

# History of the irish republican army history essay



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“ We have been told, we have been asked to hope, that after this war Ireland will get Home Rule, as a reward for the lifeblood shed in a cause which, whomever else its success may benefit, can surely not benefit Ireland” (Casement, 1916). Ireland has a long and blood history involving their fight of freedom from religious oppression, rulers and land. It should be no wonder to most that due to these issues in Ireland rebel groups, some labeled terrorists, rose up to fight against the oppression. One such group is the Irish Republican Army, which has been in existence for a little less than 100 years. In order to understand this complex terrorist group one must first look at the history of Ireland, the methodologies and ideologies of this group as well as present and future threats this group faces.

St. Patrick was born around 400 A. D. in Britain to a very religious family; his father a Christian deacon. It is claimed young St. Patrick was taken by a group of Irish bandits and held prisoner in Ireland for approximately six years. Once released, St. Patrick attempted to leave Ireland and return to his native Britain. It is stated that St. Patrick received a vision for God while returning to Britain after his capture that he was to remain in Ireland and spread the word of God, hence St. Patrick is credited for bringing Christianity to Ireland which would set the stage for religious conflict several hundred years later (Who Was St. Patrick, n. d., n. p.).

Although religion was introduced very early in Ireland's history, it did not appear to cause many problems until the issue of Catholicism versus Protestantism. England continued to seize control of Ireland between the 1100's and the 1500's leading the land to be ruled by predominant protestant leaders who attempted to bring in their protestant rules but failed

(Henry VIII). This in turn united the Irish Catholics to fight harder for freedom of religion and creating an even bigger wedge between the people and their ruler. These revolts (Ulster Revolt) that the new King, King James I attempted to provide land to Protestant settlers in an attempt to create peace. This however only made the wedge greater as now Catholics were fearful of losing the majority and their land (Northern Ireland Timeline, n. d., n. p.).

James II came to rule Ireland in the late 1600's and attempted to outlaw many of the anti-Catholic laws which led to a falling out between him and his counterparts in England. In short as a result of this fighting and his inability to satisfy his counterparts in England, William of Orange was encouraged by Britain to take the throne. As a result James II fled to Ireland in what would be known as the "Glorious Revolution". The Battle of Boyne taking place approximately two years later involved the two in which William of Orange defeated James II's attempt to regain control of the throne (Northern Ireland Timeline, n. d., n. p.).

Another significant event in Ireland's history which also ignited Ireland's hatred for its British rulers was the Potato Famine. Although many people in Ireland grew many different crops such as wheat and oats, potatoes were a very big staple in their diet. Between 1845 and 1848 the crops in Ireland failed leading to over a million Irish to starve to death. As a result of this incident several fled and relocated in different areas. One of the biggest problems the Irish had was that their British rulers and the country of England failed to provide any type of support such as more for fear the Irish would revolt and use the money to buy arms to overthrow their government. This led

to an even deeper hatred of the British for their refusal to help in a time of need.

Approximately twenty years later Charles Parnell felt to solve this issue of Ireland knowing what's best for Ireland, he helped introduce a bill that Ireland should be ruled by Irish Parliament (Home Rule Bill). This bill was introduced once in 1886 and again in 1893 failing both times due to fear that the "parliament" would consist mainly of Catholics and not equal representation of the Irish. As a result of this failed bill Sinn Fein was formed. Sinn Fein, meaning "we the people" was an organization that was formed to free Ireland from British rule and regain independence for Ireland as its own separate entity. Although the bill failed two times, a third Home Rule Bill was passed a third time in 1912 (set to become law in 1914) causing major discord in Ireland. As a result of this discord, the proposed solution was to introduce Home Rule with Partition; six Protestant counties would stay a part of the United Kingdom.

The IRA was formed from approximately 1000 rebels of the Irish Volunteers decided to take advantage of the fact that Britain was losing the battle with Germany and attempted to declare Ireland its own sovereign entity. This rebellion became known as Easter Rising, as these rebels took over the Dublin Post Office on Easter Monday in an attempt to take back Ireland. British forces did not take kindly to this rebellion and brought troops to this location in an attempt to re-claim the post office. The fighting lasted for approximately five days and resulted in 400 deaths and over 2,500 injuries. The rebels ultimately lost and ultimately were punished by death. These rebels became known as the Irish Republican Army.

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The Irish Republican Army as stated above was formed in approximately 1916 after the Easter Rising. The Irish Republican Army's goal is to free Ireland from British rule. They also wanted to remove the British troops from Ireland and unite the country to rule itself. The Irish Republican Army has method of getting its message across includes bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, beatings, smuggling, extortion and robberies (Pike, 2005, n. p.). The Irish Republican Army gets its funding and training from an unlikely source; The PLO and Libya. The Irish Republican Army receives training, money and weaponry from this country and this other terrorist organization (Pike, 2005, n. p.). It should also come as no surprise that Sinn Fein also supports this organization as well as sympathizers from many different countries to include the United States.

Although the IRA could be considered one of the main terrorist organizations in Ireland there are also a few splinter groups that originated from the IRA. First is the Provisional Irish Republican Army. The Provisional Irish Republican Army formed off in late 1960's as a result of the hard crackdown by the protestant's in Ireland. The IRA was committed to peaceful means of getting a united Ireland while the new splinter group Provisional Irish Republican Army (also known as PIRA or Provos) were seeking change through violence. In short, this new splinter group was the more violent of the two and attempted violent physical acts in an attempt to get their message across (Gregory, 2010, n. p.).

Another splinter group of the IRA is the Real IRA which was formed in 1997 in response to those who were displeased with the peace talks that occurred around this time with the British authorities. It is estimated that this splinter <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-the-irish-republican-army-history-essay/>

group has about 100 followers (Fletcher, 2008, n. p.). This group also appears to distrust Sinn Fein and disapprove of its role that it has in the IRA.

Ireland has had a history of discord and unrest but it is important to note the most recent period of discord known as “ The Troubles” that occurred between 1968 and 1998. During this time there were many issues and fighting between Catholics and Protestants. Also during this time were many protests and marches in an effort to protect their civil rights. One of the most famous incidents during this time frame was “ Bloody Sunday”. Bloody Sunday took place on January 30, 1972. During a march of over 1000 people in Derry and British militant without warning or cause shot and killed thirteen catholic protesters. The soldier at the time was acquitted of any wrong doing causing outrage as this march/protest was peaceful. Several years later the British would however, admit their wrong doing. This outrage led the IRA to set off 26 car bombs in Belfast killing 9 people and injuring approximately 130 (Frontline, 2007, n. p.). This outrage and acts of terror would continue for many years. The IRA would continue on its bombing campaign and other acts of terrorism until peace talks in approximately 1996/1997.

The Belfast Agreement occurred on April 10, 1998. This Agreement was between the British, Sinn Fein and the IRA. Sinn Fein was invited on the condition that a six week cease come into place. During the negotiations in 1997 the Irish Republican Army retracted its cease fire in July of 1997 causing this agreement to take approximately one year to work out between the parties. The Belfast Agreement stated many things. First, Ireland could not be considered a united independent country without the majority of those living in Northern Ireland. Second, those in the north had the right to <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-the-irish-republican-army-history-essay/>

refer to themselves as either British or Irish and that was not to cause any discord. This agreement also set up a north/south council to keep both sides best interest at heart. This agreement was well received by the Irish and on May 23, 1998 a referendum showed an overwhelming support for this agreement (Timeline, n. d., n. p.).

Since this agreement in 1998 it appears that the IRA has been contained. There have however still been illegal activities being executed by the IRA. According to one source, in 2004 the IRA was implicated in two sever robberies with one involving almost 50 million dollars (Pike, 2005, n. p.). A short while later the IRA also put an end to it armed violent campaign. The current leader, Óglaigh na hÉireann issued a statement on July 25, 2005 that he was ordering all his armed forces to “ dump their arms”. In this statement he also indicated that although he still believed in their cause (to rid the country of British rule and unite Ireland into its own entity), he felt this could be accomplished through no violent means (Kuznicki, M., Willet, C., Griffin, M., Manley, E., & Matten, R., n. d., n. p.).

In conclusion, it appears for now that the IRA has taken a less violent turn. It should be noted however that although the IRA appears to be giving up arms there are many splinter groups and sympathizers with this organization all over the world that have not agreed to a treaty. It seems that the key to less violence is for British troops to stay out of Ireland and allow that country to continue on its own path.