conservatives walking out on the Home Rule Bill in 1912, and Labour walking out on the Home Rule Bill in 1920. In contrast, partition was established without any democratic considerations, just as Northern Ireland may be forced to leave the EU in 2021 after having democratically voted to remain within it. While partisan violence waned in the years following the Good Friday Agreement, since the 2016 Brexit referendum there has been a steady increase in uncertainty over the border. The history of partition provides a guide on how to ameliorate Anglo-Irish relations going forward with the current border issue, or at least how not to strain them further. For democracy to prevail in Ireland, legislators must be beholden to the democratic demands of the population, instead of turning a blind eye in an attempt at holding on to the remnants of an oppressive power structure. Northern Ireland's future seems uncertain as the border, 100 years later, continues to be a point of contention, straining Anglo-Irish relations before, during, and after the implementation of the partition of Ireland.

Partition was established as a British border on the island of Ireland, but we must remember that *today* the border belongs as much to the South as it does to the North, and I think the South are emphatic about the British border being at the beach. The Good Friday Agreement, signed by all three parties, states that Northern Ireland cannot change its constitutional status without a direct say from the people. The people, or at least those who voted, spoke in 2016 when about 56 percent of the Northern Irish voted to remain in the EU, but this seems not to matter as they are still being taken out of the EU with Britain who essentially decided for them. Because of this, it seems Northern Ireland is not *leaving* the EU, but is being *taken out* of it. This is in direct conflict with the Good Friday Agreement, and could very well lead to bitter

contestation down the road. There will always be someone upset by either decision on the border, and if it's not the IRA it will be the UVF, evident now with the increase in partisan violence as of late. Ultimately, the EU would offer an institutional structure that would make it possible to end partition in a manner that would satisfy both sides in the North and South, and hopefully soon.

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