

# The irish republican army



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The Irish Republican Army: History The Irish Republican Army was born as a reaction to repressive policies of Great Britain. The abysmal poverty and exploitation of the Irish Catholics by the Protestants, and the partition of Ireland into Northern Ireland and The Irish Republic, led to the IRA's bid to achieve independence for a united Ireland through violent methods. After decades of violence from both sides, the peace process succeeded, with Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA, sharing power with the Unionists. The IRA has been disarmed and gradually disbanded by 2006. . The Irish Republican Army: History. The long and violent conflict between Ireland and Great Britain was largely an outcome of political and economic, as well as religious, differences. Great Britain, under Oliver Cromwell, established overlordship of Ireland in the seventeenth century. While Scottish and English Protestants formed a majority in the North, the South remained predominantly Catholic. The widening economic disparity between the industrialized North, and the agricultural South (where the Protestants remained exploitative, absentee landowners), led to the abysmal poverty of the Irish Catholics, and to their alienation. The overwhelming majority of Irish representatives to Parliament remained Anglican landowners. Repressive laws of the 17th and 18th centuries prohibited Irish Catholics from owning or leasing land, and denied them political rights and education. An Irish revolt in 1798 was brutally suppressed by Great Britain, resulting in the Great Hunger of 1845 - 1852, in which more than a million people starved and millions more emigrated. The ruthless reaction of the British Government was largely responsible for this. The Protestants and the Catholics separated into two warring camps and a long period of agitation and violence commenced. (Kuznicki, Willett, Griffin, Manley and Matten, nd.). The Irish Republican Army is an offshoot of these <https://assignbuster.com/the-irish-republican-army/>

developments. The origins, actions and disarming of The Irish Republican Army are closely linked to the political developments in Ireland. The origin of The Irish Republican Army can be traced to the issue of Home Rule. Irish Catholics, or Nationalists, under Michael Collins, agitated for complete freedom from Great Britain, while the Irish Protestants, or Unionists, opposed this stand. By the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, Great Britain divided Ireland into Northern Ireland, or Ulster, which remained part of the United Kingdom, and the Irish Free State, later the Republic of Ireland, with Dublin as the capital. The Catholic population in both parts remained mired in poverty. This partition of Ireland was not accepted by the nationalists. The Irish Volunteers, led by Eoin MacNeill, and the smaller Irish Citizen Army, under James Connolly, commenced an armed rebellion to achieve complete independence for a united Ireland. After the failed Easter Rising of April 1914, the Irish Volunteers became the Irish Republican Army. The IRA became the armed wing of the political Sinn Féin. The IRA received weapons and training from various international sources, most notably American sympathizers, Libya and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). (Kuznicki et al. nd. 22). The IRA persisted in a campaign of violence to end the partition of Ireland. In the 1960's, British Army troops and the Royal Ulster Constabulary took violent measures to suppress Catholic protest marches. The IRA split into the Provisional IRA which adopted violence as its means, and the Official IRA which opted for a non-violent struggle. In January 1972, when British troops opened fire on an unarmed Catholic rally in Londonderry, the Provisional IRA soared into prominence, while the latter faded away. (Gregory, 2010). While the main targets of the IRA remained the British Army troops, and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, unarmed policemen,

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judges, informers and civilians were also killed in acts of violence, which earned the group the terrorist tag. The British responded violently, by unleashing the ' Auxiliaries,' and the ' Black and Tans,' who attacked a football crowd on ' Bloody Sunday.' (Kuznicki et al. nd. 16). Major actions of the IRA include the ' Bloody Friday' attacks of July 1972 in Belfast; the assassination of Lord Mountbatten in 1979; the bombing of a Brighton hotel in 1984; several bombings of subway stations, hotels and shops in Northern Ireland and Britain in the 1970's - 1990's. The IRA death toll is about 1, 800 people, including about 650 civilians. The IRA has also been indicted in nefarious activities, such as bank robberies, counterfeiting and smuggling. (Gregory, 2010). The IRA, and Sinn Fein, declared a ceasefire, and opened peace talks with the British Government in 1994. After repeated set-backs, the Good Friday accord of April 1998, brokered by former U. S. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, was signed by all parties. The IRA agreed to a gradual disarmament. The accord gave Northern Ireland an elected assembly, thus granting the minority Catholics a share in political power. The Republic of Ireland was given a say in the affairs of Northern Ireland, and many cross-border agencies were established. After another decade of stalemates, set-backs based on slow IRA disarmament, sporadic sectarian violence, and political deadlocks, the IRA disarmed by 2006. With the signing of the Hillsborough Castle Agreement, On Feb. 5, 2010, Britain transferred genuine local government to Northern Ireland. (Infoplease, 2007). With the establishment of a power-sharing government between the Unionists and Sinn Fein, the history of The Irish Republican Army may be said to have ended. References. Gregory, Kathryn. Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) (aka, PIRA, " the provos," Oglai gh na hEireann) (UK separatists). Updated: <https://assignbuster.com/the-irish-republican-army/>

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