

Specialized Agency

United We Stand

# Republic of Ireland 1919

Skylar Schuetze and Darby French Co-Chairs



# GSMUN XXVI United We Stand

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# Republic of Ireland 1919

### Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates and Sponsors,

We are so excited to welcome you to the GSMUN XXVI Republic of Ireland 1919 Committee! Your chairs, Darby French and Skylar Schuetze, are thrilled to meet all of you. As delegates on the precipice of the Irish Independence War, you will all meet to discuss the future of Ireland's status as an undivided member of the United Kingdom. Taking place directly following the 1918 Irish elections, the committee will focus not only on the possibility of impending war but also on solutions to growing divisions within the country between Unionists and Nationalists. It is the duty of the delegates in this committee to think creatively and come up with solutions to save a struggling Ireland.

Skylar Schuetze, a senior, can't wait to be a co-chair for the Republic of Ireland 1919 Committee. This is her fourth year in Model UN at Maggie Walker and her first year chairing, previously participating as a member of the Moody Middle School Model UN. Outside of Model UN, Skylar is a dancer, swimmer, and a member of Maggie Walker's We the People team. She is looking forward to meeting all of you and having ad great GSMUN XXVI!

Darby French, a senior, is ecstatic to serve as one of your co-chairs for the Republic of Ireland 1919 committee. This is her second year part of GSMUN, and her first year as a committee chair. In addition to GSMUN, Darby loves hanging out with her three sisters and biking on trails. She is very eager to meet you all and is looking forward to making GSMUN XXVI the best year yet!

As delegates of this committee, you are expected to come prepared to debate the Irish crisis and the different aspects causing these tensions as well as possible solutions to alleviate the crisis. You should know the causes of the tensions as well as the political terms outlined in your background guide. The background guide is simply a guide to start your research, and delegates will be expected to complete a position paper, formatted in Chicago Manual Style (CMS) and pertaining to your position on the committee. At GSMUN, all position papers are expected to follow the Maggie Walker honor code; any and all plagiarism will not be tolerated. You will be expected to send your position paper by email to the chairs at gsmunxxvi.ireland@gmail.com before 5 PM on conference day.

Finally, an important part of GSMUN is our commitment to making a difference through charity. There will be merchandise, baked goods, and many other things on sale during the conference, with all of the proceeds going to charity - so don't forget to bring money! If you have any questions, concerns, or would like feedback on your position papers, feel free to contact your chairs at gsmunxxvi.ireland@gmail.com. We are looking forward to meeting everyone in committee! See you at GSMUN XXVI and good luck!

Your Chairs,

Skylar Schuetze gsmunxxvi.ireland@gmail.com Darby French

## Republic of Ireland 1919

### Committee Overview

### Background

In 1918, the reigning party in Ireland, the moderate Irish Parliamentary Party, was defeated in the election by Sinn Féin, a radical nationalist party. Sinn Féin pledged to create an independent Irish state whilst campaigning, and after the election, it became unclear what the future of Ireland in relation to the United Kingdom would look like. 1 Irish nationalists argue that since Sinn Féin won the election, they should move towards independence, while unionists argue that Ireland should remain intertwined with England. As of January 1, 1919, the elected officials have yet to take office, so it is unknown whether they will choose to move forward with independence or remain a part of the English Parliament. Another current issue facing Ireland is the many Home Rule bills that have entered Parliament but have died due to the gridlock between the two opposing parties. One of the northernmost counties in Ireland, Ulster, has remained the passionate leader in the fight against Irish Home Rule and demands to stay under Britain's authority. Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith has been a champion for the amended third Home Rule Bill which would partition the country into two parts; one being the Home Ruled Republic, and the other being six counties and Ulster that remain with Britain. However, the ongoing tensions between the Irish and Ulster paramilitary groups complicate the matter.<sup>2</sup>

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Committee has been formed to proactively consider various possibilities as to the future direction of Ireland. This committee consists of various political figures from a spectrum of ideologies in an effort to come to the best possible solution for all of the people of Ireland. The committee must decide whether to move forward with independence or not

and the consequences for the future of Ireland. It must also deal with the growing support for a partition of Ireland, and decide whether to remain united or divide its land amidst growing tensions.

### <u>Topic I: Irish-British Tensions</u> History of the Issue

England and Ireland have a history of colonialism that spans over eight hundred years, first interacting in the twelfth century with the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland that began in 1169.3 This invasion, originally under the decree of King Henry II, resulted in a divided Ireland controlled partly by the Normans and partly by the English. This division of Ireland continued until 1348 when the Black Death reached the island and greatly impacted both the larger Norman and English settlements while afflicting far fewer native Irishmen, who tended to live in more rural areas. Following this, Ireland was retaken by its native inhabitants, with English influence shrinking to a small area around Dublin known as the Pale.4 Ireland remained under Irish control for another two hundred years, until King Henry VIII aimed to regain control of the territory in what became known as the Tudor conquest. The English would finally expand their territory outside of the Pale permanently by 1603 under the rule of Elizabeth I and James I.5

Independence movements in Ireland date back to the Tudor conquest. The Desmond Rebellions, two rebellions of Irish aristocrats and feudal lords in response to the growing threat of Protestant English rule, removed the independence of feudal lords from the government. Another example of early Irish independence movements was the Williamite War, a bloody conflict throughout Ireland between the British who attempted to spread control beyond the Pale, and Irish

Catholics who were dissatisfied with further English control. Tensions over not only land control but also religious differences between the Catholic Irish and the Protestant English prompted these movements as well. Discriminatory Penal Laws and an unfair land division system strengthened these tensions and ensured the Protestant Ascendency, in which class differences between poorer Catholics and richer Protestants became extremely clear.<sup>6</sup>

A third Irish rebellion occurred in 1798 when the Society of United Irishmen, inspired and aided by French revolutionaries, launched a series of attacks against English forces in Ireland before eventually being violently suppressed by the English. This failed independence attempt led to the era of Irish-British Unification, beginning with the passage of the Acts of Union in 1800.<sup>7</sup> These acts merged the English and Irish parliaments, adding 4 rotating and 28 permanent Irish House of Lords members and 100 elected Irish House of Commons members. They also worked to unite the divided religions within Ireland through acts such as the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829, which repealed the Penal Laws and worked to emancipate Catholics on the island. Though the English Government feigned a united kingdom during this period, underlying tensions remained. The Irish kept a strong sense of resentment toward the English following the British refusal to aid the Irish during the Great Famine of 1845, which contributed to the extinction of Gaelic culture and a sharp increase in Irish poverty levels.8 The Local Government Act of 1898 best displayed the divisions of the island, giving more power to communities while demonstrating the divide in opinions between the Protestant, unionist north and the Catholic, nationalist south.

#### Current Status of the Issue

As Ireland moves away from Irish-British Unification, the push for Home Rule on the island is at an all-time high by the 1910s. In 1914, Parliament passed the Government of Ireland Act, giving self-governance to Ireland. However, the outbreak of the Great War suspended it. In response, Irish unionists formed the Ulster Volunteers in opposition, while nationalists formed the National Volunteers in support. Both groups fought valiantly in the war in hopes of swaying English support regarding the act. Ultimately, the two groups were unable to come to a compromise over the issue after the war, and Home Rule was not implemented.9 A breakaway faction of the National Volunteers, the Irish Volunteers, adamantly opposed any compromises with the Ulster Volunteers, instead demanding full independence. This radical group was responsible for the 6-day conflict with British forces in 1916 known as Easter Rising. This short conflict, though ending in a British victory, marked the first conflict of the ongoing Irish Revolutionary period.<sup>10</sup>

The recent election of 1918 was the most notable election in Irish history thus far. The Irish Parliamentary Party, a nationalist party in power for much of the 19th century in Ireland, was extremely moderate, leading to little progress in Irish Independence. The radical nationalist party, Sinn Féin stood in its first general election after winning a handful of seats the previous year. Surprisingly, Sinn Féin won in a landslide, which has led to uncertainty over the future of Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, due to the party's continued pledges for independence.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Analysis and Solutions**

There are three main routes of resolving the issue of Irish independence being considered at this time - the first being the route of independence. In rejecting English sovereignty over Ireland, the island would cease to be represented in Parliament and would have to establish a Dáil, an Irish governing body. This would involve the creation of a constitution and a declaration of full independence from Great Britain. While elections would be held and a legitimate government would be formed, the structure

of this government would be subject to debate. An independent Ireland would also have to gain international recognition and establish formal relations with Great Britain. Another thing to consider with this route is its high likelihood of war. Given their past history, it seems unlikely that England would be willing to allow Ireland its independence without conflict. If both internal and external agreements cannot be reached in Ireland, tensions may spill into violence.

The second main route of action regarding the Irish independence issue would be to begin discussions with Britain rather than immediately declare independence. The two nations could possibly draw an agreement, which may satisfy pacifist pursuits, however, this seems unlikely given the current tensions between Ireland and Britain. Unionist and nationalist Irishmen would have to incur internal discussions alongside talks with Britain, which could lead to a stalemate between uncompromising groups. Though this option could prove fruitless, it's possible that outcomes of peaceful compromise may also create a more stable foundation upon which a new Ireland could be built.

The final route of resolving the question of Irish independence was strengthening ties with Britain rather than declaring independence. Ireland and England have been intertwined for hundreds of years, and breaking these links would be extremely difficult. This option is particularly appealing to unionists, as the economic and social benefits of being a part of the British kingdom are significant.. Though appealing to many, the challenge to implementing this option arises from the overwhelming victory of Sinn Féin, a radical nationalist party, in the recent election. If this route were to be considered, the immense task of appeasing the popular opposition must be undertaken.

#### **Ouestions to Consider**

1. Is the prospect of war inevitable? Are there any concessions Ireland could

- make to maintain independence and avoid war?
- 2. What actions could Ireland take to ensure victory in what would be an unbalanced war against strong British forces?
- 3. Should the government of Ireland seek to reconcile varying opinions within the country? If so, how should it seek to achieve this?
- 4. Given their long history together, does Great Britain have a claim to Ireland, or should modern sentiments take precedence over any historically based claims?
- 5. What role does religion play in the tensions in the British Isles?
- 6. Is there a possibility that a civil war may break out between the two Irish parties?

#### **Further Research**

- 2. <a href="https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130">https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130</a> <a href="https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130">https://www.jst
- 3. <a href="https://www.britannica.com/event/E">https://www.britannica.com/event/E</a> <a href="aster-Rising">aster-Rising</a>: A more detailed description of Easter Rising and its impacts on Irish independence.
- 4. <a href="https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=history\_theses">https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=history\_theses</a>: A lengthy history of modern Ireland that includes strategies used leading up to the Irish Independence War.
- 5. <a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17526272.2021.1873552">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17526272.2021.1873552</a>: A collection of articles describing the sociocultural impacts of early 20th century Ireland.

6. <a href="https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6735970/">https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6735970/</a>: A more in-depth analysis of the effect of the Great Famine on Ireland and independence.

# Topic II: The Partitioning of Ireland History of the Issue

The particular matter of the "Irish Problem" began when Ireland and Great Britain merged in 1801. The religious differences between the two nations had grown since the Anglican-Catholic Church split in 1534. After hundreds of years of English colonization, the vast majority of Northern Ireland was Protestant just like its English counterparts, while the rest of the country maintained a Catholic stronghold. Great Britain saw these theological differences and began to slowly move towards granting Ireland the coveted Home Rule Bill and becoming decentralized.

When the Irish Parliamentary Party won seats in the 1885 general election, they, fortunately, had an alliance with the Liberal Party in the British House of Commons (the body elected by the people who have power over the Prime Minister and their term), creating the perfect conditions for the development of the first Home Rule bill.<sup>13</sup> Prime Minister Gladstone introduced the bill, but a Protestant fraternal organization known as the Orange Order blocked it. The second Home Rule bill was introduced in 1892 but again failed as unionists who opposed the bill formed around major cities across Ireland.<sup>14</sup> In 1909, the United Kingdom was embroiled in a state of turmoil due to the two houses of Parliament fighting; the liberal politicians gained control of the House of Commons while the conservatives won over the House of Lords, and a divided government ensued, leading to tensions arising between both the Houses. The House of Commons threatened to place their Liberal peers in the House of Lords so they could gain a majority and finally win in both Parliamentary houses. The predicament escalated to the point that

Liberals called on the monarch for aid and support (to which George V and George VI pledged). However, the threat never materialized because the Parliament Act of 1911 passed, which stated that the Lords no longer had power over the purse (the ability to tax and spend federal money), and their once unlimited vetoing power was restricted to a 2-year tenure. In the liberals' eyes, the House of Commons triumphed in their new considerable advantage in law-passing ability.

The Ulster Volunteers vehemently opposed the Third Home Rule Bill, introduced in 1912. More specifically, the Ulster Volunteers did not want to be under a Dublin Parliament if the Home Rule dream were to be enacted. In response to the Ulster Volunteers, they established the Irish Volunteers, leading to the Larne and Howth gun-running incidents where both paramilitary groups imported arms en masse from Germany.

The final episode stemming from the Third Bill was the Curragh Incident in Curragh County, a main British Army base. 15 The House of Lords struggled as according to the law, they could not oppose the bill for a third time. The Liberals in the House of Commons watched the situation escalate in Ulster with the Volunteer Force. In 1914, officers with Protestant ties threatened to resign as soon as they caught wind of the plan to put down a rebellion rising in the county. They refused to follow any orders against the Ulster Unionists because they empathized with their cause. 16 Once the public heard of this failed attempt from the government, Westminster officials attempted to hide the story and recanted their previous statements as a "simple misunderstanding." Yet they had already inflicted damage, and the results were detrimental to the Home Rule effort: Irish Nationalists lost faith that the British military would intervene if needed, and the Unionists grew more confident.

#### **Current Status of the Issue**

Some parliament members want to exclude Ulster from the Home Rule Act altogether in order to subdue the violence.<sup>17</sup> This would keep the county fully part of the British government, and after six years they would conduct a re-evaluation. Yet, there are some who are repulsed by this notion and are surprised that a lesser version of the bill is even being considered. The Irish Liberals view Home Rule as an inflexible ideology and do not want their state to be split up. The Prime Minister at this time, H. H. Asquith is looking into possible solutions to avoid an all-out Irish Civil War between the two warring "volunteer" groups, which would lead to the complete destruction of the country and further weakening of the already struggling population. One of the viable solutions Asquith is considering would be partitioning Ireland into two sections, and primarily leaving out Ulster from the rest of mid and southern Ireland who wished for an independent government.<sup>18</sup> On July 8, 1918, Sir Edward Carson publicly supported the amended Home Rule bill gridlocked in the House of Lords on the condition that Ulster was temporarily removed. Asquith then wrote up clear compromise terms that identified and temporarily removed six of the Protestant counties near Ulster from the territory that would be governed by the Irish Parliament.<sup>19</sup> However, some countries still did not have clarity about their nationality status, and the extent of this compromise. After making some concessions, some individuals continued to relent but ultimately gave in, such as the amendment granting local autonomy to Ulster.

Nonetheless, the reigning monarch George V called a "Buckingham Palace Conference." Unfortunately, for both sides, this conference achieved nothing for the two opponents. John Redmond, the man who introduced the Third Home Rule Bill, said in 1914 within the House of Commons that both volunteer organizations would defend Ireland in cooperation when the First World War started.<sup>20</sup> However, the Irish Republican Brotherhood soon planned an insurrection following Redmond's declaration. Two years later, the Irish Republicans launched the Easter Rising rebellion which wished to end 'illegitimate' British rule in Ireland.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Analysis and Solutions**

At some point, the northeast counties must convene to clarify their position on the amended bill about temporary movement and Ulster's autonomy. There is also the question of whether they are part of Dublin's Parliament region.<sup>22</sup> In an attempt to smooth this issue over, they could call a meeting, which can then decide if the best course of action is to combine them with Ulster and determine if the northeast would be permanently excluded from the region of Dublin's Parliament.<sup>23</sup> If Ulster comes back into the free republic, there is a high percentage that a tremendous conflict will occur like the Irish Republican Brotherhood.<sup>24</sup>

Another option is that Home Rule will be given to the Southern Catholic part of Ireland while Northern Ireland would have a dominion-style relationship with the UK.<sup>25</sup> There is also the opinion that the entirety of the state should be ruled in a dominion style, where a territory or colony has a degree of self-governance while still recognizing the authority of a larger government.<sup>26</sup> This action would grant the country full autonomy and provide it with its own Parliament. But if this course of action were taken, it begs the question of partition reversal, which could mean the backtracking of decades of work done by Liberals in the House of Commons.

There is also the option to form a referendum.<sup>27</sup> This would entail voting on possible solutions decided by the Irish people themselves. The type of solutions on the ballot could range from partition to Home Rule. The referendum option would place power directly back into the hands of the people and local governments.

#### **Questions to Consider**

- 1. Is the Irish problem a thinly veiled British plot to subdue the island?
- 2. Should England have as much influence regarding the partitioning debate and discussions relating to the surrounding counties?
- 3. Will a dominion rule satisfy the Irish nationalists? Is there any way the nationalists will be satisfied with the result? Is there any way the Unionists could be fully satisfied?
- 4. How did the political landscape and social dynamics in Ireland at the time affect the decision to partition the country?
- 5. Does the referendum option fulfill Britain's sustained goal of decentralization for Ireland?
- 6. How will the backdrop of World War I influence the future decision-making of the two opponents and their paramilitary groups?
- 7. How did the experiences and perspectives of ordinary Irish citizens during 1919 contribute to the broader political and social changes unfolding in the country?
- 8. What option would be best to appease all if not most parties? How would this option be executed?

#### **Further Research**

1. <a href="https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/15086/pg15086-images.html">https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/15086/pg15086-images.html</a>: This

- provides a full historical account of the events leading up to and during the colonization of Ireland and financial matters.
- 2. <a href="https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/244">https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/244</a>
  73895.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ae8b
  626ad2ba1572e30455459472847f2&ab
  segments=0%2Fbasic search gsv2
  %2Fcontrol&origin=&initiator=&acc
  eptTC=1: This academic article
  explores how the Protestantism
  contributed to the Irish Republican
  Home Rule desire.
- 3. <a href="https://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/partition-of-ireland-explained-47734">https://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/partition-of-ireland-explained-47734</a>
  <a href="https://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/partition-of-ireland-explained-47734">https://www.rochester/partition-of-ireland-explained-47734</a>
  <a href="https://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/partition-of-ireland-explained-47734">https://www.rochester/partition-of-ireland-explained-47734</a>
  <a href="https://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/partition-of-ireland-explained-47734">https://www.rochester/partition-of-ireland-ex
- 4. <a href="https://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforInternationalBordersResearch/Publications/WorkingPapers/MappingFrontiersworkingpapers/Filetoupload,175435,en.pdf">https://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforInternationalBordersResearch/Publications/WorkingPapers/MappingFrontiersworkingpapers/Filetoupload,175435,en.pdf</a>: This research dives into the continued relationship between Britain and Ireland and how it led to the partition.
- 5. <a href="https://towermuseumcollections.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Dividing-Ireland-Publication.pdf">https://towermuseumcollections.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Dividing-Ireland-Publication.pdf</a>: This strong article details the impacts of the partitioning of Ireland: treaties, legacies, and wars.

#### Endnotes

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- 3. R. Walter Edwards, Boland Dudley, et al, "Ireland," Encyclopedia Britannica, July 26, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/place/Ireland.
- 4. Steven G Ellis, "Introduction: In Search of Ireland's English Pale," In Ireland's English Pale, 1470-1550: The Making of a Tudor Region, 1–13. Boydell & Brewer, 2021, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1zcm3jj.7.
- 5. Ibid.
- Timothy Guinnane and Ronald Miller, "The Limits to Land Reform: The Land Acts in Ireland, 1870-1909," In Economic Development and Cultural Change, Previously published in Chicago Journals 45, no. 3 (April 1997): 591-612, https://web.archive.org/web/20151117223641/https://www.princeton.edu/rpds/papers/Guinnane\_Miller\_Limits\_to\_Land\_Reform\_EDCC1997.pdf.
- 7. Mike Rast, "Tactics, Politics, and Propaganda in the Irish War of Independence, 1917-1921." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2011. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=history\_theses
- 8. William G Powderly, "How Infection Shaped History: Lessons From The Irish Famine." Transactions of the American Clinical and Climatological Association vol. 130 (2019): 127-135. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6735970/
- 9. Michael Hopkinson, "British Rule in Ireland." In *The Irish War of Independence*, 3–10. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130hbg6.7.
- 10. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Easter Rising," Encyclopedia Britannica, July 7, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/event/Easter-Rising.
- 11. Michael Hopkinson, "British Rule in Ireland."
- 12. Alvin Jackson, "Unionism from 1885 to 1922," In Encyclopedia of Irish History and Culture, edited by James S. Donnelly, Jr., 725-728. Vol. 2. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004, Gale In Context: World History (accessed July 30, 2023), https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3434700419/WHIC?u=rich82127&sid=bookmark-WH IC&xid=5e383816.

- 13. "Third Home Rule Bill," UK Parliament, Accessed July 30, 2023, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/legislativescrutiny/parliamentandireland/overview/third-home-rule-bill/.
- 14. Richard Cavendish. "The Curragh Incident."
- 15. National Archives, "Nationalism and the War of Independence."
- 16. R. Walter Edwards, Boland Dudley, et al, "Ireland," Encyclopedia Britannica.
- 17. Steven G Ellis, "Introduction: In Search of Ireland's English Pale."
- 18. Timothy Guinnane and Ronald Miller, "The Limits to Land Reform: The Land Acts in Ireland, 1870-1909."
- 19. Mike Rast, "Tactics, Politics, and Propaganda in the Irish War of Independence, 1917-1921."
- 20. William G Powderly, "How Infection Shaped History: Lessons From The Irish Famine."
- 21. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Easter Rising."
- 22. Emmet O'Connor, "Taking Its Natural Place: Labour and the Third Home Rule Crisis, 1912-14," Saothar 37 (2012): 31–39, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24897202.
- 23. Robert Lynch, Ivan Gibbons. Partition: How and Why Ireland Was Divided., The American Historical Review, Volume 128, Issue 2, June 2023, Pages 1022–1023, https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhad186
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