

The ira



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Irish Republican Army or IRA is Northern Ireland's most notorious terrorist organization. Like many other groups, the IRA is a militant nationalist group with Marxist tendencies. They use violent attacks such as bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, extortion, and robberies that they used . to send their message. The ultimate goal of the IRA is to use militant behavior to make British rule in Northern Ireland obsolete, thus letting Northern Ireland become an independent republic, instead of two separate countries with different governments.

The IRA was founded in 1919 as a successor to the Irish Volunteers, a militant nationalist organization that was founded in 1913. One of the alias's for the group is Direct Action Against Drugs, or DADD. The IRA operates independently of any political control or party, and" in some periods actually took the upper hand in the independence movement. "(Britannica) Unlike some terrorist groups, the IRA does not carry out attacks on countries that are not in close vicinity of Northern Ireland. The majority of their operations are based out if Great Britain, and Ireland.

Some of their most favored targets were senior British Government officials, British military and police in Northern Ireland, and Northern Irish Loyalist paramilitary groups. By attacking these individuals they hoped to demoralize Great Britain to the point of turning Ireland over to the people. The IRA did not want to overthrow the government and run it themselves, they simply wanted to see a change in the government so that it would benefit the people of Northern Ireland. The IRA is organized into small, tightly knit cells under the leadership of the Army Council.

While they only have a few hundred members, they have thousands of sympathizers who contribute by donating money, supplies, shelter, and even weapons. “ The IRA Is suspected of receiving funds, arms, and other terrorist-related materiel from sympathizers in the United States. ”(Britannica) the IRA also received a large amount of support at one point from the PLO, a “ freedom fighter” group from Libya. Not only do they receive aid from other terrorist groups with similar agendas, but in 2002 three suspected IRA members were arrested in Colombia on charges of assisting the FARC to improve its explosives capabilities.

The IRA was in their prime during the late 1950's and 1960's, though they did play a big part in the Irish Civil war of 1922. As a result of this war, the IRA became more closely related to Sinn Fein, which is the Irish Nationalist party. “ In December 1969, the IRA divided into “ Official” and “ Provisional” wings. Although both factions were committed to a united socialist Irish republic, the Officials preferred parliamentary tactics and eschewed violence after 1972, whereas the Provisionals, or “ Provos,” believed that violence—particularly terrorism—was a necessary part of the struggle to rid Ireland of the British. (Global Security) This was a result of a Sinn Fein conference that had taken place in August.

After 1970, the IRA was slowly slipping into the darkness, as they had stopped attacking as much, and was not as big of a concern anymore. Because of “ Bloody Sunday’, when thirteen innocent Catholic protestors were killed by British soldiers, the IRA gained support from the Catholic Church, which gave them their reputation back for a while. Eventually though, they were back where they had left off before Bloody Sunday. The

IRA reorganized in 1977 into detached cells to protect against infiltration” and their arms dealing was back in full force. It was said that “ in the late 1990s that the IRA had enough weapons in its arsenal to continue its campaign for at least another decade. ”(Britannica) For a long time the IRA tried to use peaceful methods to gain equal treatment for the Catholic minority in the Protestant Northern Ireland. But they were were met with resistance. The Protestants and the British government met the peaceful attempts of the IRA with violence i. e. Bloody Sunday.

The IRA had no other choice but to employ violent methods to gain equality and civil rights for the Catholic Minority in Ulster. The IRA began implementing methods such as Bombings, sniper attacks, and assassinations on British citizens. (www. CFR. org) The afore mentioned Sinn Fein, which means “ We Ourselves” first emerged in the early 1900s. It is the oldest political party in Ireland’s history. It was a “ federation of nationalist clubs and eventually, all nationalists to the left of the Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster came to be popularly known as Sinn Feiners. (SinnFein. org) The party, like the IRA, was based on the demand for an Irish Republic. It won the 1918 election by a landslide and set up Dail Eireann which is translated to “ Assembly of Ireland. ” Following three years of war, led by an underground republican government, the party split in 1922 on the issue of the Treaty which partitioned Ireland into two separate provinces. The leader of Sinn Fein left the party in 1926, causing the party to lose a lot of credibility.

However, its fortunes recovered and flourished in the late 1950s and early 1960s with its new association to the IRA and their border campaign. During

this time the group experienced a substantial amount of electoral success. In present day, Sinn Fein is split into two parties, Sinn Fein and Republican Sinn Fein. The Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) was formed in 1969 as the covert armed wing of Sinn Fein. The members of this group, called, " Provos" were formed from the Official Sinn Fein and the Official IRA.

The Provisional IRA was the largest of the three republican armed resistance groups (Sinn Fein, IRA and PIRA). The policies of Sinn Fein under the new leadership of Gerry Adams led to a split in the Provisional Irish Republican Army in 1997. One side accepted the new " Good Friday Agreement" and the New or Real IRA continuing armed resistance against the British. The PIRA has at this point accepted the ceasefire and is still most commonly confused with the real IRA because of their similar connections and name.

The IRA and PIRA are not totally different groups, but they are actually two groups that used to function as one. It is my opinion that the split of the IRA into two factions is one of the major reasons why their goal was never accomplished. The army was in need of a way to make money and fundraise to support their cause. They became adept at raising money in Northern Ireland through " extortion, racketeering, and other illegal activities" and they policed their own neighborhoods through mock trials and beatings.

As a result of this Mafia like enforcement, Sinn Fein began to play a more prominent role in trying to end the arms problem that the IRA was causing. " Sinn Fein leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, together with John Hume, head of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), sought ways to end the armed struggle and bring republicans into democratic politics. They were successful in doing so, and in 1994 the IRA declared a cease fire

with Britain so that Sinn Fein was able to legally engage in politics with the Irish Parliament.

This ceasefire was shortly ended in 1996 when a bomb that was suspected to be from the IRA killed two civilians. However it was reinstated the following year, returning things back to being civilized between the IRA and Great Britain. Technically the IRA is still a functioning terrorist group, but due to the ceasefire they have been dormant since around 2002 when the final ceasefire was laid out and agreed upon. The IRA has a very important place in Irish history, as well as the history of terrorism because of their prominence in the 1950's and 1960's.