



## AUTONOMY AND ITS MANY FACES: THE IRISH CASE SINCE 1898

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The story of Ireland and the extent to which it exercised political autonomy and independence between the late 19th century and the early 21st century is interesting to us in Ireland because it is our history. However, it is also interesting because of its particular complexity, on the one hand, and on the other hand because it exemplifies some of the broad developments and trends in European history across that period.

What I hope to achieve in this lesson is to take you through a version of the story of Ireland, namely one that emphasises the evolving political aspirations of the peoples of Ireland, channelling what they aspired to and what they sometimes achieved.

If the European story of the late 19th century and the early 20th century is to a considerable degree the story of the rise of the nation-States and the decline of empires, then Ireland's experience is very much parallel to this, although, as we shall see, the shift away from the Empire was in the Irish case gradual and complex. Often the rise of the nation-State brought with it an emphasis on ethnicity as a key measure of loyalty – loyalty to the ethnic nation very often replaced loyalty to the Crown. This development was frequently reinforced by attempts in the nation-States to create dominant national cultures, and this too is the story of Ireland. Often these national projects ran up against a complicated reality. The geographic distribution or, perhaps, the scattering of political communities defined by ethnic and religious identity rarely facilitated the convenient drawing of borders. Everywhere, as the new European map emerged after WWI, minorities – often discontent, sometimes oppressed – were created inside the new nation-States, and we recognise this in Ireland too.

Finally, I want to consider how the changing relationship for both Ireland and the UK first to the European Economic Community and later to the European Union has affected relations on and between these islands. As a historian this is a little bit too much of contemporary politics for me, but nonetheless I think it is important if we talk about that too.

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In 1898 (our start date), Ireland was an intrinsic part of the State of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, which was at the heart of a broader British Empire at the time. Since the 12th century the English Crown had sought and succeeded, to varying degrees at various times, in exercising authority over part or all of Ireland. We don't have time to describe the long and complex history of conquest and colonisation, but in 1801, following the Act of Union passed in the British and Irish Parliaments in 1800, a separate Irish Parliament ceased to exist and that's the moment when the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland came into existence. Ireland then began sending representatives to the British Imperial Parliament at Westminster in London. Ireland's status was a complex one: the British elites still regarded it in many ways as a colony, they thought of it as different, very often as difficult, sometimes as dangerous. Frequently, the words 'Ireland' and 'problem' were used together in British elite circles. As what we now call Britain emerged during the 18th century, one of its defining characteristics was its Protestantism. It defined itself in many ways against the Catholicism of its key European enemies of the 16th, 17th and 18th century, Spain and France. This raised an important problem as regards the aspiration to integrate Ireland totally into this new United Kingdom, because the majority of the population of Ireland was Catholic. One of the ways in which we can see that Ireland continued to be treated or regarded to some extent as a colony was the extent to which it was much more heavily policed than the rest of Britain during the 19th century, and indeed that police was centrally controlled, so it was an arm of the central government operating out of Dublin, whereas for much of the rest of the United Kingdom, for instance, the police forces were arms of local government and controlled by local counties and cities. This was a great consequence of fear of rebellion in Ireland. The Act of the Union itself in 1800 had been prompted by rebellion in Ireland supported by French revolutionary forces in 1798, and there would be further rebellions in Ireland in 1848 as part of the European-wide explosion of revolutions in that year. Furthermore, there was an attempted rebellion in Ireland in 1867. And that doesn't take into account regular outbreaks of violence in Ireland associated with the demand for a land reform right through the 19th century. So, Ireland was regarded as a quite violent and rebellious place by the rulers. Another typical aspect of colonial government that you could see in Ireland in the 19th century was the creation of a national school system which very much emphasised the communication of English culture in an Irish context and, in particular, the speaking of the English language and the replacement of the Irish language with English.

If Ireland remained a kind of colony, then it was however a privileged one. Ireland was, as I said, an integral part of the State that sat at the core, or heart, of the Empire and the Irish were very often participants in and beneficiaries of the imperial project: Irish

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men (and this was a highly gendered world) took on key roles, they built very prominent careers in governing the British colonies in Africa, Asia, Australia and so on.

Where did authority and power rest in Ireland in 1898? Much of it rested in London: the British monarch was the Head of State, although at this point Britain was very much a constitutional monarchy and the monarch was more symbolic than powerful by 1898. Real power resided in the Parliament and, in particular, with the Cabinet at Westminster, and the government minister directly responsible to Cabinet and to Parliament for the Government of Ireland was known as the Chief Secretary of State for Ireland. There was some authority also resting in Dublin, which was the former seat of the independent Irish Parliament up until 1800 and it was one of the two biggest cities in Ireland at the beginning of the 20th century.

The Lord Lieutenant was the monarch's representative in Ireland and carried the symbolic presence of the Crown into the country. He resided at the Viceregal Lodge in Dublin and attended all sorts of official and symbolic occasions. The Under Secretary of State was the head of the permanent civil service, based at Dublin Castle, in the centre of Dublin, and he answered to the Chief Secretary or the relevant Cabinet Minister.

To what extent was this sort of structure of British government in Ireland affected by or mitigated by Irish influence? Irish MPs, who were elected to the British Parliament, sought to influence how Ireland was governed in Parliament, they did have some effect, but they rarely held senior government positions in the 19th century and quite often they were not particularly focused or were not in agreement as to how they should seek to influence London in shaping attitudes towards Ireland. There also were various levels of local government in existence in Ireland during the 19th century and indeed these grew during the 19th century. To that extent, Irish people had some autonomy over, for instance, how the Irish welfare system operated; they had control over municipal governments in various cities and towns. In 1898, a new and important layer of local government was created which were known as county councils. Ireland was divided up into 32 counties and certain responsibilities for local administration were handed over to these county councils which were elected by the local population.

The proportion of the population in Ireland that could vote had increased considerably during the 19th century. In 1845, just before the Great Famine in Ireland, there was a population of around 8 million but there were a mere 45,000 men (and they were all men) who had parliamentary franchise. By 1884, even though the population of Ireland had decreased considerably (it had dropped by at least 2 million, bringing the

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population about 5 to 6 million), there were then 740,000 voters in Ireland. These voters, as the second half of the 19th century moved on, were increasingly inclined to vote for parties who demanded some level of Irish independence. As in the case of much of Europe, nationalism was a rising force in Ireland, associated with a vibrant cultural scene in the second half of the 19th century, a sort of revival or recovery of culture similar to the Romantic nationalism that we might be familiar with in other parts of Europe. For instance, we have the Grimm Brothers going out to seek the folk tales of Germany, we have people like W.B. Yeats and his colleagues in Ireland going out to recover what they regarded as the true culture of the Irish peasantry. You also had a very vibrant print culture which was increasingly Nationalist and creating a sense of a Nationalist public sphere in Ireland.

That nationalism, broadly speaking, took two forms on a political level. The first was Home Rule, which was the dominant form. In the last decades of the 19th century and in the first decade of the 20th century, it was represented by the Irish Party at Westminster and it sought limited autonomy for Ireland. But there were others who were more radical and sought full-scale separation from the United Kingdom, very often in the form of a Republic. And the most famous example of this might be the Irish Republican Brotherhood, which was a secret revolutionary society.

So, as I said, Home Rule was the aspiration to a limited form of autonomy for Ireland, including a Parliament and executive inside the United Kingdom and then inside the Empire. That limited autonomy would see that the Irish had control over certain clearly defined matters like education, health, policing and so on, but they wouldn't have control, for instance, over defence policy or foreign policy, or the army or such matters. Now, if Irish Nationalists were increasingly demanding some form of autonomy, then that triggered a strong opposition from a proportion of the population who embraced a political philosophy which became known as Unionism. Unionists constituted a substantial minority inside Ireland and what they argued for was the maintenance of the status quo, the full integration of Ireland inside the United Kingdom. Unionists were largely – and I stress this is a generalisation – descendants of colonial settlers from earlier centuries, and they were Scottish or English by ethnic origin, and very often, although not always, they were Protestant. So, it would be an error to say that all Nationalists were Catholic and all Unionists were Protestant, but that's the general trend.

As it became more likely that Home Rule would happen, Unionists switched their demands to seeking the partition of Ireland. On the electoral map at the bottom of the slide you will see that much of the map is in green and those are constituencies that elect Nationalists, whereas you can see some of the map is in a sort of brown colour

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and those are areas that elect Unionists. You can see actually that there's a concentration of the Unionist population in the North-East corner of the country. So, partition, or the granting of Home Rule to the Nationalist areas and the exclusion of the North-Eastern corner from that Home Rule, becomes increasingly widespread as a demand.

This idea of Home Rule also divided British politics. Home Rule Nationalist leaders like Charles Stewart Parnell in the 1880s and John Redmond between 1900 and 1914 had forged an alliance with the Liberal Party in Britain and therefore the Liberal Party was prepared to support Home Rule for Ireland, whereas the Conservative, or Tory, Party generally opposed it.

Here you can see a couple of postcards. These were produced in the years between 1912 and 1914, when for the third time a Home Rule Bill was brought before the British Parliament, sponsored by a coalition of the Liberal Party and Irish Nationalists. The first and second Home Rule in the 1880s and 1890s had fallen and they hadn't managed to make their way through Parliament. But it looked like this one was certain to make its way through Parliament. You can see on the left-hand side the Home Rule imagination of what the glorious day would be when the Parliament members finally met in Dublin again in the ancient Parliament building of the 18th century. And you can see it is a Home Rule which is bound into Empire, which is bound into an idea of Britishness because it is the King and Queen that are coming to open the Parliament, so it is a limited kind of autonomy. On the right-hand side you can see a postcard that reflects the fears of Unionists. That's Belfast City Hall which is being turned into a Protestant immigration office, the other half of the City Hall has been turned into a poor house because poverty will surely follow from Home Rule and you can see a proud symbol of Belfast's industrial independence, the Albert Memorial Clock, being replaced by a statue of the Irish Nationalist leader John Redmond – and this is viewed as truly disastrous, as terrible for the people.

Home Rule does not come and the reason that the Home Rule Bill is not implemented is because of the concerted opposition of Unionism and Conservatism, but also because in 1914 the First World War breaks out and Home Rule is suspended. While the war is ongoing, things change rapidly in Ireland, and things change rapidly also as regards the relationship between Britain and Ireland. The demands of Irish Nationalists radicalised significantly in the years 1916 through to 1923, and there are a number of reasons for that. The first is a sense of anger that once more Home Rule has not been delivered. The second thing that is very important is the effects that WWI will unleash and these are effects which will influence Empires across Europe: the war will see the collapse of Empires in much of Central and Eastern Europe and the emergence of

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nation-States. For instance, in the Irish context the threat of conscription radicalises the young male national population. At the same time, however, also the possibilities that opened up, with the promise of Woodrow Wilson for the new world order after WWI, encouraged Irish radical Nationalists. You can see a poster from 1918 here. This is a poster of the Radical Party, Sinn Féin, which comes to represent radical Irish Nationalists' aspirations and it's saying to the Irish voters 'Look at what the Czechoslovaks have achieved, we can be like them too'. So, nationalism is in the air and that kind of nationalism has been unleashed by the war.

The other thing that happens in Ireland in these years is that there is a small rebellion in Dublin in 1916, which is crushed and repressed by the British parties, and sympathy for the rebels and discontent at the way in which the rebellion is crushed feeds into Irish radicalism. There followed a couple of years of protest in 1917 and 1918, which set up a cycle of protest, oppression, radicalization, further protest, oppression, radicalisation. The consequence of that is the eclipse of moderate nationalism by this new radical force, Sinn Féin. And what do they do? They attempt to establish a Republican counter-State. At the general election in the aftermath of the war in 1918, they win most of the Nationalist seats, they then refuse to attend the Parliament in London, set up their own alternative Parliament in Dublin and attempt to set up their own counter-State in Ireland. The response of the British government to that State and the determination of the radicals to establish that State led to a war of independence in Ireland between 1919 and 1921. The radical Nationalists essentially began to first boycott, then to attack the agents of the existing State of Ireland, for instance, they start to shoot policemen. The response of the British State to that is to send in counter-terror forces and repress, and that sets off a cycle of terror and counter-terror, and escalating terror and counter-terror over a couple of years.

While this conflict is going on, Unionists, who can see that some form of Irish independence is going to arrive - and the question now is whether it will be far more radical than Home Rule - are seeking to protect their position and they are still attending Parliament in Westminster, whereas the Nationalist Sinn Féin members are not. So, they begin to try and influence the British government. That leads to the establishment of a committee in 1919 which drafts, another (a fourth) Home Rule Bill for Ireland. This one is different because it proposes the establishment of two Home Rule Parliaments, one in Dublin and one in Belfast, representing all of Ulster, which is made up of 9 counties in the North-East of the country.

Now, Unionists had never wanted their own Home Rule Parliament in Belfast, they had never asked for this. But now, on being offered this, they recognise its advantages; it will give them more control over their own political future. And also, even though they

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stress their loyalty to the Union, to the Crown, to London, they are increasingly distrustful that London will protect them. So, they think that by having their own Parliament in Belfast, they can protect themselves more effectively. They lobby, though, not for a nine-county separate Home Rule region, but for a six-county one. On the map on the left-hand side, Ulster is composed of all the nine counties shaded. But the six counties to the North and to the right of the black line are the counties that would be called to constitute the new Home Rule Unionist State, which will be known as Northern Ireland. Essentially, Unionists lobby for the autonomy of six counties because this area is big enough to be viable but is sufficiently small to ensure that they can have a permanent Unionist majority. And that State is created under a piece of legislation that is called the Government of Ireland Act, which is brought into law by the British Parliament in December 1920. Hence, Northern Ireland is created even as the conflict goes on between the radical Nationalists and the British government.

Eventually, the radical Nationalists and the British government will enter into negotiations in the summer of 1921 and that will lead to the signing of a treaty, the Anglo-Irish Treaty of the 6th of December 1921. It is a compromise deal that emerges: the radical Nationalists do not achieve their aim of an Irish Republic separate from the United Kingdom, but instead they are given what is known as Dominion Home Rule. That's far more than the Home Rule that had been on offer before, which was the Home Rule inside the United Kingdom, but instead it is Home Rule outside United Kingdom, but inside the Empire. That gives this new State, which will be known as the Irish Free State, very high levels of political autonomy.

However, this is short of the Sinn Féin idea, it's not a Republic. The new Ireland is inside the British Empire, the British Monarch will remain Head of State, the British Monarch will continue to send a representative to Ireland, who will have certain powers and be part of the constitutional arrangement of the new State, Members of the Irish Parliament will have to take an oath of fidelity or an oath of allegiance to the British Monarch, Britain retains three ports on the West and North coast of Ireland for strategic defensive purposes, so it can continue to control the Atlantic, and partition is confirmed in practice. What the revolutionaries had wanted was an Irish Republic outside the British Empire and outside the United Kingdom. And what they ended up with was an Irish Free State inside the Empire and a Northern Ireland Home Rule arrangement inside the United Kingdom. There are quite complex levels of different types of autonomy.

Now, I am going to try and trace the evolution of autonomy inside these new political units and also look at some of the issues around the treatment of minorities inside these units that emerge. The first thing to say is that the Anglo-Irish Agreement of

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December 1921 was not universally welcomed by Irish Nationalists. The coalition of Nationalists which had emerged during the revolutionary years, a coalition of radicals – long-time radicals and newly radicalised moderate Nationalists – broke apart in the face of the agreement with some of the radicals absolutely clear that this Irish Free State inside the Empire was simply not enough and they would not be prepared to recognise the English Monarch. A big problem for them, perhaps the biggest problem, was taking an oath of allegiance to an English Monarch inside an Irish Parliament.

Surprisingly, partition was less of a problem because by 1922 most people in Ireland had come to recognise that some form of partition was likely inevitable. So, the Civil War between Nationalists is largely fought about the relationship with the Empire. It ended with the triumph of the moderates, who signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. And they started building their Dominion Home Rule State in various ways. For instance, they created an Irish Constitution in 1922 (that's a nod in the direction of their Republicanism, because the United Kingdom does not have a written constitution whereas Republics like France or the United States of America tended to have written Constitutions). They began to build up the institutions of the State, so policing institutions, new courts institutions, etc., they began to establish a new national army. They also began to try and shape the cultural environment inside the new State and they very much did so on the basis of a policy of Gaelicization, so harking back to the acclaimed Gaelic past of the Irish as distinct from an Anglo past which is associated with Britishness and the Empire.

Here I have some images of stamps. One of the first things that they did straight away in the early weeks of 1922 is that they put stamps and markings on top of the old British stamps with the symbols of monarchy and Britannia, and it's some sort of Celtic text and in the Irish language. Soon, within a number of years, they pushed on and they created purpose-designed stamps which reflected an Irish-Gaelic culture. For instance, you can see the symbol of a sword being held, with flames coming out of it, which was a symbol of Irish nationalism.

The pro-treaty side also set about the business of asserting Ireland's position on the world stage. With some resistance from Britain, they began asserting an independent foreign policy for the new Irish State. So, for instance, the Irish Free State joined the League of Nations in 1923. They began to issue Irish passports in 1924. They created a diplomatic service in 1924, sending Irish ambassadors out to key locations (the early places they sent ambassadors to were the United States of America because it was a new world power, but also because it had a very large Irish immigrant population base, they sent ambassadors to Germany, to France, to the Vatican - these were the early strategic countries they identified as important to establish international relations

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with). They used the mechanisms of the Empire to expand the autonomy of dominions inside the Empire, and so they cooperated with other dominions like Canada, Australia, New Zealand and so on to increase the extent to which they acted independently of London and of Britain. They operated inside the terms of the Treaty to try and push out Irish autonomy.

In 1932, that pro-treaty elite was replaced at the ballot box by the people they had defeated in the Civil War. So, the anti-treaty party, which had once been Sinn Féin and is now known as Fianna Fáil, claimed power in 1932 after a decade. Once they claimed power, they set about stretching Irish autonomy more vigorously. In actual fact, they start to dismantle the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922. For instance, one the first things they do when they come to power is to remove the oath of fidelity that Members of the Irish Parliament have to take to the Crown. And they are able to do this because of the achievements of their predecessors in expanding the autonomy of the dominions. They are taking advantage of the foundation blocks built by the pro-treaty side, and now they are pushing beyond. This is sometimes described as a sort of 'stepping-stone strategy' to the achievement of Irish independence. They diminished the office of the King's representative in Ireland in 1932 and then eventually abolished it. They launched an economic war with Britain and they wrote a new Republican Constitution in 1937.

Crucially, in 1939, when the Second World War breaks out, the Irish State does not join Britain in the war against Germany with its allies. They do so for a number of reasons, perhaps the most important one is that this is an assertion of the fact that Ireland has an independent foreign policy and Ireland remains neutral throughout the Second World War.

Eventually, in 1948, a pro-treaty party will return to power and, seeking to burnish its Nationalist credentials, seeking to show that its every bit is as green and as in favour of Irish nationalism as the anti-treaty side, they declare an Irish Republic and they withdraw Ireland from the Empire. So, in 1949 you have the Republic of Ireland outside the Empire and Northern Ireland is still inside the UK inside the Empire.

In the same period, the Unionist elite in Northern Ireland was quite fearful initially that the new southern State would aggressively attack it. There is some evidence that this happened in the early months of 1922, up to the summer 1922, but for various reasons then, the Irish Free State ceased an aggressive policy towards Northern Ireland. So that makes Northern Ireland feel somewhat more secure. But the Unionist elite inside Northern Ireland was also fearful of an internal threat from the minority inside Northern Ireland, from Republicans and Nationalists. But again, they managed to crush that

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quite effectively. There's still quite a good deal of State repression and violence in 1922-23, and the movements of revolutionary nationalism inside Northern Ireland are very quickly quashed or put down in these years. The Unionist majority also secured their control over the new State by abolishing proportional representation, i.e. that method of election to local government which protects minorities. They abolished that and instead went for a form of electoral system which is first-past-the-post, which effectively emphasises or exaggerates the political advantage of being in a majority. In matters of domestic policy they were to a large degree given their head by the Westminster government, which very rarely intervened in the autonomy of the new Northern Ireland State. But nonetheless, the Unionist majority remained constantly fearful and, as a consequence, they tended to build a quite discriminatory State, a State which, fearful of what the minority might do, fearful of potential disloyalism, tended to exclude the minority, for instance, from government jobs and to minimise its access to political rights.

What about the Southern Irish State and its minority? Very tellingly, its minority feels – it seems – quite uncomfortable and fearful also. In 1911, before the establishment of independence, you can see the Protestant minority constituted just over 10% of the population. By 1926, which is the year of the first census after the revolutionary period, that population has decreased to 7.4%, well over 100,000 persons seem to have disappeared. It is hard to know what has happened, but at least a number of them have left because they no longer feel at home or some of them because they feel directly threatened inside the new Irish State. And you can see that decline continues right up to the middle of the century. The fall of the Protestant population is to some extent caused by the fact that some of the population is fearful and flees, but there are multiple other reasons that we don't have time to explore today.

Most Southern Unionists quite quickly reconcile themselves with the new State and this is made easier for them by the fact that for the first couple of decades at least it exists inside the Empire; they can combine their loyalty to the new State with an ongoing loyalty to Crown and Empire, so that eases for them the transition to the new State. The new State does attempt to protect their political rights, for instance, it does not remove proportional representation as a method of electing to Parliament and to local government, so that should protect the minority. It also ensures that the Upper House of the new Irish State, the Senate, has a certain proportion who are nominated from the Unionist or protestant minority. Protestants were generally not disadvantaged economically; they had been an economic and landed elite coming into this period and they remained so throughout the succeeding decades. The Irish State does not, for instance, institute official policies of discrimination around access to government jobs to the minority. But what does happen is that the minority is to some

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extent alienated by the State's pursuit of a Gaelic identity, for instance, through the compulsory learning of the Irish language in schools, which is a big problem for many members of the Unionist minority with their Anglo-Irish identity. Home Rule, they feared, would become Rome Rule; in other words, the Catholics and Catholic moral positions would come to dominate the social disposition of the new State. Their fears were well-founded, as this is what happened in the mid-decades of the 20th century: Catholic social attitudes came to inform Irish legislation around access to contraception, divorce, abortion and various forms of social policies, the extent to which a welfare state should be created etc. This was certainly problematic for the Unionist minority.

One of the responses to this for some Unionists was to retreat into a sort of psychological ghetto (not physical ghettos but cultural or psychological ghettos). They chose caution and silence very often; to use an Irish phrase, 'they kept their head down', although there were some confident members of that minority who continued to assert and claim a space in public conversation. A famous example of that would be W.B. Yeats, the Nobel Prize winning poet, who was a Senator in the State and who defended his community very decisively. From the 1960s on, members of the minority became increasingly confident. A second generation, who hadn't been born in the Free State, who hadn't been born inside the United Kingdom and the British Empire, became more comfortable with ideas of Irish nationalism and became more confident actors in the public sphere. So, the relationship between the State and its minority becomes more relaxed, I suppose, in the second half of the 20th century.

In my last point I want to touch on the economic development and autonomy and to touch on the EU around that. After the Irish Free State achieves independence, the pro-treaty elite pursues an economic policy which is a continuation of the economics that had been in place before independence. They are very much focused on maximising the developmental potential for the Irish economy of remaining inside the British economic sphere. They continued to pursue policies which emphasised Ireland as a place that concentrated on producing agricultural raw material. Ireland, they said, had a competitive advantage at producing, for instance, milk, beef and so on, and this should be produced and then exported into the industrial urban British markets. And the idea was that Irish farmers would get richer and, in a sort of trickle-down economics, their money would be spent in other parts of the Irish economy, and so the Irish economy would develop and grow. It's very much still a sort of colonial economic relationship which is in existence here between the Irish as raw material suppliers to the developed industrial British imperial centre.

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When the opponents of the Treaty, the former Republicans, came to power in 1932 until 1959, they switched policies, and they pursued a policy of protectionism. They decided they were going to try and break the economic relationship with Britain, they were going to try and make Ireland more self-sufficient in food and they were going to try and develop Irish industries behind protective tariff barriers. They were going to put up import taxes and they were going to see the development of the Irish industry behind those import taxes. That made sense in the early 1930s, because many other countries were doing the same thing at the same time in the context of the Great Crash and the great economic depression that followed the Wall Street crash in 1929. But it was a failure as a policy in the medium term. The extensive data on the slide show the poor state of the Irish economy in the 1950s and 1960s. Over half a million Irish people out of a population of about four and a half million people had to emigrate between 1946 and 1961 – that is mass emigration, and people started to question the viability of the State. Ireland's industrial development was very slow in those years. The rest of Europe was experiencing a post-war industrial and economic boom and Ireland was chugging along very poorly. The Irish industries that did exist were largely producing for a home market, they were not competitive, they were not exporting. When Ireland did export, they were completely trapped in exporting to Britain; 93% of Irish exports went to Britain and most of those were agricultural exports. It is not a surprise that Irish workers were also moving, because their pay was 40% less than that of the average worker in Britain, so they were very often moving to Britain for those better wages.

There is a shift in policy in the 1950s and 1960s: the abandonment of protectionism, the encouragement of international investment, a very cautious embracing of economic planning, and a shift towards free trade, all aimed at preparing for joining the European Economic Community in 1973. And that's what Ireland did; it joined the European Economic Community at the same time as the United Kingdom in 1973. Obviously, joining the European Economic Community involved some surrendering of political autonomy. This was a very important step for Ireland in terms of autonomy, it was crucial for the breaking of the colonial economic relationship with Britain. Here you can see the proportion of Irish exports that go into Britain: 1967 it's still 72% of all Irish exports, by 1977 it is down to 47%, by 1987 it is 34%, 1997 - 25% and 2007 - 18,7% and those figures have continued to decline. Ireland is now a very open economy, part of the European economic system and then more broadly part of the global free trade economic system, but it is no longer dependent exclusively on Britain.

The shared membership with European Union changed Ireland's relationship to the United Kingdom in other ways. It facilitated a narrowing of the distance between

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Britain and Ireland after 1973 as together they cooperated in the Councils of the EU to pursue shared interests, to cooperate in negotiations, as they were very often similarly situated, with similar kinds of economies, out on the western end of the European Union etc. The context of the EU helped build relationships between the two countries. It also narrowed the distance between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, especially in the years after the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (that was the agreement which ended several decades of strife inside Northern Ireland). Shared membership of the EU and the shared membership of the economic community helped to deemphasise the importance of the border in Ireland. It emphasised the shared citizenship of a common union, and it also just facilitated movement back and forth across the border – the border became practically invisible.

With Brexit in 2016 matters changed again. The UK's decision to leave the EU has opened up concerns in recent years about the relationship between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In particular, concerns were about the re-introduction of a hard border on the island. There has been an attempt to avoid this through the creation of what is known as the Northern Ireland Protocol, which mitigates some aspects of that border and instead creates a border between Ireland (the island) and Britain in the Irish Sea. That is very problematic for Unionists, it is very problematic to the British government, it is a matter of ongoing dispute between Unionists, Britain and the European Union as we speak. So, Britain's withdrawal from the EU has complicated our relationship once more. But it is noteworthy that at no point was there a realistic conversation in Ireland about it leaving the EU together with Britain. That was simply not on the cards at all.

### **Schools beyond regions and borders (2021-2023)**

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