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Abstract

Since the first British invasion of Ireland in the 12th century, the native Irish people have been negatively affected by British presence and rule. When the English first set out to conquer Ireland, they did so on the notion and basis of religion, aiming to anglicize the Irish people. The ramifications of creating a class of people, who were second to the British colonizers, have remained persistent throughout history and into present times. The modern culmination of this historical conflict occurred in the 1960's during the time of the Troubles. However, this Northern Irish conflict was not divided on theological lines but instead on those of class and politics, as those who had been so long oppressed were demanding change, equality and freedom. This paper explores the variety of factors which truly influenced the conflict in Northern Ireland and led to the Troubles, shaping what Northern Ireland is today.

To tell the story of Ireland,[1] one must equally consider the history of Great Britain, as Irish history is entangled with English power and oppression. Extending hundreds of years, the Irish legacy is one riddled with hardship and struggle, but also one of resilience. The campaign for equality and the reclamation of culture and identity is an integral part of modern-day Ireland. Continuing the past Anglo-Irish struggle into modern times is a period known as the Troubles. Beginning in the late 1960s and concluding in the late 1990s this time was full of turmoil and violence, a result of the struggle between the Irish people and the power of Great Britain. A closer analysis of this period reveals that the origins of the Troubles in Northern Ireland were fueled by a political and social call for equality and freedom. This call would be ultimately answered by the Good Friday Agreement, bringing Northern Ireland to a state of political peace and governmental stability.

The cause of the Troubles stems from a deep history of conflict between Ireland and Great Britain, beginning in the late 12th century with the Anglo-Norman invasion. These invaders settled the island, and their descendants became known as the "Old English," assimilating with the Gaelic culture, and intermarrying with the Gaelic people; the two groups became collectively identified as Irish Catholic.[2] Conversely, the Tudor conquest of Ireland in the 16th and 17th centuries, as a means of controlling and anglicizing Ireland, quickly established dominance over the native Irish and instituted plantations across the island as a form of organized colonization. These "New English" settlers brought their ideologies of cultural and religious control to Ireland and its people.[3]

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[1] In this paper, "Ireland" refers to the island as a whole. Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland will be referred to specifically.

[2] Andrew Murphy, *But the Irish Sea Betwixt Us: Ireland, Colonialism, and Renaissance Literature* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 75-76.

[3] Joan Redmond, "Memories of Violence and New English Identities in Early Modern Ireland," *Historical Research* 89, no. 246 (November 11, 2016): pp. 708, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2281.12143.

The decades that followed were full of conflict and turmoil as Irish Catholics

continuously lost more of their status and became increasingly disadvantaged. The 1652 Act of

Settlement—which was brought forth by British Parliamentarians, who after many years of

conflict, uprisings, and war, pledged themselves to re-conquering Ireland[4]—classified Ireland as

a "conquered territory," and native Irish land was redistributed amongst soldiers and creditors of

the Parliament.[5] Under the Act, Irish Catholic landowners were displaced under threat of

execution and were made to exchange their land located northeast or south of the River Shannon

for land in Connaught, as a way to minimize potential threat as the area was locked between the

sea and the River Shannon.[6] Others had their land confiscated and non-landowners were

banished, transplanted, or relocated. While no large-scale attempt was made to convert Irish

Catholics to Protestantism, Irish culture itself was attacked, with the religion itself being

outlawed, the use of Irish Gaelic banned, and ancient bardic schools, which taught Irish language

and tradition, were shut down.[7] These actions were the beginning of the "Protestant

Ascendancy," where a dominant class of Protestant land-owning class emerged and ruled over

the Irish Catholics.[8]

The establishment of British control over Ireland was greatly aided by the institution of

colonial plantations. The most successful British Protestant plantation in the early 17th century

[4] This is also known as the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland, led by Oliver Cromwell, on behalf of England's Rump Parliament and was initiated to finalize the efforts to conquer Ireland.

[5] Plant, David. "The Settlement of Ireland, 1652-60." BCW Project, April 17, 2007. http://bcw-project.org/church-and-state/the-commonwealth/settlement-of-ireland.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Alan Smith, "Religious Segregation and the Emergence of Integrated Schools in Northern Ireland," *Oxford Review of Education* 27, no. 4 (December 2001): pp. 559, https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980120086248, 1.

[8] John Patrick Montaño, *The Roots of English Colonialism in Ireland* (Cambridge u.a., United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 125.

was Ulster, the northernmost of Ireland's four traditional provinces.[9] With the landholding aristocracy being largely English, the great landmass and power of Ulster shifted the economics of agriculture for Ireland which further disadvantaged and displaced the native Irish. Ulster became a strong central point of Protestant English domination where Protestant settlers, steadfast in their British identity and loyalty, greatly outnumbered the Catholics.[10] The British Protestant rise established political, economic, and social supremacy over the Catholic majority resulting in great tension and unrest, eventually erupting into the Irish War for Independence (1919-21). Of the nine counties that constituted Ulster at the beginning of the 20th century, four[11] had a significant Protestant Unionist majority, two[12] had a minimal Catholic majority, while the remaining three[13] had significant Catholic Nationalist majorities.[14] The Nationalists demanded that Ireland be separated from Britain, while the Unionists were in favor of maintaining their ties with England. Therefore, in 1920, the Government of Ireland Act set up two home-rule parliaments, one being Northern Ireland– formed from the four majority Protestant counties along with counties Fermanagh and Tyrone.[15] The four remaining counties of Ulster were joined with the rest of the island's twenty-three counties to form southern Ireland which would later become the Republic of Ireland. The 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, which brought an end to the War

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[9] The others being Leinster, Munster, and Connaught.

[10] Raymond Gillespie, *Plantations in Ulster, 1600-41: A Collection of Documents*, ed. R. J. Hunter (Belfast, Northern Ireland: Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and Ulster Historical Foundation, 2018), 9-11.

[11] County Antrim, Down, Armagh and Londonderry (Derry).

[12] County Fermanagh and Tyrone.

[13] County Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan.

[14] Aughey et al.,

[15] 1 § (1920), 1-3.

of Independence, created the Irish Free State in the south, giving it dominion status.[16] Thus,

beginning in 1922, Northern Ireland functioned as a self-governing region of the United

Kingdom. But with calls for freedom still ringing from Catholic Nationalists in Northern Ireland,

the separation of Ireland did little to resolve political, social, or economic tension in the island's

northern lands.

Though the division was meant to bring peace to the people of Ireland, it left two

minorities on either side of the border. In Northern Ireland, the disparity was significant, with a

substantial Catholic minority (one-third of the population) who still sought a united Ireland, as

the Protestant supremacy in government was reflected in its policies and treatment towards Irish

Catholics.[17] As put by James Craig, the Northern Ireland prime minister in 1934, "All I boast is

that we have a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant People," not only reflecting the widespread

ideology of the Northern Irish majority, but the work done by their representatives and civil

servants in Parliament.[18] With Unionists in complete control of the government, many of the

policies enacted were made to benefit the Unionist majority, and left the Catholic Nationalists at

a great disadvantage.

Catholics in Northern Ireland were restricted and left out of many areas of society and

were subject to discrimination when it came to employment, housing and education. The thriving

industries at the time, such as linen-making and shipbuilding, offered many jobs and attracted

economic migrants from all over Ireland, but the best jobs went to Protestants, often leaving

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[16] John Gibney, "100 Years Ago Today, the Anglo-Irish Treaty Was Signed in London," IrishCentral.com (Irish Studio, December 6, 2021), https://www.irishcentral.com/roots/history/anglo-irish-treaty-1921.

[17] Ronan McGreevy, "A History of Ireland for Outsiders: From Henry VIII to the Troubles," The Irish Times (The Irish Times, March 6, 2019), https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/a-history-of-ireland-for-outsiders-from-henry-viii-to-the-troubles-1.3816898.

[18] Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast, United Kingdom: The Blackstaff Press, 1992), 538-39.

Catholics jobless or restricted to inferior levels of employment.[19] As a result of this societal

boundary, Catholics were excluded from key industries and employment as a whole. According

to the 1971 census, the overall rate of unemployment for Catholics was 14% compared to 6% of

Protestants.[20] Discrimination by public and private employers alike excluded Catholics from

many jobs, apprenticeships, and training programs, furthering the disparity in Catholic

employment in jobs requiring more training or education. In the shipbuilding industry, for

example, only 5% of all employees in 1971 were Catholic.[21] This discrimination was rooted in

deep social bias towards Irish Catholics, as after the separation of Northern Ireland, Catholics (of

whom the majority opposed) were stigmatized and seen as a threat to British rule in Northern

Ireland. Basil Brooke, a member of the Unionist Party and eventual Northern Irish Prime

Minister stated, in reference to previous remarks "What I said was justified. I recommended

people not to employ Roman Catholics, who were 99 percent disloyal."[22] This commentary

further illustrates the extent of this bias, as this prejudicial ideology, when present in the most

prevalent and influential members of society, is reflective of the country's majority.

      The long-standing dominance of the Protestant dominant "Ulster Unionist Party" (UUP)

by virtue of the Protestant's population advantage, resulted in clear Unionist control of politics

throughout Northern Ireland. This further disadvantaged the minority and the public narrative

continued to mark them as disloyal. With the majority of government seats filled by members of

the UUP, government constituencies were greatly gerrymandered and Catholics were restricted

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[19] Bob Rowthorn, "Northern Ireland: An Economy in Crisis," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 5, no. 1 (March 1981): pp. 1-31, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.cje.a035466, 2.

[20] Ibid., 6.

[21] Ibid., 8.

[22] Catholic Board Members, "Commentary upon The White Paper (Cmd.558) Entitled 'A Record of Constructive Change'," *Commentary upon The White Paper (Cmd.558) Entitled 'A Record of Constructive Change'* (Belfast, Northern Ireland: Irish News, 1971).

from governmental positions. On both the local and national levels, representative members from

Northern Ireland were almost exclusively Unionist. To concentrate and minimize Nationalist

representation, gerrymandering was done throughout the country as well as at the local level. It

was done to such an extreme locally, that one Unionist vote was equivalent to two Nationalist

(Irish Catholic) votes.[23] For example, in Londonderry (Derry) which had a total electorate of

30,000 people in 1963: 10,500 Unionist electors secured twelve seats while 19,000 Nationalists

secured eight seats.[24] Moreover, the right to vote was restricted to the taxpaying heads of

households and their spouses (ratepayers), which further limited the power of the Nationalist

voice in elections, as Catholic households tended to be larger and include more unemployed

adult children.[25] Additionally, those who paid rates for more than one residence were allowed an

additional vote for each property, which given the wealth gap between Protestants and Catholics,

was almost exclusively applicable to Unionists. Ensuring a Unionist majority and control in

politics, created a clear disparity in ideological representation in government for the Nationalists,

which was reflected in policy and treatment.

Post World War II, Northern Ireland suffered a great shortage of public housing as many

of the standing homes had been constructed a century prior and were falling into shambles, in

addition, thousands of homes were destroyed by German bombing during the war. The scarce

number of vacant homes were allocated by local authorities and administrations, which were

dominated by Unionists, resulting in Catholics being largely excluded from housing allocation.

For example, in the town of Enniskillen (the capital town of County Fermanagh) in 1948

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[23] *Northern Ireland - The Plain Truth* (Castlefields, Dungannon: Campaign for Social Justice in Northern Ireland, 1964), 1.

[24] Ibid., 5.

[25] Ibid., 4.

construction began for 177 homes, while Nationalists made up 54% of the population, only two homes were given to Nationalists, and the rest were occupied by Unionists.[26] This clear political disparity and abuse of power again furthered the cycle of discrimination against the Irish Catholics and the continuation of Unionist political domination. Due to the inaccessibility of quality housing, Nationalists lived in small rooms at extremely high weekly rates, and many others resorted to living in camps described as being only "rat-infested huts," which formerly belonged to the American Army during World War II.[27] This discrimination was paralleled in many other public services, such as government allocation of resources in neighborhoods and funding to majority Nationalist areas. Most of the country's state schools were Protestant, while Catholic children attended schools funded and operated by the Catholic church. These schools were underfunded and under-supplied, leading to a lack of quality education. Educational discrimination was also rooted in the segregation of Catholics and Protestants and in the 1960s, more than 97% of Northern Ireland's students attended segregated schools.[28] In 1965, the Northern Irish government began construction of the country's second university, locating it in the largely Protestant city of Coleraine, rather than the larger but more Catholic city of Derry.[29] These barriers to education and the furthering of skills in higher education meant that Catholics were under-represented and restricted in white-collar positions such as civil service, finance, and law. As Catholics were less likely to have access to civil service positions, the Northern Ireland police forces (Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Special Constabulary) were almost

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Brian Doone, "The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement," Northern Ireland (Elite Cafemedia, September 17, 2020), https://alphahistory.com/northernireland/northern-ireland-civil-rights-movement/.

[29] Ibid.

exclusively Protestant. As a result, combined with the national narrative, Catholics throughout Northern Ireland were regularly subjected to police harassment.[30] This added to the divide between the two groups and an increased anger on the Catholic side, adding fuel to the flames of protest.

The divide between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland had little to do with a theological divide but instead was grounded in culture and politics. The Irish language and culture had been under attack since the first British occupation of the island, but the notion and ideology continued still and was prevalent during the decades prior to and during the Troubles. As stated by Commissioner and Professor G. Fitzgerald in 1904, "I will use all my influence… to ensure that Irish as a spoken language shall die out as quickly as possible."[31] Consistent with this vein of thinking, the number of schools in Northern Ireland which used the native Irish language as their instructional medium decreased greatly throughout the 1900s. In 1940, 12% of national schools were taught in Irish, with that number falling to 11% by 1950; Irish-medium secondary schools paralleled the same pattern with 28% of schools in 1942 being taught in Irish, falling to 17% by 1952.[32] These declines were a result of policy at the national and local level, along with criticism from teachers of teaching the Irish language in their classrooms. Additionally, Irish history was restricted from schools' curriculums, decreasing cultural awareness amongst young Irish Catholics and Protestants alike.[33] As a further denigration of Irish nationalism, it was illegal to fly the flag of the Irish Republic from 1954 to 1987, and from 1956 to 1974 Sinn Féin, the

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[30] This will be discussed in more depth later in the paper.

[31] Séamas Ó Buachalla, "Educational Policy and the Role of the Irish Language from 1831 to 1981," *European Journal of Education* 19, no. 1 (1984): pp. 75, https://doi.org/10.2307/1503260, 85-87.

[32] Ibid., 88.

[33] Ibid., 90.

party of Irish republicanism, was banned in Northern Ireland.[34] As tensions continued to increase, and animosity towards the Irish Catholics continued to grow, it was reflected in governmental policy, politics, and the ideology of the Northern Irish majority, as well as resistance by the minority.

Beginning in the 1960s, a new generation of politically and socially conscious young Catholic Nationalists in Northern Ireland started to demand change in their country. With the world's focus on civil rights movements in places such as America, Czechoslovakia, and France,[35] they were inspired to end the brazen anti-Catholic sentiment and oppression in their own country. The Protestant base of supporters for the Nationalist movement was growing as well, increasing the strength of the Nationalist voice. Though more than one event has been pointed to as the beginning of the Troubles, October 5, 1968, is often seen as the catalyzing moment. A crucial event in the Northern Irish civil rights movement was a housing protest in Derry, planned with the support of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), to demand an end to gerrymandering and discrimination in housing in addition to demanding an equal right to vote. On October 3rd, two days before the planned protest, the local government banned all parades in response to a planned counter-protest by a Unionist group, but the civil rights groups decided to go through with their event. On the day of the march, the RUC[36] blocked the intended route of the march, assaulting and charging a peaceful non-sectarian crowd. Deidre O'Doherty, a participant in the parade recounted that "police battered people left, right and center… a door opened and a policeman came in with a baton in his hand with the blood

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[34] *Flags and Emblems Act,* 1 § (1954), p. 1-3.

[35] More specifically: American Civil Rights Movement (1960s), Prague Spring (1968), and Protests of May 1968, respectively.

[36] Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) is the Northern Ireland police force which, as discussed earlier, was unequally dominated by Unionist Protestants.

dripping off it."[37] Television cameras stationed at the protest broadcasted disturbing images around the country and the world. The clear attack on the Nationalists by the Unionist forces, generated great support for the civil rights movement and outrage for the horrific treatment of the protesters from people around the country and the world, beginning the period of the Troubles. This time saw a dramatic increase of violence on both the Unionist and Nationalist side, giving this time its understated name, alluding to the great brutality of the conflict.

With the momentum of the Nationalist movement continuing to grow, as did the violent encounters with Unionist forces. Across Northern Ireland, Unionist groups regularly held parades to commemorate past Protestant military victories, dating back to the 17th century. In Derry on August 12th of 1969, a patriotic Unionist parade was planned, with the parade path running through the predominantly Catholic part of town called the Bogside. Bogside citizens saw the Unionist display as a direct provocation and in turn prepared for a violent confrontation.[38] As expected, the Catholic citizens were met with an attack from the RUC and Unionist parades and fought back with rocks and Molotov cocktails.[39] Raging for three days, the "Battle of Bogside" was seen across the country, especially in Belfast where Unionist mobs, aided by the Ulster Special Constabulary,[40] attacked Catholic neighborhoods and burned 1,500 homes to the ground.[41] On August 14th, the overwhelmed prime minister of Northern Ireland,

[37] Dean McLaughlin, David Wilson, and Una Kelly, "October 1968: The Birth of the Northern Ireland Troubles?," BBC News (BBC, September 30, 2018), https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-foyle-west-45625222.

[38] Dave Roos, "How the Troubles Began in Northern Ireland," History (A&E Television Networks, November 12, 2021), https://www.history.com/news/the-troubles-northern-ireland.

[39]Ibid.

[40] The Ulster Special Constabulary is a quasi-military reserve special police force in Northern Ireland. It was an armed force, called into action by the government in times deemed necessary.

[41] Roos.

James Chichester-Clark, called on the British government to send in troops in an attempt to restore order to the area. This began a decades-long deployment in Northern Ireland by the British military. The great impact of the event, and demise of the country at the time, is concisely described by John Smyth, a history professor at the University of Notre Dame, who states that "The entire Northern Ireland state collapsed over three or four days. They couldn't maintain order, so the British had to come in."[42] The British government, who declined the help of UN peacekeepers, relied on their army who did not maintain an unbiased peacekeeping stance for long, as their goal was to assist the Northern Ireland government in restoring order, not to protect Catholics from the police or the government– and so the tension further increased and the politically-founded violence continued.

Political violence continued over the next several years with car bombs and police violence becoming increasingly common. With the introduction of the British forces, came the practice of internment without trial, in which hundreds of people from Catholic and Nationalist backgrounds, in addition to Unionists suspected of being Nationalists, were rounded up and imprisoned without due process.[43] Intended to break up the IRA,[44] the policy was not successful or effective, only resulting in the unfounded imprisonment of innocent citizens. Subject to horrible conditions and sometimes torture, these arrests caused great alienation for Nationalists in Northern Ireland, triggering massive protests and violence against the policy, making 1972 the worst year of the Troubles, with 500 killed and over 4,000 injured.[45] The brutality reached its

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[42] Roos.

[43] Gerry Moriarty, "Internment Explained: When Was It Introduced and Why?," The Irish Times (The Irish Times, August 9, 2019), https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/internment-explained-when-was-it-introduced -and-why-1.3981598

[44] Irish Republican Army: An Irish republican military organization that worked (sometimes violently) to end British control in Northern Ireland, and was particularly active during the Troubles.

[45] Moriarty.

peak on January 30th of 1972, when British paratroopers killed thirteen unsuspecting civil rights demonstrators in Derry and injured seventeen others, at a protest for unjust internment. This day, later named "Bloody Sunday" was one of the darkest days of the Troubles and sparked even more outrage across Northern Ireland and the world, increasing the membership and support in the Nationalist cause. After this day, the annual death rate did not fall below two-hundred until 1977. After this event, the country saw an increase in demonstrations and violence in the face of such clear political bias and abuse of power, moving the dial of change towards progress.[46]

Following decades of significant violence, the 1990s saw a time of opportunity and hope in resolving the conflict in Northern Ireland. In August of 1994, the IRA announced a conditional ceasefire in order to "enhance the democratic process."[47] This gave both Unionists and Nationalists an opportunity to attempt an end to the conflict. The Good Friday Agreement was signed on April 10th, 1998, and approved by voters in two separate referendums held in May 1998. It came into law in December 1999 and was the most important development in the Northern Ireland peace process, halting the majority of the violence across the island and drawing the tumultuous period of the Troubles to an end. This agreement created a system of power-sharing by instituting the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Northern Ireland Executive, which ended direct rule from London, putting the power in the hands of the people. Signed by most Northern Irish political parties, it also recognized the legitimacy of any choice made by the people of Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK or to become a part of a United Ireland. This

[46] Owen Bowcott, "The Legacy of the Bloody Sunday Killings," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, June 15, 2010), https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/jun/15/legacy-bloody-sunday-killings.

[47] Rebekah Poole and Steve Thompson, "The 1994 Ceasefire," Northern Ireland (Alpha History, September 16, 2020), https://alphahistory.com/northernireland/1994-ceasefire/.

satisfied both the Nationalists and Unionists, as they both were allowed the possibility of their desired future. Though Northern Ireland still remained part of the UK, the new form of government worked to unite the country, as stated in the Good Friday Agreement:

> The power of the government […] shall be exercised with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all the people in the diversity of their identities and traditions and shall be founded on the principles of full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social, and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations of both communities.[48]

The Agreement addresses the political and civil divisions in Northern Ireland, which caused the decades-long Troubles, along with a promise for the future to resolve this history and pave a way for all its people. Along with several other unifying provisions, the Good Friday Agreement addressed and worked to resolve the history of oppression and tension between Britain and Ireland, along with the devastating violence, divided along party lines.

When looking at the Troubles, and the modern conflict in Ireland, the disputing sides are sometimes viewed as Catholic and Protestant. While religious discrimination was a reality centuries before, during the Tudor Conquest, which targeted native Irish based on religion and nationality, theological oppression is less applicable to the Troubles. The historical oppression of Irish Catholics created a secondary class of people, an ideology and pattern which would carry into the modern era, and while this group of people was majorly Catholic, they were instead identified by those historical attributes, opposed to religion. This class, the mostly Catholic-indigenous Irish, struggled throughout history as their rights and culture were stripped away. Though the historical division in this conflict can be seen as a religious one, in reality, it is divided amongst lines of citizenship and identity. Deaths were not caused during the Troubles because the opposing side identified as Protestant or Catholic, it was due to beliefs regarding

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[48] "The Northern Ireland Peace Agreement," conclusion date: April 10, 1998, *United Nations Peacemaker,* October 10, 1998: 2-3, https://library.bowdoin.edu/research/chicago-gov.pdf.

things such as Home-rule, Reunification, and the desire for basic civil and human rights. Though this false narrative was helped and promoted by certain prominent figures of the Troubles such as Rev. Ian Paisley, a Protestant political figure, who vehemently rejected any form of compromise with the Catholic minority. He was extremely anti-Catholic in his political beliefs and sermons, once interrupting a speech by Pope John Paul II, declaring him the antichrist.[49] In his many speeches at Unionist rallies, he proclaimed that all Catholics were terrorists and associated with the IRA asking, "Where do the terrorists operate from? From the Irish Republic, that's where they come from. Where do the terrorists return to for sanctuary? To the Irish Republic."[50] Though his words, and similar ideologies, did incite violence and hate towards Catholics across Northern Ireland, it was done from a Unionist base and made for a Unionist audience, only furthering the political divide, not a theological one. Though the division between the oppressed and the privileged was divided into the lines of religion, the modern Anglo-Irish conflict was a political and social one, calling for a return to equal status and civil rights.

Though the Troubles ended in 1998 with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, its legacy continues into the present time, and many feel that conflict in Northern Ireland is still not resolved. In January of 2017, the power-sharing assembly in Northern Ireland collapsed when deputy first minister Martin McGuinness resigned, citing disagreements with the Unionist opposition party. For the three years following the collapse, Northern Ireland was without a functioning government, until it was restored on January 13th, 2020 following extensive talks

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[49] T. Rees Shapiro, "Ian Paisley Dies; Northern Ireland Leader Known for Anti-Catholic Rhetoric," The Washington Post (WP Company, September 12, 2014), https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries /ian-paisley-dies-northern-ireland-leader-known-for-anti-catholic-rhetoric/2014/09/12/d02a04ee-5d72 -11e1-a729-976314dc4592_story.html.

[50] Sinead O'Carroll, "'Never Never Never' and Other Famous Words from Reverend Ian Paisley," TheJournal.ie (Press Council of Ireland and the Office of the Press Ombudsman, September 14, 2014), https://www.thejournal.ie/ian-paisley-quotes-1668331-Sep2014/.

between the British and Irish governments.[51] Additionally, following the passing of Brexit, violence has increased in Northern Ireland as the bill threatens key parts of the Good Friday Agreement, regarding its border and the prospect of new checks at the previously unrestricted Northern Irish border.[52] This would further divorce Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland which is very upsetting to those in Northern Ireland who still wish to see a united Ireland. In addition to the problems faced by Brexit, Northern Ireland is no longer a Protestant-majority state. The last census, in 2011, showed that 48% of the country was Protestant with 45% being Catholic.[53] A Catholic majority in Ireland may be realized in the near future, again bringing into question the fate of Northern Ireland. This prospect brings with it political tension across the country, reminiscent of the Troubles. While the Troubles were concluded peacefully, the future of the Northern Ireland government is in question, with the political and social conflict in the country continuing to this day.

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[51] McLoughlin, Peter John. "Northern Ireland's Government Is Back Up and Running." The Conversation. Queens University Belfast, January 31, 2020. https://theconversation.com/northern-irelands-government-is-back-up-and-running-heres-how-it-happened-and-why-129831.

[52] Rick Gladstone and Peter Robins, "The Ghosts of Northern Ireland's Troubles Are Back," The New York Times (The New York Times, April 12, 2021), https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/12/world/europe/Northern-Ireland-Brexit-Covid-Troubles.html.

[53] Gareth Gordon, "'Catholic Majority Possible' in NI by 2021," BBC News (BBC, April 19, 2018), https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-43823506.

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