Chapter 2

Modern Ireland
An Introductory Survey

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This survey is intended to introduce the primary themes and events of the past five centuries to those who are just becoming acquainted with the history of Ireland. It necessarily compresses the historical experience in the interest of conclusion, but it aims to be a lucid primer for those who will, hopefully, pursue their specific interests further. The select list of titles at the conclusion of this essay provides an initial bibliography to that end.

The Earls of Kildare

Although Ireland had been nominally conquered by Norman barons in the name of Henry II of England in the twelfth century, it had never been subjugated. Individual Norman barons such as John de Courcy and Hugh de Lacy carved out important spheres of power in northeast Ulster and the Leinster Midlands, while the de Burgos and FitzGeralds were prominent in the temporary conquest of Connaught in the early thirteenth century, but there was no systematic attempt at complete conquest. The Normans intermarried with the Gaelic Irish, introduced a centralized administration, built towns that led to the growth of trade, encouraged the activities of new religious orders such as the Dominicans and Franciscans, and were responsible for the building of the great cathedrals such as St. Patrick's in Dublin and St. Canice's in Kilkenny.

From the middle of the thirteenth century onward, the Gaelic Irish began to reassert themselves against the newcomers, and by the end of the fifteenth century, the descendants of the Normans were settled predominantly in the east, the Midlands, and the southeast. Their area of influence, the fortified hinterland around Dublin that waxed and waned in size and importance, was known as the English Pale. Control of the Pale and maintaining the authority of the English crown in the lordship of Ireland was the responsibility of the leading families of Norman descent, known as the Anglo-Irish or the Old English, the most prominent of which were the FitzGeralds, earls of Kildare.

Henry VIII, who became king of England in 1509, was the second Tudor monarch. His father, Henry VII, claimed the throne in 1485 in the aftermath of a series of
dynastic conflicts known collectively as the Wars of the Roses. Concerned with consolidating his position in England, Henry VII paid little sustained attention to the lordship of Ireland except when events there concerned the security of his throne. For the most part, he was content to leave the governance of the island in the traditional hands of his lord deputy. Henry VIII (1509–1547) continued this policy during the early years of his reign when he was preoccupied by foreign policy and continental wars.

Garrett Mór FitzGerald occupied the position of lord deputy from 1496 to 1513, when he was succeeded by his son, Garrett Óg, who held it unchallenged until 1520 and was reappointed in 1524 when various replacements proved unsatisfactory. He continued as lord deputy until his death in 1534. The FitzGeralds were a powerful dynasty. They controlled large estates within the Pale but also exerted authority outside it. Over time they had forged important alliances with leading Gaelic families such as the O'Neills of Tyrone. They commanded allegiance from Anglo-Irish families and support from Gaelic clans. In return, they guaranteed protection. For the Anglo-Irish families, the FitzGeralds provided security from aggressive and costly raids by the Gaelic Irish who bordered the Pale. For the Gaelic Irish, an alliance with the FitzGeralds discouraged ambitious attacks from enemies.

The FitzGeralds' position of great power and influence encouraged rivals, most notably the Butlers, earls of Ormond. This Anglo-Irish family had designs on the position of lord deputy and doggedly pursued their goal of discrediting the FitzGeralds, chiefly with accusations of degeneracy. As the power brokers of early-sixteenth-century Ireland, the FitzGeralds spoke the Gaelic language, intermarried with important Gaelic families, and adopted some of their social and cultural customs. This left them vulnerable to the charge that they had abandoned their English civility and were neglecting the interests of the crown in favor of their own power and prestige. This was true in some respects. On the one hand, it was necessary for the FitzGeralds to communicate and interact with the Gaelic families in order to maintain control and exert influence. On the other hand, they used their power chiefly for their own aggrandizement and made it very clear on several occasions that they could implement their threat of making Ireland ungovernable if removed from office, as was the case during the 1520s, when Henry VIII returned power to Garrett Óg after experimenting with replacements. The FitzGeralds had successfully exhibited their indispensability, but, ironically, this success strengthened Henry VIII's resolve to change the nature of Ireland's government.

Desire for significant change in the government of the lordship of Ireland was linked to wider changes taking place in England. In the early 1530s, Henry VIII's chief administrator, Thomas Cromwell, was orchestrating far-reaching political and religious change on Henry's behalf. Henry's frustrated desire for a papal annulment of his first marriage led to legislation enacted in the English parliament that declared him to be the supreme head of the Church of England and dissolved his first marriage, allowing him to marry Anne Boleyn. Simultaneously, Cromwell was introducing significant changes in central and local government (including the political union of Wales and England), some of the effects of which were felt in closer royal attention to Ireland and a desire to extend royal dominion. The chief casualties of this change in the traditional Irish policy of English monarchs were the FitzGeralds.

Garrett Óg was called to London in 1534 to answer accusations of treason brought against him by his enemies in Ireland. He left his son, Thomas, Lord Offaly, in charge in his absence. On his arrival in London, he was immediately charged with using royal artillery for his own personal use and was confined in the Tower of London. Thomas, popularly known as "Silken Thomas" because of his fondness for fine clothes, responded to his father's arrest with defiant rebellion, one that was met with a ruthless response by the forces of the crown. The consequence of this action was the effective destruction of the earls of Kildare. Garrett Óg died in the Tower of London. Thomas and his male relatives (with the exception of a young half-brother hidden by his aunt) were executed. In one fell swoop the powerful House of Kildare was destroyed, and with it the traditional power of the Anglo-Irish lords. From 1534 onward, the Tudor monarchs of England appointed English lord deputies to carry out their new Irish policies. These policies revolved around two main issues. The first was extending and consolidating power in Ireland. The second was religion.

**Plantation**

In 1541, the Irish parliament declared Henry VIII king of Ireland. The change in Ireland's status from a medieval lordship to a kingdom reflected the evolving change in royal attitudes to Ireland. However, extending royal authority in Ireland required an expensive military campaign to subdue both the Gaelic chiefs and the Anglo-Irish lords who had long been accustomed to latitude in their spheres of influence. Desire and accomplishment are not necessarily found together. Henry VIII certainly exhibited the desire to increase his authority in Ireland, but accomplishment by military means was expensive. Instead, he considered an alternative method—peaceful submission whereby Gaelic taioiseh (chiefs) and Anglo-Irish nobles recognized the king as sovereign, surrendered their lands and Gaelic titles to the king, and applied for a land grant and a peerage. English titles were conferred in lieu of renounced Gaelic titles; the recipients promised to uphold English law and customs, pay rent to the crown, and render military service. In some cases this seemed to be a viable procedure, but at the heart of the policy were the English laws of land tenure and succession that clashed with the traditional Gaelic system. Under the latter, sons and daughters could inherit land, but their tenure of it depended on kinship obligations, for land was the property of the clan. The head of a tuath (clan) was elected by eligible members of the clan, and position and title were not strictly hereditary. The land tenure system in England was based on the principle that the king was the absolute owner of all land, which others held according to royal grants and leases, and succession emphasized primogeniture. Thus Henry's policy of "surrender and grant" met with resistance and, inevitably, conflict. With the failure of this approach, Henry's successors (Edward VI, 1547–1553; Mary I, 1553–1558; and Elizabeth I, 1558–1603) emphasized finite military campaigns, confiscation, and plantation of
English settlers, although Elizabeth, as financially canny as her father, placed great hopes in negotiation.

The first plantation was carried out during the reign of Mary I. The counties of Leix and Offaly had been confiscated by the crown after a rebellion by the Gaelic O’Connors and O’Mores in the mid 1540s. The counties were renamed King’s and Queen’s Counties and were settled with planters whose duty was to uphold English law and custom in the face of Gaelic aggression and encroachment. Resistance and rebellion by the Gaelic Irish or Anglo-Irish resulted in confiscation followed by plantation, as with the earl of Desmond’s lands in Munster in the 1580s. In more extensive and fiercely resisted plantations in Munster and Connaught during the Elizabethan period, protecting and extending the Protestant religion in Ireland became an important theoretical aspect of planter duty. In practice, however, the Protestant Reformation had little impact on Ireland for a variety of reasons, which included the geographical isolation of large parts of Ireland especially in the west and north of the island, the linguistic gap between English-speaking clergymen and the predominately Gaelic-speaking population, and, overall, the somewhat surprising lack of zeal employed. The Old English (the term most commonly used in the late sixteenth century to describe those descendants of earlier settlers) were for the most part committed Catholics, and there was a certain reluctance to force religious change on such an influential group. Therefore, although the practice of Catholicism was discouraged and penalized, conversion was not undertaken in any systematic way. Yet with the Tudor plantations of the late sixteenth century, and more especially those carried out by the Stuart monarchs in the seventeenth century, a significant new Protestant element was added to the Irish population.

By the end of Elizabeth’s reign, great progress had been made in the authority of the crown in Ireland and, thus, the defense of England in the face of European enemies. Elizabeth ruled the whole island upon the defeat of Hugh O’Neill’s army, despite his Spanish allies, in 1603 at the battle of Kinsale. O’Neill had pursued an ambitious war for many years against Elizabeth’s authority, stressing his sovereignty in Ulster and using his Catholicism as a call to arms for those continental powers who opposed the “heretic queen.” His defeat marked the end of the powerful Gaelic lords and, in political terms at least, the end of Gaelic Ireland. The power of the Old English lords, so shrewdly wielded and protected by the FitzGeralds in the early sixteenth century, had been drastically curtailed. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, those same families were anxiously trying to maintain their reduced influence and wealth, given the rising prominence and power of the new Protestant planters in Ireland. This trend continued throughout the next century, uniting the once distinct Gaelic and Old English groups in a common cause of Catholic resistance to Protestant power and privilege.

Religion and Power

The seventeenth century in Ireland, as in Europe, was one of religious and political conflict. The Stuart monarchs, who succeeded the Tudors as rulers of England and Ireland, in addition to their own Scottish crown, continued the policy of plantation. The settlement of Ulster, carried out by James I (1603–1625), was the most comprehensive and successful of all. With the defeat of Hugh O’Neill in 1603 and his flight to Europe in 1607 with his ally Hugh O’Donnell and their extended families, Ulster was substantially planted with Anglican English and Presbyterian Scots settlers at the expense of those native inhabitants who had previously occupied the land. Those new settlers who were granted land in Ulster were charged with responsibility for its defense against the return of the native or the hybridization of the newcomer. The Irish Society and its shareholders, the City of London guild-companies, were granted a charter by the crown in 1613, giving them responsibility for fortifying and colonizing the region west of the Bann River, which was renamed Londonderry. The new settlers arrived in significant numbers from England and Lowland Scotland, in contrast to earlier Tudor plantation schemes. By 1630 about 6,500 British males had settled on confiscated lands. They undertook the task of planting Ulster with eagerness and fortitude, building towns and villages, clearing the land, practicing arable farming, and establishing market centers. Despite this auspicious beginning and substantial change, there were not enough new settlers to completely modify the territory. As with earlier and later plantation attempts, the Gaelic Irish, theoretically expelled from the land, were necessary to work it as tenants and laborers.

Yet the Gaelic Irish were only one of the Catholic groups that made up the Irish population. The fortunes of the Old English had declined dramatically in the sixteenth century as a result of Tudor centralization and the Protestant Reformation. Despite their persistent reduction in power, they were still an influential and wealthy group in the first part of the seventeenth century. This advantage was fleeting, however. Charles I (1625–1649), embroiled in expensive foreign wars and in conflict with his English parliament, used the predicament of the Catholic Old English, whose loyalty as subjects was open to question because of their religious allegiance to Rome, to obtain grants of money in exchange for promises to secure their lands and positions. Charles I never kept his royal promises to the Old English, but by the time this was apparent to them, it was too late. Every aspect of their status was beset because of their Catholicism. The increase in the numbers of Protestants in Ireland, largely as a result of the Ulster plantation, led to a Protestant-dominated Irish parliament in Dublin, and its continued ascendency depended on the continued decline of the Old English. Two societies were developing along religious lines: the dispossessed and threatened Catholics and the thriving yet vulnerable Protestants.

1641

External factors may have an unexpected yet decisive influence on the course of events. Such a moment for Ireland was during the late 1630s and early 1640s when the pace of events in England and Scotland, centering on the hostility between an ambitious king and an equally ambitious parliament, approached a civil crisis.

In 1641, a small coterie of Gaelic and Old English notables plotted to take advantage of the discord between king and parliament by seizing control of Dublin Castle.
the center of English government in Ireland, and to simultaneously capture Ulster in a series of military maneuvers, mimicking a successful revolt in Scotland. The plot failed, and the risings in Ulster degenerated into a series of vicious attacks on Protestants by enraged and bitter Catholics. As many as four thousand Protestants were killed, many by torture, and thousands more were attacked and driven out of their homes and farms. While there were certainly atrocities committed, what happened in Ulster almost instantly transformed itself into a myth of massacre. Protestants fleeing Ulster sought shelter and protection in garrison towns, in Dublin, and in England. Their accounts of what had taken place led to demands for immediate and harsh revenge against Irish Catholics.

Vengeance, however, had to await the outcome of the civil war in England. The division between Parliamentarians and Royalists in Scotland and England had its echo in Ireland. Having placed their political future in the hands of the monarchy over the past decades, most Irish Catholics supported the Royalist cause in the faint hope of an end to the aggressively Protestant policies of the English and Irish parliaments if Charles I was successful, and the certainty of serious retribution if he was not. Yet this Catholic Confederation of Old English and Gaelic Irish, which declared that Irish Catholics composed the Irish nation and adopted Pro Deo, pro rege, pro patria (for God, king, and country) as its motto, was rent by internal mistrust and dissension, and was, in turn, viewed with suspicion by the Royalist army in Ireland, led by the Protestant earl of Ormonde.

The Irish parliament built up a Protestant army. A Puritan Scots army under the leadership of Robert Munro arrived in Ulster in 1642 to protect Protestant settlers there and do battle with Catholic insurgents. They captured important garrison towns and successfully held the province for the duration of the conflict. The Scots were anti-Royalist with regard to Charles I but were also suspicious of the Parliamentarians.

Thus there were four armies in Ireland during a period of seven years, which eyed one another warily but partook of little direct fighting (with the exception of a serious battle at Benburb in June 1646 when the Confederate army under the leadership of Owen Roe O'Neill defeated Munro's Scots army) while awaiting the outcome of events in England. In 1649, the defeated Charles I was tried and executed. The parliament then turned its attention to Ireland and the question of vengeance for 1641. Chaos reigned as armies disintegrated and participants changed sides in hopes of survival.

Oliver Cromwell

Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the Parliamentary army, arrived in Ireland in 1649 with twenty thousand men and two aims. The first and most immediate objective was to punish the papist Irish for their atrocities against Ulster Protestants. The second was to make his own contribution to the project that had begun with the Tudors: the stable settlement of Ireland in a manner satisfactory to England and Protestantism. For Cromwell, this involved the elimination of Catholicism by force and by conversion, coupled with a more ambitious plantation scheme. Cromwell’s refusal to distinguish between Gaelic and Old English Catholics in his harsh military campaigns at Drogheda, Wexford, and Clonmel, and his determination to have satisfaction for the events of 1641 consolidated two previously distinct groups in Irish society into a more homogeneous association whose division from the other section of Irish society, the Protestants, was becoming wider and more acrid. His settlement scheme provided for extensive escheatment of Catholic land, the transplantation to and confinement of the Catholic Irish west of the Shannon River in the comparatively poor province of Connaught, and the replacement of those Catholics with Protestant settlers in the other three provinces. Confiscated estates were used to pay Cromwellian soldiers and those who had invested in this latest conquest, referred to as “Adventurers.”

This caused serious problems. Apart from overestimating the amount of land available for redistribution, many soldiers and Adventurers who received land grants were uninterested in setting as farmers in Ireland and quickly sold at low prices. Those with the means to purchase this land were Protestant settlers who had been in Ireland since the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. They took advantage of the opportunity and added large amounts of land to their existing estates. So although the confiscation of Catholic land was substantial, it did not result in the new population of Protestant planters of all classes that Cromwell had envisioned. Certainly there were new settlers, but the general pattern was of a limited number of very large Protestant landowners who needed tenants and laborers to work their estates. This resulted, as had happened in Ulster earlier in the century, in the dispossessed, embittered Catholic Irish returning to fulfill these roles. Cromwell's evangelical schemes to convert the papist Irish to Protestantism also failed, despite energetic beginnings, due to divisions within Protestantism itself and the inability of most of the Protestant clergy to speak Gaelic.

The Glorious Revolution

English political change directed the course of events in Ireland until the end of the seventeenth century. The first change was the decision in 1660 to restore the Stuart monarchy upon the death of Cromwell. With the restoration of Charles II (1660–1685) as the new king of England, Ireland, and Scotland, many of those who had remained loyal to his family since the civil war recovered lost lands.

The Irish situation was more complicated. Charles was unwilling and unable to undo the Cromwellian land settlement. He could not antagonize his current Protestant supporters by showing leniency toward Irish Catholics, and the land settlement stayed essentially as it was. When Charles's brother, James, became king in 1685, Catholics were hopeful of more positive change. James II was the first Catholic monarch of England since the brief reign of Mary I more than a century previously. Irish Catholics expected the restoration of property and influence under this new monarch, and they were not disappointed with the initial signs of change. Richard Talbot, duke of Tyrconnell and the new lord lieutenant of Ireland, instantly set about putting Catholics in influential public offices, the parliament, and the army. This naturally
alarmed Irish and English Protestants. If Catholics were experiencing reversals of fortune, then it would be at the expense of Protestant gains.

James's tactless pro-Catholic policies caused consternation in England but parliament, unwilling to take drastic action against another king so soon, comforted itself with the thought that the middle-aged James II was mortal, and his heir, his daughter Mary, was Protestant. This slim consolation disappeared when James, against all expectations, fathered a male heir in 1688. In response, the English parliament offered the throne to Mary and her husband, the Dutch Prince William of Orange.

James II fled for France when he received the news that William had landed in England. The coup was bloodless thus far, but King Louis XIV of France, at war with William's forces on the continent, encouraged James II to fight. The now largely Catholic army in Ireland, allied with the French troops sent by Louis XIV with James II at its head, prepared to do battle with William's supporters, until William himself arrived with an army to take up the challenge. Irish Protestants feared a repetition of the bloody events of 1641 and swiftly sought shelter in garrison towns such as Enniskillen and Londonderry; the latter refused to surrender to James's army and victoriously withstood a prolonged and bitter siege in 1689.

The first and very decisive victory went to William. After engaging with the Jacobite army, his forces crossed the Boyne River in July 1690 and marched toward Dublin. James's army strategically retreated southwest, while James himself fled once more to France. His supporters in Ireland withstood William's forces at Limerick, but despite giving valiant battle at Athlone and Aughrim in 1691, they were defeated. Catholic hopes were again dashed. Land was once more confiscated, and most of the Catholic officers in the Jacobite army availed themselves of William's offer of exile rather than ignominy in their own land. For more than a century these émigrés and their descendants fought in the great armies of Europe, especially that of France.

Yet the promises of religious toleration for Irish Catholics embodied in the 1691 Treaty of Limerick were quickly abandoned. Legislation enacted by the English parliament ensured that a Catholic would never again sit on the English throne. The Protestant position in Ireland was secured by military victory and buttressed by penal legislation designed to remove any vestiges of Catholic influence that remained and provide against another resurgence of Catholic power.

**Penal Laws**

The beginning of the eighteenth century was dominated by Irish Protestants' need to protect their ascendancy as a minority among a large Catholic population. This anxiety, despite recent victory, was given form in the penal code (formally, Penal Laws), a collection of laws passed by the exclusively Protestant Irish parliament with the approval of the English parliament, which were designed to maintain the ascendant position of Irish Protestants and guard against a Catholic recovery. Restrictive laws based on religion were not unusual in Europe, but Ireland presented the example of a political and social code that discriminated against the majority rather than the minority. The penal laws effectively prohibited those who were not Anglican Protestants—namely, Catholics, and to a lesser extent "Dissenters" (Presbyterians, Methodists, and Quakers)—from participating in political life.

There were provisions specific to Catholics that restricted their ownership or tenure of land, which was the foundation of political power and influence. Catholics could not vote or be elected to parliament, join the army or navy, practice law, or seek education abroad, the latter an attempt to dam the influence of European Catholicism. There were restrictions on owning or displaying the symbols of rank—namely, the right to bear arms and be suitably mounted. Priests remaining in Ireland after warnings to leave had been issued could be hanged if caught. Catholic worship was forbidden and forced underground. A few Catholics did manage to retain ownership of some land, but on their death the land was divided among all the male heirs, resulting in the effective breakup of farms. If one heir converted to Protestantism, he inherited everything.

The penal code was enacted over a number of years in the early part of the eighteenth century. The provisions were severe, but there is some disagreement among historians over when and how they were enforced. The consensus is that the implementation of most of these laws was sporadic in the first half of the century and unusual from mid-century onward. Catholicism kept a low profile but remained strong. By 1730, almost every diocese had a bishop and priests again, even if their activities were furtive. New urban churches were discreetly built, although worship outdoors and in private houses continued in rural areas. Early in the eighteenth century, priests and scholars operated mobile schools known as "hedge-schooals" as they were often held in the open. By the 1730s, proper Catholic schools were more widespread and were systematically organized by the clergy. Recent research has revealed a healthy and thriving urban Catholic middle class engaged predominantly in commercial activity, as they were effectively excluded from agrarian and political activity.

By the 1750s, a Catholic group of gentlemen who had retained some vestiges of property and influence allied with members of this Catholic middle class and began diplomatically to articulate genteel arguments for reform and the restoration of their political rights. They emphatically refuted accusations of conspiracy against Protestants, emphasized their loyalty to Britain and the crown, and asserted that their religious duty did not interfere in any way with their allegiance to the state and monarch. This rhetoric did not bear immediate fruit. Irish Protestants were still very easily alarmed by the notion of incorporating Catholics into the political nation, and their objections were strong enough to prevent any immediate changes from occurring. As King William's Protestant successors, the German Hanoverians, became more secure on the throne, and as the likelihood of a serious Stuart attempt to seize back the throne faded throughout the eighteenth century, the penal laws were essentially allowed to lapse, especially after 1745, and were beginning to be actively repealed after 1778.

**Patriots and Patronage**

As with its model and counterpart in England, the Irish parliament had evolved from medieval assemblies of the great men of the lordship meeting at the king's summons
measure intensified the claims of the "Protestant nation" to parliamentary autonomy in matters relating to Ireland. Irish Protestants regarded themselves as constituting a specific Irish nation. By this they meant a narrowly defined exclusive political nation loyal to the crown. As Catholics and Dissenters were excluded from political activity and influence, it followed that they could not be part of the political nation. By mid-century, influenced by the propaganda of Charles Lucas, the Patriots had further developed their ideology of the Protestant nation of Ireland, which unsurprisingly continued to emphasize the constitutive rights of the parliament but also concentrated on campaigning for low taxation, supporting investment in the Irish economy, and containing the pervasive Catholic hazard.

Despite the stirring Patriot rhetoric regarding the political autonomy of the Irish parliament, the reality of eighteenth-century politics was one of factionalism and patronage, or what is termed the "undertaker" system. Factions were based on a broad political outlook and family connections. Each faction competed for access to patronage, which was distributed by officials representing the British crown and government in Ireland, the most senior of whom was the viceroy or lord lieutenant. Patronage usually came in the form of pensions or lucrative places in the government, the civil service, and the army. The strategic disposal of patronage by influential members of the Irish parliament who undertook to manage the factions guaranteed strong support for the policies of the British government. From a modern perspective this seems a bluntly corrupt form of political activity, but it was the accepted way the machinery of government operated in both parliaments. Yet the practice of essentially selling votes in support of British governmental policies for political and personal gain sat uneasily with Patriot claims of Irish parliamentary sovereignty.

Secret Societies

Since the early eighteenth century there had been significant migration of Ulster Presbyterians to America. The reasons were economic, political, and religious. Rents for land and taxes were already high; the population had almost doubled over the century and thus had increased competition for jobs and land; the linen industry, which was mostly confined to Ulster, provided at best precarious employment; legislation passed by the British parliament had effectively destroyed the linen industry; and the penal code had instituted religious and civil disabilities against both Presbyterians and Catholics. Throughout Ireland, economic tensions had erupted into widespread peasant violence from the 1760s onward. Secret societies, disguised and predominantly nocturnal, protested agrarian and religious grievances such as the move to enclose common land, as well as economic and religious grievances such as the mandatory tax (the tithe) levied from all to support the Anglican Church of Ireland; these societies destroyed property and attacked, tortured, and sometimes murdered the tithe-proctors or tax collectors.

The most notorious of these peasant groups were the Whiteboys of Munster and Leinster, so known because they wore white smocks. The Whiteboys represented Catholic peasants and indulged in some sectarian violence against Protestant farmers.
and landlords, but their grievances were mainly economic and thus their violence centered on the destruction of property. In response to the violence, the parliament in Dublin passed a series of laws that rendered participation in such activities a capital offense. Despite the best efforts of the forces of law and order to suppress the Whiteboys and others, these secret agrarian societies survived and influenced the rise of the Catholic Defender movement that allied with the radical United Irishmen in rebellion at the end of the century. Secret agrarian societies were active well into the nineteenth century; they continued to protest agrarian economic conditions and the tithe with attacks on property and individuals, giving rise to the so-called Tithe War in the 1820s and 1830s, and they furnished the methodological foundation of the Land League in the 1880s.

Ulster had its own peasant secret societies—the Hearts of Oak (or Oakboys) and the Hearts of Steel (or Steelboys). These groups represented Presbyterian tenants and small farmers who protested the oppressive actions of landlords in levying labor and prohibitive fines for renewing farm leases by attacking and destroying property. They were also resentful of the relatively few Catholics who were able and willing to pay exorbitant rent for land. In contrast to the Whiteboys in the south, the secret societies of Ulster were relatively short-lived. One explanation offered for this difference is emigration.

Ulster was generally more prosperous than the rest of the country, and many Presbyterians there were slightly less impecunious than most Catholics and thus could afford to emigrate. For those who could not afford the price of passage, an option was to sign on as an indentured servant on American ships making the return journey after having delivered their cargoes of flaxseed. As with later patterns of Irish emigration, once begun, the process was self-sustaining. Ulster Presbyterians settled in New England, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and South Carolina. Newcomers in a tolerant environment with cheap land and without political restrictions, they began to prosper, and as they did, they encouraged the transplanted of communal groups. There are conflicting estimates of the number of people who emigrated, as rates varied according to fluctuating economic conditions in Ireland, but between 1700 and 1776 over 200,000 Presbyterians left Ulster for colonial America. There was also a considerable rate of Catholic emigration during the same period, estimated at around one hundred thousand individuals. Colonists of Ulster origin played important roles in the political life of their new home. They brought with them a developed sense of political philosophy, which is credited as an important influence on the developing defiance of America toward the British crown and government; America, in turn, later influenced the development of radical politics in Ulster.

Grattan's Parliament

The American War of Independence had a profound effect on Ireland. There were obvious parallels in that both Ireland and the American colonies had limited representative assemblies within an imperial framework. Americans had listened to the developing political rhetoric and ideology of the Protestant Patriots, many of whom in turn identified with the frustrated position of the colonists and even admired their revolutionary stand against Britain. The Irish parliament, controlled by the undertakers and the system of patronage, officially supported the British government in its American policy. While individual members of the Irish parliament firmly disapproved of disloyalty to the crown, others secretly applauded American independence of action. Irish Catholics were rigidly in support of government policy based on their hopes that in showing staunch loyalty to crown and government, they might make a stronger case for full repeal of the penal code. American sympathy was strongest in Ulster, based on the links forged by half a century of migration between the two, to the point where the lord lieutenant described Ulster Presbyterians as being in their hearts American. Yet in the initial stages of the war, there were clear signs of support for America among many Irish Protestants outside parliament who resented the trade restrictions imposed by Westminster and who desired reform of the parliament in Dublin in order to render it more representative.

However, when France and Spain entered the war on the American side in 1778–1779, Irish Protestant opinion was firmly inspired toward defending Ireland and Britain against any threat of invasion from ancient Catholic enemies. The formation of the Irish Volunteers in 1778 was thus originally undertaken in the spirit of Protestant defense. Companies were raised locally by subscription, and before long they were uniformed and armed. Real danger of invasion remained remote, and the Volunteers became a forum for political debate. Influenced by events in America, they eventually adopted the principles of Protestant patriotism in supporting the demand for the restoration of full legislative sovereignty to the Irish parliament. The support of an estimated forty thousand armed Protestants in the Volunteers renewed the energy of the Patriot movement in the parliament. Led by Henry Grattan, an astute and effective orator, the Patriots demanded that the British parliament acknowledge the autonomy of the Irish parliament, which passed a Declaration of Independence in 1782.

The British government's recent American experiences, coupled with the implied military threat of the Volunteers, resulted in their acceptance of the Irish parliament's Declaration of Independence and their subsequent repeal of the Declaratory Act of 1720 and Poyning's Law. An ostensibly victory enthusiastically celebrated by the Patriots soon proved a fantasy. The nominally independent Irish parliament under the British crown remained independent in name only, because the undertaker system based on the power of crown patronage continued to shape the conduct of political business. From 1782 onward, an era traditionally referred to as "Grattan's Parliament," the technically sovereign legislative body was easily manipulated by the extension of patronage. Britain had consolidated its practical power over the Irish parliament by appearing to accede to its demands. Unless the parliament itself was reformed to eliminate the power of factions and the allure of patronage, the independent Irish parliament would remain a corrupt toothless institution.

Unanimity on the future of the parliament was short-lived. There was much discussion about what parliamentary reform should entail. Grattan and others argued that the Irish parliament had to become more representative and dependent on the will of the electorate, thus destroying the traditional power of the factions and the undertakers. This raised the issue of representation in general, and specifically the
troublesome question of whether all Catholics should continue to be excluded from politics. Catholics naturally reiterated their traditional argument that they were loyal subjects of the crown and therefore deserved to exercise the same political rights as Protestants. Some Protestants agreed that Catholics should be tentatively incorporated into the political nation, but the majority were wary of such a radical move. While significant changes in political terms appeared a distant prospect, there were at least optimistic signs of Protestant willingness to support an alleviation of the penal code. A more tolerant attitude in matters of religion had spread throughout Europe in the eighteenth century, and this had an impact on some Protestant attitudes toward Catholics and Dissenters. Added to a more liberal outlook was a stronger sense of security among Irish Protestants, given their political dominance, their economic strength, the military potential of the Volunteers, and the willing conformity of Catholics to monarchy and state during the century.

Yet shrewd political calculation also informed Protestant readiness to consider repealing some of the Penal Laws. Since the 1760s Catholics had directed their arguments regarding the restoration of political rights and the inequity of penal legislation toward the British government rather than the Irish parliament. Some Irish Protestants feared that a strategic British policy of conciliating Irish Catholics by granting substantial reform would undermine the foundations of their political hegemony and allow Britain to further consolidate its power over Ireland. They reasoned that introducing minor abatements in specific penal laws themselves would promote some controlled progress toward the eventual incorporation of Catholics into the political life of the nation and also prevent any threatening alliance of Catholic and British interests.

Catholic Relief Act

The first significant step in formally dismantling the penal code came with the Catholic Relief Act of 1778. This measure focused specifically on land. Catholics were permitted to take long-lease and to inherit and bequeath land, in addition to taking an Oath of Allegiance that enabled them to express their fidelity to the crown without trespassing upon their spiritual obligation to the pope. A further measure in 1782 increased their rights regarding property, education, and the position of the clergy. In the following decade, Catholic seminaries were founded; the restrictions on intermarriage were relaxed; the rights to practice law, bear arms, and join the military were returned; and most important, after 1793 Catholics could vote, subject to strict property qualifications. The main restrictions that remained were their exclusion from the judiciary, the higher offices of government, and parliament. Edmund Burke, in his letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, published in 1792, saw these as crucial developments toward national unity, but while there was evidence of changing attitudes toward Catholics, and while pressure from the Catholic middle class was an important factor, the prime motivation informing these later concessions was to protect Protestant ascendancy interests in the face of pressure from Britain, further demands for radical political reform from Protestants and Catholics, and impending political crisis.

The United Irishmen

That crisis had been brewing since the 1770s but was profoundly intensified by the French Revolution in 1789, which led directly to the establishment of a new political organization. The Society of United Irishmen was founded in Belfast in October 1791 and emerged to represent the political views of mainly Presbyterian and Anglican political radicals who demanded significant reform of the Irish parliament. The views of a young Protestant barrister, Theobald Wolfe Tone, which had been published in 1791 as An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland, declared that sweeping parliamentary reform was the only solution to the increasing influence of Britain in Irish affairs and that such change could be delivered only if Protestants and Catholics united in a political movement that would campaign to extend the franchise and make parliament more representative.

Originally, the Society of United Irishmen was a political movement whose methods centered on pacific pressure and debate. The organization sought to galvanize public opinion with the publication of reform proposals which, in addition to parliamentary reform and Catholic political inclusion, called for the abolition of the hated tithe, the extension of education, and the expansion of trade. The United Irishmen were also very effective distributors of literary propaganda that emphasized the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity—with specific reference to America and France—and encouraged national unity, irrespective of religious creed.

Operating in a parallel, if more limited, fashion was the Catholic Committee, a pressure group that had evolved since the first tentative calls for repeal of the penal laws and the restoration of political rights in the 1760s. Strengthened by the 1778 Catholic Relief Act and the further concessions that removed the core of the penal code, by the early 1790s the Catholic Committee was energetically campaigning for the abolition of the remaining political restrictions. As war loomed between Britain and the brashly expansionist new French Republic, the British government was naturally eager to conciliate Catholic Irish opinion—to abolish the "bank of discontent," as Edmund Burke termed it—in an effort to preclude any dangerous revolutionary sympathy or political alliance with France. It was predominantly British pressure on the Irish parliament that resulted in the Relief Act of 1793 when Catholics were admitted to the franchise on the same terms as Protestants.

Concession was allied to repression as Britain and France went to war. Mindful of the implied threat of the Protestant Volunteer movement wielded by the Irish parliament in the 1770s and 1780s, the British government suppressed the movement and raised a controlled Irish militia composed of Catholics and Protestants to provide for the defense of Ireland as regular army troops went to war. Conventions and political assemblies were banned, and the Society of United Irishmen was suppressed in 1794. Domestically, there were still significant levels of agrarian violence, the result of continued economic distress as the population, specifically among the lower levels of society, continued to expand at an alarming rate. By 1791, the population of the country had almost doubled from approximately 2.3 million early in the century to 4.4 million. The increased competition for land resulted in higher rents, which in turn led to agrarian violence that had a distinctly sectarian character in Ulster. The Orange
Order, a political society committed to recalling the "glorious and immortal" memory of William's victory over James II in 1690, was formed in 1795 after a battle between the Peep O'Day Boys and the Defenders. Employing sectarian intimidation and violence, the Peep O'Day Boys articulated Ulster Presbyterian and Protestant fears of being ousted by aggressive, land-hungry Catholics who were willing to live remarkably meagerly in order to pay higher rents. Common tactics included physical beatings and burning property. Ulster Catholics responded by forming the Defenders. Clashes between the two were often bloody and fatal. The Orange Order attracted Protestants from all ranks, who were alarmed at both recent and potential concessions to Catholics. Further violent clashes led to several thousand Catholics fleeing the province. Convinced that the Orange Order was tacitly endorsed by influential members of the Irish parliament, Catholics joined the Defenders in significant numbers, and the movement spread outside Ulster.

Forced underground by the government, the United Irishmen had developed into a more radical political movement that embraced revolutionary republicanism. Theobald Wolfe Tone and others had earlier recognized the potential strength of Catholic discontent. Although the middle-class Catholic Committee was content to continue petitioning the government for political concessions, the leadership of the United Irishmen believed that Catholics could be effectively channeled in a political direction, merging peasants with smoldering local and sectarian grievances with a radical Protestant movement that wanted a republican revolution based on a suprasectarian national identity.

Wolfe Tone traveled to France in 1796 where he effectively argued the case for a supportive expeditionary force to aid the proposed rebellion. The revolutionary nature of the United Irish movement now recruiting the Catholic peasantry caused great anxiety within the government, which responded with coercion and repression. An Insurrection Act was passed, giving increased powers to local magistrates to arrest and sentence those suspected of disaffection. A mainly Protestant yeomanry force was established under the leadership of prominent local landowners to ruthlessly suppress any signs of rebellious intent; by 1798 it numbered nearly forty thousand.

Discipline was often poor, and the atrocious activities of certain corps of militia and yeomen are notorious in this period of Irish history. They enthusiastically burned peasant homes and Catholic churches; they publicly flogged, half-hanged, and mutilated peasants suspected of membership of the United Irishmen or of rebellious intrigue. Pitch-capping, the placing of a paper cap filled with hot tar over a suspect's head and ripping it off, was a common method of extracting confessions and information. While the yeomanry was a predominantly Protestant force and the government militia was mainly Catholic, both forces commonly engaged in these activities. Paradoxically, yet not surprisingly, the common result of such methods was to increase membership of the United Irishmen and the Defenders and support for rebellion.

Wolfe Tone's skillful efforts in France resulted in an expeditionary force of forty-three ships with fifteen thousand troops under the command of General Lazar Hoche, which set sail for Ireland in December 1796. Violent storms dispersed the fleet, and the few ships that reached the southern Irish coast could not land and had to turn back for France. There, Wolfe Tone renewed his efforts to convince the French to send another expedition. This French invasion attempt at the invitation of the United Irishmen was extremely alarming for the government, which now resolved to comprehensively suppress the revolutionary movement. Martial law was proclaimed in troubled parts of the country, most notably in Ulster. The undaunted United Irishmen continued their preparations for rebellion. Strongest in Ulster, they organized, recruited,
drilled, and armed themselves with muskets and pikes (shafted weapons with bayonet-like blades, easily made by local blacksmiths). The efforts of the government and military to suppress the revolutionary plot often fanned the flames of rebellion, but one notable success in government strategy was the employment of informers to infiltrate the leadership of the United Irishmen.

In March 1798, two months before the projected date of the rebellion, most of the leaders were arrested, with the temporary exception of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald, a descendant of the sixteenth-century earls of Kildare, had fought as an officer with the British army during the American Revolution. He flirted with revolutionary thought from the early 1790s onward but did not join the United Irishmen until 1796. He was popularly perceived as a dashing romantic revolutionary, and his numerous dramatic escapes from the authorities fueled this image. He was finally caught in May 1798 and died of wounds received during his arrest.

A few days later, when a badly coordinated sporadic rebellion spluttered into existence, the remnants of the leadership of the United Irishmen attempted to exert some authority over localized insurrections. The rebellion occurred in isolated pockets—Wexford and Waterford in southeast Leinster, Antrim and Down in Ulster, and, belatedly, Mayo in the west. The rebellion in Wexford began on May 26 and initially scored some swift and telling victories over the local militia and yeomanry. Led by the Catholic priest Father John Murphy and the Protestant United Irishman Beauchamp Bagel Harvey, the rebels captured Wexford town and Enniscorthy. Buoyed by success, their numbers increased. With much of the county under their control, they tried to occupy New Ross in a bloody battle that they narrowly lost to government forces after a full day of furious fighting. With this rebel loss, Protestant prisoners of both genders and of all ages, hemmed into a barn at Scullabogue, were burned to death. The capture and execution of Protestant prisoners had also taken place in the rebel camp at Oulart Hill. Government forces were equally bloodthirsty in their treatment of captured rebels. The rebellion in Wexford was characterized by sectarian division, with little evidence of the secular emphasis of the United Irishmen. Despite the involvement of some radical Protestants in the Wexford rebellion, the rebels were predominantly Catholic peasants and regarded Protestants of all classes and varieties as their natural oppressors and enemies. Here, the insurrection fractured along clear religious divides based on ancient and local grievances.

The limited Ulster insurrection led by Henry Joy McCracken, one of the founders of the society, was mostly Presbyterian in composition. The successful arms seizures the previous year, the arrest of the leadership, the growing strength of the Orange Order, and the vicious sectarianism in Wexford led to the defection of many from the movement. At the head of approximately four thousand men, McCracken failed in his attempt to capture the town of Antrim. Within ten days, the Ulster rebellion had been suppressed by the forces of the government, who tried and executed the leaders while shrewdly pardoning most of the rank and file who surrendered their arms.

Further pressure exerted by Wolfe Tone in France led to a minor and belated French expedition of three ships and one thousand men led by General Jean Joseph Humbert. The expedition arrived in Mayo in August 1798 and, together with peasant support, inflicted an extraordinary defeat on the forces of the government at Casslebar but then was quickly defeated itself. Connaught was the weakest area of the United Irish organization, and the rebellion in other parts of the country had already been suppressed by the time the French arrived. The peasants who joined with the French were unarmed and unprepared, and they were slaughtered when the militia finally caught up with them in Longford. The French were captured and eventually exchanged for British prisoners of war. Another small French expedition of about three thousand troops had sailed for the northern coast where Wolfe Tone hoped to land and link up with Humbert’s men, perhaps inspiring the remnants of the United Irish movement and their Defender allies to a last stand. The British navy intercepted the small fleet and captured Wolfe Tone. Tried by court-martial, he was sentenced to hang but committed suicide in prison when his request to be shot was denied.

Whereas the ideology of the United Irishmen had emphasized national identity above division of creed, the irony of the rebellion in its incarnation was that it was principally a conflict of Irishmen against Irishmen, militia and yeomanry against rebels, and Catholics against Protestants, with an estimated thirty thousand deaths. As with other revolutionary projects in Irish history, the bitter reality of the conflict is much less significant than the legacy of the event. The United Irishmen had failed utterly in their project of combining Catholic and Protestant in the cause of national independence, but the tradition of revolutionary republicanism they inaugurated survived and deeply influenced the course of events in the century to come.

**Act of Union**

Traditionally, the 1801 Act of Union that ended the existence of the Irish parliament and incorporated Ireland into the political structure of Great Britain has been seen as an inevitable coda to the rebellion. Yet the proposal for a constitutional union between Ireland and Britain was not new. The Irish parliament had briefly toyed with the idea when the union of Scotland and England took place in 1707 but then pursued a course of rhetorical independence. The British parliament had unsuccessfully raised the matter on several occasions during the eighteenth century as the Irish parliament had become more irascible, especially during the 1780s. The rebellion confirmed strong support for such a union in the British parliament, and the prime minister, William Pitt, embarked on a course of persuading the Protestant members of the Irish parliament of the advantages that would accrue to them if they voted for a bill that would dissolve their separate legislature.

The key term in all the language associated with pro-union argument was *survival*. Great emphasis was placed on the recent insurrection and the dependence of Protestants on British military aid in a perilous situation. A constitutional union would place Irish Protestants within a larger Protestant political unit and thus potentially remove their fears of the repercussions of incorporating Catholics into political life. Pitt also argued that a political union would remove commercial restrictions and encourage capital investment, hence transforming the Irish economy.

The Irish parliament was deeply divided on the issue. The Patriot element, still led by Henry Grattan, vehemently opposed the proposal, insisting that Ireland was a
separate political nation, symbolized by its parliament. Abolishing it would undo the Irish political nation. However, the experience of the rebellion had been a dreadful shock to the Protestant ascendancy. Visions of the sectarian violence in Wexford haunted them, and many members of parliament began to seriously consider the advantages of the union as outlined by Pitt. When the first vote was taken in the Irish parliament in 1799, the proposal for union was rejected by a majority of five. In terms of public opinion, members of the Orange Order viewed the proposal for political union as a compromise of Irish Protestant power and adamantly opposed it. Most Protestants were fearful that union would weaken both their elite position as the ruling class and the Irish economy. Catholics were generally in favor of the union, as they were given to understand that removal of the restrictions on their sitting in parliament would form part of the legislation. In addition, they had little sentimental attachment to the institution. The British government embarked on a serious campaign toward obtaining a parliamentary majority in favor of the proposal. While weighty political and economic arguments were employed, the chief strengths of the government's position were the traditional and recently revived Protestant fear of Catholics and the system of political patronage that had long allowed the British parliament to manipulate the Irish parliament.

As was customary, titles, places, promotions, and pensions were widely distributed in exchange for votes, and when the next vote took place in January 1800, despite an impassioned speech from Grattan representing a significant section of Protestant opinion, an amendment proposing to maintain an independent Irish parliament was defeated by 38 votes to 96. By August, the legislation that ended the existence of the Irish parliament was signed into law and took effect in January 1801. Ireland was politically merged with Great Britain. Irish representation in the British House of Commons was fixed at 100 members out of a total of 658, while 32 Irish peers sat in the House of Lords. The British monarchy continued to be represented in Ireland by a lord lieutenant, and the policies of the British government were carried out by the chief secretary for Ireland.

Catholic Emancipation

Although the removal of the final political restrictions against Catholics was part of the original proposals for the political union, Catholic Emancipation (as it was commonly termed) was not part of the final legislation, even though Pitt had virtually guaranteed that it would follow almost immediately after the union had been established. Most of the Penal Laws had been repealed before the 1798 rebellion. Catholics could again lease and own land, publicly worship, join the professions, and vote at parliamentary elections subject to a property qualification, but they could still not sit in parliament or occupy senior judicial, military, and political positions. Pitt was quite sincere in his commitment to reform for Catholics and in his intent to include it with the union legislation, but he faced significant opposition from public opinion, from his cabinet, and, more important, from his monarch, George III, who believed that legislation to include Catholics in the political life of the nation violated his corona-
in parliament, but there was no specific restriction against contesting an election. The Catholic Association, under the relentless direction of the clergy, marshaled all eligible Catholic voters to travel to Ennis and cast their vote for O'Connell. He was elected by 2,057 votes to 982.

This success forced the British government to react. Led by the hero of the Napoleonic Wars, the Irish-born Duke of Wellington, and strongly influenced by Robert Peel, the home secretary, the government considered its options. While not in favor of Emancipation, neither was it intractable. Despite colorful speeches, O'Connell had always abided by his publicly articulated pacific views, but the potential for serious violence—indeed, a popular revolution such as those breaking out in Europe—had to be considered. With the removal of monarchical opposition, a considerable body of support in the House of Commons, and, most important, the potential for revolution, the British government conceded the repeal of the final remnants of the penal code in 1829. With the exception of the positions of lord lieutenant of Ireland, lord chancellor of Ireland, and lord chancellor of England, Catholics could sit in parliament; become government ministers; and aspire to the highest offices in the judiciary, army, and navy.

The campaign for Catholic Emancipation is a significant development in Irish history, not so much for its immediate political gains as for its successful mobilization and politicization of Irish Catholics, including the clergy. They had campaigned as a disciplined group without violence and had achieved their aim. Psychologically, this was an enormous boost to Catholic confidence. Yet the many gains resulting from the measure have to be considered in tandem with another piece of legislation that raised the property qualification for the vote from forty shillings to ten pounds. The backbone of O'Connell's electoral campaign found themselves disenchanted.

Robert Emmet

Violence had not ceased in Ireland after the 1798 rebellion had been suppressed, although it was agrarian rather than political in character. The exception to this was the doomed attempt by Robert Emmet to resurrect the United Irishmen and launch another republican rebellion. A Trinity College student and younger brother of United Irish leader Thomas Addis Emmet, Robert had been peripherally included in the councils of the United Irishmen as they prepared for revolution in the 1790s. In the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, he undertook the task of reorganizing the movement and planning for another strike. He traveled to Paris and attempted to convince the French, who were still at war with Britain, to launch an invasion force, but cessation of hostilities between the two from 1802 to 1804 seemed to render this moot. His attempts to revive the movement in Ireland met with a listless response. Upon his release from prison in 1802 Thomas Addis Emmet emigrated to America, where he built a successful legal career.

Robert considered following the same path given the apparently dormant nature of the republican cause, but in 1803, with a renewal of the war between Britain and France, Emmet set about organizing his own rebellion. His general aim was to seize Dublin Castle, the center of British administration in Ireland, and consequently inspire a popular rebellion. This utopian approach belied Emmet's impressive munitions operation in Dublin, along with the strong if limited support of the Kildare, Wicklow, and Dublin United Irishmen.

The first disaster of the enterprise was the accidental explosion of one of the munitions depots, which drew the attention of the authorities to the plot (although they lacked sufficient information to arrest Emmet). The second disaster was the breakdown in communications that resulted in the failure of the Wicklow men to arrive in time for the rebellion. The third fiasco was the attempt to seize the castle. Emmet at the head of about one hundred men soon found himself in the middle of a riotous mob that surrounded the coach of the lord chief justice of Ireland, Lord Kilwarden, and who brutally murdered him and his son-in-law with pikes. Further violent rioting continued, and thirty people were killed. Emmet, distraught at the disintegration of his revolution into a bloody brawl, went into hiding but was arrested shortly afterward, then tried and sentenced to death.

Emmet's revolution was a catastrophe, but his lasting contribution to Irish republicanism lies in his famous speech from the dock in which he outlined his political philosophy. In a phrase that fired Irish republican imaginations in the decades to follow, he requested that his epitaph remained unwritten until Ireland had taken "her place among the nations of the earth."

Nineteenth-Century Society

The agrarian violence of the secret societies flourished in the early nineteenth century, particularly after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 resulted in a sharp economic depression that seriously affected agricultural prices. Tenants fell into rent arrears, and evictions increased. Sharp resentment of the tithe, the religious tax payable to the Anglican Church, continued to particularly inform Catholic peasant violence. In Leinster and Munster, the Rockites, Whiteboys, and Ribbonmen registered their anger with widespread destruction of property and personal attacks on tithe-proctors and landlords during the 1820s and 1830s.

The demographic increase of the eighteenth century continued in the early nineteenth century. Estimated at 4.4 million in 1791, the population rose to 6.8 million by 1821 and to 8.2 million by 1841. The majority of this population depended on agriculture to survive. It was among the lowest and poorest levels of society that the population increased most rapidly. These people eked out a precarious subsistence existence on small plots of land that were subdivided among children and that supported the crops and livestock that paid the rent and fed the family. As a cheap, abundant, and nutritious crop, the potato had long formed the staple element of Irish peasant diets. Other crops and livestock went toward paying the high rents on land and the tithe in combinations of cash and kind, as in many areas of rural Ireland a money economy was limited.
The increasing dependence of the Irish peasantry on the potato was viewed by many contemporaries as a potential disaster. Hunger was a familiar element of life. The potato crop had partially failed several times in the past century, with widespread distress and death in 1720 and especially during 1739–1741. A tentative estimate of a quarter-million deaths during the latter failure explains the Irish-language reference Blaithin an Air, or the Year of the Slaughter. Crop failures in 1817 and 1822 resulted in widespread hunger, which was partially alleviated by relief committees and schemes of public works that provided employment.

Emigration remained at high levels during the first three decades of the century. Although statistics are unreliable, historians estimate that between 1 and 1.5 million people left Ireland between 1815 and 1845 for England, Canada, and the United States. As in the emigration of Ulster Presbyterians to America in the eighteenth century, those who emigrated were those who had some money, and, once settled, they helped members of the family to follow by sending passage money. To emigrate with a family cost the equivalent of a laborer's wages for a year. For the majority of peasants in the lower levels of society, emigration was out of the question unless a landlord, eager to clear his estate, offered assisted-emigration schemes.

In the upper middle class of rural society, more substantial tenant farmers weathered the economic depressions and occasional crop failures with better success. During the 1830s they prospered, as agricultural prices temporarily recovered. These people could afford to invest capital, expand holdings, and provide for their children without subdividing their land. Their children were educated and took up careers in the church and professions. Dowries for suitable marriages could be provided. More modestly situated farmers, removed from the subsistence lifestyle of the landless laborer, lived meagerly and struggled to provide opportunities for children without resorting to subdivision or emigration.

Repeal of the Union

Daniel O'Connell built on the popularity and political power that followed his successful emancipation campaign with one aimed at repealing the political union between Ireland and Britain. The union had failed to deliver the political and economic benefits that had been anticipated. Ireland had limited representation and occupied limited attention in an expanding imperial parliament. Once the boom in the demand for agricultural produce, and thus high prices, disappeared with the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, depression rather than expansion had characterized the economy. The Irish manufacturing industry, with the exception of the linen industry in Ulster, had declined.

As a barrister, O'Connell was convinced of some validity in the argument that Henry Grattan had articulated against the union. The first element of the case was the traditional point that the Irish parliament was independent of the British parliament; the second was that the parliament was the symbol of an independent nation linked to Britain only by a shared monarchy; the third was that the decision of the members of the Irish parliament of 1800 to abolish that legislature was invalid, given the extensive employment of patronage to secure their cooperation. O'Connell knew that an Irish legislature would now be dominated by Catholics because of their demographic strength and the removal of political barriers. He did not call for separatism in his campaign for repeal; rather, he emphasized the restoration of an Irish parliament that would be linked to Britain through the monarchy.
Nor did he believe in social radicalism. O'Connell held deeply conservative views about the privileges of property owners. He supported the prevailing economic policy of the day, laissez-faire, which discouraged government interference in economic matters. He condemned the violence of the agrarian secret societies. He disapproved of the embryonic trade union movement in Britain. He was deeply loyal to the monarchy and believed that Ireland would benefit from continued association with the expanding British Empire while conducting its own domestic affairs.

The repeal campaign was launched in the early 1830s but failed to make any significant headway. For some time, the sheer exuberance that attended the success of the emancipation campaign and O'Connell's immense personal popularity carried the movement, but there were important distinctions between a campaign to remove specific restrictions of political rights and one that sought to alter the British political structure. While many influential Protestants had been sympathetic to and active in the emancipation campaign as a matter of principle, they had come to view the political union as the bulwark against Catholic political and social ambitions that threatened to consume the remains of their influence.

It is one of the ironies of Irish history that most Protestants were initially deeply suspicious of the proposal for political union while Catholics had supported it. Within three decades, Irish Protestants believed that political union with Britain, and membership of a larger Protestant polity, was their only defense against an evolving Catholic nation in which their influence would be negligible. Similarly, Catholics who had supported the union in the expectation of the restoration of full political rights and an end to the power of the Irish Protestants now identified it as the root of many evils. In particular, the union was blamed for poor economic conditions and consequent distress. With O'Connell's encouragement, Catholics began to think in terms of breaking the union and restoring an Irish parliament.

The British government was implacably opposed to discussion of repeal, and for most of the 1830s O'Connell made little progress in this direction. He worked with commitment in Westminster in supporting measures to restore law and order in Ireland, given the increased activity of the secret societies. He supported government proposals to establish primary schools with a decided agenda of Anglicization, to deal with issues of poverty, to solve the tithe question, and to introduce minor parliamentary reform, while evading attempts to suppress the repeal campaign. A renewed effort was launched in 1840 with the founding of the Repeal Association and an attempt to repeat the successful tactics of the emancipation campaign. Mass meetings were held all over the country, and just as before, the vast majority of O'Connell's supporters were the peasants who interpreted repeal of the union as the panacea for all their daily struggles.

O'Connell, having tried parliamentary persuasion with little success, believed that a repeated demonstration of the strength of desire, and the implied threat that such enormous gatherings signaled, would convince the government to acquiesce once more to his demand. The government was determined not to yield and called his bluff when, despite the risk of popular violence, they banned his mass meeting at Tara in 1843. O'Connell complied with the ban, and the movement lost what impetus it had gathered.

Young Ireland

One of the somewhat indirect products of the repeal movement was a cultural and political nationalist group called Young Ireland. Significantly influenced by prevailing ideals of romantic nationalism in Europe, this group of educated young men from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds had supported O'Connell's repeal campaign through the columns of their weekly newspaper, the Nation. Drawing from the ideology of the United Irishmen, Young Ireland expressed support for a concept of inclusive Irish national identity. Thomas Davis, James Clarence Mangan, and Charles Gavan Duffy used literature, history, and mythology to fashion a plural Irish identity. In political terms, while some members of the group supported a constitutional approach, others like John Mitchel formulated a more separatist point of view that looked back to the radical republicanism of the United Irishmen. Another member, James Fintan Lalor, presciently expressed the revolutionary notion that Irish peasants should become owners of their land and that any campaign for independence would fail to harness the support of the people if it did not link the land issue to politics. As the political views within the group became more radical, they broke from O'Connell's Repeal Association. The death of Thomas Davis removed an important influence, and between 1845 and 1848 the prevailing ideology was one of rebellion. Because the country was in the throes of the Great Hunger, the prospects of a handful of idealistic individuals launching a popular revolution were bleak. After a minor skirmish in 1848, most of the members fled or were deported.

Again, the pathetic nature of the actual skirmish was less important than the legacy of the Young Ireland movement for later nationalists. They had taken up the inheritance of the United Irish movement and attempted to breathe new life into it. Despite the failure of their attempt at rebellion, they had preserved a practice of protest in arms. In literary terms, the work of Davis in particular, in trying to carve an inclusive national identity from a fractured and bitter historical experience, would influence later cultural nationalists who believed, as he did, that cultural unity took precedence over political sovereignty.

The Great Hunger

On the eve of the era known as An Gorta Mór, or the Great Hunger, the Irish population exceeded eight million, the result of a demographic boom that had begun in the mid-eighteenth century but had already started naturally to subside by the 1830s. The majority of these people were directly dependent on agriculture for their livelihood and on the potato for their survival. Nearly half of all farms in Ireland were less than five acres in size. The partial failure of the potato crop was frequent enough to give rise to some speculation about the nature of a complete failure and predictions of disaster on a grand scale. The government's reform policies in the 1830s had established a system of primary education, set up public works to build roads, and—in 1838, mirroring the English Poor Law—introduced workhouses throughout the country, but they failed to foresee the overwhelming nature of the catastrophe that was about to
strike. Despite the tremors caused by fourteen partial potato failures between 1816 and 1842, and despite the forebodings of many commentators, no one anticipated the appearance of a new fungal disease that would repeatedly destroy the crop for five successive years.

*Phytophthora infestans* was first observed on the east coast of the United States in 1843 and is generally believed to have originated in South America. It was reported in Europe in the autumn of 1845. There were serious crop failures throughout Europe, most notably in the Scottish Highlands and the Netherlands. Thriving in damp conditions, the "blight" spread rapidly throughout the Irish countryside from September onward, although early eyewitness reports suggest it did so in an erratic pattern. It destroyed 40 percent of the potato crop. The British government initially reacted quickly. Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel appointed a commission to study the new disease and make recommendations for dealing with it. He also acted with political courage and rapidity in organizing relief measures. His first step was to contravene prevailing economic principles by buying significant amounts of American maize for controlled sale in Ireland in order to prevent the inflation of food prices. More familiar reactions included the establishment of relief commissions to finance and organize public works (funded equally by the government and property owners at a total cost of one million pounds) to provide employment for approximately 150,000 people, enabling them to buy food.

For some time, Peel had been convinced of the wisdom of repealing the protective tariffs imposed on imported grain, known as the corn laws. These laws were designed to guarantee a minimum market price for domestic grain by making imported grain more expensive and less competitive. Yet Peel and others had questioned the benefits of protectionism for the British economy and advocated free trade. The failure of the Irish potato crop in 1845 convinced him that repeal of the corn laws must be undertaken to facilitate the further importation of cheap American grain if it proved immediately necessary, but he also considered the long-term policy of encouraging the permanent substitution of the potato with maize in Ireland. Peel succeeded in convincing the British parliament to repeal the corn laws, but at the cost of his Conservative Party government, which split and was replaced by the Liberal Party under the leadership of Lord John Russell in 1846.

Historians conclude that while distress and suffering were widespread among the poorest classes of society during 1845–1846, few people actually died of hunger. Public works, private charity, the availability of maize, and disposable resources enabled cottiers and laborers to survive, although they fell farther into rent arrears. The prevailing attitude, reflecting the pattern of limited sporadic failure in the past, was that the potato crop which had been planted for the following harvest (using a portion of the crop that had escaped the blight) would flourish.

One of the most puzzling realities of the famine era for a modern reader is that even though the potato crop was destroyed, other crops and livestock continued to be exported from the country in 1845–1846, although the poor were beginning to feel the pinch of serious hunger. Prohibiting food exports would have contravened the essence of the popular laissez-faire economic philosophy, which held that government interference in the economy was erroneous. In any case, the class of substantial farmers who produced the surplus crops and livestock for the export market, and who did not depend on the potato for survival, would have resisted any attempt at prohibiting exports.

Peel decided that further government interference in the economy was unmerited. His administration had proved equal to the initial task of organizing relief works, which had mitigated distress during previous potato crop failures. The complete failure of the potato crop in the autumn of 1846 was not foreseen, and by that time a Liberal Party government led by Russell had replaced Peel's Conservative Party administration.

While Peel was not adverse to taking political risks in pursuit of what he believed was necessary, including bending the rules of laissez-faire, his successors in government (most notably the permanent head of the treasury, Charles Trevelyan, and the chancellor of the exchequer, Sir Charles Wood) were more rigid in their devotion to economic nonintervention. When the second and almost complete crop failure occurred in 1846, the government at first refused to consider supplying food for sale, insisting that this activity properly lay within the sphere of private enterprise. Food prices soared. Politicians also emphasized that it was the duty of property owners to take entire fiscal responsibility for the poverty in their own area. "Irish property must support Irish poverty" was a political maxim. Thus the impossible burden of completely financing sufficient public works to meet the needs of a larger number of people was firmly placed on landowners.

While there were certainly extremely wealthy landlords whose Irish estates provided them with large incomes, many landlords were in financial trouble themselves. The agricultural depression of the previous decades had resulted in tenants falling into serious arrears of rent. While some landlords responded with evictions, others accepted the genuine difficulties of tenants who paid what they could. The cost of the workhouses had to be subsidized by landowners; the more tenants were evicted, the bigger the numbers in workhouses. It was often less of a financial liability to accept what little rent could be paid than resort to evictions. Many a landlord found himself with an actual income that bore little resemblance to his rent rolls. Most estates had carried large debts for generations—heirs borrowed on their future prospects, marriage settlements for sisters and daughters had to be provided, and large houses had to be maintained. The added burden of having to finance relief works without any incoming rent, however meager, broke many landlords completely.

The winter of 1846–1847 was one of the harshest in memory. People who had been hungry but survived the previous winter were beginning to starve by the end of 1846. Although guarded exports of grain continued, they were one-third lower than usual. Imports of maize and rice into Ireland grew to twice the rate of grain exports, but these imports arrived in quantity only after the winter, which had witnessed many deaths from hunger. Desperate people sought employment by breaking stones on the relief works, but this financially fragile system was completely unable to cope with the demands of a quarter-million people in November and half a million in December 1846.

For those who had succeeded in obtaining such employment, their wages were completely inadequate, given the rise in food prices. Crime increased as survival
became more precarious. The winter and spring of "Black '47" were bitterly cold. People congregated in towns and especially around the workhouses, which were crammed to capacity. Disease began to spread rapidly, most notably typhus and relapsing fever, but fatal bacillary dysentery was also widespread. Those who had the means emigrated with all possible speed. By the end of 1847, two hundred thousand people had left; some using their own resources, some because landlords assisted with the costs, others because of money sent to them for their passage from family members who had left in prior decades. These remittances totaled half a million pounds by 1849 and a further million pounds by 1851.

The Irish Society of Friends (Quakers) imported food supplies from America, established soup kitchens in 1846, and provided grants for the purchase of boilers to set up further soup kitchens. Their tours of the country and their written reports detailing their observations and experiences were crucial in shaping public opinion and fund-raising in Britain and abroad. The Quakers were noted for their philanthropy and nonproselytism. While "soupertime," or the exchange of food for religious conversion, rarely occurred, those conversion societies and individuals who pursued this agenda initiated a popular myth about these years that eclipsed the impartial aid of genuinely altruistic organizations.

The British Relief Association founded in 1847 was made up of businessmen and merchants who raised an estimated £470,000. Contributions came from all over the world: £14,000 came from Calcutta in 1846, £5,000 arrived from Bombay, Jamaica sent £2,000, and the Choctaw tribe in Oklahoma sent £70 in 1849. America contributed $1 million from private donations in 1846, and special relief commissions were established to continue fund-raising during 1847. New York raised $170,000, Philadelphia sent $50,000, Boston collected $45,000, New Orleans and Albany each raised $25,000, New Jersey sent $35,000, and Baltimore sent $40,000. With the approval of Congress, American warships were used to carry shipments of food.

While public opinion expressed great sympathy and a desire to help, and while some members of the government risked political careers in vainly drawing up proposals for new state-subsidized relief schemes, the prevailing attitude toward any serious government intervention was still negative. In a manner reminiscent of the fable of the ant and the grasshopper, Charles Trevelyan worked with great commitment in dealing with the bureaucratic burdens created by the crisis, but he was personally convinced that Irish irresponsibility, fecklessness, and improvidence had created the potential for this disaster in which he could see the hand of God at work in eliminating the "cancer of dependency" and the overpopulation of the island.

The situation was so grave by the spring of 1847 that the government conceded it had to temporarily abandon both its cherished economic policy and public works and then provide direct relief in the form of free food. Even given the desperate situation in Ireland, this was a radical decision in the context of its time. Attitudes toward poverty dictated that direct charity merely begot further dependents, and many people genuinely worried that if the indigent in Ireland were given a taste of such charity, the problem would be exacerbated in the long run by the creation of a population of paupers.

Government-subsidized soup kitchens were established to feed the starving a daily meal. Yet there were significant and widespread delays in setting them up, even though the public works division had already been shut down. Therefore, in parts of the country, there were fatal delays throughout the late spring when no relief was available. By the late summer of 1847, these outdoor kitchens were distributing one meal to more than three million people per day. An amendment to the Irish Poor Law in June allowed for continued relief to be given outside workhouses to those who had absolutely no other resources. Relief would be denied to anyone who leased or rented more than a quarter-acre of land. Again, the burden of financing this increased relief fell on Irish property owners, but the quarter-acre clause allowed some landlords to clear their estates with greater rapidity. The number of evictions soared.

Direct government relief was regarded as a short-term response to the crisis. In the expectation of a healthy crop or perhaps in sheer disbelief that it could fail completely again, the government decided to close its soup kitchens by the end of September 1847. The very small autumn crop of potatoes was again the victim of blight but was not completely destroyed. A cautious optimism arose that with three consistent crop failures surely the worst had passed, yet food was still very scarce and what was available was prohibitively expensive. The relief works had ended, the soup kitchens were closed, and those clamoring outside the workhouses for food could not be appeased. Thousands of people were dying every week from the combined effects of malnutrition and disease, which were exacerbated by thousands flocking into and around the workhouses. In 1848, the crop failed almost completely again, and in this year the appearance of cholera, which raged until the summer of 1849, claimed thousands of those weakened by prolonged hunger. Between 1849 and 1850, over 400,000 emigrated. In 1851, the total was just under 250,000.

Charity subscriptions from private sources had peaked and declined. In the summer of 1849, the financially and physically exhausted Quakers shut down their soup kitchens and called on the government to intervene. But the government held firm to its policy of laissez-faire. As far as official responses were concerned, the need for direct relief had ended in the autumn of 1847, and it was the responsibility of landlords and property owners to deal with the consequences of the continued crop failures. The small 1849 crop showed signs of improvement, the 1850 crop recovered further, and in the following years the effect of the blight on the crop declined, although it was not until later in the century that bluestone (or copper sulfate) was used to control the disease.

The census of 1851 revealed a population of about 6.5 million. There is some disparity among scholars about excess mortality during the years 1845-1850, but most agree that the number is over one million. Those most vulnerable, the youngest and the oldest, died in large numbers. The landless laborer and the small tenant farmer were most adversely affected. More than £8 million had been raised in Ireland by increased property taxes and private borrowing by landlords to deal with the costs of public works and workhouse relief. The British government spent just over £8 million on relief measures; half of this was in the form of loans to be repaid by Irish property owners over time in increased taxes. Given the inability of property owners to meet
these financial commitments, and the fact that numerous bankrupt estates were sold from 1849 onward when legal restrictions regarding inheritance had been removed, the government canceled the debt in 1853.

While Robert Peel's early response to what was initially perceived as another partial and limited failure of the potato crop was swift and effective, the actions of the Liberal Party government that took office in 1846 proved ultimately deficient. An inflexible economic philosophy and an implacable belief in harsh providentialism dictated government policy from 1846 onward, even when it became strikingly clear that this was a departure from the sporadic and partial potato failure. Yet, at a moment of extreme crisis when the government temporarily bowed to the desperation of the starving in setting up the soup kitchens, it became clear that with sufficient intervention of this kind by the state, the death toll could have been reduced.

After the Famine

Important differences marked the post-Famine era. Historians have long argued about whether the traumatic experiences of the 1840s initiated or accelerated these changes. The rate of population growth had slowed in the 1830s, but after the chilling fatalities of the 1840s and continually high levels of emigration until the late twentieth century (over four million people left Ireland between 1851 and 1911), the Irish population continued to decline. This was also partly the result of changing practices with regard to land and marriage.

In the earlier part of the century, the widespread practice of subdivision of land among the children of tenants and small farmers had facilitated marriage at a young age and, consequently, large families. With high levels of mortality among these vulnerable tenant classes during the famine years, and with increased emigration added to numerous evictions that had cleared the land of its dense population, landlords and strong farmers emphasized consolidation and, where possible, expansion of landholdings. From then on, the accepted practice among tenants and farmers of all classes was for one heir to inherit the intact holding, usually not until the death of both parents. This postponed inheritance implied celibacy until marriage at much later ages and, consequently, smaller families. Siblings who had no prospect of inheriting land and few other employment options faced the choice of emigration or remaining as an unpaid and unwed laborer on the family farm.

The British army and the Catholic Church were two popular career options for young men. Women for whom marriage dowries were not available faced spinsterhood, emigration, or the convent, although the latter usually demanded a financial settlement similar to a marriage dowry. In 1850, there were approximately fifteen hundred nuns in Irish convents. By 1900, there were eight thousand. With the consolidation of land into larger farms after the famine years, livestock farming became more popular and profitable, especially as the continued expansion of the railways in Ireland in the 1850s and 1860s made transport to British markets easier.

The physical landscape changed after 1850 with the consolidation of land and the marked absence of those whose small, self-contained rural villages (or cuchais) were eerie crumbling monuments to their lives and deaths. Mass grave sites dotted an oppressively silent countryside. People felt that they were living among ghosts, an emotion that continued into the next century. Social customs and traditions were neglected. The Irish language, strongest among those who had suffered most severely, entered a period of decline that was intensified by continued emigration, a state education system that was hostile to it, and a growing popular attitude that characterized the language as backward. In many parts of the country, within the space of one generation between 1840 and 1870, English replaced Irish as the people's first language.

In the decades after the Famine, the Catholic Church experienced a renewal, or what some scholars have called a "devotional revolution." The substantial increase in vocations, for which there were compelling economic explanations, and attendance at religious services have often been characterized as a reaction to a devastating experience that many interpreted as an act of divine wrath. An increase in Church personnel and authoritarian power was certainly due in part to the determined efforts of Archbishop (Cardinal from 1866) Paul Cullen, who had been sent from Rome in 1849 to lead the meandering Irish Catholic Church back into line with papal policy. Reform had been a priority since well before the famine, as pilgrimages to holy wells, energetic and earthy wakes following death, a prevalent belief in magic, and ancient celebrations of seasonal change such as Lughnasa were intertwined with orthodox Catholicism, particularly among rural peasants.

Yet the grim puritanism and continence of Catholicism in the second half of the century was due neither to the reforming zeal of Paul Cullen nor to a population appealing a wrathful deity who had sent the famine to punish them. It emerged as the response of a society intent on survival, which required celibacy, discipline, and material resources, subordinating the aspirations of the individual to the well-being of the family. Consolidation of land inherited by one male heir, the emphasis on limited strategic marriages, the diffusion of surplus offspring by means of emigration and vocation, and the societal taboo on unsanctioned sexuality fed the repressive character of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Irish Catholicism.

Puritanical religious revival was not confined to Catholicism. Protestant evangelism with an energetic attempt at proselytism had flourished in the early nineteenth century as Presbyterianism became more fundamental in the aftermath of the 1798 rebellion. Protestantism, predominantly concentrated in Ulster, responded in the 1850s to the Famine with another bout of enthusiastic evangelism that was articulated in street preaching that denounced poverty. Mid-nineteenth-century American revivalism had a tremendous influence on Presbyterianism, especially among the urban working class in 1859, but the overall effect of religious revival in Ulster was to emphasize the common Protestant ground between Presbyterians and members of the Church of Ireland in reaction to ultramontane Catholicism. The Orange Order, which had languished since the beginning of the century, was revived to rally Ulster Protestantism, provoking in response the establishment of the Catholic Ancient Order of Hibernians, both of which formed extensive and effective political networks in the coming decades.

The political implications of the Famine were profound, although they did not fully emerge for some time. Many of those who had lost family members, who had
been evicted, or who had emigrated burned with a bitterness directed principally at Great Britain. John Mitchel's assessment of the Famine as a deliberate attempt at genocide by the government found a receptive audience, especially among emigrants who willingly supported and financed organizations that sought to sever the political connection with Britain during the coming decades. Political activity in the 1850s was mainly confined to unsuccessful attempts at organizing tenant leagues to campaign for agrarian reform; in addition, there was a loose and short-lived coalition of Irish Members of Parliament (MPs) in the British House of Commons whose aim was to act as a pressure group for reform of Irish issues. The Catholic Church under the leadership of Cullen favored the political union with Britain and sought to obtain concessions in the area of education by emphasizing its support of the political status quo. Many contemporaries characterized the 1850s as a decade of political stagnation, but by its close a new Irish republican movement emerged that embodied the ghost of revolutions past and articulated once again the call to arms.

The Fenians

The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was established in Dublin in 1858 and drew extensively from the republicanism of Wolfe Tone and the literary bequest of Young Ireland, along with the agrarian radicalism of James Fintan Lalor. The leaders of this latest incarnation of revolutionary nationalism were James Stephens and John O'Mahony, both veterans of the Young Ireland skirmish in 1848 who had fled to France and New York in its aftermath. The secret oath-bound organization, borrowing from its American branch established by O'Mahony in New York, quickly became known as the Fenian Brotherhood, a name that reflected the influence of the Young Irishers among others in popularizing Irish mythology. The name "Fenian" was an anglicized version of the Gaelic word Fianna, which referred to an ancient band of warriors.

Reflecting Stephens's sojourn in Paris, the Fenians were organized in a secret cell structure that aimed at thwarting infiltration by informers. Recruits swore allegiance to the Irish Republic, but the traditional interpretation of the Fenians as a disciplined popular force intent on rebellion has been modified by research that argues that for some it was predominantly a middle-class organization with notable literary, social, and recreational functions. The opposition of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church to the Fenian movement has been well documented. Paranoid about revolutionaries, committed to government support in return for concessions, and upholding the papal censure of oath-bound societies, Paul Cullen condemned the movement and combined with other constitutionally minded individuals to launch the ineffective National Association whose mild program requested denominational education, modest land reform, and the disestablishment or removal of the privileged position of the Church of Ireland.

Stephens's efforts to build up a substantial armed force relied heavily on funding and support from Irish Americans in the Fenian Brotherhood led by O'Mahony. While there was significant popular support among the Irish in Britain where cells were established, and while the organization spread rapidly in the major east coast cities of the United States, the American Civil War postponed any plans for a rebellion in Ireland. Although this was a disagreeable delay in some respects, there were also certain experiences to be gained from the conflict. Thousands of emigrant Irishmen were recruited as soldiers for both armies, from which seasoned military officers and men could be drawn for a future rebellion in Ireland. Hopes were high of escalated tension between the American government and Great Britain, resulting in a war that the Fenians could profit from by launching a simultaneous rebellion in Ireland or by allying themselves with the federal army. While the latter hope proved futil, the end of the Civil War resulted in a few hundred experienced officers and soldiers traveling from America to Ireland in the expectation of an imminent rebellion.
The authorities in Dublin Castle were aware of the conspiracy. After accumulating sufficient evidence, they moved against the Fenians late in 1865, suppressing their newspaper and arresting most of the significant leaders who were summarily tried and convicted of treason. Stephens was captured but escaped the country in 1866. Long sentences of penal servitude were imposed on the rest, but the numerous trials also allowed the effective employment of oratorical propaganda that fueled the romantic legacy of the movement. In America, the movement split into two factions. One group, led by William R. Roberts, advocated an ambitious if quixotic invasion of Canada in order to provoke a conflict between America and Britain. The other faction, headed by O'Mahony, was still determined to launch a rebellion in Ireland. The arrival of Stephens in New York did not heal the rift but precipitated further hostility after his appropriation of O'Mahony's position. The Roberts faction obstinately attempted their invasion three times—in 1866, 1870, and 1871—before they finally decided it was a futile strategy.

While the Fenians fractured in America, those in Ireland were preparing to make at least a gesture toward rebellion. In March 1867 during a snowstorm, ill-prepared and badly armed groups of Fenians attempted a rising in Dublin, Tipperary, Cork, and a few other areas around the country in which police barracks were attacked and twelve people died. The insurrection fizzled out almost as quickly and as ingloriously as its predecessor in 1848. Those arrested were dealt with quite leniently by the government, which imposed sentences of life imprisonment for leading rebels and lighter prison terms for the rest. A government amnesty released many within a few years.

Little sustained popular attention was paid to the attempted rising, but the execution of three Fenians accused of murdering a policeman in Manchester while trying to rescue a colleague resulted in an immediate wave of sympathy and sentiment directed at those now described as martyrs in the nationalist cause. Once again, a plot for a definitive and glorious revolution in Ireland had fallen far short of the mark despite years of planning. Yet Fenianism did not cease with the failure of 1867. It regrouped over the following decades while maintaining a low profile and proved very adept at infiltrating all aspects of nationalist organization—constitutional, literary, and agrarian—while biding its time for a resurrection of the revolutionary enterprise.

The Irish Question

William Ewart Gladstone, the Liberal Party's prime minister of Britain, believed that support for Fenianism was a symptom of Irish grievances that could be solved by legislative means. Gladstone, though sometimes popularly portrayed as a champion of Irish interests, was firmly committed to the political union and sought to strengthen that union by dealing with two of the chief subjects of instability: religion and land. Both of these lay at the heart of surviving Protestant influence in Ireland. The Church of Ireland was the established church, which meant that although the fiercely resented tithe had been merged into general property taxes in the 1830s, the Protestant religion was still heavily subsidized by the government while representing only one-fifth of the population. The Liberal Party was in principle opposed to state support for religion and introduced a Disestablishment Act in 1869 that removed such support from the Church of Ireland, as well as grants to the Catholic seminary at Maynooth. Although the Church of Ireland was a wealthy and influential body, it was predictable that with its protected status removed it would diminish over time to reflect the small percentage of the population that adhered to it. Irish Protestants were alarmed at this move, which they interpreted as the first step of British abandonment.

Gladstone's second measure of reform, the Land Act of 1870, was a cautious response to the continued demand for reform of land tenure conditions by farmers and tenants. In particular, they demanded fair rents and fixity or security of tenure. The measure legalized the "Ulster Custom" where it existed—a tradition strongest in the north—whereby tenants were allowed to sell their leases and were not evicted as long as they paid their rent. In the rest of the country, tenants who were evicted for any reason, except for nonpayment of rent, were entitled to compensation for disturbance. While in many ways this legislation was limited and certainly did not satisfy tenants' ambitions, it was significant in that the government for the first time officially interfered with the absolute rights of property and recognized that tenants had valid claims to compensation and protection.

Despite his positive efforts, Gladstone had succeeded in alienating most groups in Ireland. Protestants resented his disestablishment of their church and his government's meddling with property rights, and they suspected his ultimate intentions regarding the union. The Tenant League, formed in 1869, was disappointed with the limitations of the Land Act. Supporters of amnesty for the Fenian prisoners were discontented with the limited releases approved. Representing a section of Irish Protestant opinion that resented the power of the Westminster parliament to dictate policy for Ireland, especially when policy threatened their interests, Isaac Butt, a Protestant barrister and MP, launched the Home Government Association in 1870. An eccentric mix of conservative Protestant landowners, tenant rights advocates, constitutional nationalists, and several secret Fenians, the association's aim was the establishment of a domestic Irish legislature. "Home Rulers," as they quickly became known, contested by-elections with some success in the early 1870s and capitalized on these steps with the return of fifty-nine MPs after the 1874 general election.

The Catholic Church was initially suspicious of the Protestant character of the association, and Paul Cullen unsuccessfully attempted to form a rival group to express Catholic support for the union. His policy of loyalty to the British government in the expectation of state subsidies for an exclusively Catholic university received a rude setback when Gladstone introduced proposals for a University Bill in 1873 that were highly unsatisfactory to the Catholic Church. The hierarchy began to view the Home Government Association in a new light, and several bishops joined it. Irish constitutional nationalists, the mostly Catholic progeny of O'Connellism, were attracted to the Home Government Association and joined in substantial numbers. Their membership changed the balance of composition: a strongly conservative and Protestant character was steadily eclipsed by the solid presence of the Catholic hierarchy and constitutional nationalists. Many of the original Protestant members who flirted
uncertainly with an attempt to resurrect the spirit of eighteenth-century Patriotism fled from a movement that, despite Butt’s continued leadership, was increasingly representative of Catholic nationalism with Fenianism prowling in its shadows.

The New Departure

The reorganized Fenian movement in America led by John Devoy, now known as Clan na Gael (Family of the Gael), had adopted a new policy. Devoy observed with interest the burgeoning Home Rule movement and paid close attention to a cabal within Butt’s ranks that ruthlessly used the practice of obstruction—filibustering or the strict employment of the procedures of parliamentary debate—to frustrate the business of legislating in order to focus attention on a grievance. Joseph Biggar, an MP from Belfast and a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, initiated the practice among a select number of Irish MPs in order to draw attention to the current Conservative government’s studied neglect of Irish issues. On one memorable occasion they kept up a continuous relay debate for twenty hours.

While Butt and many of the Home Rule MPs disapproved of such an ungentlemanly subversion of the parliament, Biggar was joined by a Protestant landlord from County Wicklow, Charles Stewart Parnell. This behavior attracted the attention of extreme nationalists like Devoy who saw the potential of an alliance of Fenian interests with those of the parliamentarians and agrarian reformers. Other Fenians, especially those in Ireland, disagreed and remained adamant that the best policy was to resist dabbling in land reform or parliamentary politics and concentrate on building up a secret force that could take advantage of potential British vulnerability, such as when the country would be involved in the next major European war. Devoy, secure in his leadership of the lucrative and influential Clan na Gael, ignored their objections and pursued an alliance with Parnell, whom he believed would emerge as the leader of the parliamentary party.

James Fintan Lalor had emphasized the importance of land reform several decades earlier, prophesying that it would be the issue of land that would propel a successful campaign for national independence. In the late 1870s, depressed agricultural prices, an industrial depression in Britain, and bad weather and consequently poor harvests revived the clamor for further land reform. In 1878, John Devoy and Michael Davitt approached Parnell with their proposal for a “new departure” that would ally Fenian, agrarian, and Home Rule interests. While there are conflicting accounts of this secret discussion, the result was Parnell’s inclusion in a new program that allowed him access to the considerable organizational and financial support of Clan na Gael in America and involved him in Davitt’s new movement for agrarian reform, the Irish National Land League. In return, it was accepted that Parnell would become leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party and work to advance the cause of land reform and nationalism. Devoy believed that Parnell was committed to going farther than Home Rule and would advocate a separatist revolution if necessary, but Davitt recalled that Parnell had refused to commit himself.

The Land League

Parnell was elected president of the Land League, a movement that organized the tenant farmers to resist high rents and evictions during the current crisis, demanded protective legislative reform, and, ultimately, established peasant proprietorship. In 1880, in a two-month tour around America to highlight the severe agrarian crisis in Ireland, Parnell raised $200,000 for relief of the food shortages that threatened Connaught. Private charity and government grants added to the financial aid available, which enabled people to buy maize in order to supplement a very poor potato crop. An unexpected general election recalled Parnell to Ireland to campaign for his seat in parliament. The election restored Gladstone’s Liberal Party to power, and the Irish Parliamentary Party, led by William Shaw since Butt’s death in 1879, won sixty-one seats. Parnell was shortly afterward chosen as the new party leader.

The Land League campaign increased in intensity during 1880–1881. Meetings attended by thousands were held throughout the country, and tenants were advised to defend themselves. While the leadership of the movement, especially Parnell, were careful that their language did not directly incite violence and thus invite official suppression and imprisonment, tenants told to keep a firm grip on their land interpreted it to include “by any means necessary.” The traditional methods of the agrarian secret societies, largely dormant since the famine, reemerged as landlords and their property became the targets of violence. A very effective practice of ostracization, with roots in Gaelic society, isolated landlords and their families from supplies, service, and society. Popularly called boycotting, after Mayo landowner Captain Charles Boycott had experienced it, this weapon was also used against any tenant who rented a farm from which another had been evicted or against those accused of helping victims of a boycott. Agrarian crime rose as evictions increased. Cattle were maimed, hay and turf supplies were burned, crude threatening letters warned landlords of their imminent demise unless they repaired their ways, and murder was attempted and committed.

Those landlords who escaped direct personal violence faced serious financial difficulties as a result of intimidation, ostracism, and property destruction.

The government responded to the escalating violence with a Coercion Act in January 1881, which allowed for the arrest and imprisonment of suspects without trial. Gladstone followed this with another Land Act in April, which gave Irish tenants the “3Ps” they had demanded: fair rent to be established by an independent commission; fixture of tenure if rents were paid on time; and free sale, the ability independently to sell a lease for profit. This was a significant achievement in agrarian reform and essentially granted the Land League’s immediate demands, but many still were unhappy with its complicated provisions that did not offer any protection to tenants who were in rent arrears—namely, one-third of all tenants and two-thirds of those who lived in Connaught.

Parnell was in a delicate position. The legislation offered significant advances in land reform and from his perspective fulfilled the terms of his compact with Davitt and Devoy as far as agrarian issues were concerned. The act was welcomed by stronger farmers and businessmen, who together composed the majority of the Irish electorate,
When it became law, Parnell convinced moderates in the Land League to test its provisions, while he made a series of deliberately violent speeches that had the required effect of landing him in Kilmainham prison, thus appeasing extremist elements in the League who had suspected his commitment to their cause. From there he endorsed a "No Rent Manifesto" and encouraged tenants to boycott the commission established to decide fair rents. The government promptly suppressed the Land League, and the violence of secret societies such as the Moonlighters escalated.

By 1882, the government was ready to negotiate. Gladstone agreed to amend the Land Act to help tenants in arrears to take advantage of its provisions, while Parnell agreed to convince the league to accept this and to use his influence to end the agrarian violence. Successive governments, particularly Conservative Party administrations, passed further land reform measures in the hope that popular support for Home Rule would decrease as land reform increased. The successful Ashbourne Land Purchase Act of 1885 provided attractive loans to enable tenants to purchase their farms, while further measures such as Balfour's Land Act of 1891 and the Wyndham Land Act of 1903 increased the financial support that was available to tenants for purchasing their farms.

The central political significance of the land issue lay in its popular support. Parnell had taken a calculated yet successful gamble in involving himself with the Land League. He had recognized the potential of what Lalor had pointed out in the 1840s: the land issue was the engine that would pull political self-determination in its wake if the two could be harnessed. With the settlement of the major demands of the Land League in 1882, Parnell began to build a tightly disciplined and effective political party in Westminster, diligently supported by a committed grassroots organization of those who had benefited from land reform, with which he intended to achieve Home Rule.

**Home Rule**

A significant percentage of the Liberal Party, including Gladstone, had begun to accept that some measure of self-determination was necessary for stability in Ireland. When Gladstone's views became public, the Conservative Party declared its opposition to Home Rule and its support for the union. Some members of his own party vehemently disagreed with his change in policy and formed a splinter group, taking the name Liberal Unionists. Undaunted once he had made his decision to introduce Home Rule, Gladstone rallied the remnants of his party together and, allied with Parnell's party, drew up a bill that was presented to parliament in 1886. This proposed establishing an Irish legislature in Dublin that would control domestic affairs, while imperial matters remained the preserve of Westminster where Irish MPs would no longer sit. An intense debate ensued, culminating in rejection of the bill by a majority combination of Liberal Unionists, Conservatives, and Irish Unionists, who collectively believed that Home Rule would be the first step toward complete separation, a precedent that would be disastrous for Protestantism and for the future of the British Empire.
Irish Unionism

There were two distinct types of Irish unionism. The first was generally referred to as southern unionism and was composed of a small number of influential upper-class individuals, most notably Protestant landlords but also wealthy businessmen and professionals, who had founded the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union in 1885 to oppose any attempt to interfere with the political union. The second unionist group was more numerous, cohesive, and ultimately effective. Ulster unionism reflected the numerical strength of Protestants in the north of Ireland where they composed more than 50 percent of the population and were distributed among all classes. Whereas southern unionism sought to protect the increasingly fragile position of the descendants of the Protestant ascendancy, given their slender numbers and declining influence in society, Ulster unionism was more aggressively hostile to Catholicism.

In particular, Ulster unionists feared that an Irish parliament would be ultimately dominated by the authoritarian Catholic Church and thus that "Home Rule would be Rome Rule." Additionally, unionists in Ulster emphasized that Belfast and its hinterland had prospered in the nineteenth century with the strong linen and shipbuilding industries, and they feared the economic repercussions of Home Rule. Ulster unionists formed the Anti-Repeal Union and joined with their southern counterparts in 1886 to form a Unionist Party whose MPs in Westminster would combat proposals for an Irish parliament. In terms of their share of Irish representation in the British parliament, they won only 18 seats out of a total of 103 in the 1885 general election. Parnell's Irish Parliamentary Party held the balance of Irish seats. Yet the unionists had powerful allies in the Conservative Party and in the Liberal Unionist Party, which together formed an effective bulwark against the passage of Home Rule in the House of Commons in 1886 and again in the House of Lords in 1893.

Continued Land Reform

During the late 1880s, agricultural depression produced another crisis. Evictions and emigration rose sharply, accompanied by traditional agrarian violence. The Land League reconstituted itself as the National League and embarked on the Plan of Campaign, another battle on behalf of tenant farmers. Parnell, unwilling to risk his alliance with Gladstone and immersed in his complicated private life, remained aloof from the campaign, which encouraged tenants to stage rent strikes if landlords rejected reasonable proposals for rent reductions. Boycotting was again employed to intimidate those tempted to lease farms from which others had been evicted. The popularity of the campaign alarmed Parnell, who feared that his Liberal Party allies would abandon Home Rule given the unrest in Ireland.

The Conservative Party government, which had replaced Gladstone's administration after the defeat of the 1886 Home Rule Bill, appointed Arthur Balfour as chief secretary for Ireland. He introduced a Coercion Act to suppress lawlessness but also proposed a Land Act that was passed in 1887; it revised rents and satisfied some of the immediate grievances. Balfour continued his work on land reform until the early 1890s. He was responsible for drawing up legislation, which the Conservative government passed in 1891, making attractive loans available to tenants to purchase their farms. A Congested Districts Board was established to consolidate farms along the western coast by buying and redistributing land, to encourage education in agricultural methods and production, and to promote local industries. By 1913 when it was dissolved, this body had spent more than £11 million in buying, apportioning, and improving two million acres of land, encouraging craft industry, and improving infrastructure.

The Fall of Parnell

Parnell's private life became public in 1889 and consumed his political career, split the Irish Parliamentary Party, and almost destroyed the prospects of achieving Home Rule. While Gladstone and Parnell were planning their tactics for the next attempt at passing a Home Rule Bill whenever the Liberal Party returned to power, Parnell was named a co-respondent in a divorce case. Katherine O'Shea, estranged wife of William O'Shea, had been involved with Parnell since 1886 and had been living with him since 1886. Her husband, well aware of the love affair, had chosen to ignore it while he awaited the spoils of a significant inheritance due to Katherine from her aunt. When the aunt died, her will bequeathed the money directly to Katherine, with provisions that made it impossible for O'Shea to benefit. In the aftermath of this disappointment, he initiated divorce proceedings which Parnell initially welcomed in his desire to marry Katherine, a marriage that took place in 1891.

The revelation of this long-term affair, although known to many of Parnell's colleagues, resulted in an uproar in Britain and Ireland. Gladstone made his continued support of Home Rule conditional on Parnell's resignation as party leader. The Catholic Church, long suspicious of Parnell as a political leader, roundly condemned him as an adulterer. Irish public opinion split in a bitter divide that mirrored that of the Parliamentary Party that had the responsibility of choosing between the leader and the policy. They chose the latter by a majority of twenty. Parnell was advised by his supporters in the party to retire temporarily, but he refused and campaigned at by-elections in Ireland where his candidates were consistently defeated. In September he fell gravely ill, and he died of pneumonia in October 1891. His death failed to heal the divide within the party, which lost its parliamentary effectiveness for years by choosing to continue bickering, but it transformed the man into a mystic nationalist victim who quickly joined the ranks of those who had preceded him. Fickle public opinion, which had been harsh in its condemnation of him in life, loved him in death. His ghost assumed the persona of an uncrowned king who had been deliberately destroyed by his petty enemies.

The Gaelic Revival

While many contemporaries, most effectively W. B. Yeats, characterized the closing decade of the nineteenth century as apolitical, the temporary eclipse of the fractured
Irish Parliamentary Party merely threw into relief economic, cultural, and political developments that had been brewing for some time. "Reival" was the shibboleth of the next two decades. As the achievement of an Irish parliament seemed unlikely in the near future, with the retirement of Gladstone after the Lords' rejection of the 1893 Home Rule Bill, the factionalism of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and the strength of unionist opposition, increased emphasis was placed on self-reliance, the de-anglicization of Irish life, and achievement in cultural, economic, and political spheres.

Sport was the first area of cultural revival with the founding of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in 1884 to halt the replacement of traditional Irish games with, in Archbishop Croke's view, "alien" sports such as cricket, tennis, soccer, and rugby. Founded in Tipperary by Michael Cusack, Archbishop Croke, and Maurice Davin, the GAA formalized and encouraged the playing of native games such as hurling and Gaelic football. Immensely popular and well organized throughout rural Ireland (with the exception of strong unionist areas), the GAA emphasized its exclusive nationalism by barring from membership and participation those who played "foreign" games.

Entrenched within the leadership of the movement was the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). The Fenians had maintained a superficially dormant existence for many years while awaiting another opportunity for revolution. The GAA—with its superb organization from the local to the national level; its emphasis on male team sports, training, and fitness; and its nationalist character—provided the perfect cover for the careful rejuvenation of IRB membership and morale. The Catholic Church was also part of the power structure of the GAA. Organization at the local club level necessarily involved the parish priest, whose approval was essential for the survival of any organization within his sphere of considerable influence.

Emphasis on linguistic identity is a hallmark of nationalism. Two approaches to language and literature emerged in Ireland toward the close of the century. The theme of de-anglicizing Ireland, first articulated by Archbishop Croke, who deplored a native tendency to imitate English "effeminate follies," provided the motif for other cultural projects. Comha na Gaéilge (the Gaelic League) was established by Douglas Hyde, Eoin MacNeill, and Fr. Eugene O'Growney in 1893 to resuscitate the rapidly declining Irish language (spoken by fewer than 14 percent of the population in 1901) and to promote the writing and publication of literature in Irish. Hyde, a native speaker of the language, collected and published popular collections of stories and poetry in Irish and English during the late 1880s. Slow to spread at first, there were more than six hundred branches of the League by 1901, which taught the language using O'Growney's textbook, encouraged traditional music and dance, organized fiseanna (festivals), and published a newspaper (An Claidheamh Soluis, The Sword of Light) that promoted Gaelic literature. It successfully campaigned to introduce the language into the educational curriculum at all levels, was responsible for making St. Patrick's Day a national holiday, encouraged sobriety, and worked with other organizations in fostering native industry and business.

While the league originally aimed to avoid divisive issues such as politics and religion in an attempt to encourage pluralist membership, the bond between language and nationalism, as well as the increasing power of the Catholic Church in the organizational structure, discouraged Protestant membership. Douglas Hyde, from a Church of Ireland background, recognized the necessity of Catholic clerical involvement if the League was to prosper, but disturbing examples of clerical power in League matters quickly alienated those Protestants who had initially been enthusiastic members, while confirming the forebodings of those who had remained aloof. Never as popular as the GAA, the Gaelic League was a profoundly influential cultural organization which, despite Hyde's insistence that it was nonpolitical, was the nationalist nursery for a new generation of political activists who came of age within a decade.

Building on the work of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars in preserving, translating, and annotating manuscripts in the Irish language, writers such as Samuel Ferguson and Standish O'Grady published popular versions of mythic tales in English, admitting many to a hitherto undiscovered world of Gaelic literature and mythology. The creation of a distinct Irish literature in the English language was the goal of a movement that came to be known as the Anglo-Irish literary revival. Energized by W. B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory, this movement sought to revive the power of Gaelic literature by publishing it in English and, using that early literature and mythology as a wellspring, to create a new national literature of the highest quality. Deeply influenced by European developments, the Irish Literary Theatre was founded in 1899 by Yeats, Gregory, and Edward Martyn. Its emphasis on poetic drama enacted by English players (in the absence of a professional Irish acting company) was of limited appeal, with the sole exception of Cathleen ni Houlihan in 1902, a popular allegorical treatment of Ireland as an old woman awaiting rejuvenation from the death of male patriots who fight for the restoration of her stolen "four green fields."

Partnership with an amateur group of Irish actors headed by William and Frank Fay led to the formation of the Abbey Theatre in 1904. The dramas produced in this theatre by Yeats, Gregory, and John Millington Synge in the first decade of this century represent the crowning achievement of the movement in literary terms, but the hostile and violent reaction of Irish (and Irish American) audiences to Synge's plays, most notably The Playboy of the Western World in 1907, with its perceived slurs on Irish nationalism and womanhood, revealed the uneasy relationship between literary endeavors and nationalist priorities.

Some of those priorities were ably articulated in the pages of The Leader by D. P. Moran, who advocated a philosophy of Irish-Ireland that supported the revival of the language and called for the rejuvenation of industry. He believed that economic self-reliance and cultural nationalism were more important than parliamentary politics, which he regarded as innately corrupt. Deprecating the slavish imitation of British trends that Archbishop Croke had earlier criticized, a tendency that Moran scathingly termed "West Britonism," Moran was also heartily critical of the Protestant personnel of the Anglo-Irish literary revival, insisting that the essence of cultural nationalism was Gaelic and Catholic.

Sinn Féin (Ourselves) was a name suggested by Mary Butler when Arthur Griffith described to her his concept of Irish self-reliance in economic, political, and cultural terms. Griffith was a Dubliner by birth and a printer by trade who returned from South Africa in 1898 to edit the United Irishman, a newspaper with limited circulation.
after 1916, largely due to a confused insistence by the government that Sinn Féin had been responsible for the rebellion, but for the first decade of its life it had a peripheral existence.

**Nationalism and Radicalism**

While the potential for revolution did not loom large on the horizon in the first decade of this century, the IRB, albeit limited in numbers, was found in every nationalist organization and was especially active in organizing events commemorating the centenary of the 1798 rebellion and in supporting the South African Boers in their war against Britain between 1899 and 1902. The gradual revival of the IRB from 1898 onward was largely due to the emergence of a new generation of revolutionaries, most notably Belfast men Denis McCullough and Bulmer Hobson, and Séan MacDiarmada from Leitrim. McCullough and Hobson established the Dungannon Clubs in 1905, which were separatist organizations that publicly debated nationalist issues and campaigned against Irish recruitment to the British army, and were one of the movements that combined to form Sinn Féin in 1907. MacDiarmada traveled all over the country in his overt role as an organizer for Sinn Féin, but he also covertly rebuilt IRB ranks and established networks of committed republicans.

Bulmer Hobson and Countess Constance Markievicz founded Na Fianna Éireann (Warriors of Ireland), a nationalist youth movement for boys that functioned as a crèche for IRB recruits. Countess Markievicz, a member of an established Sligo gentry family who had married a Polish count, was the most radical female republican of her time. She was involved with the militantly nationalist feminist movement Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Daughters of Ireland), founded by Maud Gonne in 1900 (it merged with Sinn Féin in 1907). In future years she became deeply involved in the labor movement, took part in the 1916 rebellion for which she received a death sentence (commuted to a prison term), and was the first woman ever elected to the British House of Commons in 1918.

One of the most important personalities in this IRB revival came from America. In 1907 John Devoy, leader of Clan na Gaeil, sent Thomas Clarke (a veteran of the 1880s dynamiting campaign in England for which he served fifteen years in prison) to Ireland to restructure the Brotherhood and to prepare to take advantage of any decent opportunity for revolution. Given the successive crises in European diplomacy and the intricate tangles of alliances and secret treaties, there was every likelihood of a major war erupting in the near future. British involvement in such a European war was virtually guaranteed, and this was the opportunity that the IRB were determined to seize. From his tobacconists' and newsagent's shop in Dublin's North Great Britain Street, Clarke reorganized the supreme council of the IRB and supported the replacement of older members with fresh blood, so that by 1912 the leadership of the movement in Ireland had passed into the hands of a new generation. While active membership in Ireland was fewer than two thousand men, Clarke and MacDiarmada preferred to bide their time in recruiting. Instead, they encouraged the placement of
small numbers of IRB men in key leadership positions of other organizations such as the Gaelic League, the GAA, and Sinn Féin, rather than risking infiltration by informers that would likely attend a wholesale recruitment campaign.

Militant nationalism was not the sole radical development of the decade, nor was the IRB the only group dreaming of revolution. Dublin in the early years of the twentieth century was a slum city, one that is brilliantly evoked in the dramas of Sean O'Casey. Thousands of families lived in single-room tenement apartments without heat or sanitation. Dublin's rates of infant and adult mortality were the highest in Britain and among the highest in Europe, while disease and malnutrition were rife. In a city dependent on trade rather than industry, skilled employment was limited. Male unemployment was estimated to be around 20 percent; female unemployment was much higher, and prostitution was prevalent.

The labor movement was slow to develop in Ireland for a number of reasons. The predominance of the national question and strong confessional allegiances that were hostile to socialism precluded the development of parties based on class division, which was the case in Britain and much of Europe. Political activity was dominated by nationalism and unionism. A conservative and largely rural society, with the exception of northeast Ulster, Ireland had not experienced significant industrialization, and trade unions, affiliated with British unions, tended to represent small groups of craftsmen. James Connolly, the son of Irish emigrants who had settled in Edinburgh, arrived in Ireland in 1896 to organize socialist clubs and to articulate his developing philosophy that socialism and nationalism were symbiotic with the formation of an Irish Socialist Republican Party. Having made little progress in spreading socialist ideology in Ireland and barely earning enough to provide for his family, in 1903 he left for America, where he worked as an organizer and writer for the Industrial Workers of the World, embraced syndicalism, and founded the Irish Socialist Federation in New York.

While Connolly's socialism had met with an unenthusiastic response from the Irish proletariat, James Larkin founded the first unskilled Irish union, the Irish Transport and General Worker's Union (ITGWU), in 1909. Born in Liverpool, Larkin was also of Irish descent. He arrived in Ireland in 1907 as a British union organizer, in which role he orchestrated a short-lived but significant strike of dockworkers in Belfast. Connolly returned to Ireland in 1910 to lead the new Socialist Party of Ireland and to organize the ITGWU in Ulster, having developed his philosophy in Labour in Irish History (1910), which interpreted early Gaelic society as "primitive communism," thus providing a historical and nativist precedent for an Irish socialist state. He argued that the nationalist struggle was in essence a social struggle and asserted that political independence had to precede the full development of Irish socialism.

The ITGWU spread rapidly in Dublin but also in cities such as Cork and Belfast, with an estimated membership of ten thousand by 1913. A series of strikes in 1911 and 1912, with roots in a general trade depression in Britain, culminated in a lockout of Dublin ITGWU members from work in 1913 when the representative of the Employers' Federation, William Martin Murphy, a strong supporter of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the owner of the Irish Independent newspaper and the Dublin Tramway Company, convinced his fellow employers to refuse to hire members of the union. In response Larkin called a strike, and workers who were members of the ITGWU were subsequently locked out of their jobs. The struggle was bitter and demonstrated impressive solidarity among the workers, given the infamy of the labor movement, but hunger and desperation at the onset of winter, as well as the influential disapproval of the Catholic Church, resulted in a victory for the employers as the men slowly returned to work.

The following year, Larkin departed for a lecture tour in America where he spoke against Britain at Irish American and German American events and was involved in the founding convention of the American Communist Party, for which he served a three-year prison sentence. Upon his release in 1913 he returned to find the Irish labor movement besieged by intense political divisions, not only between nationalists and unionists but also between advanced republicans and moderate nationalists. Connolly took over the leadership of the ITGWU in 1914 and developed the Irish Citizen Army (a small socialist militia founded to protect the striking workers from attacks by the Dublin Metropolitan Police) toward a revolutionary role. But the labor movement afer 1913, along with other initiatives such as the suffrage campaign and industrial committees, occupied a distinctly subservient position in Irish politics as the issue of Home Rule came to the fore once again.

Constructive Unionism

The Irish Parliamentary Party had called a truce in its post-Parnellite bickering and combined its factions under the leadership of John Redmond in 1900, but with successive Conservative Party governments in power from 1895 until 1905, the prospects for again raising the subject of Home Rule were not encouraging. Allied with the unionists, the conservatives were implacably opposed to a separate parliament for Ireland. They believed, as Gladstone once did, that the movement to modify the union by achieving Home Rule could be halted by social amelioration. "Killing Home Rule by kindness" was the epithet employed to describe an evolving constructive unionist policy that was committed to dealing with land ownership, local government, and social issues. The land acts that Arthur Balfour introduced in 1887 and 1891, supporting and extending the concept of peasant proprietorship, were based on a belief that ownership of land would reduce agrarian discontent and activity while satisfying the immediate and long-term interests of a significant section of the population that were among the strongest supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Many Irish unionists, particularly landlords in the south, were keen to support this government initiative and make the union work in economic and social terms.

Returning from a decade of ranching in Wyoming, Horace Plunkett, a Meath landlord and a Liberal Unionist MP from 1892 to 1900, worked to address economic and educational issues with the organization of an Irish agricultural cooperative movement in 1889 and the Irish Agricultural Organization Society in 1894. Pressure on the government resulted in the establishment in 1898 of an Irish Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction under Plunkett's direction. Plunkett emphasized economic initiative and self-sufficiency, and while his political attitudes differed...
markedly from D. P. Moran’s, for example, self-reliance in all areas of Irish life was encouraged in the Gaelic League, the Irish-Ireland movement, the literary revival, the arts and crafts movement, and Sinn Féin.

Arguably the most important piece of legislation introduced by the Conservative Party government was the Local Government Act in 1898. This essentially transferred power in local matters from the old grand juries, traditionally controlled by landlords, to new democratically elected councils voted in by an increased electorate, which for the first time included female voters. These councils were responsible for collecting and expending local property taxes on the maintenance of roads and the provision of public services. The effects of this legislation were not quite what the government had envisioned. Instead of satiating political aspirations, the revision of local government intensified the desire for Home Rule and support for the Irish Parliamentary Party as nationalists quickly came to dominate the new councils outside northeast Ulster.

Constructive unionism was at once a product of European conservative ideology, which had recognized that adaptability was the only meaningful way of preserving an old order in the face of new forces, and a specific British response to the Irish question. While the Conservative Party government was ready and able to introduce tradi-

tional coercive measures in response to a breakdown of law and order, they combined this with conciliation, producing legislation of great benefit to Ireland. Yet, as a policy it failed in its attempt to kill the desire for Home Rule which, with the return of the Liberal Party to government in 1905, was once more within the bounds of possibility.

While the Irish Parliamentary Party renewed its alliance with the Liberals after the 1905 election, the latter were not dependent on their support and were reluctant to commit to another campaign for Home Rule. They advocated the complete postponement of the Home Rule issue for five years while they experimented with the concept of gradual devolved powers such as the establishment of an Irish Council that would exercise limited jurisdiction in specific areas of Irish life. This proposal was ultimately rejected by Irish nationalists, but the Liberal-Irish Parliamentary Party alliance continued and important legislation was passed: a Labourer’s Act (1906) to provide housing; the Old Age Pensions Act (1908) for those over age seventy; the Irish University Act (1908), which gave university status to Queen’s College, Belfast, and established the National University of Ireland; and another Land Act (1909), which amended some of the financial aspects of the 1903 Wyndham Land Act and gave the Congested Districts Board increased powers of appropriation.

Reform of the House of Lords

Escalating tension between the British House of Commons and the House of Lords, over the power of the latter to exercise a veto on legislation passed by the Commons, was brought to a head in 1909. The House of Lords was traditionally a strong and effective ally of Conservatism and Unionism, with the result that, if the Lords so inclined, the Liberals were unable to pass much legislation without significant amendment or continued rejection. In 1909, the Liberal Party government passed a number of resolutions asserting the right of the Commons as the representative body of the legislature to have the final say on legislation, but the crisis climaxed when David Lloyd George, the chancellor of the exchequer, introduced a stiff budget that the Lords rejected. Parliament was dissolved, and a general election followed, which gave the balance of power between the Liberal Party (allied to the relatively new Labour Party) and the Conservatives (allied with the Unionists) to the Irish Parliamentary Party. If Redmond agreed to support the Liberals, then they would be able to form a government. In return for that support, the Liberals would have to commit once more to championing Home Rule.

The death of King Edward VII in 1910 and the succession of King George V led to a vain attempt by the political parties to avoid a constitutional crisis with regard to the Lords, but a second general election in less than a year produced a similar result. The Liberals and the Conservatives allied with Unionists each won exactly the same number of seats, while Labour captured forty-two. Again the Irish Parliamentary Party held the balance of power, and the Liberal Party leader, Henry Asquith, agreed to commit his government to Home Rule. Threatened with the creation of numerous new peers, the House of Lords rather than be flooded with the nouveau riche and other parvenus, agreed to an amendment of its veto power. Thenceforth legislation
passed by the Commons could be delayed no more than two years before becoming law. Although this was a considerable constitutional change in British parliamentary history, the significance of the Parliament Act of 1911 for Ireland was that it made the passing of the next Home Rule Bill inevitable if Asquith’s Liberal Party, committed to introducing the legislation, remained in government.

**The Third Home Rule Bill**

In April 1912, Asquith introduced the Government of Ireland Bill to the House of Commons. It proposed the establishment of a bicameral parliament in Dublin to be made up of an elected lower house of 164 members, and a senate of 40 members elected on a property franchise. This parliament would exercise devolved power in domestic issues while Westminster reserved power in anticipated areas such as the monarchy, foreign affairs, and defense (including the police force) but also in matters such as customs, taxes, social policy, and land issues. The representative of the monarchy, the lord-lieutenant, would serve as the leader of an executive council made up of ministers in charge of various Irish departments and would retain a veto power over legislation. Forty-two Irish MPs would continue to sit in Westminster to enable representation at the imperial table, a role that many eagerly anticipated.

Despite the rhetoric employed during election campaigns, Irish constitutional nationalism did not embrace separatism but, rather, regarded the empire in terms of its potential for Ireland. After all, Irishmen had played a crucial part in the establishment of the British Empire, especially in the ranks of the army, the navy, and the civil service. Redmond looked forward to the benefits for Ireland that a voice in imperial affairs could provide, as well as to his own role as a statesman of the empire.

A very modest form of devolved power, this proposed legislation did not address the objections and forebodings of the substantial unionist community in Ireland except for a general prohibition against the Irish parliament enacting discriminatory legislation. Welcomed by the Irish Parliamentary Party as the victorious outcome of a long battle, Irish nationalists somewhat precipitately celebrated this limited yet idealized form of self-government, while Irish unionists prepared to resist it by any means necessary. Unionists had not remained idle after the previous Home Rule crisis of 1893. They had recognized that while a Conservative government had remained in power, the threat against the union was held in abeyance, but if a sufficiently powerful Liberal-Irish Parliamentary Alliance emerged in the future, that threat would reappear.

Since 1907 the Ulster Unionist Council and the Irish Unionist Alliance had coordinated their efforts through the establishment of a Committee of Unionist Associations. Led from 1910 by Edward Carson, a distinguished Dublin-born barrister, the Unionist Party in Westminster cooperated closely with the Conservatives, but on the removal of the Lords’ veto power in 1911, they realized that extraparliamentary activities would be necessary in their fight against Home Rule. Unionism had always been concentrated in northeast Ulster. As its southern counterpart grew weaker, a result of the general decline in the economic and political position of its leading personnel who were predominantly landlords, Ulster unionism, led by James Craig MP intensified.

In 1910, the Orange Order had directed its members to prepare to exercise their duties in voting in that year’s general election to return the Unionist Party in strength to combat the predicted deadly blow at the Union. In the event that constitutional measures were inadequate, members were warned to prepare for a struggle. The anti-Home Rule campaign was formally launched in Ulster in 1911 when the Ulster Unionist Council, after a rally at which an estimated one hundred thousand people attended, decided to resist Home Rule. Meetings were held all over the province, and just before Asquith introduced the bill for the first time in Westminster, a demonstration was held in Belfast at which the Church of Ireland primate, the moderator of the Presbyterian Church, and many members of the Conservative Party were in attendance. A male Solemn League and Covenant and a female Declaration endorsing the former were signed by nearly half a million people of Ulster birth in September 1912. These documents were a declaration of unionist intent to uphold religious and civil liberties in resisting Home Rule by any means necessary. By the beginning of 1913, as the Home Rule Bill passed its final reading in the House of Commons, the Ulster Unionist Council established volunteers into a military body, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), which at once began to arm and drill in preparation for the coming conflict.

As the government procrastinated over its response to Ulster defiance, Irish nationalists consistently underestimated the resolve of the unionists, characterizing the public demonstrations and declarations as mere bluff. The foundation of the UVF with ninety thousand members shook that complacency. If unionists claimed a right to resist Home Rule by force, why should nationalists not have the right to establish their own force to demand its implementation? The Irish National Volunteers were established under the leadership of Eoin MacNeill, who had publicly called for such a development. Eight of the thirteen founding members were IRB men. The Volunteers stressed that their role was the defense of Home Rule and thus sought an alliance with the Irish Parliamentary Party, which accounted for the rapid rate of recruitment estimated at nearly two hundred thousand members in less than a year. Redmond, recognizing the dangers of allowing this movement to develop independently of the political party, successfully demanded control of the Volunteers in the summer of 1914.

The secret cabal of IRB men on the executive committee was unperturbed at what they regarded as a temporary expedient. Following the example of the UVF, although with less volume and success, the Irish National Volunteers armed themselves by gunrunning. A female auxiliary corps, Cumann na mBan (Women’s League), was established to support the Volunteers. Composed of middle-class professionals, working-class women, and those of independent means, it was politically radical but was thwarted by its subservient relationship to the Volunteers. On the eve of war in Europe, two paramilitary groups were preparing for conflict over the issue of self-government, while the government vacillated in deciding on a course of action.
The Great War

The outbreak of the First World War had the immediate effect of defusing the impending domestic crisis by transferring it to the front. The implementation of the Home Rule Bill was suspended for the duration of the war. Edward Carson pledged that Ulster unionists would shed their blood for crown and empire, a sanguine demonstration of loyalty that unionists were confident would guarantee their political future. The 36th (Ulster) Division was formed in October 1914 and was composed of more than thirty thousand members of the UVF. It was decimated at the battles of the Somme in July 1916, suffering thirty-two thousand casualties by the end of the war, a blood sacrifice that Frank McGuinness explores in his extraordinary play, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching towards the Somme*. John Redmond, conscious of an opportunity to prove Ireland's imperial credentials, and anticipating that nationalist support for the war effort would guarantee the implementation of Home Rule, likewise pledged the Irish National Volunteers to the war effort; the majority of members supported this decision. Almost thirty thousand men joined the 10th and 16th Divisions to fight for Home Rule, but a minority of between three and ten thousand men rejected his call to fight, insisting that it was not an Irish conflict. This splinter group retained the name Irish Volunteers, while those who supported Redmond called themselves the National Volunteers. Cumann na mBan supported the Irish Volunteers. Between nationalists and unionists, Catholics and Protestants, it is estimated that more than two hundred thousand Irishmen fought in the war, of whom nearly fifty thousand died. Yet within nationalist consciousness, the contribution of Irishmen to the Great War was eclipsed by the rebellion of 1916.

The Easter Rising

The IRB had responded to the war with a decision to stage an armed rebellion. Clarke and MacDiarmada led a committee to plan the insurrection and secured the cooperation of James Connolly and his small Citizen Army. Other members of the committee included Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, Éamonn Ceannt, and Joseph Plunkett. All were leading members of the Irish Volunteers: Pearse as director of organization, MacDonagh as director of training, Ceannt as director of communications, and Plunkett as director of military operations. Pearse and Ceannt joined the IRB in 1913, both MacDonagh and Plunkett were recruited in 1915. All poets, Pearse, MacDonagh, and Plunkett were the products of the cultural nationalist movement, especially the Gaelic League. Pearse was the editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis* from 1903 until 1909, after which he concentrated on the development of St. Enda’s, his bilingual school for boys in Dublin. Originally a supporter of Home Rule, his address at a Wolfe Tone commemoration ceremony in 1913, and most notably his oration in 1913 at the funeral of Fenian Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa (whose body had been shipped from New York for burial), when he declared that “Ireland unfree shall never be at peace,” confirmed his commitment to insurrection. His avocation of blood sacrifice has been well documented by Irish historians who have recently placed him in the context of heightened European militarism and comparative unionist rhetoric. Stating that from the graves of patriots spring living nations, Pearse believed that the Irish nation required a “cleansing and sanctifying” blood sacrifice to rejuvenate the national spirit in the fight for independence, a theme he explored in poetry and drama employing imagery from both Irish mythology and Catholicism.

While Eoin MacNeill ostensibly led the Irish Volunteers, whom he regarded as a pressure group rather than a military force, he was unaware of the IRB plot taking shape within the organization. Much of the initiative for the rebellion came from John Devoy and Clan na Gaeil in America who had approached Count Bernstorff, the German ambassador to the United States, in 1914 to apprise him of their intention to organize a rebellion and to request military aid. Sir Roger Casement, a British diplomat with a distinguished record of human rights activity and a recent convert to advanced Irish nationalism, was smuggled to Germany from New York to negotiate for official recognition and military aid and to raise a brigade of Irishmen from among the Allied prisoners of war.

The IRB planned to form the central core of the rebellion, which would remain completely secret until the last moment, when strategically placed members of the Brotherhood in the Volunteer movement would command the ranks to follow them into conflict. The Volunteers campaigned energetically against the war effort and recruitment to the British army, as did Arthur Griffith’s pacifist party, Sinn Féin, and it is from this parallel labor that the misconception arose that resulted in the Irish Volunteers becoming labeled as “Sinn Féin Volunteers” in weekly and monthly police reports. Fear of conscription was widespread, and as the war dragged on, the IRB was hopeful of popular support for an insurrection. But the intense secrecy it nurtured as its only weapon against government informers was ultimately counterproductive. Casement eventually succeeded in procuring and shipping a consignment of dated arms and mismatched ammunition from Germany, but faulty communications (which had to be routed through Clan na Gaeil in New York) led to confusion over the date of arrival. The ignorance of the local population on the eve of the rebellion as to what the German ship the *Aud* (disguised as a Norwegian trawler) was patiently waiting for in Tralee Bay led to her eventual interception by the British navy. Casement himself was arrested shortly afterward, having been brought to Ireland by German submarine. Transferred to London, he was later tried for treason and executed.

The rebellion was scheduled for Easter Sunday, April 23, 1916, but the belated realization by Eoin MacNeill of what was afoot, and his attempts to halt it by countermanding a public notice of Volunteer exercises (the insurrection signal), resulted in widespread confusion. IRB commanders throughout the countryside lacked clear information, although messengers were hastily dispatched from Dublin to inform them that the supreme council had decided to go ahead with the rebellion the following day. Government authorities in Dublin Castle had heard rumors of a rising, but with no confirmation from informers within the Volunteer movement, believed that with the capture of Casement the threat had been neutralized.

On Easter Monday, just before noon, to the initial amusement and subsequent bewilderment of the pedestrians strolling about the city on that civic holiday, about fifteen hundred Volunteers and members of the Citizen Army, led by the IRB, seized a
number of buildings in Dublin (the majority of which had little apparent strategic value compared to Trinity College and Dublin Castle, which were ignored). They declared the establishment of the Irish Republic and held their positions for five days, during which a British gunboat shelled the city center from Dublin Bay. Cumann na mBan played an active role in first aid and delivering dispatches. Forced to capitulate to prevent further civilian deaths (of 450 fatalities, most were civilians), Pearse took responsibility for issuing the order to surrender that was delivered to the various outposts by Cumann na mBan member Elizabeth Farrell.

The government declared martial law and appointed General Sir John Maxwell as military governor. Public responses varied. There was widespread confusion and rumors based on lack of information. People wondered about the identity of the rebels and the purpose of their actions while Irishmen were dying at the front for the sake of self-government. Some were convinced that it was inspired by socialism. Others, including John Redmond, characterized the insurrection as a German plot, an interpretation that found fertile ground in the minds of the public.

The severity of the government’s response to treason during wartime was predictable, yet shortsighted. Maxwell supervised the arrest of thousands of suspected “Sinn Féiners” (a term increasingly used as a catchphrase for advanced nationalists), nearly two thousand of whom were immediately deported without trial to internment camps and prisons in Britain. One hundred and seventy rebels were secretly court-martialed in Dublin. Ninety death sentences were pronounced, although seventy-five of these were commuted to life imprisonment. These included Éamon de Valera, born in New York to an Irish mother, and (to her indignation if also relief) Countess Constance Markievicz, because of her gender. Fifteen executions were carried out by degrees between May 3rd and May 12th. The names of the seven who signed the Proclamation of the Republic—Clarke, MacDiarmada, Connolly, Pearse, Plunkett, MacDonagh, and Ceannt—became familiar as bafflement slowly gave way to anger at the indiscriminatory nature of arrests and distress at the protracted executions.

The Rise of Sinn Féin

The leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party rapidly anticipated the consequences of a serious swing in public opinion and advised the British government that Home Rule must be implemented immediately in order to prevent political polarization. Contingent upon compromise between constitutional nationalists, who were fast losing their traditional support to advanced nationalism as the rebels became martyrs, and Carson, who insisted on permanent exclusion for six counties of Ulster from Home Rule, the negotiations conducted by Lloyd George quickly broke down. Partition was not a new proposal. It had been raised in the summer of 1912 when a Liberal Party MP suggested that Home Rule should not apply to the four Protestant-dominated counties of northeast Ulster: Antrim, Armagh, Down, and Londonderry. Carson countered six months later, as the legislation moved inexorably toward law, with a proposal that all nine Ulster counties should be permanently excluded from the measure.

By the summer of 1914, the Irish Parliamentary Party had conceded the concept of temporary partition with a suggested scheme of opting out of Home Rule on a county basis, which they anticipated would result in several Ulster counties with strong nationalist populations, such as Donegal, Cavan, Fermanagh, Tyrone, and Monaghan, deciding to accept Home Rule. The Unionist Party still insisted on the permanent exclusion of the province, although in principle they were prepared to surrender the counties of Cavan, Donegal, and Monaghan. Permanent exclusion of the remaining six counties was their final offer before the matter was suspended for the duration of the war.

By the end of the war and the next general election in 1918, the Irish Parliamentary Party had irrevocably lost its political mandate, as a significantly increased electorate due to the extension of the franchise voted for the program of advanced nationalism represented by Sinn Féin, which had been modified as a political party to campaign for recognition of the Republic. Griffith’s party had originally supported the moderate political goal of dual monarchy but had also contained within its composition several militant elements. That inherent separatism came to the fore in the aftermath of 1916, aided by the fact that Sinn Féin was mistakenly associated by the government and in the popular mind with the rebellion. Sinn Féin provided an organizational
umbrella for many aspects of moderate and advanced nationalism—monarchists, disenchanted parliamentarians, militant republicans, feminists, and socialists—as well as addressing issues of popular import, such as the fear of conscription and agrarian crime.

The only surviving male commandant of the rebellion was Éamon de Valera, who, while imprisoned, emerged as the leading republican voice. His agenda emphasized securing international recognition of the Republic at the peace conferences following the end of the war. In particular, he was confident that America, just entering the war, would endorse Ireland’s claim to be an independent nation and pressure Great Britain into acknowledging it. While conceding the power of the Irish-American political voice, given that America and Britain were allies in warfare, and that both Clan na Gaeil and Sinn Féin had engaged in pro-German activities, the chances of achieving American recognition for the Irish Republic were bleak.

De Valera was born in New York in 1882 but was raised from the age of three by his mother's family in Limerick. An enthusiastic member of the Gaelic League and a teacher by profession, he joined the Irish Volunteers in 1913. Upon his release from prison in the summer of 1917, due to a second government amnesty for Irish prisoners designed to create a more favorable climate for political cooperation, de Valera stood successfully as a Sinn Féin candidate in a Clare by-election. Supported by the Volunteer movement in whose uniform he campaigned, his was the third victory over the Irish Parliamentary Party within a year against abstentionists Sinn Féin candidates. Personally a devout Catholic, de Valera's electoral rhetoric stressed the essential relationship of religion and patriotism, smoothing over the traditional hostility the church had expressed for republicanism. A detente between the political movement and the church was evident in the aftermath of the 1916 rebellion, when periodicals and newspapers produced hagiographical treatments of the executed rebels as Catholic martyrs, while the members of Cumann na mBan under the presidency of Countess Markievicz organized commemorative ceremonies. De Valera skillfully reassured most of the hierarchy of the essential conservatism of the Sinn Féin movement, although Cardinal Michael Logue spoke openly about the immorality of utopian rebellion.

In October 1917 at the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis (national convention), de Valera skillfully trumped Griffith in securing leadership of the party and was the sole architect of a formula designed to smooth over the uneasy alliance of the various factions. Sinn Féin's agreed mission was to secure international recognition for an independent Irish Republic. Once that was achieved, the Irish people would participate in a referendum to decide the future form of government. Abstention from Westminster, appeals to the postwar peace talks, and passive pressure were the methods endorsed by the delegates in pursuit of this aim. Alternative methods of achieving their aims were not overtly addressed, but the threat of force remained an option, given the close relationship with the Irish Volunteers who, at their own national convention on the day following the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, also elected de Valera as their president. While another rebellion was not anticipated, the Volunteer executive reserved the power to declare war if the issue of conscription was forced.

Several key members of Sinn Féin occupied powerful positions in the Volunteers, and vice versa. Cathal Brugha, who like so many had progressed from the GAA and the Gaelic League into the Volunteers in 1913, was elected its chief of staff. Supporting the goals and methods that Sinn Fein had agreed upon, the role of the Volunteers as envisioned by de Valera and Brugha was to act as political lever rather than as militant army. De Valera recognized both the potential and the limitations of armed resistance. The Volunteers could not inflict a formal military defeat on the British army, but they could be strategically employed in combination with political action to convince the government to recognize the demands of Irish nationalists.

The IRB pursued a different path, placing little faith in a modus operandi that excluded revolution. The more clandestine recovery of the Brotherhood paralleled the renovation of the Volunteers and Sinn Fein. In 1909, Michael Collins joined the IRB in London, where he worked as a civil servant. He returned to Ireland early in 1916 to take part in the rebellion. Interned in the aftermath with hundreds of others in a Welsh prison camp, Collins set about quietly reorganizing the Brotherhood and recruiting fellow prisoners, some of whom had no radical political background while others were members of Sinn Fein and the Volunteers. Released toward the end of 1916 as part of the first government amnesty, Collins quickly joined the supreme council of the IRB. The established policy of secret infiltration was continued, as IRB members sought significant positions in both Sinn Fein and the Volunteers. Collins occupied Pearse's former position as director of organization and orchestrated the appointment of members of the Brotherhood to most of the executive positions. In 1917, with the death of Thomas Ashe, the president of the supreme council, as a result of forced feeding while on a prison hunger strike, Collins became the leader of the IRB. The political and military wings of nationalism were out of sync, despite de Valera's presidency of both the political party and the Volunteers. He pursued a program of conservative republicanism conducted through political pressure, while Collins, committed to further insurrection, controlled the IRB and covertly gained control of the Volunteers.

The political negotiations initiated by Lloyd George, which had resulted in de Valera's release from prison in the summer of 1917, dragged on until April 1918. Chaired by Horace Plunkett and attended by one hundred delegates, this convention was an exercise in futility. Sinn Fein boycotted it, while Ulster unionists retained their antipathy to Home Rule and reiterated their demand for exclusion. Southern unionists, conscious of the splendid isolation of their northern counterparts, belatedly accepted that their future lay in cooperation with Redmond's party and agreed to participate in a domestic parliament, but it remained a concession in principle only as Home Rule became increasingly passe among Irish nationalists. The death of John Redmond in March 1918 and the government's decision to implement conscription in Ireland confirmed the demise of constitutional nationalism. The convention was doomed to irrelevance as it refused to recognize the new political priorities, but the difficult political issues with which it sincerely wrestled continued to defy resolution in the following decades.

The conscription crisis solidified Sinn Fein's usurpation of nationalist politics. Despite dwindling rates of recruitment, Ireland had been excluded from conscription, which had been in force in Britain since 1915. With the German offensive on the western front in the spring of 1918, the government moved to apply conscription in
Ireland with a vague and pointless gesture in the direction of implementing Home Rule to sweeten the pill. This was met by a successful anti-conscription campaign led by Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers, and Cumann na mBan, with the cooperation of the Irish Parliamentary Party, which withdrew from Westminster in protest, and the influential participation of the Catholic Church. The government hastily responded with the discovery of a "German plot," a clumsy and transparent claim of evidence that Sinn Féin was plotting another rising. De Valera, Griffith, and seventy-three others were imprisoned, while Sinn Féin and the Gaelic League were suppressed. In the general election to Westminster held in December 1918, abstentionist Sinn Féin won seventy-three seats, many of them uncontested, while the Irish Parliamentary Party in a humiliating and terminal performance won six. Ulster Unionists returned to Westminster with twenty-six seats.

Those Sinn Féin members who had won seats and were not in prison, met in Dublin in January 1919 as Dáil Éireann (parliament of Ireland) and proceeded to adopt a provisional constitution, ratifying the declaration of the Irish Republic in 1916. This assembly issued a vain appeal for recognition to the nations at the peace conference in Paris to which it sent delegates. De Valera escaped from prison with Collins’s help in February. Before furtively making his way to America where he intended to campaign for funds and political recognition, he attended the second meeting of the Dáil in April and was elected Príomh Aire (prime minister). He appointed Arthur Griffith as minister of home affairs and Cathal Brugha as minister of defense. Finance was Michael Collins’s political portfolio, while Countess Markievicz became minister of labour and Eoin MacNeill was in charge of industry.

The infrequent and hasty meetings of the Dáil, many of whose members were busy evading arrest, were initially ignored by the Conservative Party–dominated coalition government led by Lloyd George, which was preoccupied with demobilization and peace negotiations. However, the 1914 Home Rule Act, which had been suspended for the duration of the war, was now due to come into effect once a decision had been made about Ulster. Against a background of escalating insurrection in Ireland orchestrated by Collins’s IRB-dominated Volunteers, Dáil Éireann was proclaimed an illegal assembly in the late summer of 1919. In the absence of any nationalist voice at Westminster, a cabinet committee chaired by Walter Long, a former leader of the Unionist Party, recommended the implementation of legislation to establish two Irish parliaments. Although it was successful in achieving exclusion from a Dublin parliament, the Unionist Party found itself in the ironic position of accepting the principle of self-government after having campaigned so arduously to avoid it.

Partition

However reluctant some were to accept self-government, the benefits of a devolved state with a Protestant majority within Great Britain proved attractive to those who mistrusted the long-term commitment of the British government to protect their political future. Ulster unionists prevailed in their desire for a six-county zone, although this was naturally unpopular with those unionists who lived in the three excluded counties on the periphery of the province. The argument for six counties was based on compromise: the full nine counties of the province would result in a very slim unionist majority (given the strong nationalist character of Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan), while the four counties that formed the core of unionism were too small an area to justify a regional parliament. While both Fermanagh and Tyrone contained nationalist majorities, they would be contained by the unionist strength of Antrim, Armagh, Down, and Londonderry. The Government of Ireland Act, which
became law in 1920, established two parliaments and also a Council of Ireland that was designed to draw its membership from and promote cooperation between the two regional parliaments, providing a bridge that would evolve eventually into a single parliament, thereby ending partition of the island. As before, Westminster reserved power over foreign affairs, external trade, and finance, and each region was to elect a small number of representatives to sit in the imperial parliament. Each parliament was to consist of a senate of twenty-six members and a lower house of fifty-two members elected by proportional representation to ensure a role for the respective minorities.

The inaugural election to the Northern Irish parliament took place in May 1921 with the return of forty unionists, six Sinn Féin representatives, and six nationalists to the lower house. Sinn Féin continued its policy of abstention, and the constitutional nationalist representatives followed suit, thus leaving the unionist members led by Prime Minister Sir James Craig in control of proceedings. The border dividing Northern Ireland from the rest of the country was drawn along county lines, excluding areas with strong unionist populations while including nationalist communities. The partition of Ireland, for so long a reality in perspective and practice, was thus formally accomplished in 1920.

The War of Independence

While this legislation also provided for a matching parliament in Dublin, the concept of a limited measure of Home Rule was obsolete in the south, given the developments in Irish nationalism since 1916 and the current state of guerrilla warfare initiated by the Irish Volunteers the previous year. On the very day that the Dáil first met in January 1919, the inaugural event of a protracted and patchy conflict between militant republicans and the forces of the government took place when two policemen were killed in a Volunteer ambush. Increasingly known as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), given that the Dáil had ratified the republic, they conducted guerrilla-style arms raids and attacks on the police force throughout 1919 and 1920, but the frequency and effectiveness of action depended on the initiative of local commanders.

Strongest in Munster and in the midland counties of Longford and Westmeath, the conflict intensified sharply during 1920 as the government responded by deploying police reinforcements. An auxiliary division of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) was created, drawing on demobilized officers from the British army, while a second force made up of former soldiers were quickly dubbed the "Black and Tans" in reference to their khaki and dark-green uniforms. Reprisal and retaliation were committed in an escalating pattern of violence and terror, which until the end of 1920 the British government refused to legitimize as a war by sending in the army. By July 1921, 405 policemen and 160 soldiers had been killed by the IRA, while there were 730 fatalities among civilians and the IRA.

Ignoring the political provisions of the Government of Ireland Act, Sinn Féin, with the help of Cumann na mBan, proceeded to usurp judicial, governmental, and ad-
effect from July 1921 as de Valera went to London to consider political solutions. But a united republic was an impossible objective.

While expressing support for the concept of unity, Lloyd George offered dominion status (self-government within the empire) for the twenty-six counties, stressing that Northern Ireland's constitutional status would remain unaffected except with the consent of its parliament. This was superficially rejected by de Valera, who nonetheless realized that partition was a political fact and that conceding a republic was at present unfeasible from an imperial perspective. The channels of communication remained open throughout the following months as a lengthy and detailed correspondence between Lloyd George and de Valera concluded with an invitation to negotiations in London to discuss Irish national aspirations and their relationship to the British Empire.

Choosing a delegation proved difficult. For reasons that are still debated by historians and biographers, de Valera insisted on remaining in Dublin. Some scholars attribute this to his realization that the delegation would fail to achieve a republic and his determination not to be the fated messenger. Others argue that jealousy of Collins's popularity and legendary exploits prompted de Valera to set him up as the scapegoat. His own convoluted explanation of why he refused to lead the delegation was in his position as president of the republic (a title he evolved from his position as prime minister of the Dáil). As such, he cast himself as the symbol of the republic and declared that participation in negotiation would compromise that position, a fairly feeble argument given his previous talks with Lloyd George. He also persuaded his cabinet colleagues that by staying in Dublin he would give the delegation a practical fallback position by having to consult with him at each stage of negotiation.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty

Arthur Griffith headed the delegation of plenipotentiaries that included a suspicious and reluctant Michael Collins. Robert Barton, Eamon Duggan, and George Gavan Duffy—chosen for their economic, legal, and constitutional qualifications—completed the negotiating team. The experienced and savvy British delegation was led by Lloyd George and included Winston Churchill, Austen Chamberlain, and Lord Birkenhead. De Valera had developed a concept that he called "external association," whereby Ireland would be associated with the British Empire but would not be a member of it. This was rejected by Lloyd George, who correctly interpreted it as the essence of republicanism with a new title. External association would remove Ireland from direct allegiance to the crown and establish political sovereignty, a formula de Valera hoped would satisfy the aspirations of those sworn to defend the republic, and which he persuaded the delegation to reintroduce despite Lloyd George's emphatic rejection.

Two months of negotiation produced a dramatic moment when Lloyd George, threatening immediate and terrible war within three days, urged the Irish delegates to sign a treaty that established a twenty-six-county Irish Free State within the empire, granted fiscal autonomy, and provided for a boundary commission to examine the border between Northern Ireland and the proposed Free State. Although the agreement was applicable to all of Ireland, thus recognizing the concept of essential unity, provision was made for the six counties of Northern Ireland to opt out, which they promptly did. The provision in the Government of Ireland Act for a Council of Ireland was also included in the agreement. The British government reserved access to specified naval facilities. Religious freedom was to be guaranteed. Faced with a choice between the treaty with its restrictions on political sovereignty and the resumption of a war that Collins knew the IRA could not win, the delegates signed the articles of agreement with misgivings on December 6, 1921.

Bitter divisions during cabinet meetings while negotiations were ongoing provided the opportunity for the reception of the treaty. On December 3, de Valera had rejected the draft treaty and sent his frustrated negotiators back to vainly present external association again. At the next cabinet meeting on December 8, when the delegates presented the signed articles of agreement, de Valera, Cathal Brugha, and Austin Stack voted to reject, while Griffith, Collins, Barton, and W. T. Cosgrave voted to accept. A secret meeting of the IRA executive endorsed their leader's belief that it was the best deal available and one that could be built on to eventually achieve the united republic.

The Dáil, which met on December 14 and 19, was characterized by rancorous debate. Extremists simply rejected the agreement because it did not provide for a united republic, while others, led by de Valera, sought to reject it in favor of yet again presenting external association. Troubled principally by the oath of allegiance to the crown, they argued that Irish independence of political action would be seriously restricted. Griffith and Collins emphasized that the concept of external association had been categorically and repeatedly rejected by the British government, which was prepared to declare all-out war if the treaty was rejected. Griffith stressed the benefits: British troops would evacuate the twenty-six-county Free State, which would exercise fiscal and political sovereignty symbolized by its own flag and army. He argued that the Boundary Commission would significantly revise the border between the two states, while economic considerations and the Council of Ireland would lead to mutual cooperation and eventual unity. Membership of the empire, which was clearly evolving toward equality and independence, was an asset rather than a disadvantage. Collins, in particular, was passionate in his defense of a measure that he defined as a stepping-stone to the republic and in his vain appeal for unity among nationalists.

On January 7, 1922, the Dáil voted in favor of accepting the treaty by sixty-four votes to fifty-seven, to which de Valera responded by resigning and withdrawing his supporters. Griffith was elected as prime minister of the Dáil, while Collins continued as minister of finance and Richard Mulcahy took over from Brugha as minister of defense. Under the terms of the treaty, ratified by the British parliament in March, a provisional government was established from the remaining members of the second Dáil. Collins was elected chairman of this interim body, which was responsible for overseeing the transition of power and drafting a constitution reflecting the articles of agreement. Meanwhile, Griffith's government continued to operate until elections and the ratification of a written constitution enabled the end of dual government.
Civil War

In the deliberate interim between the establishment of the provisional government and the summer elections, the factions polarized. Public opinion was generally in favor of a measure that would end the violence, remove the hated Black and Tans, and establish an Irish government. While Collins had convinced the IRA executive to accept the treaty, the ranks split on the issue. Many agreed with Collins's pragmatism and long-term perspective, but others were passionate in their rejection of what they regarded as the betrayal of those who had fought and died for the republic. Those who were pro-treaty formed the new army of the Free State, while the "Irregulars" refused to recognize the government and, in April 1922, seized and occupied the Four Courts in the heart of Dublin. Cumann na mBan also split with most of its members rejecting the treaty. De Valera formed an anti-treaty party, Cumann na Poblachta (Republican Party), but he mistrusted and was mistrusted by the military extremists whose actions made the slide toward hostilities seem inevitable. Attempts by Collins and de Valera to find stable ground for political compromise failed, as Winston Churchill rejected the first draft of the new constitution in which Collins had subtly worked the essence of external association in the hope of defusing republican hostility to the treaty.

On June 16, 1922, the elections returned a majority of pro-treaty candidates: fifty-eight from pro-treaty Sinn Féin, seventeen Labour candidates, seven independents, four southern unionists representing Dublin University seats, and seven from the recently established Farmers' Party. Thirty-five anti-treaty Sinn Féin candidates were elected. Thus 93 out of 128 new Teachta Dála (Dáil deputies) supported the agreement. Arthur Griffith was elected president of the Executive Council in the new Free State government. The new constitution of Saorstát Éireann (Irish Free State) established a lower house, which retained the name Dáil Éireann, to be henceforth elected by proportional representation based on universal suffrage. An upper house, Seanad Éireann (Senate of Ireland), was made up of thirty candidates elected by the Dáil and thirty nominated by the president of the Executive Council to represent the interests of the Protestant minority. W. B. Yeats served as a senator from 1922 to 1928, while Douglas Hyde became a senator in 1925.

On June 22, 1922, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, a native of Longford, security adviser to the Northern Irish government, and Unionist Party MP for North Down, was assassinated by two IRA men in London. Although the origins of the order to kill Wilson remain uncertain, the British government reacted to his death with an ultimatum to the Free State government to deal with the anti-treaty faction led by Rory O'Connor that had repudiated civil authority and seized the Four Courts the previous April. Spurred finally and obviously reluctantly to action by the kidnapping of J. J. O'Connell, the deputy chief of staff of the Free State army, Collins as commander in chief ordered an attack, which within a week ruined the building that housed irreplaceable historical manuscripts and thus ended the republican occupation. One of the fatalities was Cathal Brugha.

With the defeat of his party and position in the recent election, and with the military action of the new government, de Valera and his followers formally aligned themselves with the republican militants. Declaring the Free State and its institutions illegitimate, republicans established an ineffective underground government headed by de Valera and prepared for civil war that ensued throughout the twenty-six counties, although the heart of resistance lay in Munster. Badly armed, limited in numbers, employing familiar guerrilla tactics, and lacking the civilian support that had buoyed IRA efforts during the War of Independence, the Irregulars were no match for the superior manpower and resources of the Free State army. By August, republicans had been routed by Collins's troops throughout Munster. Although pockets of IRA resistance remained during the following months, the order to cease hostilities did not come until May 1923, the outcome of the conflict was obvious by the end of that summer.

Yet the fledgling Free State government endured other crises that summer. On August 12, 1922, Arthur Griffith suddenly died from a cerebral hemorrhage. Michael Collins was killed ten days later during an ambush by Irregulars at Béal na mBláth in west Cork. Their successors in government—W. T. Cosgrave as prime minister, Kevin O'Higgins as minister for justice and external affairs, and Richard Mulcahy as commander in chief of the armed forces—implemented draconian emergency powers to suppress republican dissent. Army tribunals were empowered to dispense punishments such as internment, imprisonment, and execution for offenses against the government, including the unlawful possession of firearms. Erskine Childers, a former Dáil minister who had used his yacht to smuggle guns for the Irish Volunteers in 1914, was executed for possession of a pistol that had been a gift from Michael Collins. In December 1922, Sean Hales, TD (Teachta Dála, Irish for Dáil Deputy), brother of prominent republican Tom Hales, was shot by the IRA. The government responded by executing leading republican prisoners, including Rory O'Connor and Liam Mellows. Between November 1922 and April 1923, the government executed seventy-seven prisoners. In all, the civil war counted for approximately twelve hundred deaths. More than eleven thousand republicans, including four hundred members of Cumann na mBan, were interned, although most of them were released over the following year. The IRA did not surrender its arms in May 1923 but, rather, declared a cessation of hostilities. Republicans continued to regard the Free State government as an illegitimate body and remained committed to the goal of subverting an executive and legislature founded on what they regarded as the betrayal of the treaty.

Northern Ireland

Sir James Craig and the unionists of Northern Ireland had successfully resisted attempts by Lloyd George to pressure them into political concessions during the treaty negotiations, arguing that the Government of Ireland Act was from their perspective a final settlement. Yet the treaty was greeted with dismay by unionists, as the essential unity of Ireland had been recognized in an article that applied the agreement to the entire country with provision for the six counties to opt out and the establishment of a Boundary Commission to examine the border between the two states. Political and sectarian violence was rife in the new state. IRA activities increased against the army
and police force as thousands of Catholics were driven from their homes. High unemployment levels, fear of socialism, and sectarian tension resulted in the mass expulsion of more than five thousand Catholics and nearly two thousand suspect Protestants from the Belfast shipyards in the summer of 1920. Riots, arson, and murder left one hundred people dead in Belfast in 1921. Between 1920 and 1922, political and sectarian violence in Northern Ireland accounted for 428 deaths and 1,766 wounded.

Augmenting the thirteen units of the British army and the new police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the Ulster Special Constabulary was established in September 1920, with the consent of the British government. Three classes of constables (A, full-time paid members; B, part-time paid auxiliaries; and C, volunteers reservists) were created, composed mainly of former UVF members. An entirely Protestant force, which frequently engaged in sectarian violence against Catholics, it was effective in containing IRA activity, while Craig's government introduced a Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act in 1922 that enabled internment without trial, prohibited assembly, and enforced a strict curfew. The possession of firearms was punishable by flogging, while the minister of home affairs had unspecified discretionary powers in preserving law and order. While one-third of the places in the new RUC were initially reserved for the nationalist minority of the state, nationalists repeated their abstention from parliament with a boycott of the new police force, which as a result was dominated by unionists.

The refusal by nationalists to recognize the legitimacy of the state or to participate in any of its evolving institutions was met with concerted sectarian discrimination by a government that viewed them as essentially disloyal and subversive. Although nationalists comprised about one-third of Northern Ireland's population, the government's statements regarding inclusion and equality were shallow. Instead, priority was given to establishing a Protestant state for a Protestant people. This, in turn, contributed to the increasing alienation of nationalists from the state. The vicious sectarian and political cycles showed no signs of change under new management. As civil war dominated life in the twenty-six counties, the government of the six counties concentrated on consolidating the institutions and powers of their state and suppressing the IRA, which in Northern Ireland set aside the split over the treaty in its campaign against British and unionist forces.

The Boundary Commission finally met toward the end of 1924. It was composed of Eoin MacNeill, representing the Free State; Justice Richard Feetham of the South African Supreme Court, representing the British government; and Belfast lawyer Joseph R. Fisher, who represented Northern Ireland but was appointed by the British government, as the Northern Irish government refused to cooperate with what it viewed as an attack on its territory. Feetham interpreted the specific clause of the treaty relating to the functions of the commission to exclude alteration of the entire boundary. Rather, he examined the economic and geographic considerations that might lead to a limited alteration of the border. After a year of deliberation, he recommended that part of South Armagh and slivers of Fermanagh be transferred to the Free State but that the strongly nationalist area of south Down remain part of Northern Ireland, while a section of east Donegal be transferred from the Free State to Northern Ireland. In terms of people, the Free State would gain about twenty-seven thousand Catholics but surrender over four thousand Protestants and twenty-seven hundred Catholics.

When these conclusions were leaked to an English newspaper, public opinion in the Free State was outraged by the limitations of the gains, the continued exclusion of nationalist areas, and, worst of all, the surrendering of territory and Catholics to Northern Ireland. Eoin MacNeill resigned. W. T. Cosgrave hurriedly met with James Craig and English Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin in London. The outcome of the meeting was the suppression of the commission's recommendations. This left the border unchanged, transferred the moot Council of Ireland's powers to the Northern Irish government, and thus ended potential cross-border cooperation and canceled the Free State's obligation to contribute to the British national debt. Envisioned as a measure to undermine partition, the Boundary Commission bolstered it.

Sinn Féin maintained its abstentionist position as IRA activity decreased after 1925, but for Northern Irish constitutional nationalists the failure of the Boundary Commission was a bitter experience that alerted them to the permanence of partition and to the need for a nationalist voice in parliament. In 1926, a former Irish Parliamentary Party MP, Joseph Devlin, led five nationalists into the Belfast parliament and was shortly joined by five more who reconsidered their abstentionist positions in 1927. But this Nationalist Party was not strong enough to offer effective opposition to the government, and it further declined as changes in the electoral system were implemented. The Government of Ireland Act had provided for a proportional representation system of voting in order to represent minority interests, but the passive resistance of Sinn Féin—which stood for election yet refused to participate in government—led to the abolition of proportional representation in local government in 1922 and parliamentary elections in 1929. Electoral boundaries were modified (gerrymandered) in favor of unionism, and by 1924 unionists controlled all but two local government councils.

The switch to the British electoral system strengthened unionist representation in their own parliament while eliminating the electoral prospects of independents and smaller parties. Unionists consistently held ten to twelve of the thirteen seats reserved for Northern Ireland in Westminster. In Lord Craigavon's (Craig became a viscount in 1927) view, one was either a unionist or a subversive, and with the abolition of proportional representation, a unionist monopoly of political power was confirmed. By 1932, Devlin's Nationalist Party had again withdrawn from participation in parliament, convinced that the policy of the government was to pursue sectarianism.

Relations between Catholics and Protestants, nationalists and unionists continued to worsen over the following decades as unionist dominance over every aspect of life became more deeply entrenched. Nationalists were perceived as the enemies of the state, and discrimination in employment and allocation of housing was thus justifiable in terms of proven loyalty versus subversion. Unemployment rose as agriculture and the shipbuilding and linen industries declined, with an average of 19 percent of the labor force unemployed from 1923 until 1930 and approximately 37 percent during the 1930s. Health conditions were poor, and the availability of public housing fell far short of demand. Despite such economic difficulties, the sectarian division of society and politics in Northern Ireland prevented the development of the Labour Party,
which never won more than three or four seats in parliament, mistrusted as it was by nationalists and unionists alike.

Seasonal sectarian violence between the two communities continued unabated, peaking in the summer months when the Orange Order triumphantly celebrated past and present victories over Catholics in a series of provocative marches. An attack on an Orange march in 1931 resulted in a wave of violent reprisals, while in July 1935 rioting in Belfast resulted in nine deaths and hundreds were driven from their homes. The British government, although ultimately in control of the devolved government in its new parliament building at Stormont, chose to abdicate its responsibilities toward the nationalist minority of the state over the following decades by adopting the official position that domestic problems required domestic solutions.

The Free State

In 1923, the pro-treaty element of Sinn Féin, which had been elected to the third Dáil the previous summer, reconstituted themselves as Cumann na nGaedheal (Irish Party) under the leadership of Griffith's successor, W. T. Cosgrave. Contesting its first election in August 1923, Cosgrave's new party won sixty-three seats and was supported in government by representatives of the Farmers' Party. Those elected as independents, including some southern unionists and former Home Rulers, were somewhat critical of Cumann na nGaedheal but supportive of the treaty and constitution on which the government was based. The Labour Party, despite a strong showing in the 1922 election, failed to capitalize on that success, capturing only fourteen seats in 1923. The explanation for its decline lay in ideological disputes and internal splits that coincided with the return of Jim Larkin from the United States and his subsequent clashes with union leaders. Added to factionalism, economic depression led to high unemployment and decreases in social benefits and wages, which the trade unions were unable to prevent.

The main opposition to Cumann na nGaedheal remained outside the Dáil as those thirty-five anti-treaty Sinn Féin TDs elected in 1922 refused to take their seats in a government that they regarded as illegitimate. With the formation of Cumann na nGaedheal, Sinn Féin, now in its third incarnation, solely represented anti-treaty Republicans led by de Valera who contested the 1923 election, winning forty-four seats. They continued their policy of nonparticipation as Cumann na nGaedheal formed a one-party government with no formal opposition in the Dáil, but de Valera was quick to realize that principled opposition outside the legislature was a limited policy. In November 1925, suspicious of his political intentions, the IRA withdrew support. At its Ard Fheis in March 1926, Sinn Féin rejected de Valera's proposal to enter the Dáil if the oath of allegiance to the monarchy was removed. Followed by approximately 50 percent of the Sinn Féin TDs and local party branches, de Valera founded a new republican party, Fianna Fáil (Warriors of Ireland), which campaigned against the oath of allegiance to the crown and supported a program of economic and social development.

Cumann na nGaedheal had faced the important task of state building with fortitude if with limited imagination, reorganizing the civil service, government departments, the legal system, and local government with efficiency but departing only slightly from the British models they had inherited. A new unarmed police force, Garda Síochána (Guardians of the Peace), was established in 1922. The reduction of the army, which had swollen during the civil war, was a priority that Kevin O'Higgins briskly accomplished in 1924, despite the serious opposition of senior officers and the resentment of those being demobilized.

The economy was a more intractable problem. Agriculture, the backbone of the economy, suffered serious recession as a result of the postwar slump in prices and the loss of British markets. Cosgrave's government committed itself to completing the transfer of land ownership to those who farmed it. Under the direction of Patrick Hogan as minister for agriculture, the 1923 Land Act established compulsory purchase of land from the few remaining landlords in the twenty-six counties, thus further depleting the small southern Protestant population, which decreased by 3 percent in the first decade of the Free State's existence. By the 1930s, Protestants accounted for just over 7 percent of the population. Agricultural production standards were targeted, and by 1929 the value of agricultural exports had significantly improved. Industry was limited in the Free State, and the government did little to encourage its development, although some protective tariffs were imposed on goods. Unemployment was high at about 17 percent, while an estimated one hundred thousand people emigrated in 1924 and 1925. The one achievement in the industrial sphere was the adoption of an electrification scheme and the establishment of the state-sponsored Electricity Supply Board.

Culturally, as the new state strove to assert its separate identity, great emphasis was placed on reviving the Irish language, which had continued to decline despite the initiative of the Gaelic League. The constitution specified that Irish was the national language, and the government committed itself to making the language a compulsory subject in secondary education. Financial incentives were offered for teacher training and for teaching all subjects through the language. Examinations were weighted in favor of candidates who answered in Irish. Steps were taken to make Irish compulsory for positions in the police, the army, and the civil service, and for university matriculation. Although the few remaining areas of the country where people spoke Irish as their first language, the Gaeltacht, were subsidized by the government, the number of native speakers halved in the first seventeen years of the Free State and continued to decline throughout the rest of the century.

Insularity was a hallmark of the conservative Free State as it emphasized its Gaelic and Catholic identity and strove to exclude foreign and modern influences including radio, newspapers, films, books, and music. The compulsory element of the language revival was an indication of official thinking that led to the establishment of film censorship in 1925 and a Censorship Board in 1929 to protect Irish society from immoral literature, pornography, and birth control information. Works by George Bernard Shaw, Ernest Hemingway, and Sean O'Casey were among those banned, while the Catholic Church happily cooperated in denouncing dance halls and jazz music. While
the constitution specified freedom of religious allegiance, it was inevitable that the character of the Free State was shaped by Catholicism. Divorce was at first officially obstructed and then prohibited in 1937, while the importation and sale of contraception was illegal from 1935 onward. Educational and social welfare matters largely remained the church’s prerogative. The 1908 papal decree *Ne Temere*, which had confirmed Protestant fears about the aggressive nature of Catholicism in its stipulation that children of mixed marriages had to be reared as Catholics, was fully enforced by the church in the new Free State, whatever lip service had been paid to minority interests.

In external affairs, the Cumann na nGaedheal government took advantage of the changing nature of the evolving commonwealth. Kevin O’Higgins and Desmond Fitzgerald worked effectively behind the scenes at the 1926 Imperial Conference, which declared that each dominion was an equal and autonomous community within the empire, while the outcome of the 1930 conference resulted in the landmark Statute of Westminster, which withdrew the right of the imperial parliament to legislate for the dominions without their consent and provided for the repeal of legislation affecting the dominions that had previously been passed by Westminster. The implications of this legislation for the Free State were tremendous, giving it the freedom to alter the provisions of the treaty, a power that de Valera was to exercise with great effect in the following decade. An ambassador to the United States was appointed in 1928, and in 1930 the Free State won a seat on the League of Nations Council that it had joined in 1923.

Fianna Fáil contested its first election in 1927 and won forty-four seats, compared with Cumann na nGaedheal’s significantly reduced tally of forty-seven seats. Labour had temporarily gained back significant ground with twenty-two seats, while the independents and the Farmers’ Party captured twenty-three seats between them. Sinn Féin and independent Republicans won a mere seven seats. If Fianna Fáil took its place in the Dáil it could threaten Cumann na nGaedheal’s ability to form a government, but in order to enter the legislature de Valera and his elected colleagues would have to take the oath of allegiance to the monarchy. The assassination of Kevin O’Higgins by the IRA a few days later led to a Public Safety Act, which again imposed the death penalty for illegal possession of arms and gave the government wide powers of arrest and detention in its campaign to suppress the unlawful IRA. Accompanying this legislation was an Electoral Amendment Bill, which introduced a prerequisite pledge to take the oath of allegiance for any candidate seeking election. Fianna Fáil responded to Cosgrave’sthrowing down of the gauntlet by declaring that the oath was merely an “empty formula” and, arriving at the Dáil to take their seats, signed the book containing the oath, which allowed de Valera to claim that he was simply signing his name as a technicality and not taking an oath of allegiance to the crown.

Cosgrave rapidly called another election. This resulted in the formation of a government by Cumann na nGaedheal that combined its sixty-two seats with the Farmers’ and independents’ total of eighteen seats. Fianna Fáil increased its share to fifty-seven seats, mostly at the expense of Labour, which declined again to thirteen TDs. Sinn Féin did not even contest the election. De Valera’s party energetically opposed Cosgrave’s administration throughout the following five years, while quietly disassociating itself from its past links with the IRA and successfully wooing the support of the Catholic Church. Fianna Fáil replaced a jaded Cumann na nGaedheal as the dominant party in the 1932 general election when it captured seventy-two seats compared to the latter’s fifty-seven and formed a government with the support of the seven Labour Party TDs who had been returned to office.

**Dismantling the Treaty**

As the new president of the Executive Council, de Valera immediately tackled the task of dismantling the treaty by initiating the abolition of the oath of allegiance, undermining the position of governor general, and withholding the annuities still owed to the British government from numerous land purchase loans advanced to Irish farmers over the previous forty years. Britain responded by imposing heavy duties on Irish agricultural exports to recoup the annual payment of £3 million, and this was countered by the Irish government imposing similar tariffs on British exports, mostly iron, cement, coal, and steel. The economic conflict that ensued over the next six years severely affected Irish agricultural exports, which had already fallen in 1929 due to decreased demands in the British market and the general economic depression. From an annual value of £49 million in 1929 they fell to £18 million in 1934.

Farmers suffered but generally supported de Valera’s stance in the ultimately disappointed expectation that the annuities they had to pay each year would be abolished. De Valera halved the amounts they had to pay but continued to collect the fee. The mutually damaging conflict was brought to a close in 1938 when the Irish government undertook to pay a final settlement of £10 million while, to the consternation of many of his colleagues, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain improvidently agreed to surrender British control of the ports and facilities reserved for its use in the twenty-six counties. An enormous political coup for de Valera, this agreement enabled his dogged pursuit of a policy of neutrality for the Free State during the imminent war.

The Army Comrades Association (ACA) was formed in 1932 by former soldiers of the Free State army. It rapidly assumed a political position when its leader T. F. O’Higgins (brother of the late Kevin O’Higgins), declared that the organization would oppose communism and defend free speech. As Cumann na nGaedheal meetings were popular targets for IRA attacks, the ACA assumed a protective role that led to violent clashes with republicans. A new political party simultaneously emerged in the Dáil led by James Dillon. Incorporating the Farmers’ Party, the new National Centre Party proposed a settlement of the economic conflict with Britain and sought to bridge the gap of the civil war conflict that lay at the heart of Irish politics. De Valera astutely responded with a snap election early in 1933, which increased his party’s strength to seventy-seven seats, while Cumann na nGaedheal fell farther to forty-eight seats and the National Centre Party won only eleven seats.

As Fianna Fáil increased in strength, the opposition parties sought out each other and strengthened their links to the ACA (now led by ex-Garda commissioner Eoin O’Duffy), which, following the example of Mussolini’s black-clad supporters, had
recently adopted a uniform of blue shirts and the straight-arm salute. In essence, however, the ACA, popularly known as the Blueshirts, remained a rural-dominated conservative movement. It called for an end to the British model of party politics in favor of a vocational model, recently advocated by Pope Pius XI, whereby TDs would represent certain groups such as farmers or business interests. Attempted government suppression of the movement led to the combination of Cumann na nGaedheal, the National Centre Party, and the Blueshirts in the formation of a new party, Fine Gael (Irish Tribe). Led briefly by O'Duffy (who subsequently departed to fight in the Spanish Civil War, having been ousted from his position as a result of his reckless and violent speeches), and under the subsequent leadership of W. T. Cosgrave, Fine Gael endorsed traditional party politics and effectively reorganized itself to become the main opposition party in the Dáil.

The tacit indulgence of the IRA by de Valera, and vice versa, proved temporary as militant republicans were consistently disappointed with his political performance. The paced and selective dismantling of the treaty provisions, however, progressive from a political perspective, was not enough for those who had anticipated an immediate assertion of the republic and an attack on partition. De Valera spent considerable energy and resources in cajoling republicans into Fianna Fáil through pension and compensation schemes, but his attempts to persuade the IRA to give up its arms were futile. Following several murders, the government banned the IRA in 1936 and used military tribunals to imprison its leaders. Driven underground, the movement split into numerous factions, one of which pursued a bombing campaign in Britain during 1938 and 1939. Membership declined from an estimated thirty thousand in the Free State in 1932 to a few hundred individuals with no effective leadership by the middle of the following decade.

Seizing upon the abdication crisis in Britain in 1936, the result of Edward VIII's determination to marry Wallis Simpson, de Valera legislatively removed all reference to the crown in the Free State constitution and proceeded in 1937 to introduce a new constitution that incorporated his scheme of external association with the Commonwealth. The name of the state was changed to Éire (Ireland), and even though the word "Republic" was not used in this document, de Valera achieved a republic in all but name. The new constitution denied Northern Ireland's constitutional status by claiming that the national territory comprised the entire island, although jurisdiction would be limited to the twenty-six counties pending reintegration of the national territory. An elected president became the head of state, an office that combined ceremonial functions with guardianship of the constitution. The office of president of the Executive Council was replaced by that of a prime minister called Taoiseach (chief), who would lead a cabinet of government ministers. The Dáil and the general electoral system remained unchanged, but the Seanad was remodelled so that of its sixty members, eleven would be nominated by the Taoiseach, six elected by university graduates, and the remaining forty-three elected on a vocational basis by members of government and local government.

Human and civil rights were guaranteed subject to public order and morality, which allowed the government considerable discretionary powers. Irish remained the first language of the state, while English was recognized as its second language. Religious freedom was guaranteed, but the document's language was permeated by Christian references, and the "special position" of the Catholic Church was officially recognized. The integrity of the family was emphasized, leading to an article that defined the premier role of females as wives and mothers whose position in the home was morally supported by the state. This led to a marriage ban in public service employment that was not finally removed until 1973. Divorce was prohibited, as was the remarriage of persons divorced elsewhere. Contraception had been made illegal two years previously, while abortion was so abhorrent that it was not even mentioned, although an amendment was added in 1963 to protect the life of the unborn. On July 1, 1937, the new constitution was approved by a slim majority of the electorate, and Fianna Fáil was returned to power with de Valera as Taoiseach. Endorsed by all parties, Douglas Hyde became the first president of Éire.

The Emergency

During the first years of political sovereignty within the empire, foreign affairs had revolved around the evolving commonwealth and the League of Nations. De Valera, who served as president of the Council of the League of Nations from 1922 and as president of the Assembly of the League in 1928, anticipated the approaching war and determined that Éire would remain neutral. The surrender of British control over specified ports and facilities in 1938 made this policy possible, and when the war began in September 1939, Éire declared its neutrality and a state of emergency was implemented by the Dáil that allowed the government powers to impose strict censorship and to take action against threats to the state. One such threat was the remnants of the IRA, which the new Offences Against the State Act was designed to counter with its extensive powers of internship and the introduction of the death penalty for treason. German attempts to initiate contact with the IRA to discuss anti-British activity revealed the IRA's inherent disorganization and weakness, which were compounded by the government's swift action in interning known militants. The army and its reserves were expanded to a quarter of a million men, while a coastal patrol watched for signs of attack.

Supported by the electorate, de Valera was resolute in maintaining neutrality despite considerable pressure from Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt to join the Allied cause. Concessions for Allied flights over Irish air space and antisuicide patrols in Irish waters were agreed on, but applications for port facilities at Berehaven in Cork for the essential Atlantic convoys were denied, which led Churchill to threaten invasion. The availability of Northern Ireland's ports eased the pressure on the convoys, although it added some two hundred miles to their hazardous journey. In the absence of those facilities, it is doubtful that Irish neutrality would have survived British need.

In essence, the Irish government's policy was one of benevolent neutrality whereby discreet and unofficial cooperation was given to Allied forces, such as turning a blind eye toward Allied pilots who inadvertently landed in Éire and allowing them to cross the border into Northern Ireland, while any Germans found in southern Ireland were
interred for the duration of the war. Reflecting poor economic conditions in the twenty-six counties, as well as popular disapproval of German aggression, fifty thousand Irishmen joined the British army while several thousand male and female Irish emigrants to Britain provided labor for war production and, despite domestic rationing, Irish farmers supplied price-controlled food for the British market. The twenty-six counties suffered from general shortages of food, fuel, and other essentials, and once from a misdirected German bombing raid that hit Dublin in May 1941, but the most significant result of the war was the affirmation of political sovereignty and national identity that the policy of neutrality had enabled.

The political landscape changed in the postwar period with the emergence of smaller parties expressing discontent with economic and political conditions as Fine Gael and the Labour Party continued to lose ground. Clann na Talmhan (Agricultural Party), which called for reform of land division and general farming conditions, drew support away from Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil with the election of fourteen deputies in 1943, but ultimately it proved a transitory party. More significant was the establishment in 1946 of Clann na Poblachta (Republican Party), led by ex-IRA chief of staff Sean MacBride, the son of former revolutionaries Maud Gonne and John MacBride, the latter who had been executed for his part in the 1916 rebellion.

Composed of IRA members who had realized the futility of a military campaign and radicals who sought social and economic reform, this new party threatened Fianna Fáil’s claim to represent republican interests. In the 1946 general election, a coalition of Fine Gael, Labour, Clann na Talmhan, and Clann na Poblachta succeeded in ousting de Valera from power for the first time in sixteen years. This interparty government, led by John A. Costello and based on an uneasy coalition of different agendas, was short-lived, but it accomplished the unanticipated declaration of a republic, and in its controversial fall, illuminated the power of the Catholic Church. The decision to change the name and constitutional status of the state was announced by the Taoiseach while on a Canadian visit in 1948 and was a surprise to the Irish public. But reflecting Sean MacBride’s position as minister of external affairs, this move had been decided upon by the cabinet the previous summer. With the repeal of the External Relations Act severing Eire’s relationship with the commonwealth, the Republic of Ireland was finally realized at Easter 1949.

Republic of Ireland

The young minister for health, Dr. Noel Browne, successfully tackled the severe problem of tuberculosis, which accounted for approximately four thousand deaths per year, by spending £30 million in building and staffing sanatoriums throughout the countryside. Free treatment was provided to those suffering from the disease, and within ten years the fatality rates had been reduced by two-thirds and continued to fall until the disease was eliminated. Less successful was his innovative Mother and Child Scheme, which aimed to provide free medical care for mothers and children under sixteen. The medical profession opposed free health care (worried that it would undermine their practices), but it was the powerful opposition of the Catholic Church that killed the plan and provoked the fall of the government. The church insisted that the provision of health care was the parents’ prerogative and worried that state intervention would evolve into state control and thus lead to policies that the church opposed, such as birth control and abortion. Browne’s refusal to compromise on the legislation led to demands for his resignation by his party leader, Sean MacBride.

Browne’s departure was repeated by some of his party colleagues, and with the withdrawal of their support, the coalition government collapsed, resulting in a general election that enabled Fianna Fáil to assume power once again. Clann na Poblachta never recovered from the experience. Apart from a second short experience of interparty government under Costello between 1954 and 1957 (during which time the Republic of Ireland joined the United Nations), Fianna Fáil held power for the next twenty-two years. De Valera was eventually convinced to retire from leadership of the party at the age of seventy-seven when he succeeded Sean T. O’Kelly as president, allowing the younger and dynamic Sean Lemass to succeed him as Taoiseach in 1959. De Valera served as president of the republic from 1959 until 1973. He died in 1975 at the age of ninety-two.

Throughout the 1960s, Lemass concentrated on the sluggish economy that he had inherited from de Valera. Job creation in industry after the war was offset by the substantial decreases in agricultural employment. The republic was still heavily dependent on British markets, and emigration rose to late-nineteenth-century levels. Between 1936 and 1946, some 187,000 people left the twenty-six counties; during the following decade, 316,000 emigrated, followed by more than 200,000 between 1956 and 1961. The population of the state according to the 1961 census was only 2.8 million. Implementing the recommendations of the 1958 Whakarere Report, successive programs for economic expansion were implemented that aimed at joining the European Economic Community (EEC), stimulating private industrial investment, and encouraging foreign capital into the state with attractive financial incentives for multinational companies establishing a base. These plans were aided by a general improvement in economic conditions, which resulted in an average annual growth of 4 percent during the early 1960s. In 1965, an Anglo-Irish free trade agreement stimulated further development and made economic cooperation with Northern Ireland possible. Some 350 foreign companies were attracted into the twenty-six counties during the 1960s, while emigration slowed down and the population increased for the first time in more than a century. The Republic of Ireland became a member of the EEC in 1973, which enabled it to direct a higher percentage of its exports outside the British market.

Important developments were evident in Irish society. Free secondary education was introduced in 1957 by Donogh O’Malley, with a dramatic increase in the number of pupils who went on to the post-primary grades, while the number of university students also rose as financial aid increased. From the mid-1960s, the number of women in the workforce (only 34 percent of those employed were female in 1961) rose, as did the number of female graduates from universities and colleges. The prohibition on employing married female teachers, which was the result of the constitutional emphasis on a woman’s place being in the home as wife and mother, was
abandoned in 1957, although married women were prevented from working in the civil service until 1973. The Married Women’s Status Act was passed in 1957 to take the first step toward equalizing the position of female spouses. For the first time in the history of the state, married women could hold property in their own name, enter into contracts, and initiate legal proceedings. The Guardianship of Infants Act in 1964 gave mothers and fathers an equal role in decisions about their children’s upbringing (previously, fathers exercised sole rights in the rearing of children). The 1965 Succession Act legally entitled widows to a share of their deceased spouse’s estate, whereas previously they could be completely disinherited. Welfare provisions such as children’s allowances, work insurance, and pensions improved.

Radio Telefís Éireann (RTE), the national television service, was established in 1961. Censorship declined from 1966 onward as the republic abandoned its parochial shell. The Second Vatican Council slightly eased the puritanism of Catholicism, and a referendum held in 1972 removed the “special position” of the Catholic Church from the constitution, although divorce and contraception remained prohibited. In 1979, legislation was passed that permitted married couples to purchase birth control with a prescription. It was not until 1993 that contraception was made freely available and homosexual activity was decriminalized. An amendment protecting the life of the unborn was added to the constitution in 1983, and subsequent attempts to remove it have failed, although public opinion accepts the fact that Irish women travel to Britain for abortions. In 1992, a constitutional crisis occurred when the High Court interpreted the constitution to prevent a minor, pregnant as the result of rape, from traveling outside the country to terminate the pregnancy. The Supreme Court overturned this decision, and in 1993 the right to travel, and to avail oneself of information about abortion services, was approved in a referendum. In 1986, a proposal to permit limited divorce was rejected by the electorate, but in 1995 a second referendum resulted in the repeal of the relevant article in the constitution, allowing for a moderate form of divorce.

Economic recession from 1974 until the late 1980s saw unemployment and emigration soar again. Fine Gael under the leadership of Garret FitzGerald, in coalition with the Labour Party, provided an alternative to Fianna Fáil, which had suffered from the implication of two government ministers in republican gunrunning schemes in 1970. Yet by 1977, Fianna Fáil had recovered power with the largest majority in its history, winning eighty-four seats to the combined sixty-four of the other parties. Led by Charles Haughey from 1979, Fianna Fáil announced its determination to work toward a solution of the conflict in Northern Ireland, building upon Sean Lemass’s pragmatic overtures that had been engulfed by the disintegration of the northern state into social and political anarchy in the late 1960s. With the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, and the ongoing “peace process” of the 1990s, successive Irish governments have been cooperating with successive British governments in developing political initiatives aimed at ending the civil and political conflict in the six counties.

The role of the European Economic Community (now the European Union) has been vital in the Republic’s economic development. Financial aid has improved the state’s infrastructure, while the Common Agricultural Policy has benefited Irish farming. In May 1987, the Irish electorate approved the implementation of the Single Euro-

pean Act and followed this by endorsing the 1992 Maastricht Treaty that provided for closer integration in economic, judicial, and security issues. Ireland’s vibrant economy, recently christened the Celtic Tiger, experienced the highest rates of growth in Europe in the 1990s. Emigration declined to its lowest levels in the history of the state, as did unemployment. Ireland has modernized rapidly in the past decade, transforming its image from a minor and peripheral member of the European Union. It is now regarded as an economic success; its population is young, well educated, confident, and affluent; and it no longer experiences the depletion of emigration. Recently, the Economist named the Republic of Ireland as the best place to live according to a quality-of-life assessment, because it combines desirable factors such as high growth and low unemployment with the preservation of stable family and community life. Yet, the modernization of Ireland has led many to question the future of traditional values and culture.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland was exempt from conscription during the Second World War but participated fully in the Allied war effort for which it had been preparing since 1937, a role that paid dividends in the postwar period. Northern Irish ports offered protection for the Atlantic convoys excluded from Eire’s ports and upon which the survival of the Allied campaign depended. Londonderry provided the site for an important American naval base, while Canadian naval forces were transferred there from Iceland. Thousands of American troops arrived in 1942 and 1943 as Northern Ireland became the Allied forces’ main training site for the Normandy invasion. The shipbuilding industry was temporarily rejuvenated, while the rapid development of the limited aircraft industry and the building of airfields provided much needed employment and transformed the six-county state into a virtual aircraft carrier. One hundred and fifty ships were produced in Belfast during the war years, while fifteen hundred aircraft and five hundred tanks were also produced. Agricultural production was increased threefold to meet mainland war needs as compulsory tillage raised the production of crops and livestock numbers rose dramatically.

As an important center of war production, Belfast was targeted by German bombers, suffering four air raids in 1941 that killed hundreds of civilians. Early in April, six bombers destroyed a crucial Harland and Wolff factory and killed thirteen people. One week later, 150 bombers hit Belfast again, destroying residential areas, churches, hospitals, a linen mill, and a railway station, as well as inflicting further damage to sections of Harland and Wolff and killing approximately 745 people. Two further attacks occurred early in May, with a loss of more than 150 lives and extensive damage to crucial sites of aircraft production. One hundred thousand people were rendered homeless by the attacks, causing temporary problems in providing food and shelter. The war resulted in economic prosperity for Northern Ireland as heavy industry was revived and agricultural production intensified, but the political and sectarian divisions remained.

Craigavon had died in the early stages of the war and was first replaced by J. M.
Andrews and then by Sir Basil Brooke (afterward Viscount Brookeborough) as prime minister. Constitutional nationalists remained an ineffective force, while the Northern Ireland Labour Party alienated what nationalist support it might have had by supporting the British connection. Unionists were keenly aware of the valuable contribution that Northern Ireland had made to the Allied war effort, in stark contrast to Eire, and were determined to capitalize upon Britain's acknowledgment of their role.

The 1945 general election in Britain produced a Labour government that the unionists were initially wary of as a dubious ally, but their suspicions were put aside in pursuit of the advantages of the modern welfare state that Prime Minister Clement Attlee introduced to Great Britain in the postwar period. A series of financial agreements reached between 1946 and 1951 resolved the financial limitations that had hampered the Northern Irish government since 1920. Britain agreed to subsidize the cost of implementing new welfare measures in Northern Ireland, which benefited from a new system of national insurance incorporating unemployment benefits, family allowances, pensions, free health care, funds for public housing, and free primary and secondary education in a remodeled system that also provided grants for building new schools and financial support for university education, regardless of social and religious background.

Taoiseach John A. Costello's announcement of Eire's decision to leave the commonwealth and declare itself a republic in 1949 alarmed the Northern Irish government, which imagined that an attack on partition would follow. Brookeborough called a general election, which eliminated Labour Party representation in Stormont and reaffirmed unionist power. A recently founded conservative and largely rural nationalist organization, the Anti-Partition League, aimed at achieving a parliamentary presence to work toward ending the division of the island, failed to get any of its candidates elected. Legislation introduced in Westminster to recognize the changed status of the twenty-six counties reasserted the status of Northern Ireland, declaring that in no event would Northern Ireland cease to be part of the United Kingdom without the consent of the parliament of Northern Ireland. While the Republic's hopes of undermining partition were dashed by the passing of this Ireland Act, the unionist government of Northern Ireland was comforted by this legislative guarantee of its state's political status and by the official visit of Princess Elizabeth and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, to Belfast.

With the security of the Ireland Act, and particularly after the replacement of de Valera by Sean Lemass as Taoiseach, certain limited measures of cross-border cooperation became possible and practical from an economic perspective. Land-drainage plans, the establishment of a hydroelectric station, and management of railway services offered civil servants and government ministers from both states opportunities for constructive and mutually beneficial interaction, but little of substance changed in internal politics, despite an improving economy that was benefiting from the welfare state and the attraction of new industries. Unemployment and emigration among Catholics remained high, as Sinn Féin with its endorsement of armed resistance won only two seats in the 1955 elections and the IRA struggled to reorganize. It conducted a futile border campaign between 1956 and 1962, which cost nineteen lives and consid-erably property damage but was eventually abandoned as a result of internal factions and security measures employed by both governments, combined with a lack of popular support.

Former minister of finance, Captain Terence O'Neill, who succeeded Brookeborough as prime minister in 1963, was determined to tackle unemployment, which was four times higher than in mainland Britain, and the forces of hatred and violence that had long paralyzed Northern Ireland's development. Genuine in his desire for reform, reconciliation, and an end to economic and social discrimination, O'Neill's policy proved much too radical for his unionist colleagues in government, and he was also mistrusted by extreme nationalists. A false dawn of good feeling was symbolized by his visits to Catholic schools and his much vaunted economic plans that aimed at attracting foreign investment, financing industrial centers, and improving road transport. A new ministry of development and an advisory Economic Council were established, and a number of multinational companies, including Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), Grundig, and Michelin, set up bases in Northern Ireland, but the postwar decline of long-established industries such as shipbuilding and linen manufacture with significant job losses continued. Some scholars have dismissed O'Neill's economic initiatives as superficial and badly planned, but twenty-nine thousand jobs were created, although taking into consideration job losses, a net gain of only five thousand was achieved by the end of the decade.

A new pragmatic willingness on the part of the republic to recognize the existence of Northern Ireland was becoming more apparent under the leadership of Sean Lemass. O'Neill's first meeting with Lemass in Belfast early in 1965 to discuss economic matters was arranged without seeking the approval of his cabinet, but after some initial sulking they followed public opinion in welcoming practical economic cooperation. O'Neill took an official visit to Dublin the following month. The Nationalist Party in Northern Ireland, led by Eddie McAteer, welcomed these positive developments, and in February 1965 the nine elected nationalist representatives accepted the role of official opposition in Stormont. In the general election the following November, voters endorsed O'Neill's modernizing economic and integrative policies by voting for his party in higher numbers than in any election since 1921, yet serious opposition to O'Neill was forming within the Unionist Party.

Disturbed by his liberalism and conciliatory attitude to Catholics, and the implications for unionist employment and control of government if nationalists were brought in from the cold, members of his party looked toward Minister of Commerce Brian Faulkner as a more suitable leader. Condemnation of O'Neill and his policies also came from outside Stormont, as the strident voice of Presbyterian fundamentalism, the Reverend Ian Paisley, accused him of betraying the British and Protestant heritage of the state. A member of the Orange Order, Paisley established the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster in 1951 and entered the political arena in 1956 as a leading member of the extremist group, Ulster Protestant Action, which aimed at maintaining Protestant dominance in all aspects of Northern Irish life. His combination of fundamentalism and fiery political rhetoric proved popular with Protestants worried about the threat to their political and social hegemony if O'Neill pursued his integrationist
policies. In 1966, Paisley founded the Protestant Unionist Party and chaired the Ulster Constitution Defence Committee, which supervised the revival of the UVF to prepare for the protection of Protestant Ulster.

Despite O'Neill's intentions of improving the position of Catholics and modernizing Northern Ireland, little of practical significance was actually achieved. Products of the postwar reform of the education system, a new generation of university-educated Catholics grew impatient with empty promises and organized a movement to demand equality of treatment as British citizens. Founded in 1966, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) demanded human and civil rights; reform of the police force; reform of the electoral system, the franchise, and the electoral boundaries; reform of housing and employment practices; and repeal of the Special Powers Act.

Taking its cue from the civil rights movement in the United States, the leaders of the NICRA organized nonviolent marches that were quickly characterized by clashes with an aggressive RUC and were broadcast all over the world, as the power of television focused international attention on the state. With prominent and effective spokespersons in Bernadette Devlin and John Hume, the NICRA was composed of disparate elements representing socialist interests (Young Socialist Movement), students from Queen's University, militant activists (People's Democracy), and local interest groups (Derry Citizens' Action Committee). This combination of elements held together for the time being, but an inherent split between the pacifist position represented by John Hume and the urge to physically resist the violence of the state articulated by Bernadette Devlin was inevitable. Popularly viewed as a republican plot by leading unionists, the NICRA marches were regarded as legitimate targets for police action and inspired counterdemonstrations by Paisley's followers. On October 5, 1968, a banned civil rights march in Derry degenerated into violent rioting by demonstrators and members of the RUC.

A belated reform package unveiled by O'Neill in cooperation with British Prime Minister Harold Wilson promised reform in public housing allocation, local government elections, and the repeal of the Special Powers Act. This was welcomed by the moderate members of the civil rights movement but was rejected by the more militant elements and inspired ominous opposition from within unionist ranks. Brian Faulkner resigned from the government, and members of the Unionist Party publicly criticized O'Neill who responded with a general election that split the party between those who supported him and those who opposed his continued leadership. The Nationalist Party was eclipsed by the new Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), which succeeded in electing civil rights activists John Hume and Ivan Cooper to the parliament, while Bernadette Devlin of the People's Democracy movement was elected the following month as a Westminster MP.

O'Neill resigned in April 1969, and his seat in the following by-election was ominously won by Ian Paisley, while James Chichester-Clark emerged as the new prime minister. To the anger of unionists, the British government initiated experimental "direct rule by proxy," whereby they supervised the conduct of the Stormont government. Riots continued between marchers and police in Londonderry and Belfast throughout the summer of 1969 as civil rights marches were banned but traditional Orange Order marches proceeded. The disintegration of law and order in the region prompted the British government to send in ten thousand soldiers to act as a buffer between the police and the Catholic community, which also suffered from attacks at the hands of Protestant extremists such as the "B Specials" and the Ulster Defence Association.

Regenerated by the anxiety and anger of the nationalist community, both Sinn Féin and the IRA divided into factions. The traditional militant wing of the IRA, split from an element that had turned toward socialism, became the superior faction rechristened as the Provisional IRA, or "Provos." Under the leadership of Seán MacStiofáin, and financed by sympathizers in the Republic and in the United States, the Provos energetically proceeded to recruit and rearm. Sinn Féin also split into official and provisional factions, with the former pursuing parliamentary politics in the Republic (as the Workers' Party from 1977), while the latter, true to its abstentionist heritage, supported the military campaign of the Provisional IRA.

Chichester-Clark resigned in March 1971 when his demand for more British troops was refused by British Prime Minister Edward Heath. He was replaced by Brian Faulkner, who persuaded the British government to counteract IRA activity with the reintroduction of internment without trial. In a disastrously counterproductive policy, more than three hundred Catholics were arrested at dawn on August 9, 1971, and subjected to harsh interrogation; 240 of them were interned without trial. Protestants remained exempt from government strategies to combat terrorist activity. The nationalist community was enraged. IRA recruitment rapidly increased, violence escalated, and nationalist politicians withdrew from Stormont and local government. A banned civil rights march in Derry in January 1972 resulted in the deaths of fourteen people shot by British paratroopers on a day known as Bloody Sunday, the subject of an official inquiry established by British Prime Minister Tony Blair in April 1998. The British embassy in Dublin was set on fire by furious protestors, while Westminster suspended the Northern Irish government and imposed direct rule in 1972. More than four hundred people died as a result of political and sectarian violence between 1969 and 1972.

Direct rule was regarded as a temporary measure that would be succeeded by the reintroduction of devolved government based on power-sharing between the unionist and nationalist communities in Northern Ireland. The Sunningdale Agreement reached in November 1973 among William Whitelaw (representing the British government), the Official Unionist Party, the SDLP, and the Alliance Party proposed the establishment of a power-sharing executive composed of unionists and nationalists, but attempts to implement it crumbled amid republican and unionist opposition.

Paramilitary terrorism has dominated life in Northern Ireland over the past three decades as both republican and unionist forces expressed their opposing aspirations in retaliatory acts of violence that have claimed and maimed thousands of lives. The IRA targeted Northern Ireland and mainland Britain with a series of bombings and assassinations in their campaign against what they characterized as forces of occupation. Protestant paramilitary forces such as the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Freedom Fighters targeted known republicans, and Catholics in general, in retaliation for IRA activity. In the aftermath of the 1981 hunger strikes by incarcerated IRA members seeking political prisoner status, which resulted in ten deaths before
the tactic was abandoned, the British and Irish governments agreed to cooperate in the search for a political solution to the obstinate problems that Northern Ireland presented.

The vested interest of the Republic of Ireland in its neighboring state had been recognized in the early 1970s, but was given political force in the Anglo-Irish Agreement signed by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald in 1985. Endorsed by the SDLP, this agreement provided the foundation for the subsequent peace process in establishing meaningful intergovernmental cooperation in security and judicial matters. Predictably, both republicans and unionists were unhappy with the agreement: the former because the Republic had acknowledged that Northern Ireland was part of Great Britain, and the latter because a "foreign" government was given a voice in Northern Irish affairs. Yet their opposition proved ineffectual, and despite continued violence and fiery extremist rhetoric from both sides, political initiatives have been gaining ground in the six counties.

In the late 1980s, Sinn Fein recognized that its policy of political abstention deserved some thought. The Official Unionist Party also recognized that ending the political stalemate and vicious circle of sectarian and political violence in which the region was trapped required new approaches. By the early 1990s, formal talks were established based on three strands: internal Northern Irish arrangements, North-South arrangements, and Anglo-Irish relationships. Meanwhile, the SDLP and Sinn Fein, led by John Hume and Gerry Adams, respectively, engaged in talks over the future of nationalist endeavors, as Prime Minister John Major and Taoiseach Albert Reynolds announced the Downing Street Declaration at the end of 1993. This agreement repeated that Great Britain had no "selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland" but that both governments would work toward a peaceful resolution of the conflict based on consent. Political parties that renounced paramilitary violence would be included in talks about the future of the state.

Diplomatically encouraged by the United States under the leadership of President Bill Clinton, delicate and lengthy negotiations, accompanied by fragile paramilitary cease-fires, produced an agreement, endorsed by the political parties in Northern Ireland (with the exception of Ian Paisley’s Democratic Unionist Party) and approved by the Northern Irish people and the citizens of the Republic. Chaired with great skill and patience by American Senator George Mitchell, two years of negotiations resulted in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that follows the three-strand model and is based on the principle of consent. Constitutional change may come about only with the consent of the majority of the people, but in the event that change is favored, it is the responsibility of both governments to implement it. The people of Northern Ireland can identify themselves as British, Irish, or both, with the right to hold dual citizenship.

Approved in May 1998 by 95 percent of those who voted in the Republic and by 71 percent of Northern Irish voters, the Good Friday Agreement resulted in the repeal of the Government of Ireland Act and the removal of the Republic’s territorial and jurisdictional claims pending the establishment of an assembly and executive. A legislative assembly elected by proportional representation was established, with positions in the executive allocated according to party strength. Elections in the summer of 1998 pro-

SUGGESTED READING