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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: The Development of Irish-American Political Power</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Irish-American Politicians and Northern Ireland</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Internationalizing the Northern Irish Conflict</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: The Good Friday Agreement</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

In January 1992, a group of Irish-Americans, led by former congressman Bruce Morrison and Irish author Niall O’Dowd formed the official “Irish Americans for Clinton” group. The small group’s goal was simple: find a Democratic candidate who would work to find an American role, an issue that had largely been ignored by the Reagan and Bush administrations. The original group was small; O’Dowd estimated that there were only thirty founding members originally, barely enough to fill a table at a fundraising dinner.¹

In early September, the group—now known as Irish Americans for Clinton-Gore—arranged a meeting with the Clinton campaign to discuss the “Irish question” and make sure that, if elected, Clinton would follow up on his Irish agenda of supporting moderate nationalist interests in Northern Ireland. Before the meeting, O’Dowd was not especially optimistic; he thought that, at best, the Clinton campaign would trot out a staffer who had been loosely briefed on the events in Northern Ireland but was only meeting with Irish Americans for Clinton-Gore to appease an ethnic contingency and to be polite.

But the opposite happened. Clinton himself sat in on the meeting. He had a deep knowledge of the conflict, and more importantly, Clinton seemed to care in ways that even the Irish-American Reagan had not. Perhaps it was due to the years Clinton spent at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar during the same years that the Northern Irish civil rights movement was gaining

traction. O’Dowd was suitably impressed and believed that Clinton might be the American president to make the difference.²

Clinton was the American president who made the difference in the Northern Irish question—it was under his leadership that the United States was first able to meaningfully get involved in the Northern Ireland peace process and work as a major player in procuring a lasting peace. But to understand the Good Friday Agreement and the American role requires going beyond Clinton’s role as a charismatic international actor or his intimate relationship with Tony Blair.

So, how did the Irish-American community develop the political power necessary to force President Clinton to challenge what had been seen as British domestic policy and help make peace in Northern Ireland? How did a population that largely came to the United States poor and illiterate, become a major voting bloc in American elections and win the White House in 1960, and later elect a “green” president in 1992? This thesis aims to explain how an ethnic group that was once marginalized and hated became politically powerful enough to sway international events.

**Understanding the Conflict in Northern Ireland**

The origins of the Catholic-Protestant tensions in what is now Northern Ireland began in the 17ᵗʰ century. Following revolts and insurrection by the majority-Catholic population, Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell systemically killed Catholic leaders and redistributed the best farmland, located in Ulster, to Protestants from England and Scotland.³ For the next two

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² Ibid, 70.
centuries, the Protestant minority maintained absolute power over the island until the Catholic emancipation of the early 19th century and subsequent political reforms over the latter half of the century.

In 1922, following the unsuccessful Easter Rising of 1916, disappointment in the Home Rule movement, and a guerrilla war for independence, twenty-six of the thirty-two counties declared independence from Great Britain, forming the Irish Free State. The other six counties—Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone—remained part of the United Kingdom under the name of Northern Ireland.

There are several theories to explain both the creation of Northern Ireland and the reasoning for only including six of Ulster’s nine counties. While no single theory explains the creation of the Northern Irish state, Dominic Beggan and Rathnam Indurthy describe three popular theories: a British show of loyalty to Ulster Protestants, a method of keeping part of the island under British control, and an attempt to prevent sectarian violence in the region.4

Likewise, there is no single explanation for the breakup of Ulster, although a popular and likely explanation was put forward by Unionist leader Walter Long, who explained that including the Catholic-majority counties of Cavan, Donegal, and Monaghan would “provide such an access of strength to the Roman Catholic party that the supremacy of the Unionists would be seriously threatened.”5 A nine-county state would threaten the Protestant hegemony, while a six-county state was both large enough to ward off external threats from the Free Irish State while retaining a large Protestant majority. In short, it was in the British interest to retain

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5 Ibid, 6.
the parts of Northern Ireland that were least likely to rebel and allow the pro-independence counties to form the Free State.

While Northern Ireland was not explicitly founded on the idea of Protestant supremacy, within forty years of existence, Northern Ireland was politically dominated by the Protestant majority, with little room for the ever-growing Catholic minority. Inspired by the black civil rights movement in the United States, students and Catholic religious leaders in the 1960s began to organize their own marches and demonstrations to protest inequalities in housing, employment, and political opportunities in the county. Terence O’Neill, the Ulster Unionist Party Prime Minister at the time, agreed to some limited reforms to be slowly rolled out in order to appease the Catholic minority. Part of his reforms included limited Catholic political participation, a proposal that triggered a Unionist backlash led by Ian Paisley, the radial Protestant minister. This backlash, as well as other actions Paisley would take through 1998, “probably contributed to more sorrow and pain in Northern Ireland than any one leader before or after him,” not counting, of course, terrorist actions by the IRA.

O’Neill’s plan for limited equality failed, and the moderate Protestant faction he represented fell in the elections to a more hardline vision of Unionism. At the same time, the Catholic community, who rightly believed that any chance of reform had been destroyed both by radical Unionism and cowardice from the moderates, began to rally around militant Catholic groups like the Provisional Irish Republican Army. In 1973, the Northern Irish government was dissolved and the British took over the administration of the country due to civilian unrest and an uptick in terrorist bombings.

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6 Ibid, 8.
By the 1970s, as violence spiraled out of control, Britain sent troops to quell the tensions. At first, the Catholics welcomed the British soldiers, seeing them as protectors against Protestant law enforcement and anti-civil rights mobs, but after a series of scandals, including the infamous Bloody Sunday massacre and internment of young Catholic men on unfound charges of paramilitary membership, Catholic attitudes shifted.\(^7\) This tensions reached a fever point in 1981, with Bobby Sands’ hunger strike over the treatment of political prisoners and subsequent death after British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher refused to negotiate with the striking prisoners.\(^8\)

The conflict first became internationalized in 1985, with the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Thatcher, the neo-liberal champion of the British imperial tradition, agreed to meet with her Irish counterpart, the Fine Gael Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald. Thatcher and FitzGerald drafted the Anglo-Irish Agreement to address the political issues and violence in Northern Ireland and resolved to create a power-sharing government in which all parties in the conflict would have some power. While Catholics supported the agreements, Unionists led by Paisley saw it as a British betrayal.\(^9\) While the Anglo-Irish Agreement failed to resolve the conflict, it set the stage for the Good Friday Agreement and American involvement in the Northern Irish peace deal by beginning to internationalize the conflict.

**Major Players**

Because the Good Friday Agreement involved political leaders from Great Britain, Ireland, the United States, and Northern Ireland, it is important to understand the various players

\(^7\) Ibid, 9.
\(^8\) Ibid, 10.
\(^9\) Ibid, 11.
and parties involved in the negotiations and their ideologies regarding the status of Northern Ireland.

Three or four parties came from Northern Ireland. The disparity in number is due to the fact that Paisley’s Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) boycotted the negotiations in 1998. However, the DUP was still an influential actor in the peace talks, even if they were not formally at the table at the end of the talks. The four Northern Irish parties who played a major role in the Good Friday Agreement were Sin Féin, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the Ulster Unionist Party, and the Democratic Unionist Party.

Sinn Féin is a self-described “radical, left-wing republican party” formed in 1905 that subscribes to ethnic and civic militancy as its expression of Irish Catholic nationalism. Following the Irish War for Independence and the creation of the Irish Free State, Sinn Féin has been closely linked to the Irish Republican Army, and in Northern Ireland, the two can be seen as synonymous. In short, Sinn Féin believes in a unified Irish state and operates both within the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. As civic and ethnic militants, Sinn Féin, through the IRA, advocates for using armed struggle to liberate Northern Ireland from British rule and to further Irish self-determination. As a result, unionists rightfully do accuse Sinn Féin of advocating for terrorism in Northern Ireland. During the negotiations and eventual Good Friday Agreement, Sinn Féin was headed by Gerry Adams.

The Social Democratic and Labour Party—colloquially known as the SDLP—is a traditionally center left social democratic party, originally founded as a way of ending the civil

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11 Ibid, 131.
rights conflict by bringing Catholics into the Northern Irish state. The SDLP’s nationalism takes a variety of forms including: constitutional republicanism, or full reunification through legal and diplomatic means; and neo-nationalism, advocating for an inclusive Irish nation. A united Irish state is the SDLP’s ultimate goal, although they believe it can only be reached through peaceful means and negotiations. Historically, the SDLP has been very critical of the IRA and only entered into talks with Sinn Féin in 1988. In 1998, John Hume was head of the SDLP and represented it at the Good Friday Agreement.

The Ulster Unionist Party, or the UUP, served as the mainstream Protestant party from 1920 until the collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement in 1972. The UUP was “a broad-based coalition of working-class, middle-class and landed unionism, spanning social and regional boundaries.” The UUP maintained their dominance due to both their broad appeal to Protestant voters and because of political, legal, and administrative control over the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland. There were deep links between the UUP and the British Conservative Party as well, with the UUP essentially serving as the Tories’ arm in Northern Ireland. David Trimble represented the UUP during the peace negotiations.

The Democratic Unionist Party—the DUP—is the hard-line loyalist party that formed in 1971, following unionist schisms due to the UUP’s handling of the civil rights movement and the eventual Sunningdale Agreement. Because its founder, Ian Paisley, was a leading Protestant

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13 Broin Ó, *Sinn Féin and the Politics of Left Republicanism*, 221.
16 Ibid, 125.
18 Ibid, 209.
religious figure, the DUP had close ties to hardline Protestant groups and paramilitaries.\textsuperscript{21} While there were DUP splinter groups, the party was able to reincorporate their bases whenever said splinter groups tried to negotiate with either the UUP or the SDLP. The DUP focused on “smashing” Sinn Féin and Irish Catholic nationalism as a major part of its platform and before the Good Friday Agreement, only supported a majoritarian state system.\textsuperscript{22} The DUP did not participate in the Good Friday Agreement, although their absence played a major role in the negotiations. At the time, they were led by their founder, Ian Paisley.

From the British side, both the Labour Party—England’s leftist party—and the Conservative Party—the mainstream centre-right party at the time—were involved in the peace process. As referenced before, due to Conservative ideology regarding preserving the British Empire, Tory leadership was less likely to agree to any talks that involved Sinn Féin, who the state saw as a terrorist group until the 1994 ceasefire,\textsuperscript{23} or agree to internationalizing the settlement. Tony Blair, the Labour leader beginning in 1997, helped revitalized the peace process and, due to Blair’s close relationship with Bill Clinton, was able to fully internationalize the settlement.\textsuperscript{24}

Finally, representing the Americans was Bill Clinton and his team, headed by former Senate majority leader George Mitchell. Clinton’s election in 1993 served to “green” the White House and provide Irish nationalists and their allies in American politics, most notably Ted Kennedy, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and Peter King, with a platform to advocate for a solution in

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 193.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, 203.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 384.
Northern Ireland. Clinton’s popularity with the Irish-American community, British leadership by 1997, and leadership from Sinn Féin, the SDLP, and the UUP all led to a legitimization of the American role in the conflict.

The American Irish and the Good Friday Agreement

The Good Friday Agreement came out of a complicated history defined by sectarian violence and ethno-religious strife, and reaching peace involved a variety of actors. Clearly, the Northern Irish actors at the table, and a party that was not, were beyond instrumental to making a lasting peace in the country, and without the dedication of moderate leaders like John Hume of the pro-Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party and David Trimble, leader of the Protestant Ulster Unionist Party, it is unlikely that there would be either a lasting peace or an agreement that allowed for equality through power-sharing. The role of the Irish and British also cannot be understated. However, the Americans, especially the Irish-American community, were major drivers to the peace process.

The American Irish have a unique connection to Ireland, and as they grew more politically powerful, they were able to influence American policy toward Ireland and Northern Ireland, culminating in Clinton’s involvement in the Good Friday Agreement through his special envoy, George Mitchell and subsequent peace treaty.

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Chapter 1: The Development of Irish-American Political Power

In this chapter, I will attempt to explain how Irish-American political power developed through the 19th and 20th centuries. Using theories of power development, I will analyze the rise of Irish machine politics in major urban centers like Boston and New York and how machine candidates were able to shift from the city level to the state and national level. Using the 1928 election and the 1960 election, I will highlight both the development of the Irish-American presidential candidate and popular American reaction to the Irish-American politician. Additionally, I will use the lens of historic events, including World War I and the start of the Northern Irish civil rights movement, to explore the dual nature of the Irish-American political identity and the tensions between being part of the American polity and identifying strongly with a nebulous Irish identity.

Theories of Development

The Famine-era Irish migrants did not have structural power within the American political system. In the words of George E. Reedy, the Irish in America at the time were “an indistinguishable group of people living as outsiders in the midst of the heaviest population centers;” they were a poor people and lacked significant economic and political power within most cities. However, within roughly one hundred years, the Irish-American population would transform into a large and vocal political interest group and elect one of their own to the White House. How and why did the Irish transform from a shunned population that was routinely targeted by the Nativist movement to leaders in the Democratic Party and send one of their families to dominate American politics for most of the 20th century?

Perhaps no factor is as important in the Irish American rise to power as the city. Famine-era migrants, post-Famine migrants, and their descendants were primarily urban. Unlike in Ireland, where the population was rural and political loyalty lay at the clan and county level, Irish-American migrants and their families formed political bonds at the community level. They also came from a tradition of peasant solidarity against the British elite during times of strife. These two identities would serve to help Irish-Americans establish their own political identity within the existing American framework. The Irish-American community was able to mainstream their identity into the political and social system, combat nativism, and develop into a key demographic throughout the next century.

The Irish political machine grew out of the Irish-American political identity of intercommunity loyalty and outsider status, as well as a means of protection against nativist backlash. It also grew out of the very nature of American democracy. Unlike in the United Kingdom, American political power can be very concentrated at the local and community level; the Irish in the United States were able to hold their own local power despite being an “outsider” group, while they did not have these same opportunities in the United Kingdom and its colonies of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. However, this alone does not explain the Irish rise to power in many northeastern cities in the United States. While the Irish were a sizeable minority in Boston, New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, they were still just that: a minority. In Philadelphia, for example, the Irish population was both sizeable and established before the Famine, but did not gain significant political power until the 1960s, because the white Protestant

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27 Ibid, 41.
29 Ibid, 186.
Republican Party was able to unify other minority groups against the Irish.\textsuperscript{30} The development of Irish political power in America, therefore, must go beyond simply the solidarity of the Irish community and its relative size in many cities.

Irish-American political power came out of the Civil War. 150,000 Irish soldiers served in the north, totaling nearly ten percent of the Union Army.\textsuperscript{31} They earned respect on the battlefield, both within both Irish-only regiments like the Fighting 69\textsuperscript{th} and small Irish companies in larger, mixed units. But they also made a name for themselves when they organized a series of strikes against the 1863 Conscription Act, inspired both by anti-black racism and by frustration with existing power systems in the North that ignored the Irish and their interests.\textsuperscript{32} The Civil War moment increased Irish visibility, both for better and for worse. They were part of American civil society simply by serving their country, but they also were caricatured as “an apelike creature [with a] long upper lip, pointed teeth, and fringe beard”\textsuperscript{33} who were inherently prone to drunkenness and alcoholism, a stereotype that would last well through the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

\textbf{The Political Machine}

In the aftermath of the Civil War, new opportunities for both economic and political advancement had opened up for Irish Americans. By 1870, less than two decades after the peak of Famine-era migration, both Irish-American laborers and artisans were making roughly twice of what they had in 1850 and, in professions like bricklaying, three times what they would have made in Ireland in the same year.\textsuperscript{34} Kinship networks within certain industries, like meatpacking

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 188.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, 372.
\textsuperscript{33} Reedy, \textit{From the Ward to the White House: The Irish in American Politics}, 47.
\textsuperscript{34} Lee and Marion, \textit{Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States}, 235-236.
in Chicago, allowed for the Irish to dominate professions. One member of the kinship network, often the oldest or most established in the profession, was often responsible for helping other members of the network for getting their jobs, and so if he decided to run for a union position or as a ward leader, the rest of his kinship network would vote for him out of obligation. The established kinship leader had political backing, while the lower-ranking members within the relationship had a politician who could protect their interests.

Both Reedy and Timothy Meagher present a similar argument for the third factor in understanding the development of Irish political power and the urban machine: the use of favors and negotiation. There is a traditional way of understanding the development of political coalitions through coercive exchanges of favors; the Party 1 threatens the Party 2 enough that Party 2 agrees to support Party 1. These threats can be both physical—like inciting supporters to violence against the out group—and metaphorical—pledging to withhold services, opportunity, and avenues to power. However, there is also an alternative route to the development of political power that does not require the coercive exchange of favors. In this model, Party 1 willingly does favors for Party 2 without threats and coercion, and in return, Party 2 is not willing to support Party 1 within reason but also is a reliable political ally. This model most closely mirrors the Irish rise to political power.

However, the development of Irish political power went beyond merely exchanging favors. For many Irish communities, “politics was their business… the only business that they could call their own.” For this reason, it was essential that the nascent Irish political machine both worked with other marginalized ethnic and religious groups and blocked said groups from

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35 Reedy, *From the Ward to the White House: The Irish in American Politics*, 50.
gaining any significant urban political power. They had to go beyond simply offering up favors in exchange for political support but had to build coalitions large enough to challenge the WASP hegemony that dominated many American cities without giving rival minority groups the opening for their own power expansion that was not within the anti-WASP, Irish-dominated coalition. The Irish did this in part by allying themselves with the Democratic Party; while the Democratic Party had been significantly weakened in the North after the Civil War, the Republican Party was the party of industrial interests. Additionally, dissatisfaction with Reconstruction policies helped alienate Irish-Americans from the Republican Party.\textsuperscript{37} As the Democratic Party was deeply unpopular in Northern cities—the areas that the vast majority of Irish migrants and their descendants lived in—there was an opening for the Irish to take on a role in and take over the Democratic Party. For more than a century, therefore, the Democratic Party and Irish-Americans would be intimately married.

Tammany Hall in New York City was the ideal model for the Irish political machine and effectively controlled New York City politics for a century, from the 1860s through the 1960s. Tammany Hall, the informal nickname for a New York City political organization, existed since the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century and was already known as a bastion of corruption by the 1810s.\textsuperscript{38} However, the Irish community did not seize control of Tammany Hall until William Marcy Tweed, a Scots-Irish New York firefighter, successfully ousted then-mayor Fernando Wood from control in 1859.\textsuperscript{39} From 1859 to 1871, Tammany Hall, under Tweed’s leadership, controlled “City Hall, the

\textsuperscript{37} Reedy, \textit{From the Ward to the White House: The Irish in American Politics}, 53.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, 63.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 65.
state legislature, two-thirds of the New York Supreme Court, and the governor’s mansion in Albany.\textsuperscript{40}

Tweed was both effective and corrupt, corrupt enough that in 1873, Tweed was found guilty on 104 counts of bribery and sentenced to twelve years in prison, although the latter was reduced to a fine.\textsuperscript{41} Even though Tweed’s successors, especially John Kelly, would work to reform Tammany Hall into “an organization that performed social services for people in the lower depths,”\textsuperscript{42} its legacy remains tied to Tweed and political corruption and kickbacks. Despite the Tammany Hall legacy and a series of Progressive Era reforms attempting to combat political corruption, the Tammany Hall legacy and Irish-American political power lived on.

**World War I and Irish Independence**

The World War I period represented a moment of intense political activity by the Irish-American community. It was a time of internal strife within the community over American entrance into the war, debate over the Irish-American place within Irish liberation, and division over support in the Irish Civil War. The period from 1914 to 1923 served to divide what was once a politically unified community, and also highlighted how influential the Irish-American community would eventually become in the international arena.

American entry in World War I fundamentally divided the Irish-American community. World War I was a contentious issue in Ireland, and that contention crossed the Atlantic to America. Irish nationalists opposed the war on principle, as they saw it as further expansion of British colonial control and an excuse for Britain to back out of limited Home Rule-based

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, 66.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 66.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 67.
reforms. Many in Ireland supported the Central Powers. However, in America, there was division. Clan na Gael supported American neutrality during the war, while the Hibernian Society supported alliance with Germany against the British Empire.\textsuperscript{43} The Ancient Order of Hibernians, founded in 1836, was an Irish-Catholic fraternal organization that, while supportive of Irish political ambitions, tended to avoid radicalism and embraced orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{44} In contrast, Clan na Gael was a radical Republican organization, established in 1869 after the collapse of the Fenian Brotherhood to support violent action in Ireland against British control and as a brother organization to the Irish Republican Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{45} It is not necessarily shocking that the more “moderate” Irish secret society would actively support siding with Germany, but Clan na Gael had their own agenda and did not want to turn American public opinion against the Irish-American community.

Clan na Gael leadership knew about the 1916 Easter Rising, as they were in close communication with its leaders. They helped plan the rebellion and donated nearly $10,000 to the rebels for weapons and supplies, including German guns.\textsuperscript{46} The funding for this donation came from membership fees and German support. Groups like Clan na Gael were intrinsically linked to Germany; the more vulnerable Britain was, the less likely Home Rule was to pass. If Home Rule passed, Clan na Gael’s organizing strategy would be considerably weakened.\textsuperscript{47} Clan na Gael leadership regularly traveled from the United States to Ireland and Europe during the early years of World War I without raising suspicion from either the American or British....

\textsuperscript{44} Lee and Marion, \textit{Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States}, 188.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 492.
government. This strategy of maintaining neutrality while still benefiting from a secret deal with the German government was supposed to benefit the Irish-American community as it could be seen as loyal by the American public and simultaneously sabotage the British in Ireland. Although the Irish-American community was not politically powerful at a national level, Irish-American societies like Clan na Gael still were able to influence global events.

After the Easter Rising failed, Irish-Americans found themselves in a tough situation. Prior to 1916, those who were members in Irish-American brotherhoods and societies either opposed entering the war or openly desired conflict with Britain. After 1917 and America’s entrance into the war, both political parties saw the Irish as “hyphenated Americans,” having to prove their loyalty and status as part of the polity. Woodrow Wilson made it clear that at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, his administration would not bring up the topic of Irish independence both due to concerns over angering Britain and as punishment against perceived Irish-American disloyalty, even as his famous Fourteen Points focused on progressive foreign policy like self-determination. When Irish-American representatives supported by Clan na Gael were denied entry to the treaty of Versailles, Wilson did not support them. Just as the Irish-American community was becoming accepted into the American national identity, Irish nationalism threatened to upend the delicate balance.

Although Irish-Americans were seen as disloyal due to their lack of support for the United States joining the War, the post-World War I moment led to a new surge of Irish political power. Once America actually entered the War, predominantly Irish units like the Fighting 69th, who first gained fame in the Civil War, became famous for taking heavy causalities in some of

the most brutal battles of the War; of the roughly 1,800 men who went to France in the Fighting 69th, a third died in the trenches of Meuse and Lorraine.\textsuperscript{50} In 1919, the same year that Wilson refused to support the Irish-American representatives to Versailles, Al Smith, the progressive Irish Democrat, was elected as governor of New York, enacting a progressive agenda and taking a stand in the brewing political battle over the prohibition of alcohol.\textsuperscript{51}

The end of World War I allowed the Irish-American community to take a new stand for Irish nationalism without worrying about their place within the American system. When Éamon de Valera came back to New York City, the city of his birth, in 1919, he sold over $5,000,000 in bond certificates to fund the Irish Republican Army during the Anglo-Irish War.\textsuperscript{52} However, much to the disappointment of Irish independence leaders, the Irish-American community was not especially active in either the war for independence or the Irish Civil War.\textsuperscript{53} While Clan na Gael helped smuggle guns and ammunition to the Irish Republican Army during the 1920s, it never was at as large a scale as their Easter Rising operation.\textsuperscript{54} However, following independence, Clan na Gael struggled to take serious action in the Irish Civil War, due to American support for the Irish Free State and the Pro-Treaty forces. Due to cooperation between the Free state, British intelligence agents, and American law enforcement, Clan na Gael activities in the Irish Civil War were curtailed and the organization significantly weakened.\textsuperscript{55}

While the Irish-American community did not become as actively involved in the Irish Civil War following Irish independence, it was now possible to be both an American and an Irish

\textsuperscript{50} Reedy, \textit{From the Ward to the White House: The Irish in American Politics}, 105.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, 105-106.
\textsuperscript{52} Metress, \textit{The American Irish and Irish Nationalism: A Sociohistorical Introduction}, 10.
\textsuperscript{53} Paul McMahon, \textit{British Spies and Irish Rebels: British Intelligence and Ireland, 1916-1945} (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2008), 113.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, 114-115.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, 116-117.
nationalist. However, when Irish identity and American identity were in conflict, the Irish-American community would side with the latter in the future. This in turn would help “prove” Irish-American loyalty to the American state and would make future attempts to organize for the Irish cause more viable.

**Al Smith and World War II**

In 1928, the Irish Catholic community found the White House within their grasp, thanks to Smith. He represented the best that the Irish-American community, and Tammany Hall, had to offer. He was:

> the epitome of all the finest traits that hat been developed by the Irish organizations since the Potato Famine. He was possessed of superb political skill; he was a first class orator; he had lifted himself out the slum by his own bootstraps; his feelings for people in trouble ran deep; and he was scrupulously honest.\(^{56}\)

The latter was important; Smith actively combatted the reputation of the Irish Catholic urban politician as a corrupt horse trader, giving away power and prestige in exchange for votes and influence. He was a progressive reformer who had battled the clothing industry after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911 and passed major labor reforms, including early workman’s compensation, a limited workweek, and protections for women and children in the workplace as governor.\(^{57}\) Smith was popular with Irish voters and conservative Southern Democrats alike, winning the 1928 presidential nomination on the first ballot.\(^{58}\) And yet, he overwhelmingly lost the White House in 1928.

\(^{56}\) Reedy, *From the Ward to the White House: The Irish in American Politics*, 135.
\(^{57}\) Ibid, 136.
\(^{58}\) Ibid, 138.
There is, of course, no single factor to explain a presidential loss. The 1928 electorate was focused on the economy, not on vestiges of the Progressive Era, and Smith was not a candidate who focused on Wall Street and the stock market. He had little appeal to Republican voters or the rural voters who still dominated the American electorate.\textsuperscript{59} His Republican opponent, Herbert Hoover was also known as a self-made man and a pillar of society, and in the international community, he was recognized as the man who organized humanitarian food aid for Belgium following World War I. Like Smith, Hoover also was also a member of a religious minority faction, but he was a Quaker, part of a group that was seen as non-threatening to the American Protestant identity.\textsuperscript{60} Hoover simply appealed to a mass base of American voters, and many saw him as an obvious shoo-in for the presidency.

However, this factor alone is not to understand Hoover’s landslide victory over Smith. Nativism and anti-Irish prejudice played an equally important role. Smith was a long-standing enemy of the revived Ku Klux Klan,\textsuperscript{61} especially after he effectively banned the organization within New York state.\textsuperscript{62} He also benefitted from internal collapse and corruption within the KKK during the 1920s, which meant they would not be as large a factor in his election attempt.\textsuperscript{63} However, Smith still struggled to combat broad anti-Irish sentiment that persisted in the United States.\textsuperscript{64} Part of it was due to poor campaign strategy; Smith adopted the brown derby as a symbol of his campaign, a symbol that many non-Irish urban Americans associated with the

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, 138.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid, 141.
\textsuperscript{61} The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s was different from the Ku Klux Klan of Reconstruction; the new KKK, while still racist, also targeted Catholic and immigrant communities.
\textsuperscript{62} John Higham, Strangers In The Land (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 298.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid, 329.
\textsuperscript{64} John F. Kennedy, “John F. Kennedy’s Address to Protestant Ministers” (Greater Houston Ministerial Association, Houston, Texas, September 12, 1960).
WHYOs, a group of particularly brutal Irish gangs in post-Civil War New York City.\textsuperscript{65} To many Americans, Smith was too closely linked to Tammany Hall and the Catholic Church. While Smith supported “the absolute separation of Church and State” and “recognize[d] no power in the institutions of my Church to interfere with the operations of the Constitution of the United States or the enforcement of the law of the land,”\textsuperscript{66} Smith was attacked as the Pope’s puppet and inherently un-American, a threat to the cultural hegemony. It would take another world war for an Irish Catholic to win the White House.

World War II tested the balance between Irish nationalism and American loyalty within the Irish-American population. Much like Irish-Americans of the 1840s who turned against Daniel O’Connell when he criticized the role of slavery in American political life, Irish-Americans turned against Ireland during World War II. Due to internal economic weakness and de Valera’s distrust of the British,\textsuperscript{67} the Irish remained neutral during World War II.\textsuperscript{68} The Irish-American community felt betrayed and immediately distanced themselves from their homeland.\textsuperscript{69} Irish men signed up for the armed forces en masse; over 30 percent of the American military was Catholic.\textsuperscript{70} Like in the Civil War and World War I, Irish-American soldiers were largely seen as brave and patriotic—the only difference was that historically communal and ethno-religious units like the Fighting 69\textsuperscript{th} became integrated with other white soldiers. The Irish-American community was American first and Irish second. During the war, Joseph P. Kennedy, second generation American and ambassador to Britain, reportedly told a reporter “I

\textsuperscript{65} Reedy, \textit{From the Ward to the White House: The Irish in American Politics}, 140.
\textsuperscript{67} Lee and Marion, \textit{Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States} 137.
\textsuperscript{68} Although technically neutral, the Irish government allowed Allied forces to send air missions from the Irish coast, and Irish beaches were used to practice for D-Day.
\textsuperscript{69} Metress, \textit{The American Irish and Irish Nationalism: A Sociohistorical Introduction}, 12.
\textsuperscript{70} Lee and Marion, \textit{Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States}, 597.
was born here. My children were born here. What the hell do I have to do to be called an American?" 71

The 1960 Election

In 1960, the junior senator from Massachusetts, a war hero and the son of one of America’s most prominent Irish Catholic families, showed what it took to be called an America when he ran against Pat Brown, Lyndon B. Johnson, Adlai Stevenson, and Hubert Humphrey for the Democratic nomination and won. In November, he narrowly beat out the sitting vice president, Richard M. Nixon, to win the presidency, the first and only Catholic to do so.

So how was Kennedy able to do what Smith, could not? In some ways, Kennedy was the polar opposite of Smith—Kennedy was from a rich family where Smith was poor, Smith had political experience while Kennedy had barely served a full term in the Senate. So why did Kennedy win what Smith could not? There are two important factors to consider. The first is that Kennedy was a candidate who appealed to more than just an urban, Northern, working class. Kennedy and his campaign team actively reached out to intellectuals, veterans, Jewish groups, and—albeit not as a campaign priority, as not to upset Southern whites—African-Americans. 72 The Kennedy campaign took the traditional function of machine politics and turned it on its head to appeal to a mass populace rather than just a small ethno-religious population. The second factor is that by 1960, the Irish were more integrated into American society. It was over one hundred years since the Famine-Era wave of migrants and the creation of the early Irish political machine. The Irish had fought and died for the United States in a series of wars, and when it

71 Ibid, 597.
came to the choice between their Irish loyalties and their American identity, they were American first. It did not hurt that anti-Irish nativism had largely died out by 1960.\textsuperscript{73}

By and large, Kennedy’s Irish Catholic identity did not matter to the same extent that Smith’s did in 1928. In a famous speech to Protestant ministers in Texas, a “must-win” state for the Kennedy campaign, Kennedy described “an America where the separation of church and state is absolute, where no Catholic prelate would tell the president—should he be Catholic—how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote.”\textsuperscript{74} While it is safe to assume that there were voters who were motivated by anti-Irish sentiment, Kennedy did not face the same level of vitriol as Smith did. Kennedy was a candidate “whose public acts are responsible to all groups and obligated to none… [and] whose fulfillment of his presidential oath is not limited or conditioned by any religious oath, ritual or obligation,”\textsuperscript{75} a candidate who both was symbolic of Irish America and also transcended it. He won the White House and with it elevated the Irish-American community to political power.

**Renewed Interest in Northern Ireland**

Within a decade of Kennedy’s presidency, the Irish-American community was revitalized and had rediscovered its Irish identity. From the partition to the late 1960s, most Irish-Americans were not attuned to the political situation in Northern Ireland.\textsuperscript{76} The so-called Irish betrayal during World War II had weakened the culture ties that many Irish-Americans felt with Ireland. They no longer felt like outsiders within the United States, as they put their American identities

\textsuperscript{73} By the 1960s, the Ku Klux Klan had shifted their focus entirely to terrorizing black Americans in the South.
\textsuperscript{74} John F. Kennedy, “John F. Kennedy’s Address to Protestant Ministers” (Greater Houston Ministerial Association, Houston, Texas, September 12, 1960).
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
before their Irish ones. However, the rapidly devolving situation in Northern Ireland, especially with the strong links between the Northern Irish civil rights movement and the black civil rights movement in the United States, reinvigorated Irish-American interest in the Northern Irish question.

Northern Irish non-violent civil rights leaders took inspiration for non-violent protest from Martin Luther King, Jr. Hume personally followed the King model when he began his SDLP leadership:

> Well, in the 1960s… I was very much inspired by that time by Martin Luther King’s leadership for civil rights. And of course, we started the civil rights movement on our own streets, here in the city of Derry to create equality of treatment for all sections of our people. And it was a very important factor in improving our situation here.\(^77\)

The black civil rights protestors of the United States and the Catholic civil rights protestors were linked by more than just non-violence. Hume and his fellow marchers were protesting the lack of job opportunities, blatant housing discrimination, and limited voting rights that Catholics in Northern Ireland faced, issues that were similar to those that black southerners were marching for. Catholic protestors sang “We Shall Overcome” as they marched, and when the Royal Ulster Constabulary responded with batons and water cannons, Irish-Americans saw the images on their televisions.\(^78\)

However, where the American civil rights movement set a peaceful precedent for complicated intercommunity relationships, the Northern Irish civil rights movement triggered further violence. When British occupation began, many Americans and Irish-Americans, largely


uninformed on the politics of Northern Ireland, saw it as a positive; after all, perhaps the British could maintain the peace.\textsuperscript{79} January 20, 1972 changed everything. British troops in Derry, including members of a parachute regiment, opened fire onto unarmed civil rights protestors, killing 13 outright, in what would later be known as Bloody Sunday.\textsuperscript{80} Following Bloody Sunday, Irish-Americans began to take notice of the Northern Irish situation, organize en masse, and develop political power at an international level.

Of the American groups to develop from Bloody Sunday and renewed Irish nationalism, the Irish Northern Aid Committee, a radically pro-nationalist group, was the most prominent. NORAIM, as it was more colloquially known, became the leading Irish-American fundraising arm for providing economic relief to Catholics in Northern Ireland. By 1972, less than two years after it was founded, NORAIM boasted one hundred chapters and 80,000 members in the United States.\textsuperscript{81} Other Irish-American groups for Northern Irish relief existed—the National Association for Irish Justice and the National Association for Irish Freedom were two Irish-American groups that worked closely with Northern Irish Catholic leaders like Bernadette Devlin—but these other groups did not last beyond the 1970s, largely due to ideological divisions and the supposed broad appeal of NORAIM.\textsuperscript{82} In the early 1970s, in the direct aftermath of Bloody Sunday, NORAIM looked like the best bet for Irish America to organize against Britain’s presence in Northern Ireland.

NORAIM had its unsavory sides. For starters, despite its claim of being the leading voice for Irish-Americans on the Northern Irish issue, even at its peak, NORAIM’s membership

\textsuperscript{80} Lee and Marion, \textit{Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States}, 558.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, 298.
included just over five percent of the first-generation Irish-American community. Its supposed broad base simply did not exist. This is because NORAID was significantly more radical than most Irish-Americans, just as many Northern Irish Catholics, prior to the Good Friday Agreement, preferred the SDLP to Sinn Féin. NORAID, despite its claims of humanitarianism, was part of the radical nationalist Irish community. Its founder, Michael Flannery, was an IRA veteran of the Irish Civil War, and he had deep ties to members of the Provisional IRA. In fact, at a 1969 meeting with PIRA leadership, Flannery agreed to create an American fundraising campaign “to support a renewed military campaign aimed at uniting Ireland.” While NORAID officially only raised funds for humanitarian aide, questions about its links to the IRA would dog the organization throughout the Troubles.

From 1972 to 1982, NORAID and Flannery were investigated by the American, British, and Irish government for possible links to the IRA and for funneling funds toward buying weapons. In 1982, Flannery was acquitted of any charges for conspiracy to supply guns to the IRA. While there is no legal evidence that NORAID actually bought weapons for the IRA, the roughly $6 million the group raised from 1970 through 1982 allowed the IRA to use their own money to buy weapons. While not direct material support, the existence of NORAID humanitarian funds helped a listed terrorist organization to participate in violent political advocacy. In addition, NORAID directly sent money to the families of jailed nationalists. While many nationalists in British prisons were political prisoners with social links to the IRA,

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84 Ibid, 298.
87 Tim Murphy, “Peter King’s Terrorism Problem,” *Mother Jones*, January 19, 2011.
like the famed martyr Bobby Sands, others were members of the IRA and carried out violence on their behalf, meeting American legal definitions of terrorists. Political scientist Alan B. Krueger found that when the families of terrorists are paid compensation by the terrorist organization, there is a causal relationship with increased terror recruitment. While NORAID leaders may not have intentionally wanted to support terrorism, there is a reasonable chance that giving stipends to imprisoned IRA members’ families could have helped encourage IRA recruitment and membership.

Following the start of the Troubles, Irish America was not united on the Northern Irish question. Just as Irish America was divided, so was its leadership. Some leaders, like Peter King, supported Sinn Féin and NORAID; others, like Daniel Patrick Moynihan, vehemently opposed radical Irish nationalism; their identities within the conflict was dictated not by party identity but by ideology on the Irish question. Pragmatic moderates and mediators, led by Ted Kennedy, tried to strike a balance between the two extremes. The development of Irish political power throughout American history allowed for these Irish-American leaders to form relationships and have considerable influence on the global stage.

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Chapter 2: Irish-American Politicians and Northern Ireland

In this chapter, I will focus specifically on Irish-American political leaders who were actively involved in the Troubles and the subsequent Good Friday Agreement, their ideologies, and their links to the Northern Irish political leaders. I will be focusing on four political leaders on both sides of the aisle who, in my view, represent the broad array of Irish-American popular opinion: Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), Majority Leader Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY), Representative Peter King (R-NY), and Special Envoy George Mitchell (D-ME). Although Senator Mitchell was not strictly Irish-American in the way that Kennedy, Moynihan, and King were, his role was incredibly important for understanding the road to peace. This chapter will serve to link Irish-American political leaders to the Good Friday Agreement and highlight the unique political role Irish-Americans served in the Clinton administration and during the negotiations.

Case Study One: Peter King

Peter King is an Irish-Catholic Republican who has represented Long Island in Congress since 1992. His family emigrated from Galway and Limerick in the 1920s, as part of the post-Famine migration wave. His mother’s family had been quite active in the original Irish Republican Army during the Irish Civil War. King described his family as very anti-Treaty and “Catholic because the British were Protestant,” rather than because of an especially deep religious faith. In 2015 terms, King is generally a political moderate. Ideologically, King stands

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90 Peter King, "This is what I grew up listening to", interview by Meaghan McKeown, November 28, 2005.
91 Peter King, "On his maternal grandmother, Maggie McNamara”, interview by Casey R. Marion and Meaghan McKeown, November 28, 2005, Ireland House Oral History Collection, Archives of Irish America, New York University.
92 In a post-Tea Party Republican Party where Paul Ryan and John McCain are seen as Republicans In Name Only, it is difficult to accurately label conservative ideologies accurately.
out as a military hawk and perhaps the most anti-terror candidate in Congress. In 2011, King held a series of controversial hearings on radicalization in the American Muslim community, which were decried as misguided, Islamophobic, and “a bigoted witch hunt.”\(^93\) Given his position on Northern Ireland, King’s radical anti-terror ideology, when it applies to Muslim Americans, can be seen as ranging from odd to hypocritical.

King has a close, multi-decade relationship with radical Northern Irish republican groups and their senior leadership, including Gerry Adams. He first travelled to Belfast as part of a fact-finding mission with New York Republican Senator Alfonse D’Amato in 1980 and met members of the Provisional Irish Republican Army and Sinn Féin.\(^94\) Following the 1981 hunger strikes, King became actively involved in the Northern Irish issue and with the controversial Northern Irish independence group, NORAID. Throughout the 1980s, King actively campaigned in support of the IRA, describing the group as both “the legitimate voice of occupied Ireland”\(^95\) and its members as “those brave men and women who this very moment are carrying forth the struggle against British imperialism in the streets of Belfast and Derry.”\(^96\)

However, King’s support for the IRA went deeper than simply giving speeches in support of a terrorist group. He first met Gerry Adams in 1984,\(^97\) the year the IRA bombed 10 Downing Street. When in Ireland, King would stay with well-known IRA leaders and was invited to join an IRA drinking club, the Felons, whose only membership requirement was serving time in jail for the “cause.”\(^98\) One of his closest friends in the IRA was the group’s operations officer in

\(^{96}\) Moloney, “Rep. King and the IRA: The End of an Extraordinary Affair?”
\(^{97}\) Moloney, “King of the Hill Changes His Tune.”
Belfast and was responsible for most of the IRA violence in the city during the 1980s. His support was so open that King was ejected from a Belfast court for being “an obvious collaborator with the IRA,” and was labeled as a possible security threat by both the Secret Service and the FBI.

King’s support for the IRA and Sinn Féin helped to legitimize radical Irish nationalism in the United States. Until 9/11, King never tried to downplay or deny his links to the IRA and Sinn Féin, and often gained positive press for his republican views. In 1985, with NORAID lobbying, King was the grand marshal of the New York City St. Patrick’s Day Parade, despite a boycott from the Irish government. Despite, or perhaps of the boycott, King became incredibly popular with America’s Irish-Catholic elite, including Cardinal John O’Connor, the Catholic archbishop of New York; King described O’Connor as a “hater” before the parade but after the parade, he “became Cardinal O’Connor's best friend.”

By implicitly endorsing King as grand marshal, the American Catholic Church also implicitly endorsed him as a legitimate voice for Irish-Americans who were dissatisfied with American inaction on the Irish question. The parade helped King cement his position as a powerful voice for the Irish-American community and jump-started his political career in New York state.

The Clinton administration also helped bring King’s views into the political mainstream. During Clinton’s first term, King was one of the few Americans who had close ties with the IRA.

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99 Moloney, “King of the Hill Changes His Tune.”
100 Moloney, “Rep. King and the IRA: The End of an Extraordinary Affair?”
101 Ibid.
and Sinn Féin and, more importantly, a personal friendship with Adams—who the Clinton Administration pragmatically recognized as a major player for any peace deal to be successful. King moved from fringe terrorist sympathizer who was investigated by three country’s security apparatus to a respectable political ally that Clinton would invite to the White House for pizza and Super Bowl parties. While the administration did not endorse supporting terrorism, King’s role in helping Clinton’s team allowed a global power to bring a leader like Adams to the table as a legitimate negotiating partner. Despite King’s radical position, he served an important role to the Clinton administration, which in turn allowed him to remain a respected political leader outside of just the Irish-American community.

King represented a conservative Irish-American sub-population that, despite major political differences with Sinn Féin’s neo-socialist ideology, supported an international terrorist group and radical Irish nationalism. By 1998, the majority of Irish-Americans were aligned with the Democratic Party, which, by and large, was both more pro-Irish than the Republican Party and more moderate on the Irish question that Peter King. King made it acceptable for Irish-Americans to actively support Sinn Féin and engage with groups like NORAID that would funnel money and arms to the IRA.

As an interesting aside, after 9/11, Peter King broke from his former Sinn Féin friends, accusing Sinn Féin and the Irish government of “knee-jerk anti-Americanism” and a lack of support for the United States’ intrusions in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition, with the success of the Good Friday Agreement and a somewhat stable peace in Northern Ireland, King “no longer

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104 Moloney, “King of the Hill Changes His Tune.”
106 Ibid.
[sees] any rationale for the IRA.”

King’s relationship with the IRA and Sinn Féin lasts as long as it does not threaten his anti-Muslim extremism ideology. Cynical as it may sound, Peter King might believe in the old saying that one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter when it comes to the IRA and Sinn Féin, but given the current political climate in the United States and his own leadership role in the anti-terrorism community, it is no longer politically feasible for him to support Irish terrorists. Any argument for brutal terror in the name of independence was made moot by the power-sharing aspects of the Good Friday Agreement. There are also historic parallels between King’s sudden disavowal of the IRA; throughout Irish-American history, the American Irish—unsurprisingly—have broken with their Irish loyalties when the Republic or Irish leaders criticize American political problems or do something that the Irish American see as “wrong”, like remaining neutral during World War II.

**Case Study Two: Daniel Patrick Moynihan**

Daniel Patrick Moynihan was the Irish-Catholic Democratic senator from New York from 1976 to 2000. His grandfather, John Moynihan, migrated from County Kerry to the United States in 1886, as part of the post-Famine migration wave. Jack, as he was known, worked in industry in the Rust Belt region of the United States, like many Irish immigrants of the time who did not settle in coastal cities. It is unclear if they were Scots Irish or not. Although born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Moynihan grew up in Hells Kitchen in a Catholic family that was staunchly for FDR. Moynihan served in the Department of Labor under fellow Irish-Catholic John F. Kennedy and

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107 Ibid.
109 Ibid, 27.
110 Ibid, 28-29.
as ambassador to both India and the United Nations\textsuperscript{111} before he served as a United States Senator.

Moynihan is theoretically more difficult to place on the political spectrum than Peter King or Ted Kennedy. His ideology drifted from FDR-style liberalism while he served in the Kennedy administration to a rightward, anti-Soviet and more socially conservative bent while serving as as ambassador, to a mostly-reliable voice for New York state’s myriad interests. Some of Moynihan’s contemporaries, as well as his biographer, Godfrey Hodgson, describe Moynihan as “not primarily a liberal, still less a conservative”,\textsuperscript{112} that he could transcend ideology differences and the Left-Right binary of American politics. A more cynical analysis of Moynihan’s career would see his “transcending” the ideology as pure pragmatism, mirroring the ideology of whoever is president.\textsuperscript{113} But perhaps the best understanding of Moynihan’s myriad political positions it to look at him as an Irish-Catholic who came from a political background that is both progressive and afraid of rocking the proverbial boat, loyal to heritage but putting the United States first.

Perhaps this ideology of Irish-Catholic identity strongly tempered by pragmatism best explains Moynihan’s actions and interactions, or lack thereof, with the Northern Irish question and leaders on both sides of the conflict. Again, unlike his fellow Irish-Catholic contemporaries, Kennedy and King, Moynihan did not take an especially strong stance in support of Irish republicanism and Catholic nationalism. Although from an Irish family, Moynihan did not feel an especially strong tie to the country and gave very little thought to questions of Irish

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, 17.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, 24.
\textsuperscript{113} Moynihan’s political positions were significantly more “conservative” under Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan than when Bill Clinton, John F. Kennedy, or even Gerald Ford were president.
nationalism and Northern Ireland. He did not even pay attention to the island, as he recalled, until around 1969, when it was clear things were going very badly in the civil rights movement. If anything, Moynihan was the most prominent Irish Catholic politician to oppose Sinn Féin and the IRA.

It actually makes sense that Moynihan would virulently oppose Sinn Féin. Sinn Féin, after all, is an avowedly socialist party and Moynihan was an avowed anti-socialist and anti-communist. Historically, Catholic Americans, especially Irish-Catholics, have been more anti-socialist anti-communist than most Americans. While on a Fulbright Scholarship at the London School of Economics, Moynihan befriended Jock Gollogly, an Ulster Catholic who was a leader in the local Labour Party. Jock was also a strong anti-communist, and Moynihan’s political views were very influenced by Gollogly. It is unclear if Gollogly and Moynihan ever discussed the Northern Irish question, but it is striking that one of Moynihan’s first Northern Irish connections was also against socialist parties like Sinn Féin. In fact, Moynihan believed the only reason Sinn Féin did not take the SDLP approach to Irish nationalism was that they were Marxist, so violence and terrorism was inherently in their self-interest.

However, this is not to say that Moynihan was not proud of his Irish heritage or was not a major leader in the Irish-American community. Along with New York governor Hugh Casey, Massachusetts congressman and Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill, and Massachusetts senator Ted Kennedy, Moynihan was known as one of the “four horsemen” of Irish-American

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116 Ibid, 45.
117 Ibid, 44-45.
118 Moynihan knew Gollogly before the Troubles began.
Democrats. One of Moynihan’s first acts in the Senate was a push for an official Saint Patrick’s Day statement.  

Ironically, pro-Union British tabloids labeled the statement as pro-radical nationalism, when the opposite was true. Moynihan and his fellow Horsemen used the statement to call on:

> Those organizations engaged in violence to renounce their campaigns of death and destruction and return to the path of life and peace. And we appeal as well to our fellow Americans to embrace this goal of peace, and to renounce any action that promotes the current violence or provides support or encouragement for organizations engaged in violence.  

For four years, the Four Horsemen would repeat this statement each Saint Patrick’s Day. In 1981, at the peak of the hunger strikes, the Four Horsemen also announced they were creating a new group to address the violence in Northern Ireland, the Friends of Ireland. Their ultimate goal, which Moynihan supported, was a reunified Ireland reached through peaceful means and with consent of a Northern Irish majority.  

This plea and proposal highlighted Moynihan’s approach to the Troubles and Irish nationalism. Undoubtedly, Moynihan supported a unified Ireland, but only though democratic, non-violent means and, ideally, without the participation of a socialist political group like Sinn Féin. He had a close personal relationship with John Hume, leader of the SDLP, and personally admired Hume and all that the SDLP did to promote Irish nationalism through peaceful methods. Like the SDLP, Moynihan pushed for an ecumenical approach to solving the conflict; in 1988, he even asked John O’Connor to use the New York City Saint Patrick’s Day

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120 Ibid, 283.  
121 Congressional Record 1998, p. 6621  
Parade as an opportunity to bring Protestant and Catholic children from Northern Ireland together as a way of promoting peace:

The most recent [Saint Patrick’s Parade] had begun in Syracuse [New York] and for the purpose of raising money to bring Protestant and Catholic children from Ulster… Might we not start a project such as they have undertaken in Syracuse? Which is to say, use the parade as an occasion to raise monies to bring children over here.124

Moynihan did not just speak out against violence and terrorism but also campaigned for peaceful ways of building bridges in the Northern Irish community, such as his proposal for the 1988 parade. The only solution in Northern Ireland was not Sinn Féin and the IRA but an SDLP model of community-building and peace.

Moynihan stood out from most Irish-Catholic politicians, especially Democrats, in his steadfast refusal to negotiate or engage at all with Sinn Féin. By the early 1990s, his close friend, Ted Kennedy, had begun pushing Bill Clinton to give Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin’s leader, a visa to visit the States. Despite press stories that claimed Moynihan supported Kennedy, he vehemently opposed giving Adams any sort of visa.125 Following the World Trade Center bombings in 1993, Moynihan could not help but see similarities in IRA and al Qaeda attacks126. In a letter to then-New York City mayor David Dinkins, expressed his concerns that the IRA and Islamic militants might cooperate in the future:

The Islamic terrorists and the IRA are in close communication and have been for decades. Collaboration I don’t think we could prove but we could certainly surmise… My concern is that the IRA will now get involved with providing semtex [an explosive used at the

125 Hodgson, The Gentleman From New York, 357.
126 In 1992, the IRA attempted to bomb Canary Wharf, a major business district in London. Part of the IRA’s plan included blowing up tall office buildings.
Canary Wharf attempted bombings] to Islamic terrorists… Note how casually they have been killing children in Britain.\textsuperscript{127}

While there is not an especially convincing link between the IRA and al Qaeda, the IRA had close ties with groups like the Basque ETA and Colombia’s FARC. So while Moynihan’s concerns were not founded, they were based on logical inferences.

Moynihan can be seen as a foil to Peter King. Where Peter King was a vocal Sinn Féin supporter, Moynihan was a vocal Sinn Féin and IRA critic for his entire political career. Moynihan represented an Irish-American population that did not feel the same ties to Ireland and its conflicts and preferred to either stay out of the problem or support the moderate side. This population was in the minority for most of the Troubles. Moynihan’s approach to the peace process was idealistic and perhaps a bit naïve, as Sinn Féin involvement was a necessity for a peace deal that could satisfy almost all parties in the conflict. However, Moynihan represented serious and not unfounded concerns in the Irish-American community about supporting a terrorist group like the IRA and not criticizing their political arm, Sinn Féin.

\textbf{Case Study Three: Ted Kennedy}

Ted Kennedy was the Irish-Catholic Democratic senator from Massachusetts from 1962 to his death in 2009. Kennedy’s paternal great-grandfather, Patrick Kennedy, fled County Wexford during the peak of the Famine in 1848.\textsuperscript{128} Two of his maternal great-grandparents, Thomas Fitzgerald and Rose Mary Murray, also migrated from County Wexford in the 1840s.\textsuperscript{129} Despite being born nearly a century after his great-grandparents left Famine-era Ireland for Massachusetts, Ted Kennedy shared deep ties to Ireland that many Irish-Americans feel,

\textsuperscript{127} Weisman, \textit{Daniel Patrick Moynihan: A Portrait In Letters of an American Visionary}, 605.  
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid, 52.
regardless of how many generations they are separated from their origins. He first visited Ireland at the age of six, although he would not visit Northern Ireland until 1998.\textsuperscript{130}

The youngest of Joe Kennedy’s four boys and the only one to survive past the 1960s, Ted Kennedy was responsible for carrying on the family legacy after Bobby Kennedy was assassinated in 1968. Ted Kennedy was often described as the “Lion of the Senate” for both his long service and his unabashedly liberal ideology. In 2009, only a few months before his death, \textit{The National Journal} found Ted Kennedy to be the third-most liberal senator for that session, based on his lifetime voting record.\textsuperscript{131} While his Irish-Catholic Democratic counterpart, Moynihan, was content to moderate his views depending on who was in office, Ted Kennedy was always reliably liberal in both image and ideology.\textsuperscript{132} While health care reform was arguably Ted Kennedy’s decades-long focus, he led many progressive causes, ranging from civil rights advocacy to supporting global democracy.\textsuperscript{133} Ted Kennedy’s position on Northern Ireland arguably makes him the quintessential liberal Irish-Catholic Democrat.

Ted Kennedy was both conflicted and pragmatic when it came to Northern Ireland, especially in his relationship to Sinn Féin and Gerry Adams. He was torn between his ideology, party identity, and familial loyalties. As early as 1971, in the early years of the Troubles, he first called for British troops to withdraw from Northern Ireland.\textsuperscript{134} In an impassioned speech before the United States Senate on October 21, 1971, Ted Kennedy declared:

\begin{quote}
Ulster is becoming Britain’s Vietnam. The conscience of Americans cannot keep silent when men and women of Ireland are dying. Britain has lost its way, and the innocent people of Northern
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{130} Adam Clymer, \textit{Edward M. Kennedy: A Biography} (New York City: Morrow, 1999), 181.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Clymer, \textit{Edward M. Kennedy: A Biography}, 607.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Ibid, 606-607.
\item \textsuperscript{134} Conor O’Clery, “Champion of Ireland’s Cause and a True Friend,” \textit{The Irish Times}, August 27, 2009.
\end{itemize}
Ireland are the ones who now must suffer. … Indeed, it is fair to say that Britain stands toward peace in Northern Ireland today where America stood in Southeast Asia in the early 1960s. … If only the cruel and constant irritation of the British military presence is withdrawn, Ireland can be whole again.  

This statement was Ted Kennedy’s most radical on Northern Ireland; it was also widely criticized in both the United Kingdom and the United States. It was also Ted Kennedy’s first break from his family’s quiet Irish pride that always came second to American interests, including its close relationship with the Britain. This statement appealed to an Irish-American Catholic audience, many of whom were furious with the deteriorating civil rights situation in Northern Ireland, as well as implicit American support for British policy.

Everything changed in 1972, shortly after the Bloody Sunday massacre. Irish diplomats, who saw Ted Kennedy’s “Brits out” position as harmful to foreign policy, encouraged him to met with John Hume. He and Ted Kennedy first met in Bonn on November 21, 1972, just over a year after his “Britain’s Vietnam” speech. This meeting significantly shaped Ted Kennedy’s perspective on the conflict. As Kennedy would later recount:

> My understanding of the situation in Northern Ireland really began to evolve after I met John Hume… it was really in late 1972 that John began the great education of Edward Kennedy about Northern Ireland and established the seeds that grew into a wonderful relationship.

Hume helped pull Ted Kennedy away from the extremist brink, explaining that such rhetoric would only inflame violent national passions rather than lead to any real settlement. So, as a

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result, Ted Kennedy tempered his language and his position and took up new leadership within the so-called Four Horsemen. By 1976, Ted Kennedy could be seen as a moderate within the Irish-American political context, restrained Irish-American leader on the Northern Irish question.\textsuperscript{141} No longer an instigator, Ted Kennedy was now a mediator through the rocky 1980s.

That is not to say Ted Kennedy was popular among the British or Unionist leadership. Ted Kennedy had urged Carter to end the sale of American weapons to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Northern Irish police force popular with Unionists and despised by Catholics.\textsuperscript{142} While the action was justified with the language of non-intervention, the British government saw it as implicit support for the IRA rather than a neutral action. After all, groups like NORAID had made it very easy for IRA members to get funding and American-made weapons. The RUC was the only legitimate force fighting the IRA, and the weapons ban came across as an American attempt, led by a radical Irish faction, to make it harder for the RUC to maintain security and peace in the region.\textsuperscript{143}

The 1981 Hunger Strike, which culminated in Bobby Sands’ death, and Ted Kennedy’s response perhaps best represented his attempt as to mediate between a hostile and politically powerful Irish-American public and a suspicious British government. While “barely a hundred people protested outside the home of the British consul general in Boston” following Sands’ death, Irish Catholic leaders in the Massachusetts government issued a statement strongly condemning the Thatcher government’s position that Sands and the other strikers were not

\textsuperscript{141} According to Adam Clymer’s \textit{Edward M. Kennedy: A Biography}, in 1976, Carter had moved to the left of Kennedy on Northern Ireland. At the New York City St. Patrick’s Day Parade that year, Carter wore a “Get the Britain Out of Ireland” button, a button with the same sentiment that got Kennedy in trouble in 1971.\textsuperscript{142} Sanders, “Senator Edward Kennedy and the ‘Ulster Troubles’: Irish and Irish-American Politics, 1965- 2009,” 222-223.\textsuperscript{143} Unionist paramilitary groups, such as the Ulster Defence Association, also fought the IRA, but they can hardly be described as legitimate.
political prisoners. The resolution, which described the consul general as a persona non-grata, demanded that Thatcher meet the hunger strikers’ demands and withdraw all troops from Northern Ireland, as well as urged that the United States government impose economic and political sanctions against Great Britain until the conflict was resolved. Ted Kennedy distanced himself from the resolution. Rather than taking a radical position like he might have only a decade earlier, Ted Kennedy urged President Reagan to discuss the issue of prison conditions with Thatcher. As Ted Kennedy saw it, the treatment of quasi-political prisoners like Bobby Sands “were only increasing American contributions to the terrorists.” Throughout the 1981 hunger strike and its fallout, Ted Kennedy managed to remain above the political fray and came out of the tensions as a non-racial voice on Northern Ireland.

However, Ted Kennedy’s role as a mediator was complicated by his family. It is important to differentiate Ted Kennedy from the Kennedy family monolith. Early in his career, Ted Kennedy broke from his brothers’ more moderate position on Northern Ireland and was the first Kennedy to criticize British policy in the region. At the same time, he was influenced by his family members, especially his nieces and nephews and his sister, Jean, all of whom were more sympathetic toward the IRA and took more extreme positions on the Northern Irish question.

Joe Kennedy II, Robert Kennedy’s eldest grandson, advocated for many IRA and suspected IRA members who were in prison during the 1970s and 1980s. He was especially close with the Guildford Four, a group of young Irish Catholics who had been wrongly accused

\[144\] Maier, *The Kennedys: America's Emerald Kings*, 563-564.
of a 1974 bombing after violent interrogation and a non-jury trial.\textsuperscript{147} Although the Guildford Four were eventually acquitted of that bombing after fifteen years in prison after investigators found that key evidence and statements had been manipulated or falsified, they were still controversial and seen by many as IRA sympathizers, especially after Paul Hill, one of the Guildford Four, described the IRA members he knew glowing terms as “neighbors [and] the brothers of our friends.”\textsuperscript{148} It certainly did not help that Hill married one of Ted Kennedy’s nieces, Mary Courtney Kennedy, while pending appeal for the murder of a British soldier or that the priest who performed the ceremony was a well-known republican sympathizer.\textsuperscript{149} Following their 1993 marriage, Ted Kennedy was quite literally linked to the conflict by blood in ways that made it more difficult to claim a role as a moderate and mediator.

This role was only further complicated when Clinton named Ted Kennedy’s youngest sister, Jean Kennedy Smith, as his ambassador to Ireland.\textsuperscript{150} Kennedy had secretly lobbied Clinton to give his sister the position, due to her status as “a well-informed observer of the turmoil in Northern Ireland” and the close relationship she had with Irish leaders and Hume.\textsuperscript{151} Kennedy Smith supported giving Gerry Adams, the Sinn Féin leader, a visa to visit the United States. The British government opposed giving Adams a visa, as they saw Adams as intrinsically linked to the IRA and therefore a terrorist.\textsuperscript{152} To complicate things further, Ted Kennedy’s good friend, Hume, had been secretly negotiating with Adams for most of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In a popular, if apocryphal, story, Hume encouraged Ted Kennedy to support Adams’

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\textsuperscript{147} Maier, \textit{The Kennedys: America’s Emerald Kings}, 564-565.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid, 564.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid, 565-566.
\textsuperscript{151} Kennedy, \textit{True Compass}, 460.
\textsuperscript{152} Maier does point out that by the early 1990s, Adams had began to distance himself from some of the most atrocious IRA bombings, but still had deep ties to IRA leadership.
\end{footnotesize}
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visa while at Tip O’Neill’s funeral; according to Ted Kennedy, they discussed it over dinner following the funeral, not at the graveside itself.

Ted Kennedy organized thirteen senators and twenty-eight representatives to send Clinton a letter in support of the visa. Clinton gave Adams a 48-hour visa. The British, the State Department, and even some members of the American Embassy in Ireland, believed that Adams could not be trusted until he fully committed to nonviolence. By granting him a visa before this commitment, many in the State Department and in British leadership believed Clinton had been “played” by the IRA and its American supporters, including Ted Kennedy and his sister. However, this point of view ignores the importance of Kennedy and Hume’s relationship. It is unlikely that Ted Kennedy would have supported Adams’ visa request without Hume’s support; Hume legitimized Adams as a reputable political figure. After all, Ted Kennedy followed Hume’s example when it came to the complex details of the conflict after 1971. To say that Adams’ visa was simply a result of the Kennedy family applying pressure on the Clinton administration ignores just how much Ted Kennedy trusted Hume’s judgment and how, by 1994, Hume and Adams’ own relationship had changed.

When analyzing Ted Kennedy’s complicated relationship with Northern Ireland and its Catholic leadership, it is also important to remember how American, Irish, and British biases can complicate the popular image of Ted Kennedy as the Irish-American mouthpiece. The contentious issue of Ted Kennedy’s legacy in Northern Ireland and influence on the peace

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154 Kennedy, True Compass, 462.
155 Clymer, Edward M. Kennedy: A Biography, 536.
156 Ibid, 537.
process can best be seen by the debate over his honorary knighthood in 2009. Lord Tebbit, a Conservative politician who almost died in an IRA attack in 1984, described Ted Kennedy as “no friend of the U.K.,” due to what Tebbit considered to be Ted Kennedy’s implicit support for the IRA. Others in Britain, especially on the political right, saw Ted Kennedy as a vicious politician who would say whatever was necessary to win Irish votes in Massachusetts.

However, from the Irish perspective, Ted Kennedy was a hero. In an Irish Times op-ed published shortly after Ted Kennedy’s death, Conor O’Cleary said that Ted Kennedy’s crowning achievement was his ability to serve as a mediator when he “renounce[d] any action that promoted violence, while calling for an Irish dimension to peace efforts and investment in the Border economy.” Perhaps the strongest example of the Irish perspective on Kennedy comes from Gerry Adams himself, who in an obituary for Ted Kennedy, described him as “an advocate for citizens' rights” in Northern Ireland and the true hero of the peace process. The Sinn Féin vision of Ted Kennedy as an Irish hero and the Tory vision of Ted Kennedy as an IRA sympathizer who poisoned US-UK relationships represent just how divisive opinions of Ted Kennedy’s role in Northern Ireland were at the time of his death, more than a decade after peace was eventually reached.

Ted Kennedy’s relationship with Northern Ireland was perhaps the most complex of the three Irish-Americans in this case study. While King was avowedly in support of Sinn Féin and the IRA prior to 9/11 and Moynihan was avowedly opposed, Ted Kennedy walked a fine line between the two positions. After his controversial “Britain’s Vietnam” comment, Ted Kennedy

159 O’Clery, “Champion of Ireland’s Cause and a True Friend.”
significantly moderated his language and the conflict and began to shadow Hume’s own language and actions. As the most prominent name in Irish-American politics and the face of Irish America, Ted Kennedy worked to moderate an Irish-American community that was at the very least sympathetic to the IRA while also serving as a leading advisor to Clinton on the issue. Although controversial, the decision to support the Adams’ visa, with Hume’s blessing, perhaps best defined Ted Kennedy’s position on Northern Ireland.

**Case Study Four: George Mitchell**

George Mitchell was the Democratic senator from Maine from 1980 to 1994, Senate Majority Leader from 1988 to 1994, and the Special Envoy to Northern Ireland from 1995 to 2001. Unlike the other three case studies, Mitchell is not Irish-Catholic; he is Catholic but comes from a Lebanese family. Compared to the other case studies, Mitchell also had a relatively short career in Congress; he only served for fourteen years while King has, as of 2016 served for twenty-four, Moynihan for twenty-four years, and Kennedy for forty-seven. As the Special Envoy, Mitchell served a very different role from the other case studies and therefore had different relationships with major Northern Irish players in the Good Friday agreement. For this reason, I will break down the relationship that Mitchell had with the four major Northern Irish political leaders and how those relationships and interactions helped or hindered the negotiations.

Although Mitchell can be frustratingly coy in his memoirs,\(^1\) it appears that he had the best relationship with John Hume, the leader of the moderate Catholic SDLP. This close connection makes sense; of all the parties at the table, the SDLP was the most moderate, had the fewest ties to terrorist or paramilitary groups, and could reasonably be supported by the

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\(^1\) I believe he does this so as not to upset the delicate balance in Northern Ireland and to remain an unbiased foreign policy perspective for future conflicts.
American, Irish, and British governments. Hume and the SDLP advocated for non-violence and for internationalizing the conflict, two key platforms that the Clinton administration could support without American backlash. In addition, the Clinton administration and the SDLP had a common goal: a solution that would end the Troubles and create a “fair” Northern Irish state without actually discussing its status within the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland. In short, the SDLP was the party that was the most politically acceptable, the least likely to cause problems, and the most devoted to reaching a lasting peace.

That is not to say that Mitchell’s relationship without the SDLP was not without its hitches. Hume was very critical when the international coalition of Ireland, Britain, and the United States would give into certain demands that were necessary to keep unionists at the table. That is not to say that Hume was a saboteur or openly hostile like like Paisley, but it is disingenuous to see the Mitchell/Hume relationship as ideal or perfect. Relatively late in the game, after Sinn Féin was allowed to join the talks, Hume balked on a possible consensus with the UUP.\(^\text{162}\) In his retelling, Mitchell seems almost disappointed in Hume for using a tactic that the UUP had used so often during the proceedings: claiming to be on board with a resolution or idea, only to pull support at the last minute. Despite these occasional flare-ups, Mitchell and Hume maintained a strong relationship throughout the process, and the SDLP was the first Northern Irish party to sign onto what would be known as the Good Friday Agreement.

Mitchell’s relationship with David Trimble, leader of the UUP, was the most complicated, as Hume had both the most to gain and lose from the negotiations and was the bulwark of making sure the unionist community would agree to any resolution. Early on in the

negotiations, the UUP refused to make any statement about if they even supported Mitchell’s appointment to chair plenary sessions. However, Mitchell understood and respected this decision:

If the peace process failed, Trimble did not want unionists, and especially his party, to be held responsible... He wasn’t opposed to me; he was opposed to my having the authority the governments proposed giving to me... Trimble felt that there was an advantage in having a chairman willing to act independent of the governments, even though serving at their invitation.

Trimble was not happy about the internationalization of the conflict, but perhaps he, more than anyone else at the table, was the reason that, even when the DUP would walk out, the peace process continued with unionist support. The UUP could take credit for making sure Mitchell received his chairmanship and peace was achieved in ways that even the SDLP could not. In the end, while the DUP never intended to participate once a deal was reached, the UUP was devoted to the talks and a “fair” resolution.

Mitchell and Trimble’s relationship was often complicated by the DUP and Ian Paisley. Many of the non-starters that Paisley would propose or threaten to leave over had to do more with intra-unionism disputes that would hurt the UUP’s appeal with the unionist community. It was something that Trimble was forced to balance. He wanted to remain in the talks to keep the UUP legitimate and because he had an interest in peace, but acquiescing too much to American/SDLP/British/Irish demands could turn unionists against him and hurt him in elections, which in turn would weaken him as the legitimate unionist voice. Even though the UUP did remarkably well in the 1997 British elections, winning a third of all Northern Irish

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163 Ibid, 46.
164 Ibid, 47.
165 Ibid, 86.
166 Ibid, 85.
votes,\textsuperscript{167} it was unclear if Trimble would quit talks once Sinn Féin was allowed to join and effectively end any unionist participation in talks. This lack of predictability meant that while Trimble was willing to negotiate, Mitchell could not rely on him as much as he could Hume, who clearly would not quit the talks under any circumstances.

Thankfully for both Mitchell’s relationships with him and the peace process, Trimble took a risk and agreed to stay in talks after Sinn Féin joined. However, it meant that Mitchell had to essentially accommodate any of Trimble’s requests, as Trimble was the only unionist in talks. After Sinn Féin joined the talks, one of Mitchell’s priorities was making sure Trimble approved of any decommissioning language, even if it would anger the nationalists\textsuperscript{168} and whenever there was a possible breach of ceasefire, Trimble, not the outside parties, were allowed to take charge on if Sinn Féin should be allowed to stay.\textsuperscript{169} Even though Trimble would, for the entirety of the negotiation, refuse to speak directly to Adams and any other Sinn Féin representative, Mitchell was still able to count on him as a reliable negotiation partner. From his memoir, it is clear that Mitchell credits Trimble’s own resilience and willingness to take political risks for, in part, why the peace succeeded. Of the four leaders, Mitchell seems to respect Trimble the most, as Trimble was in the most difficult situation politically and was still willing to take unpopular political positions with unionists.

Perhaps Mitchell’s most interesting relationship was with Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin’s leader. For most of the agreement, Sinn Féin was locked out of negotiations due to their deep ties with the IRA. However, unlike his unionist counterparts, Adams said that he did not speak for

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid, 103.
\item Ibid, 117.
\item Ibid, 118.
\end{enumerate}
the IRA or other nationalist paramilitaries,\textsuperscript{170} and throughout the peace process, Adams struggled to uphold the IRA ceasefire. President Clinton has also extended an olive branch of sorts to Adams, when he gave him a visa to visit the United States in 1994, despite opposition from the British government and the State Department. Reaching out to Adams was risky, as Mitchell had to weigh the importance of including all major negotiators with the fact that many considered Adams to be terrorist and many unionists would try to shut down talks if he was included.

Despite Adams’ reputation, Mitchell believed that he was actually devoted to reaching some sort of deal and, looking back on the negotiations, thought “[Adams] is trying hard, in difficult and dangerous circumstances, to bring his supporters into the grand tent of democracy.”\textsuperscript{171} Despite Mitchell’s beliefs on Adams’ own character and commitment, he had to contend with the fact that Adams really did not have control over the IRA and its subgroups, despite the close link between the IRA and Sinn Féin. During early 1997, despite Sinn Féin’s interest in participating at the talks and supposed commitment to peace, a series of bombings and attacks by IRA-affiliated and IRA-adjacent groups threatened to destroy Sinn Féin’s legitimacy, but Mitchell was willing to take a chance on Adams and urged the other parties to allow Sinn Féin to remain at the table as long as the IRA fully observed a continuous ceasefire.\textsuperscript{172} Although Mitchell was rightfully wary of Adams and his links with the IRA, by including him in talks, Mitchell made sure that the eventual agreement was as inclusive as possible and would meet the concerns of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland, rather than punishing all nationalists based on the actions of a terrorist group.

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid, 23.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid, 113.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid, 142.
The relationship between Ian Paisley and his DUP and Mitchell was, in some ways, almost comical. Paisley and his deputies viciously opposed Mitchell’s leadership, calling him a pawn of “despotic governments.”\(^\text{173}\) Mitchell actually recounted that during the first few days of negotiations, a British officer would physically sit in his chair whenever he left, due to concerns that Paisley would literally occupy Mitchell’s seat and shut him out that way; Paisley also organized a walk-out on the first day when Mitchell took his chair.\(^\text{174}\) Despite these childish outbursts, Mitchell initially worked to keep Paisley as a negotiating partner, as Paisley was willing to accept the so-called Mitchell Principles, seen as a major step in agreeing to disarming and reaching peace—especially since the Mitchell Principles equally applied to unionist paramilitary groups.

Until Sinn Fein was allowed to join the talks in 1997, actually, the DUP were somewhat willing to negotiate, although always with the threat that they could wreck the peace at any time by leaving. In the window between when the talks began and when the DUP walked out for good, Mitchell said that they brought “constructive suggestions”\(^\text{175}\) to the discussions, and working with Mitchell actually gave Paisley some political protections; by participating in negotiations, the DUP could not be painted as unreasonable by the British government, even if in the end, they quit the talks and became intransigent. That is not to say that Paisley would make Mitchell’s life easy before leaving the talks for good. In November 1996, Paisley and the DUP accused one of Mitchell’s female aids of sleeping with a Sinn Fein member. Even after the rumor

\(^{173}\) Ibid, 49.  
\(^{174}\) Ibid, 50.  
\(^{175}\) Ibid, 63.
was shown to be nothing more than a smear campaign, Paisley continued to make statements regarding the affair that could be construed as an attempt to delegitimize the negotiations.176

This would characterize Paisley’s relationship with Mitchell; be an “unwilling” participant in the talks, while complaining and bad-mouthing Mitchell the whole time. In some ways, Mitchell coyly hints that when Paisley and the DUP walked out, his life actually became easier, as he no longer had to deal with an impossible set of demands and that Trimble no longer had his hands tied up.177 Of the four leaders, Mitchell is the most critical of Paisley’s behavior, although he never goes so far as to criticize his politics. From his own recollections, it is clear that Mitchell believed Paisley was always disingenuous about the peace talks and never had any intention of letting there be a successful deal that the nationalists could agree to.

176 Ibid, 90-93.
177 Ibid, 110.
Chapter 3: Internationalizing the Northern Irish Conflict

By the start of the Troubles, there was significant Irish-American political power in the American government. Irish-American politicians in both major political parties and with varying levels of support for Sinn Féin and the IRA were powerful and influential voices in Washington, DC. However, presidential administrations for much of the Troubles preferred to stay out of the conflict, largely in part because of the United States’ close relationship with Britain and British resistance to internationalize the conflict to any world powers. So how did the United States not only become involved in the Troubles but take a role as a major negotiating partner for peace?

Early Days of the Troubles

Prior to 1972, the non-Irish American establishment did not take a strong policy interest in Northern Ireland. It was part of the United Kingdom, and therefore part of Britain’s sphere of influence. In the Cold War mindset, it was not America’s priority to get involved in a foreign policy issue that was not a direct threat to containing Soviet influences, especially when a historic ally was a party to the conflict. While the United States was mired in an unwinnable war in Vietnam, Northern Ireland was simply not a policy priority or consideration. It was an internal problem that could be adequately handled by the British government. Due to the war in Vietnam and the larger implications of the Cold War, State Department resources that normally were given to the European Bureau—the State bureau that dealt with the United Kingdom—were redirected toward bureaus that dealt directly with NATO and the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁸

That is not to say that some Irish-Americans tried to put political pressure on Nixon to get involved. Then-Speaker John McCormack, a Massachusetts Democrat and descendent of Irish Catholic Canadians, encouraged Irish members of Congress to make floor statements, hold committee hearings, and introduce non-binding bills and resolutions about the conflict. In the 1969 Congressional session, House members introduced 25 resolutions, letters of concern, and articles about Northern Ireland. Tip O’Neill, the future Speaker, rallied 104 other members to sign onto a letter expressing concern about the situation in Northern Ireland. 1969 also saw the first piece of legislation aimed at the Northern Irish crisis, although it was never voted on.\textsuperscript{179}

However, Bloody Sunday forced Nixon and his administration to take a new look at the situation in Northern Ireland and America’s role in the conflict. Congress and the Nixon Administration took very different approaches to the massacre. Irish-American Congressional leaders, suspicious of British reports that the IRA had opened fire and those killed were terrorists,\textsuperscript{180} organized a series of investigative hearings on Bloody Sunday. Led by Ted Kennedy, the hearings focused on proposed legislation that called for full British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, an end to the controversial British internment policy, and the possibility of a conference focused on future Irish unification.\textsuperscript{181} The legislation, obviously, did not pass.

While Congressional leaders took some, limited action in the wake of the Bloody Sunday massacre, the Nixon Administration did not. Neither the White House nor the State Department issued a statement about the tragedy. On February 3\textsuperscript{rd}, four days after Bloody Sunday, Nixon publically announced that “it would be inappropriate and counter-productive for the United

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid, 27-28.
\textsuperscript{180} Not only were these reports untrue, but former RUC leadership told the Irish News in 1998 that the British Army knew that the IRA would not be present at the original peace march.
\textsuperscript{181} Thompson, American Policy and Northern Ireland, 37-38.
States to attempt to intervene… the United States would play a role only at the request of both British and Irish governments.” In short, the Nixon Administration did not disrupt the status quo, as it had other foreign policy objectives and did not want to compromise its relationship with Britain. By and large, the Ford Administration would continue this policy of non-involvement in Northern Ireland, just without the secrecy and paranoia that was present in Nixon’s foreign policy.

A letter from British Prime Minister Edward Heath to Richard Nixon, sent in 1972, perhaps best illuminates the nature of the British-American relationship and Northern Ireland. Heath focuses on his plans to “set the affairs of the province on a new course” after Bloody Sunday, describing plans to de-escalate tensions through electoral changes, internment reform, and better relations with the Catholic minority. Although Heath never says it outright, the implication is clear: Britain had its affairs in Northern Ireland in order, and there was no need for America to get involved. He describes British policy as “in no way in pursuance of a sectarian policy against the Roman Catholic minority” but focused on “removing or neutralizing the terrorists and providing a better chance for peaceful moves towards a political solution.” Heath also recognizes that Irish-Americans, both in groups like NORAID and in Congress, are trying to force some sort of American involvement in the conflict, and thanks Nixon for taking a strong-arm opposition against any sort of action.Ironically, Heath ends the letter by talking about how much he enjoyed meeting with then-California governor Ronald Reagan to discuss British policy and encourage non-intervention.

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182 Ibid, 36.
184 Ibid.
Surprisingly, like Nixon, Jimmy Carter avoided making Northern Ireland a serious policy focus and refused to pressure Britain into internationalizing the conflict. During his 1976 campaign, Carter infamously wore a “Get Britain Out of Ireland” pin at the New York City St. Patrick’s Day parade, but once elected, he took a moderated stance that focused largely on the humanitarian aspect of the conflict. In 1977, when Carter issued his first presidential statement on Northern Ireland, he announced that his administration would continue Nixon and Ford’s policy of impartiality, Carter shared his belief that “a peace settlement should be achieved” and that the United States was invested, both politically and financially, in helping reach that peace, but only with British consent. He also reiterated the Four Horsemen’s disavowal of American support for Irish violence, a direct slap in the face to NORAID.\(^{185}\) Irish, British, and SDLP leadership all praised Carter’s statement, and the New York Times editorial board named him as the “Fifth Horseman for Peace in Ulster.”\(^{186}\)

While Carter tried to take a humanitarian approach while not getting actively involved in the Northern Irish conflict, his administration was challenged by Irish-American nationalist groups like NORAID. In 1977, Irish-American nationalists urged non-Irish American congressional Democrats, led by New York Congressman Mario Biaggi, to create an Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs\(^{187}\) to pressure Carter and his administration on Northern Ireland.\(^{188}\) However, the Committee faced steady backlash from both the Four Horsemen and the Irish government. Then-Taoiseach Jack Lynch was closely affiliated with the Four Horsemen and both feared that they were losing power in Congress and was concerned

\(^{185}\) Thompson, *American Policy and Northern Ireland*, 78.
\(^{186}\) Ibid, 79.
\(^{187}\) Despite the name, the “Ad Hoc” committee is still in existence after 25 years.
\(^{188}\) Thompson, *American Policy and Northern Ireland*, 80.
about the Committee’s “public association with members of NORAID.”\textsuperscript{189} Despite Lynch’s condemnation and lobbying by the Four Horsemen, by 1979, there were 130 members in the Ad Hoc Committee, around one third of the entire House.\textsuperscript{190} They were large enough to lobby Carter to make the first internationalizing move of America’s involvement in the conflict: ending the American tradition of selling weapons to the RUC. Although Carter did not try to actively force British policy changes, his administration was the first to take meaningful action to intervene in the conflict.

**Nixon, Thatcher, and the Anglo-Irish Agreement**

Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher had the closest relationship between a president and a prime minister since Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. This close relationship, as well as a shared neoliberal worldview, dictated Reagan’s policy toward Northern Ireland. Despite this close relationship, the Reagan Administration and Thatcher’s government butted heads over Northern Ireland prior to 1985, especially in regard to the 1981 Hunger Strike and other British policy decisions\textsuperscript{191} that caused outrage among the Irish-American community, including the moderate voices. Additionally, for during Reagan’s first term, most of his information on Northern Ireland was either out of date or biased toward the British perspective.\textsuperscript{192} Much like other presidents, Reagan was caught between an Irish-American community whose loudest voices were radically nationalist, a historic ally that did not want intervention in Northern Ireland, and unreliable or biased information on the conflict.

\textsuperscript{189} Ibid, 81.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid, 85.
\textsuperscript{191} Thanks to hindsight, it is easy to label some of Thatcher’s decisions vis-à-vis Northern Ireland as blunders, as they could escalate the tensions. However, given the political context that Thatcher operated in, combined with her own ideology, these policies make perfect sense.
\textsuperscript{192} Thompson, *American Policy and Northern Ireland*, 99.
The 1981 Hunger Strike caused the biggest split between the Irish-American community, American political leadership, and the British government. This was largely due to Thatcher’s mismanagement political prisoner crisis and resulting hunger strike. Rather than take a moderate approach, Thatcher became increasingly hardline, refusing to negotiate with the strikers and labelling them as criminals who chose to take their own lives.\(^\text{193}\) This, in turn, triggered both an Irish and Irish-American backlash against British prisoner policy. Moderate Irish and Irish-American groups were also blamed for being weak on the issue and unable to have serious political clout in Washington D.C. and Dublin. The 1981 Hunger Strike rallied otherwise politically apathetic Irish-Americans to the nationalist cause, alarming moderate Irish-Americans, moderate Northern Irish leadership and the Irish government. The Reagan Administration was initially reluctant to either condemn Thatcher’s policy regarding the strikers or issue an official White House statement of support.\(^\text{194}\) Reagan faced public pressure from both moderate and nationalistic Irish-American groups.

At the same time, moderate Northern Irish leaders and Irish government officials put international pressure on Regan to engage with Thatcher over the hunger strike and British policy. Taoisigh Charles Haughey and Garret FitzGerald both personally appealed to Reagan to publically pressure Thatcher into at least changing British policy. However, in part because of the “Special Relationship” Britain and the United States shared and in part because of historic distrust toward Irish government after Irish neutrality in World War II, Reagan’s Administration was reluctant to and actively did not engage with their Irish counterparts. Although Seán Donlon, then the Irish ambassador to the United States, was able to help lobby the Reagan Administration

\(^{193}\) Ibid, 102.
\(^{194}\) Ibid, 103.
to accept his close friend, William Clark, as the president’s National Security Advisor, the Irish government was still unable to get Reagan or his administration to intervene or even make a public statement about the 1981 Hunger Strike. This speaks to the strength of the American-British relationship and how Reagan was reluctant or unwilling to attempt to internationalize the conflict without Thatcher’s support.

However, a series of British policy decisions allowed for some limited American diplomatic intervention in Northern Ireland. Other than the mishandling of the 1981 Hunger Strike, British politicians did not denounce Ian Paisley after he created a vigilante paramilitary group, the Third Force, nor did they discipline British security forces who used illegal “shoot-to-kill” strategies against civilians. These actions gave the impression that the British government was unfairly biased in favor of unionism and were willing to turn a blind eye to Loyalist violence. These missteps allowed for the Friends of Ireland, a moderate Irish-American group in Congress led by O’Neill, Moynihan, and Kennedy, to make a formal connection with the Dáil, Ireland’s parliamentary lower house. Taoiseach Haughey, before his 1982 trip to New York City, expressed his hopes for American cooperation, and by 1983, the Friends of Ireland sent their first official delegation to Dublin. The Reagan Administration also took tentative steps toward playing a larger role in the conflict. In 1983, Reagan named Samuel Bartlett, a moderate Irish-American nationalist, as Belfast’s Consul General. That same year, in part due to pressure from moderate Irish-Americans in Congress, Reagan also convinced Thatcher to reopen talks with

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195 Ibid, 103-104.
197 In reality, the British government historically struggled to counter radical unionism without alienating the Protestant community. The collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement is a good example of this struggle.
198 Thompson, American Policy and Northern Ireland, 112-113.
Taoiseach FitzGerald. These talks would set the groundwork for the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the first internationalization of the conflict. 199

1985 brought the first internationalization of the Troubles through diplomatic action and the groundbreaking Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Anglo-Irish Agreement was the first serious diplomatic agreement between Britain and Ireland regarding Northern Ireland since partition in 1921. The agreement laid out a three-pronged platform to internationalize and mitigate the conflict. The Anglo-Irish Agreement recognized the permanent status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom unless a majority in Northern Ireland voted for independence, created an intergovernmental conference to discuss the historic links between Britain and Ireland, and created a framework for the devolution of British control in Northern Irish government. 200 The Agreement also created the International Fund for Ireland to promote peace projects in Northern Ireland and economic interaction with Irish border communities. Unlike the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which only had two formal partners, many countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, and EU member-states were able to participate. 201

Both sides of the Agreement debate the role that American political pressures played in creating the framework and opening up the conflict to international actors. Not surprisingly, “British officials downplay[ed] American ‘pressure,’ [and] Irish officials embrace[d] it.” 202 It is obviously impossible to know how much individual actors were influenced by American diplomats and politicians, but it is clear that the Anglo-Irish Agreement opened a new door for

200 Ibid, 127.
201 International Fund For Ireland, “About the Fund,” International Fund For Ireland, June 12, 2009.
American policy-makers to become involved in the Northern Irish conflict and peace settlement. For the first time, an American president “no longer regarded Northern Ireland as completely Britain’s domestic affair.” However, Reagan went beyond simply voicing support for internationalizing the Northern Irish conflict; he actively provided financial support to the International Fund for Ireland and encouraged Thatcher and her government to substantially alter their own domestic policy, therefore opening a door for further international intervention in Northern Ireland.

Early in his presidency, Reagan avoided putting pressure on his close ally, Thatcher, much to the frustration of moderate Irish-American groups and the Irish government. This lack of action catalyzed radical Irish-American nationalists, and due to a lack of Irish state influence in the United States, it became difficult to counter the biased nationalist narrative. Additionally, Reagan’s reliance on the British narrative meant that he was less likely to listen to the moderate perspective on Northern Ireland. However, the flawed response to the 1981 Hunger Strike and other unpopular British decisions helped catalyze a limited American response to the conflict. By the mid 1980s, the Reagan Administration had begun to move toward limited criticism and pressure on the British government. The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement created a wedge that the United States could use as active participants in finding solutions to the conflict. His predecessor, George H.W. Bush, would largely continue this policy of limited intervention and close cooperation with British Tory leadership. However, this policy would change when Bill Clinton won the White House.

The Clinton Administration

\(^{203}\) Thompson, *American Policy and Northern Ireland*, 129.
Bill Clinton broke with tradition on the Northern Irish question and successfully brought the United States into the peace proceedings. He disrupted nearly twenty years of political continuity, declaring that “British government advice was no longer the deciding factor in how America should behave towards Northern Ireland.” Clinton transitioned to a pragmatic Northern Ireland policy, expanding the American diplomatic role in Belfast and working with Northern Irish actors—Adams and Sinn Féin—who had previously been left out of any peace negotiations. However, Clinton always listened to his international partners, especially Irish leadership and John Hume, before making any drastic decisions. In March 1992, during his first meeting Taoiseach Albert Reynolds, Clinton proposed sending an American peace envoy to Belfast but backed down after Reynolds asked him to hold off on such a drastic move. Although eager to get involved, Clinton was also willing to listen to his Irish and moderate Northern Irish counterparts, as well as the British government, in order to reach a place at the negotiation table.

That is not to say Clinton’s relationships with both British and Northern Irish leaderships were not complicated. Clinton’s relationship with British Prime Minister John Major was cordial at best and at worst, in Major’s own words, “frosty.” Major was close with Clinton’s predecessor, George H. W. Bush, and many Tories actively campaigned for Bush in 1992. Although some commentators speculate that Clinton and Major’s poor relationship drove Clinton to pursue policies that the British opposed, there does not seem to be much evidence for this; Clinton had already voiced policy positions that the British government opposed, like the creation of a peace envoy, before meeting Major.

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A better way of understanding Clinton and Major’s tensions over Northern Ireland is to look at how they were of different political affiliations and had very different foreign policy goals from each other. For example, while Major intended for the 1993 Downing Street Declaration, which encouraged meetings between unionists and Irish officials under British supervision, to reiterate commitment to Irish cooperation on solving the conflict and British neutrality on the Northern Irish question, Clinton and his team interpreted the statement as support for internationalizing the conflict and an explicit invitation for the United States to get involved.207

Although Clinton and Major had different interpretations of the Downing Street Declaration, the statement helped create a framework for a larger American role within the conflict. The DSD, through its reiteration of British and Irish neutrality in Northern Ireland, no longer required Clinton to choose sides. His administration could serve as a facilitator for peace.208 The language of the DSD urged the British to work with an international party—the Irish government—to solve its what was traditionally seen as a domestic problem:

The British and Irish Governments will seek, along with the Northern Ireland constitutional parties through a process of political dialogue, to create institutions and structures which, while respecting the diversity of the people of Ireland, would enable them to work together in all areas of common interest. … They commit themselves and their Governments to continue to work together, unremittingly, towards that objective.209

The DSD provided the Clinton administration with an “in” to participate.” There was precedent for “foreign” participation within the United Kingdom, and the DSD reiterated that Northern

207 Ibid, 46-47.
208 Thompson, American Policy and Northern Ireland, 171.
Ireland was no longer simply a British policy concern. Despite the relative successes of the DSD, Clinton’s relationship with the other international actors, especially Britain, would remain complex.

The Adams visa controversy also complicated Clinton’s role in internationalizing the conflict. Adams first applied for a visa to visit the United States in April 1993 and was denied without controversy.\(^{210}\) Shortly after his visa was turned down, Adams and Hume released their first public statement together, signaling that Hume, the leader of the moderate SDLP, was willing to see Adams as a legitimate partner for achieving peace. Adams and Hume agreed that “a new agreement is only achievable and viable if it can earn and enjoy the allegiance of the different traditions on this island, by accommodating diversity and providing for national reconciliation,” and vowed to “[engage] in a political dialogue aimed at investigating the possibility of developing an overall political strategy to establish justice and peace in Ireland.”\(^{211}\) Although the statement did not trigger an immediate reversal on the Adams visa decision, it allowed for the Clinton Administration to seriously consider the political viability of giving Adams a visa, given that he was in negotiations with Hume, a major ally.

Less than six months later, Hume and Adams released a second joint statement, further reiterating their respective commitments to the peace process:

> Our discussions, aimed at the creation of a peace process which would involve all parties, have made considerable progress. … We are convinced from our discussions that a process can be designed to lead to agreement among the divided people of this island, which will provide a solid basis for peace.\(^{212}\)


Adams indicated his commitment to continuing to work with SDLP as partners in the peace process. In October 1993, Taoiseach Reynolds began to support the Adams’ visa, as did major American actors including Ted Kennedy and Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell.\textsuperscript{213} Clinton, after consulting with Reynolds, trusted Irish-American leaders, and his National Security Council, gave Adams a two-day visa to visit New York in February 1994 for a peace conference hosted by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, despite Adams failing the so-called Arafat test to denounce violence before getting a visa.\textsuperscript{214} The visit, albeit brief, dominated the news cycle for beyond the forty-eight hours Adams was in New York for and would serve to influence further American policy choices.

On August 31, 1994, the IRA declared a ceasefire that would eventually last until 1996. Two weeks later, the British lifted a decades-long ban on broadcasting Sinn Féin on the BBC.\textsuperscript{215} Clinton approved a second visa for Adams to take part in a two-week tour in October 1994 and also lifted bans on communication between American officials and Sinn Féin members, allowing him to meet with high-level officials at NSC meetings.\textsuperscript{216} In March 1995, Clinton lifted a federal ban on fundraising for Sinn Féin, further bringing them into the political mainstream, and gave Adams a visa to attend St. Patrick’s Day festivities at the White House. These visas and knew opportunities for Sinn Féin leadership in the United States was all contingent on the existence of an IRA ceasefire and eventual decommissioning. While the British government did not oppose the Adams’ visa, the decision to lift the fundraising ban enraged the British government; Major

\textsuperscript{213} Thompson, \textit{American Policy and Northern Ireland}, 174.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid, 175.
\textsuperscript{215} Lynch, \textit{Turf War: The Clinton Administration and Northern Ireland}, 33.
\textsuperscript{216} Thompson, \textit{American Policy and Northern Ireland}, 177.
refused to take any calls from Clinton for 10 days, and he stopped referring to the diplomatic connection between Britain and the United States as a special relationship.\(^{217}\)

Mounting tensions in Northern Ireland also complicated the American role in the conflict. By the summer of 1995, it was clear that the IRA would not decommission until Sinn Féin could participate in all-party negotiations. The British government, however, would not allow Sinn Féin to join all-party negotiations until they had evidence that the IRA had fully decommissioned. Additionally, the Democratic Unionist Party threatened to vote with the Labour opposition if Majro’s government allowed Sinn Féin to participate in talks.\(^ {218}\) Despite international on Sinn Féin and the IRA to deescalate the conflict, the opposite happened. On February 9, 1996, the IRA set off a bomb in Canary Wharf, the heart of London’s financial district, ending the uneasy peace.\(^ {219}\) Clinton’s reputation was also seriously hurt. He had painted himself as someone who could get the IRA and Sinn Féin to agree to work with moderate groups, and the violent end of the ceasefire damaged that reputation.

Despite the complicated role the United States had in Northern Ireland by 1996, Clinton’s re-election, and a sometimes contentious relationship with Major, the two men respected each other and acknowledged that they each were coming from different places. In a 2004 interview with The Guardian, Clinton described his respect for Major:

> I particularly admired John Major because it was harder for him than it was for Blair because he needed the Unionists in parliament to sustain a narrow majority and yet he consistently tried to do the right thing. So I always thought Major never got enough credit for what he did on Ireland. … I thought he played [his political hand] about as well as he could.\(^ {220}\)

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\(^{217}\) Ibid, 179.

\(^{218}\) Ibid, 180.

\(^{219}\) Ibid, 184.

Unlike Reagan and Thatcher, Clinton and Major had different ideologies and policy goals, and the two men had started their “Special Relationship” on rocky footing, in part because of the 1992 election. Clashes came out of those different worldviews, but it was never a question of respect. Ten years after the 1994 Adams visa controversy, Clinton said he “was never mad with John Major,” 221 but rather was frustrated by factors that often were beyond their control. Clinton and Major both sought peace in Northern Ireland, just through different avenues, and those disagreements have often been confused for personal animosity.

Within a year of the resumption of violent conflict, the peace process and America’s role in it was back on track. In the 1997 British general elections, voters swept the Labour government into power. Tony Blair, the first Labour prime minister in 18 years, generally shared the same Northern Irish policy positions as his predecessor, but unlike Major, Blair’s majority was large enough that he did not need to rely on DUP and UUP votes. 222 The UUP also performed better than the DUP in the 1997 elections, winning one third of all Northern Irish votes for British parliament and cementing Trimble as the legitimate voice for Northern Irish unionism. 223 Later that year, Ireland also held general elections. Fianna Fáil defeated Fine Gael, and Bertie Ahern became Taoiseach. 224 Additionally, Mary McAleese, a law professor who grew up in Belfast, was elected as Ireland’s president in 1997. 225 As a historian, it is dangerous to use the idea of the right players at the right time as the only explanation, but the election of moderate and center-left political leaders in Ireland and Britain meant that Clinton had more willing

221 Ibid.
222 Ibid, 194.
224 Due to Fianna Fáil’s original opposition to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, it is generally seen as more sympathetic to the Northern Irish cause than Fine Gael.
225 Thompson, American Policy and Northern Ireland, 195.
partners to work with than he had with the Major government. These elections helped create an opportunity for the Blair government that Major simply did not have; the British government no longer had to rely quite as heavily on the unionists to move the peace process forward. These talks, after nearly two years of negotiation and near-failure, would eventually lead to the Good Friday Agreement and peace in Northern Ireland.
Chapter 4: The Good Friday Agreement

In this chapter, I will lay out the basic framework of the Good Friday Agreement with a brief summary of the diplomatic and political mechanisms that allowed for international involvement and a successful resolution for the Troubles. I will analyze this through the lens of the interpersonal relationships between the various international actors to answer a fundamental question: how was American political leadership in the negotiations, with the help of the Irish and British governments, able to force a deal between two diametrically opposed socioethnic groups that would lead to lasting peace?

American Leadership in the Talks

The previous chapter briefly touched upon the tense relationship between Clinton and Major, the British prime minister during his first term. These tensions made it more difficult for British and American negotiators to cooperate and limited opportunities for American involvement. According to Niall O’Dowd, “issues such as the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four would have been resolved much more quickly with American intervention”\textsuperscript{226} because, as O’Dowd claims, the British government would be shamed into taking action. Without these political complications, it is likely that some elements of the conflict, especially regarding criminal justice, would not have been as controversial during the 1997-1998 negotiations. Clinton also had to contend with pressure from the Ulster Unionist Party in ways that other presidential administrations did not; Jim Molyneaux,\textsuperscript{227} then-leader of the UUP, personally met

\textsuperscript{226} Marianne Elliott, ed., \textit{The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland} (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 69.
\textsuperscript{227} Unlike his DUP counterpart, Ian Paisley, Molyneaux supported some limited international intervention in Northern Ireland and had a close relationship with many American politicians, due to his leadership role at Normandy during World War II.
with Vice President Al Gore and members of the Clinton administration in 1994 to lobby against the Adams visa. Additionally, Clinton had to contend with some resistance from fundamental Christians in the South; many American Christian fundamentalists, like Jerry Falwell, are also deeply anti-Catholic and saw Ian Paisley as a religious and political ally.

Despite these tensions with both British and moderate Protestant leadership, the Americans were always the driving force in the 1997-1998 negotiations, even before the negotiations first began. By the 1990s, Sean Donlon, the Irish ambassador who worked to “silence” Irish-American leaders seen as too “green”—too opinionated on Ireland—and worked to make sure the Irish government’s position was the only “acceptable” position for Irish-Americans in the United States, was no longer in power. This allowed for American political leaders who were knowledgeable on Northern Ireland to take a place at the American table and contribute to Clinton’s strategy for peace. One of these politicians who, under Donlon’s control, would not have been included in the discussions, was George Mitchell. However, by 1996, both British and Irish leaders voiced their support for Mitchell serving as the chair of the negotiation’s plenary sessions, the most important non-Northern Irish role at the talks. Mitchell’s presence as the American outsider meant that he could “[correct] the imbalance of power between” all sides in the conflict.

The dedication and determination of American political leadership also helped drive the deal that would become the Good Friday Agreement. The talks began in 1996; in late 1997, they

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228 Elliott, *The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland*, 38.
230 Elliott, *The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland*, 68.
231 Ibid, 42.
almost collapsed.\textsuperscript{233} In some ways, the talks seemed doomed from the start; in 1996, the IRA had broken an 18-month ceasefire, the longest IRA ceasefire of the Troubles, and moderate nationalists led by Hume refused to participate in a forum of Northern Irish parties to come up with the terms for negotiation.\textsuperscript{234} This was a problem, as the unionist coalition saw the creation of this Forum as a precondition to entering talks.\textsuperscript{235} When talks finally began in June 1996, Mitchell, while supported by the Irish and British governments and the nationalist coalition—excluding Adams, as he was not yet allowed to participate—struggled to win over unionist support. Paisley and Robert McCartney, the leader of the minor United Kingdom Unionist Party, unilaterally opposed Mitchell chairing the plenary sessions, as did the UUP deputy, John Taylor; Trimble was, characteristically, silent on what he thought.\textsuperscript{236} In the early days of the talks, a British officer would physically sit in Mitchell’s chair when he was not in the room, to prevent Paisley from quite literally taking over the chair and keeping Mitchell from the table.\textsuperscript{237} Despite these awkward encounters, and outright hostility toward the idea of peace from some parties, Mitchell was able to keep the talks on track through the tumultuous period of late 1997 and spring of 1998.

The Americans, through Mitchell, held negotiations together during a series of attempted and successful IRA bombing campaigns and the threat of unionist exit. In October 1996, less than six months into talks, the Lisburn bombings almost destroyed the talks.\textsuperscript{238} After agreeing that loyalist paramilitary retaliation would ban certain smaller unionist parties, the talks almost

\textsuperscript{233} Elliott, \textit{The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland}, 91.
\textsuperscript{234} Dixon, “Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process on the World Stage, 83”,
\textsuperscript{236} Ibid, 46-47.
\textsuperscript{237} Ibid, 50.
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid, 80-81.
collapsed again within the week, due to disagreements about decommissioning. Part of the debate over decommission was also about Sinn Féin participation; the talks could not go forward as long as there were “endless battles over agenda and procedures and the conditions that should apply to Sinn Féin participation.” Following discussions with the British and Irish governments, Mitchell, working with other non-involved parties like Harri Holkeri and John de Chastelin, set up an independent and international body to monitor decommissioning on both the republican and unionist side. The unionists rejected this negotiation, threatening to leave talks if Sinn Féin was allowed at the table and if parallel decommissioning took place. At this point in the talks, Sinn Féin entry was still an impossibility, as the IRA had yet to declare a new ceasefire.

On July 20, 1997, the IRA declared a permanent ceasefire, opening the door for Adams to have a place at the table and further complicating the American role as mediator. While Sinn Féin’s entry helped to strengthen negotiations, it led to talks almost falling apart yet again. Once Sinn Féin entered talks, Mitchell had to find a way to keep the UUP at the table. Without Trimble’s involvement, the peace talks would fully collapse. As discussed in the Mitchell case study, Mitchell and the Americans were forced to acquiesce to many of Trimble’s demands about decommissioning and the conditions under which Sinn Féin could participate. When a UUP deputy, Ken Maginnis, called Adams a “fucking murderer” and refused to speak to him, Mitchell was able to both talk Adams down from verbally retaliating and encourage moderates in

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239 Most of the disagreements about decommissioning were driven by internal unionist power struggles; Trimble knew that complicating the decommissioning debate could be detrimental to the peace talks, while more radical unionists saw any deal as a non-starter unless the IRA fully surrendered all weapons.
240 Elliott, The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland, 116.
241 Mitchell, Making Peace, 104-105.
242 One of the reasons that the Sunningdale Agreement failed was that there was no Sinn Féin presence in the settlement, so the IRA and other radical republicans had no motivation to support it.
243 Elliott, The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland, 116.
the UUP to work with moderate nationalists to find common ground. While it is unlikely that Adams would have walked out on talks simply because someone swore at him, the Americans were able to de-escalate the tensions between Sinn Féin and the UUP in ways that simply the British and Irish would not have been able to, due to their status as the neutral observer.

The Americans, through Mitchell, put pressure on all parties to find a set end-point to the negotiations and to come to agreement. It was Mitchell who proposed for a deadline of April 11, 1998 for the finalized referendum that would be voted on by both the Irish and Northern Irish population. By setting a solid date for negotiations to end, Mitchell and the Americans forced all parties involved to choose between public shaming and a commitment to peace. When leaks from the Northern Ireland Office threatened to upend the peace process in late March, Mitchell “met almost nonstop with the parties, trying to draw out of them possible areas of compromise.” Working with Blair and Ahern, Mitchell spent nearly sixty hours between Wednesday, April 8 and Friday, April 10 hammering out final language on small issues, like prisoner exchanges, that also were just as make-or-break for both sides as power-sharing. Despite attempts by Paisley to sabotage the talks in the last few days, by the evening of April 10, 1998, Mitchell was able to announce that all parties involved in the talks had reached a deal to make peace in Northern Ireland.

Understanding the Good Friday Agreement

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244 Mitchell, Making Peace, 137.
245 Ibid, 144.
246 Ibid, 148.
247 Ibid, 173.
248 On April 9, Paisley and his supporters tried to physically barricade Stormont in an attempt to shut down the talks.
The Good Friday Agreement, the common nickname for the Belfast Agreement decided on April 10, 1998—which happened to fall on Good Friday—is a remarkably short document, given that it reached a settlement for a complicated, three-decade ethno-religious and political conflict that took more than three thousand lives. The Good Friday Agreement focused on three strands of conflict that all sides believed were essential for any new settlement to go forward: establishing new democratic institutions, the creation of north-south institutions, and furthering the Irish-British balance in Northern Ireland. The agreement also included language about protecting human rights and various culture traditions and created policies for decommissioning. Most importantly, the Agreement defined the status of Northern Ireland and created a path forward should the people of Northern Ireland choose to change their status.

Perhaps the most important strand the Good Friday Agreement settled was the question of Northern Irish government and how power would be shared in the region. Through the Agreement, a “democratically elected Assembly in Northern Ireland which is inclusive in its membership, capable of exercising executive and legislative authority, and subject to safeguards to protect the rights and interests of all sides of the community” was established.249 Unlike the Assembly established by Sunningdale, the new Assembly satisfied both unionist and nationalist communities; unionists got an assembly that filled what they saw as a democratic deficit, while the republicans got an assembly structured to protect minority rights.250 The most important part of the terms of the new Assembly was the requirement of either parallel consent—a majority of unionists, a majority of nationalists, and a majority of independents had to support a piece of legislation for it to move forward—or a weighed majority—60 percent of the Assembly,

249 “The Good Friday Agreement” (Belfast, April 1998), 7.
250 Elliott, The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland, 105.
including at least 40 percent of the nationalist vote, had to be in agreement.\textsuperscript{251} This structure of parallel consent and weighed majorities protected the republican and other minority interests by guaranteeing that they would still have an equal voice in government, while unionists were all but guaranteed to hold the position of First Minister, leader of the Northern Irish government. State authority, therefore, came from both the unionist and the republican communities equally, as both communities had to give consent for governance.

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A major concern, albeit from different perspectives in the unionist and republicans, that the Good Friday Agreement addressed had to do with relationships between Ireland and Northern Ireland, the so-called “north-south” relationship. This made up the second strand of the Good Friday Agreement. The Agreement established the North/South Ministerial Council to coordinate policy across the island. This Ministerial Council, according to the Agreement, would be made up of the First Minister, Deputy First Minister and relevant ministers from Northern Ireland and the Taoiseach and relevant ministers from Ireland, independent of both the Assembly and the Irish Oireachtas.\textsuperscript{252} While the arrangement did not fulfill the desires of either community, it was a fair compromise. The republicans wanted north-south institutions, and the unionists did not. The Ministerial Council was relatively weak, satisfying the unionist focus on making sure Ireland would not have a large role in Northern Irish affairs, and its very existence satisfied the republican demand for a relationship with Ireland.\textsuperscript{253}

The final major strand that the Good Friday Agreement sorted out was the English-Irish, or “east-west” relationship through the establishment of the British-Irish Council. The BIC as it

\begin{footnotes}
\item[251] “The Good Friday Agreement,” 7.
\item[252] Ibid, 13.
\item[253] Elliott, \textit{The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland}, 105.
\end{footnotes}
was known, created a new institution for “the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the totality of relationships among the peoples of these islands.” In short, the BIC was a body that represented entities within the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom and created a forum to circumvent future tension. Under terms established by the Agreement, representatives from Dublin and London and Belfast, as well as, when appropriate, the Scottish and Welsh governments and other municipalities like the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands, were to hold a twice-yearly summit and regular meetings on specific transnational issues.

Unlike with the second strand focused on north-south relationships, the BIC fully satisfied both unionists and republicans, as it filled a unionist desire for a closer relationship with Britain and a republican interest in connecting with nationalist movements in Scotland and Wales and the guarantee that Ireland would be kept in the proverbial loop. The third strand, while the least controversial of the strands, allowed for a system were both Ireland and Britain had clearly defined roles in Northern Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement also covered two issues that were close to each community: questions of safeguarding minority rights and handling decommissioning and security. Since the Civil Rights movement of the late 1960s, organizers were focused on guaranteed protections for the Catholic community, including rights to equal job opportunities, basic voting rights, and the ability to seek state housing. The Good Friday Agreement affirmed protections for basic human rights, including but not limited to housing protections, freedom of expression and religion, and the ability to peacefully push for constitutional change without harassment or punishment.

255 Ibid, 16.
256 Elliott, The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland, 105.
equal importance to the unionist community were concerns over decommissioning and security. The Good Friday Agreement required the IRA to reaffirm its commitment to disarming and required that the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning, not the Northern Irish, British, or Irish governments, had final say over if decommissioning had been fully completed within an established time frame.\textsuperscript{258} These two issues, while not directly related, highlighted how the Good Friday Agreement worked to address concerns in both the unionist and republican communities and find a solution that could appeal to both.

While the Good Friday Agreement addressed many aspects of the conflict, its major achievement was determining the status of Northern Ireland within Britain and in relation to the Republic of Ireland. The Good Friday Agreement established that “Northern Ireland in its entirety remains part of the United Kingdom and shall not cease to be so without the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland”\textsuperscript{259} while providing an avenue for possible reunification with Ireland, should a majority of Northern Irish voters in both the Catholic and Protestant communities vote to do so. The Agreement required the Republic of Ireland to amend Articles 2 and 3 of the 1937 Constitution, which claimed a territorial right to the Northern Irish territories.\textsuperscript{260} Northern Irish voters simply had to vote on if they accepted the terms of the Agreement.

On May 22, 1998, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland held joint referenda to approve the Good Friday Agreement. In Ireland, the referendum and the proposed constitutional amendment passed with a whopping 94 percent of the vote, while in Northern Ireland, the

\textsuperscript{258} Ibid, 22.
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid, 4.
\textsuperscript{260} Ibid, 5.
referendum won just over 70 percent of the vote.\textsuperscript{261} Only 52 percent of unionists voted in support of the referendum, just over the majority needed for the referendum to pass under the idea of parallel consent.\textsuperscript{262} While the referendum barely passed in Northern Ireland, it did claim majority support from both communities, highlighting the success of its strengths for creating and maintaining settlement. After thirty years of conflict and over a decade of American pressure, the Troubles were, on paper at least, over.


\textsuperscript{262} Elliott, \textit{The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland}, 159.
Conclusion

Nearly twenty years after the Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland is at peace, albeit a peace that is uneasy at times. The last major loyalist paramilitary bombing happened in 1999, the last IRA bombing with casualties in 2001. Currently, the biggest threat to stability in Northern Ireland is not a resumption of violence but the possibility of the so-called “Brexit” or British exit from the European Union. Many, including the current Taoiseach Enda Kenney, worry that the Brexit could severely damage Northern Ireland’s economy because the region is very dependent on trade with the European Union,\(^\text{263}\) while Sinn Féin leadership has vowed to hold a referendum should the Brexit become reality.\(^\text{264}\) And even if the Brexit does happen, it is unlikely that violence will resume; Northern Ireland now has institutions in place that benefit both the unionist and the republican community, institutions that held even after the UUP and the SDLP lost power to the more extremist DUP and Sinn Féin. Political debate and settlement, not violence, is now the status quo.

In the post-Good Friday Agreement world, the Irish-American perceptions of Northern Ireland and republicanism have also changed. While American politics have not been “organized”—that is, the unionist voice is not prioritized over the republican voice in Washington DC—support for the IRA is no longer politically acceptable, even among nationalists like Peter King, the loudest pro-IRA voice on Capitol Hill. Part of this has to do with the “war on terror” ideology of the post 9/11 moment; there simply is “no tolerance anywhere in America for actions


that smack of terrorism" or for groups that have ties to terrorists or other American enemies. In 2002, Congress found clear ties between the IRA and the revolutionary socialist Columbian group, FARC, as the IRA smuggled guns to FARC and helped train its members. Additionally, IRA “misbehavior,” including an infamous bank robbery in 2004 and links to international art thieves and drug smugglers, helped destroy any links the group may still have had with mainstream Irish-American politicians. Irish-American actors like Ted Kennedy, who once supported the Adams visa and made statements endorsing Northern Irish independence, strongly distanced themselves from the IRA and Sinn Féin after the Good Friday Agreement and post 9/11.

The IRA is no longer popular among Irish-American politicians. However, Irish-Americans remain a politically potent force in the United States government. In the 114th Congress, over ten percent of the Senate is Irish-American or is of Irish Catholic heritage and represent the largest single ethno-religious group in the Senate. Joe Biden, the current vice president, is Irish-American, as is Paul Ryan, his opponent in 2012 and the current Speaker of the House. Irish-Americans, clearly, are still a major political force in the United States. Both parties had Irish-American presidential candidates in the 2016 primaries, although neither got especially far. However, Rick Santorum and Martin O’Malley, the two Irish-American candidates, were unsuccessful despite their identities, not because of them; Santorum’s base was split between many other candidates pandering to the extreme religious right, while O’Malley was upstaged by Bernie Sanders as the alternative candidate on the Democratic side. Irish-

266 Paul Dixon, “Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process on the World Stage,” Political Science Quarterly 121, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 86.
267 Ibid, 90.
268 These numbers come from my own calculations.
American identity is no longer a disqualifier to seek higher office, nor is it a guarantee of electoral success. The Irish-American identity has become mainstreamed into American political culture.

The Irish-American community is not a political monolith. In the 2001 election, the Irish-American community was evenly split between George W. Bush and Al Gore; 52 percent ended up voting for Bush, a four-point margin.\(^{269}\) Even during the peak of Irish-American influence when it came to Northern Ireland, political leaders were divided. As I analyze in my case study, Peter King, the moderate Republican congressman from New York, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the moderate Democratic senator from the same state, were diametrically opposed when it came to support for Sinn Féin, while the liberal Ted Kennedy eventually fell somewhere between the two of them. In fact, the Irish-American community are not even predominantly Catholic. A 2000 General Social Survey found that 50 percent of Americans who identify as Irish are Protestant, while just over one third are Catholic.\(^{270}\) This shockingly high rate of Irish-American Protestants is due to the early Scots Irish population, who have largely been erased from history due to their wide geographical spread and relatively limited political power after the Famine-era migration waves, and can be attributed to intermarriage and conversion among the Irish Catholic population as a way to assimilate into the American mainstream.\(^{271}\) To ignore the nuances of the Irish-American community, in terms of religion and political identity, is to create a false monolith and to ignore Irish-American actors as something other than just a branch of their community.

\(^{269}\) Dixon, “Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process on the World Stage,” 89.
\(^{271}\) Ibid, 26.
Can other marginalized ethnic and religious groups follow the Irish-American model to create political power and influence international events, and why were the Irish-Americans able to be politically successful when other marginalized groups were not? Probably not. The Irish-American community were able to become politically powerful due to a number of factors, including a single large wave of migration that was geographically concentrated to the Atlantic northeast that coincided with a moment of American political upheaval, settlement in urban centers that allowed for the growth of machine politics, a history of communal military service, and the ability to assimilate into the American identity. The development of a political machine in northern urban cities during Reconstruction allowed the Irish-American community to establish a power base. This power base, and increased political influence, created an “in” for the Irish-American community to lobby and exert pressure on various presidential administrations. This rise to political power and how they used that power to get the United States involved in Northern Ireland would be difficult for other ethnic or religious groups to replicate.

Irish political power developed through urban channels, identity politics and communal links, and through trading favors and influence with other marginalized groups in the cities. This political power waned when the Irish-American community put their Irish identity before their American one, such as during World War I, and grew when they proved their total loyalty to the American state in the Civil War and World War II. As the Irish-Americans became a major electoral power and as Irish-Americans won seats at the state and national level, their influence only grew, to the point where they could put enough pressure on presidential administrations to get involved in what once was seen as a purely British domestic issue. The history and nature of
Irish-American political development, therefore, can explain American involvement in Northern Ireland, the ultimate Irish-American political triumph.
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