

Northern Ireland

Sarah Kelly



History

Mixing of the English Protestants and Irish Catholics

- England first laid roots in 1167 - the English and Irish never mixed, creating 2 completely different populations
- King Henry VIII introduced religion into Irish politics for the first time
- During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, plantations throughout Ireland were seized and giving to colonists, creating a large English Protestant community
- Oliver Cromwell, known for brutality, set up the final official plantations in the 1650s
 - September 1649 - Cromwell seized Drogheda and murdered all of the town's defenders

The Protestants Gain a Majority

- Battle of Boyne (1690) - defeat of the Catholic King James II by Protestant King William III
- Penal Laws limited Catholic's property and rights
 - First signs of Irish nationalism as movements sprung up demanding representation in Parliament
 - England understood they could not afford an uprising and relaxed the Penal Laws

The Unification of Ireland and England

- January 1801 - the Act of Union makes Ireland and England one state
 - Irish Parliament is abolished
- Groups began to rise to preserve native Irish pastimes and languages
- The Protestant population of Ulster wanted to remain a part of the British Empire
- Private armies formed on both sides
 - Ulster Volunteer Force (Protestants)
 - Irish Volunteers (Nationalists)

Sinn Féin Rises in Popularity

- Easter Rising of 1916 - Britain won this battle, but the Irish cause and Sinn Féin (the IRA political party) gained popularity
 - IRA: Irish Republican Army, which fought for an independent Ireland
- Sinn Féin members refused to attend government in Westminster, instead forming their own Irish Assembly

The Creation of Northern Ireland

- May 1921 - the Government of Ireland Act is passed, splitting Ireland into 2
- Seen as a way to solve the violence in Ireland
- Ulster counties (mainly Protestant) became the North
- The other 26 counties became the South
 - The South was not yet completely independent
 - Dominion status within the British Commonwealth
- The border was created with little consideration to localities, splitting up villages
- 1921 - Constant troubles in the North during (IRA) vs. Ulster Volunteer Force
- 1937 - the south gains full independence - the Republic of Ireland

The “Troubles”

- Disparities between the Protestants and Catholics were becoming overwhelmingly obvious
- Terence O’Neill (Prime Minister of England) met with Sean Lemass (Ireland’s Prime Minister) during England’s economic troubles
- 1966 - the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising, violence erupted
 - Armed forces on both sides: the Provisional IRA (PIRA) had the same political goals as the IRA, but was willing to use violence
 - British forces were deployed to Northern Ireland
- With the presence of British forces, more people were drawn to the ranks of the IRA
- 1971 - internment is introduced and violent protests continue

The “Troubles”

- 1972 - bloodiest year of the “Troubles”
- January 30, 1972: Bloody Sunday - British troops suppressed peaceful civil rights marches and killed 14 protestors
- 1973 - Sunningdale Agreement: a new Northern Ireland Assembly with proportional representation and shared power between the Catholics and Protestants
- May 1974 - the Ulster Workers’ Council called for a strike in Northern Ireland; loyalists bombs exploded in Dublin and Monaghan, killing 32 people
- Direct rule was reinstated for the next 25 years

The “Troubles”

- Hunger Strikes by PIRA prisoners leads to 10 deaths
 - Bobby Sands, leader of the strikes, dies
 - Brings attention to Sinn Féin - Gerry Adams wins a seat in Westminster for West Belfast
- 1985 - Anglo-Irish Agreement between Margaret Thatcher and Garret Fitzgerald: Northern Ireland will remain independent of Ireland so long as it is the will of the majority
 - Gave Dublin some say in Ulster affairs
 - Sets up an intergovernmental Conference, giving the Republic a voice on security and political issues in Northern Ireland
- 1994 - paramilitary ceasefire and a boost to the peace process when Sinn Féin enters the talks

Peace Talks and the Resolution Process

The Beginning of the Peace Talks

- Split into 3 phases, involving Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the British government
- Would focus on the establishment of some form of self-government in Northern Ireland and the creation of a “cross-border” body between Ireland and Northern Ireland regarding domestic issues
- Former US Senator George Mitchell is sent to be a mediator for the talks - he creates a report in 1996 recommending a gradual disarmament of the IRA

The Peace Talks

- The peace talks formally begin in 1966 but aren't effective until 1997 when Sinn Féin is allowed to participate
- Sinn Féin and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) are both present at the talks
 - The more extreme Democratic Unionist Party and smaller United Kingdom Unionist Party choose not to join

The Good Friday Agreement (April 10, 1998)

- Direct rule of Northern Ireland is placed in the hands of locally elected government
- A power-sharing assembly and government is made for Northern Ireland, having all sides of the community represented (Northern Ireland Assembly)
- Cross-party cabinet with devolved powers
- Cross-border boundaries to deal with issues common to Ireland and Northern Ireland
- Catholics have to relinquish the goal of a united Ireland unless the majority Protestants want it
- John Hume and David Trimble (leaders of the largest Catholic and Protestant political parties) are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

Reconciliation Efforts

Government Efforts Towards Reconciliation

- Before Good Friday, reconciliation language was often put into government policy, but more or less came out of the policy language as efforts collapsed
- The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 can be seen as the government's reconciliation efforts to bring both sides together
- Government efforts are almost always at a time where there are public displays of division
- Good Friday: help Northern Ireland become more integrated
 - Allow all sides to have a voice (even the extreme sides)
- Some argue the government efforts were more effective than community building efforts, as it got to the core of the actual problem

NGOs

- Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group (SLIG): works towards creating peace building between the Suffolk and Lenadoon communities and an overall better quality of public services
- Intercomm: works to enable Intercomm to become an advocate in monitoring and holding the government responsible to its commitments
- Fermanagh Trust: encourages the development of shared education in Fermanagh by incentivizing schools to be more collaborate and build advocacy based on reconciliation, educational and economic benefits of shared education
- Northern Ireland Alternatives and Community Restorative Justice Ireland: works towards supporting the mainstreaming of community-based restorative justice and diverting teenagers from antisocial behavior and engagement with paramilitary groups (like the IRA and UVF)

NGOs

- Northern Ireland Foundation: works towards a “cohesive Northern Ireland society” through reconciliation efforts; focuses on a shared future, local community activism and the exchange of international best practices
- Social Change Initiative: “working to secure progressive social change, so that communities become more inclusive, fairer and peaceful”; focuses on grassroots activism, peacebuilding, advocacy and strategic philanthropy
- Peace and Reconciliation Group (PRG): has structured workshops to facilitate peaceful communication, as well as assists in community organizations and the Police Services of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to find solutions to contentions situations that arise in connection with parades, bonfires, football games, etc.

NGOs

- Committee on the Administration of Justice: “to protect human rights and support the development of sustainable and independent capacity to ensure that human rights principles and standards are reflected in law and policy in Northern Ireland. Focus areas include dealing with past abuses, criminal justice and equality monitoring.”
- Law Centre NI: “to enhance the capacity of the Law Centre to protect rights and increase access to justice and services in areas within the direct competency of the Northern Ireland Executive”
- Disability Action: “to secure better rights and protections for people with disabilities and to increase the participation of people with disabilities in policy making”

NGOs

- Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities: “to enable NICEM to secure better rights protections and improve access to justice and services for minority ethnic communities. Focus on monitoring government actions on implementing Race Equality Strategy”
- Human Rights Consortium: “to support civil society in securing better rights protections and to build a broad coalition of support for human rights and equality. To maintain capacity to hold government to account by supporting independent actions across all sections of Northern Ireland community and to support campaigns for specific policy and practice change. To continue and complete its campaigning work regarding a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland”

NGOs

- South Tyrone Empowerment Programme: “to enable STEP to secure better rights protections and improve access to justice and services for minority ethnic communities. Focus on monitoring government actions on implementing Race Equality Strategy”
- Community Foundation for Northern Ireland: “to support the development of community driven advocacy efforts and facilitate connections and networks with policy makers and politicians. A rights-based approach to community development. To support the engagement of disadvantaged communities to influence public service delivery”
- Public Interest Litigation Fund: “to support the advancement and protection of human rights through promoting the use of strategic litigation in Northern Ireland”
- Participation and the Practice of Rights Project: “to support and enable marginalized communities to bring about changes in public policy by using a human rights-based approach”

Transitional Justice in Reconciliation Efforts

- Fault was never put on either party during the Good Friday agreement out of fear of destabilizing the fragile peace process
- A “decentralized” program of transitional peace was created, including victim and ex-prisoner support groups, community-based truth-recovery
- Bloody Sunday
 - Each group believed different inquiries blaming fault on different parties
 - The Bloody Sunday Inquiry allowed a “shared truth”
 - Most now feel justice; however, some feel there is still injustice due to the soldiers not facing responsibility
 - Helped defuse a contentious issue that divided the 2 parties

Transitional Justice in Reconciliation Efforts

- Can be an integral part of promoting reconciliation as it helps victims feel justice
- Past crimes and injustices need to be addressed in order to move on and for there to be cooperation
- The acknowledgement of accountability can delegitimize violence and renew commitment to the rule of law, as well as ameliorate feelings of anger
- Some feel that focusing on the past only continues to reinforce intergroup tensions

Reconciliation and Human Rights

- 2 approaches to peacebuilding: advocating from a **human rights**-based perspective, and promoting community relations and **reconciliation** for peace
- Human rights can be seen as a more legal approach while reconciliation can be seen as a more human, bottom-up approach
- Sometimes it is hard to stay apolitical as an NGO due to different sides' beliefs
- A need for synergy between human rights and reconciliation efforts
- The key to this reconciliation process is respect and understanding
- Efforts to reconcile in Northern Ireland sometimes compare the differences between the 2 groups rather than highlighting their commonalities

Education for Reconciliation

- Used to promote social cohesion and transmit societal norms and values
- The unification of nations and dissemination of traditions and notions of citizenship
- Helps children understand the historical context and how to move forward towards resolution
- Has not had as much success as originally expected

The Success of “Good Friday” and the Future of Northern Ireland

Post-Good Friday

- 1999 - IRA and Sinn Féin want the government to be formed before they disarm; the Ulster Unionists want an IRA disarmament before the government is formed
- Dec. 2, 1999 - David Trimble and the Ulster Unionists agree to create the government first; the British government starts to transfer its power to the Northern Ireland Parliament
- Feb. 12, 2000 - the British government suspends Northern Ireland Parliament and imposes direct rule (due to the lack of disarmament by IRA)
- May 30, 2000 - home rule is restored
- Between 2000 and 2002, there is a back and forth between the complete disarmament of the IRA and successful setting-up of the government

Post-Good Friday

- Oct. 14, 2002 - the power-sharing government is suspended and the British government takes back control for the 4th time since the creation of the assembly
- 2003 - a universal call for the disarmament of the IRA
- 2005 - the IRA murders Belfast Catholic Robert McCartney and begin to lose their support
- July 2005 - the IRA unequivocally renounces their violence
- 2007 - devolved rule is definitively restored: Protestant Unionist leader Ian Paisley and Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness are made first minister and deputy first minister

Post-Good Friday

- 2010 - British Prime Minister David Cameron formally apologizes for the killings on Bloody Sunday
- June 2011 - several nights of rioting in East Belfast

Northern Ireland Today

- 2017 - a collapse of the power-sharing institutions
 - Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness resigned and Sinn Féin never replaced him, triggering the collapse of the executive
- The former Secretary of State, James Brokenshire, called for a new election
 - Showed that Sinn Féin had gained in popularity and the Unionists no longer held the majority
- Any talks for a resolution are to be monitored by the current Secretary of State Karen Bradley to represent the British government and Simon Coventry, Irish Tanaiste (Deputy Prime Minister), to represent the Republic of Ireland
- Ongoing disagreements between Sinn Féin and DUP
- Conflict over the Irish Language Act - Sinn Féin and nationalists want to make Gaelic a bigger part of Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland in the Future in Terms of Brexit

- People wanted Brexit to move away from EU policies regarding integration and cooperation between nations
- Meaning there would need to be some kind of border between Northern Ireland and Ireland to have the effective Brexit that most people voted for
- The majority in Northern Ireland voted to stay a part of the European Union
- A “hard Brexit” means there would be a frontier to the free movement of people, goods, services and capital
- Cross-border cooperation and trade is imperative to maintaining peace
- A hard border is simply not an option

Northern Ireland in the Future in Terms of Brexit

- The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) said it will not vote for Theresa May's Brexit deal - a no-deal Brexit "could jeopardize Northern Ireland's place in the UK"
- Sinn Féin is focused on protecting the premises of the Good Friday agreement
- Without a deal, there is the possibility of direct rule in Northern Ireland and a possibility that Ireland and Northern Ireland will unite (the majority in Northern Ireland want to be a part of the EU)
- The EU is backing Ireland's insistence that there cannot be a hard border, meaning the UK would have to remain a part of the EU customs union and single market

Northern Ireland in the Future in Terms of Brexit

- The Good Friday Agreement requires the British government to consult with Ireland before imposing direct rule
- Direct rule could come about because:
 - Civil servants in Northern Ireland do not have the authority to make some decisions in the absence of devolved institutions
 - The Northern Ireland government cannot make decisions that would come about from decisions made by the EU or the Irish government
 - Government representatives have said direct rule would only be for a short time and to deal with the short-term impacts, not policymaking

Recap

Reasons for the Conflict

- Northern Ireland had Unionists (or Loyalists; mostly Protestant) that wanted to stay under British rule when the Republic of Ireland split from UK rule
- Nationalists (or Republicans; mostly Catholic) wanted Northern Ireland to join the Republic of Ireland
- Catholics were having a hard time living in Northern Ireland due to Penal Laws that resulted in disparities between Catholics and Protestants
- Protests required British troops to be sent in (who were then faced by Republican armed groups...PIRA)
- Loyalists were also violent, with groups like the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)
- Bloody Sunday - 14 people were killed by British troops in 1974 at a peaceful (yet illegal) civil rights march led by Catholics and Republicans

Different Parties Involved in Good Friday

- IRA (Irish Republican Army); leader - Gerry Adams
- Moderate Nationalist SDLP (Social Democratic and Labour Party); leader - John Hume
- Ulster Unionist Party (UUP); leader - David Trimble
- Unionist Groups (UDA, UVF)
- Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) - did not support the agreement
- Other groups involved: The Alliance Party, Progressive Unionist Party, Sinn Féin
- Tony Blair - British Prime Minister
- Bertie Ahern - Irish Prime Minister
- George Mitchell - former US Senator sent by President Bill Clinton as a “special envoy”

The Resolution Agreement

- The Northern Ireland government must be shared between the unionists and nationalists
- Northern Ireland Assembly - an agreement between the 2 sides to work together, with some decision-making power previously held by the UK government
- Now in trouble as Sinn Féin (the nationalists) want more “Irish” tendencies in Northern Ireland

There is currently no effective government in Northern Ireland

Resources

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/38648719>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/14118775>
- https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/good-friday-agreement-twenty-years-northern-ireland-brexit-peace-ira-blair-ada-ms-mcguinness-paisley-a8290746.html
- https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/TheGoodFridayAgreementBrexitandRights_0.pdf
- http://education.niassembly.gov.uk/post_16/snapshots_of_devolution/gfa
- <https://www.history.co.uk/history-of-the-northern-ireland-conflict>
- https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counties_of_Ireland
- <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-irish-queen-troubles/factbox-history-of-northern-ireland-conflict-idUSBRE85Q17D20120627>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/20930976/northern-irelands-violent-history-explained>
- <https://www.infoplease.com/northern-irish-conflict-chronology>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-47761230>
- <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-ireland/fearing-brexit-protesters-gather-along-irish-border-idUSKCN1RB0ML>
- <https://www.ft.com/content/7d5244a0-f22d-11e8-ae55-df4bf40f9d0d>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/northern-ireland-talks-latest-updates-stormont-power-sharing-deal-what-deal-lo-uk-sinn-fein-dup-deal-a8711691.html>
- Northern Ireland: Brexiting Borderlands: the vulnerabilities of the Irish Peace Process, by Katy Hayward
- <https://academic.oup.com/view-large/33843049>
- <https://northernireland.foundation/about-us/>
- <https://www.thesocialchangeinitiative.org/>
- <https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/northern-ireland/peacebuilding-organisations/peace-and-reconciliation-group-prg/>
- Reconciliation and Human Rights in Northern Ireland: A False Dichotomy? By Maggie Beirne and Colin Knox
- The Bloody Sunday Inquiry: Transitional Justice and Postconflict Reconciliation in Northern Ireland by Nevin. T. Aiken
- <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/uk/britain-would-consult-with-dublin-before-imposing-direct-rule-in-no-deal-brexit-1.3840646>
- Reconciliation as a Dirty Word: Conflict, Community Relations and Education in Northern Ireland; by Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie

Questions?