



# BRITISH POLITICS REVIEW

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## Britain and Ireland Reassessing a historic relationship

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Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, popularly known as "Paddy's Wigwam". Located at the one end of Hope Street, opposite (the Anglican) Liverpool Cathedral, is a poignant symbol of Anglo-Irish communion in North West England.

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## Editorial

# The weight of history

At a time when the future status of Scotland within the UK is put in question, it might be valuable to direct our attention towards another, and in some respects more fundamental territorial relationship on the British Isles. Britain and Ireland go a long way, alongside and against each other, integrated through conquest and empire and disintegrated through rebellion and war, then slowly establishing a relationship as independent equals.

This year, ninety years have passed since the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922. Based upon the Anglo-Irish Treaty signed one year before, it prepared the ground for an independent Ireland, a choice which would gradually be sealed by the new constitution in 1937 and the Republic of Ireland Act in 1948, establishing the Republic and thereby abolishing the vestiges of British monarchical authority in Ireland.

The Irish Republic was built on the notion of distinctiveness from Britain, yet territorial, cultural and historical proximity could not be vetoed away. As argued by several contributors to the current issue of *British Politics Review*, the relation was always there, whether through secret fascination with monarchy – as vividly testified to by Mary Kenny on these pages – or through concurrent economic ties, as analysed by Dermot Hodson and Andrew Scott Crines.

The articles which follow investigate different facets of the British-Irish relationship, ranging from Adrian Guelke's analysis of the current situation in Northern Ireland via Patrick Fitzgerald's overview of Irish migration to Charles Armstrong's account of the Irish poet W.B. Yeats' difficult and contradictory relationship with the English.

Historical enmity leave legacies that are difficult to confront. Clearly, some can be redressed only through ceremonial acts of leadership. The Review is introduced by one fascinating example to that effect, namely the speech given by Queen Elizabeth II in Dublin Castle on the occasion of her state visit to Ireland in May last year.

The significance of her visit, the first by a ruling British monarch in a century, could hardly be overestimated. Nor could the symbolism of her carefully weighted words to the Irish audience: "To all those who have suffered as a consequence of our troubled past I extend my sincere thoughts and deep sympathy." If shared acknowledgement of the past is the only way to face the future, that must indeed be the case for the British-Irish relationship.

*Øivind Bratberg and Atle L. Wold*

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# The Queen's speech: Dublin Castle, 18 May 2011

*Speech held by Queen Elizabeth II in St. Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle on 18 May, the 2nd day of her State Visit to Ireland.*

*A hUachtarán agus a chairde (President and friends).*

Madam President, Prince Philip and I are delighted to be here, and to experience at first hand Ireland's world-famous hospitality.

Together we have much to celebrate: the ties between our people, the shared values, and the economic, business and cultural links that make us so much more than just neighbours, that make us firm friends and equal partners.

Madam President, speaking here in Dublin Castle it is impossible to ignore the weight of history, as it was yesterday when you and I laid wreaths at the Garden of Remembrance.

Indeed, so much of this visit reminds us of the complexity of our history, its many layers and traditions, but also the importance of forbearance and conciliation. Of being able to bow to the past, but not be bound by it.

Of course, the relationship has not always been straightforward; nor has the record over the centuries been entirely benign. It is a sad and regrettable reality that through history our islands have experienced more than their fair share of heartache, turbulence and loss.

These events have touched us all, many of us personally, and are a painful legacy. We can never forget those who have died or been injured, and their families. To all those who have suffered as a consequence of our troubled past I extend my sincere thoughts and deep sympathy. With the benefit of historical hindsight we can all see things which we would wish had been done differently or not at all.

But it is also true that no-one who looked to the future over the past centuries could have imagined the strength of the bonds that are now in place between the governments and the people of our two nations, the spirit of partnership that we now enjoy, and the lasting rapport between us. No-one here this evening could doubt that heartfelt desire of our two nations.

Madam President, you have done a great deal to promote this understanding and reconciliation. You set out to build bridges. And I have seen at first hand your success in

bringing together different communities and traditions on this island.

You have also shed new light on the sacrifice of those who served in the First World War. Even as we jointly opened the Messines Peace Park in 1998, it was difficult to look ahead to the time when you and I would be standing together at Islandbridge as we were today.

That transformation is also evident in the establishment of a successful power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland. A knot of history that was painstakingly loosened by the British and Irish Governments together with the strength, vision and determination of the political parties in Northern Ireland.

What were once only hopes for the future have now come to pass; it is almost exactly 13 years since the overwhelming majority of people in Ireland and Northern Ireland voted in favour of the agreement signed on Good Friday 1998, paving the way for Northern Ireland to become the exciting and inspirational place that it is today.

"[S]o much of this visit reminds us of the complexity of our history, its many layers and traditions, but also the importance of forbearance and conciliation. Of being able to bow to the past, but not be bound by it."

I applaud the work of all those involved in the peace process, and of all those who support and nurture peace, including members of the police, the gardai, and the other emergency services, and those who work in the communities, the churches and charitable bodies like Co-operation Ireland.

Taken together, their work not only serves as a basis for reconciliation between our people and communities, but it gives hope to other peacemakers across the world that through sustained effort, peace can and will prevail.

For the world moves on quickly. The challenges of the past have been replaced by new economic challenges which will demand the same imagination and courage.

The lessons from the peace process are clear; whatever life throws at us, our individual responses will be all the stronger for working together and sharing the load.

There are other stories written daily across these islands which do not find their voice in solemn pages of history books, or newspaper headlines, but which are at the heart of our shared narrative. Many British families have members who live in this country, as many Irish families have close relatives in the United Kingdom.

These families share the two islands; they have visited each other and have come home to each other over the years. They are the ordinary people who yearned for the peace and understanding we now have between our two nations and between the communities within those two nations; a living testament to how much in common we have.

These ties of family, friendship and affection are our most precious resource. They are the lifeblood of the partnership across these islands, a golden thread that runs through all our joint successes so far, and all we will go on to achieve.

They are a reminder that we have much to do together to build a future for all our grandchildren: the kind of future our grandparents could only dream of.

So we celebrate together the widespread spirit of goodwill and deep mutual understanding that has served to make the relationship more harmonious, close as good neighbours should always be.



HM Queen Elizabeth II pictured at the State Dinner held in St Patrick's Hall of Dublin Castle on 18 May 2011. She sat between Enda Kenny (left), Taoiseach of Ireland and Mary McAleese, President of Ireland.

Photo:Maxwell photography, Dublin.

# From postcolonial antagonism to a more mature partnership

By Timothy White

The legacy of British colonialism defines the historic relationship between Britain and Ireland. Revisiting the roots of this legacy takes us back to the settlement or invasion of the Anglo-Normans in 1170. The Anglo-Normans were invited by a deposed Irish king, yet they quickly came to dominate most of Ireland politically and militarily. Nevertheless, their rapid incorporation into existing Irish society meant that within two centuries they had become as the saying goes, "more Irish than the Irish themselves".



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The British Crown responded to the Anglo-Norman presence in Ireland by initiating policies to bring Ireland under its direct control, thereby minimizing any potential threat to its authority. This ultimately led to the English and Scottish so-called plantation of Protestant settlers in the seventeenth century that sought to replace and displace the indigenous population of Ireland. The plantation is remembered in Ireland – even to this day – and remains a chief historical basis for the fundamental antagonism that is present in Irish relations toward Britain. Along with the penal laws that formally stripped the Irish population of their economic and political rights as well as other policies intended to destroy various aspects of Irish culture (music, language, dance, religion, etc.), the British government alienated the local Irish population for centuries.

The famine of the nineteenth century contributed to the historic grievance in Ireland toward the British, and it remains to this day an important part of the collective memory. Even though a series of land reform acts distributed much of the land in Ireland to tenant farmers in the nineteenth century, plantation settlers and their descendants with the large estates retained a privileged position in society based on the connection to the British crown, police, and military forces that protected their property in Ireland.

The Anglo-Irish War of 1919 to 1921 led to negotiations that culminated in a treaty that brought Ireland partial independence from Britain. The treaty divided the country, a source of dismay for Irish republicans to this day. In addition, the treaty required that those elected to the Irish parliament take an oath to the British king. The failure of this treaty to achieve

a unified thirty-two county republic was an immediate cause of the civil war in Ireland as treaty opponents resorted to violence when they were unable to defeat the treaty in parliament or a national referendum.

Over the next couple of decades, the Irish rewrote their constitution and declared themselves a republic. In the postcolonial period, the central figure in the effort to assert Ireland's autonomy and sovereignty was Eamon de Valera. De Valera endeavored to achieve complete sovereignty over twenty-six of Ireland's thirty-two counties. Thus, in the first few decades after independence the Irish strove, as most postcolonial nations do, to assert their autonomy and sovereignty to themselves and the rest of the world.

As the decades after partition passed, the division of Ireland came to be something that was begrudgingly accepted as the status quo in the Republic of Ireland, but the Protestant and unionist domination of the North of Ireland became increasingly unsustainable. The oppression of the Catholic minority in the North led to a civil rights movement in the 1960s. This movement and its ultimate transformation into the Troubles of the 1970s through the 1990s led to a fundamental change in Anglo-Irish relations. No longer could either the British or Irish government ignore the plight of Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland.

By 1985, the Irish and British governments negotiated the Anglo-Irish Agreement which recognized the Republic of Ireland's interest in the affairs and governing of Northern Ireland. While this agreement did not gain support of the majority Protestant

population in Northern Ireland, it laid the framework for a more encompassing peace process that began in the late 1980s between parties in Northern Ireland and the British and Irish governments. In the early 1990s, the British government declared that it held no selfish or strategic interest in Northern Ireland, and both governments came to accept that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland should be determined by the principle of majority consent. This meant that Northern Ireland's status in the United Kingdom could only change if a majority of the people of Northern Ireland voted to do so.

These statements by the British and Irish governments as well as their willingness to engage the various parties in Northern Ireland led to a comprehensive peace agreement on Good Friday in 1998. The Belfast or Good Friday Agreement, which was ratified via referendums that received overwhelming support in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, created new formal means of institutional cooperation through North-South bodies and organizations that linked Ireland with Britain in terms of ministerial cooperation. Thus, by the eve of the twenty-first century, the historic relationship of British domination over Ireland had been replaced by two sovereign states choosing to cooperate for mutual benefit.

The improved relations between Britain and Ireland in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement allowed Queen Elizabeth to make a formal state visit to Ireland in May 2011. It had been more than a century since a British monarch had been to Ireland. Despite threats from dissident republicans, the visit by the Queen was greeted with great enthusiasm in Ireland. The Queen visited the Garden of Remembrance in Dublin where the Irish remember those who died fighting for Irish freedom. She greeted a crowd outside the English Market in Cork and toured famous sites such as the Rock of Cashel. During the formal state dinner in Dublin, the Queen even spoke in Irish.

The recognition by the British monarch of Ireland's sovereignty, its past suffering, and its linguistic and cultural heritage were all powerful signs of British respect for the Irish. Seen against the historical backdrop, it was also an indicator of dramatically improved relations. British assistance with Ireland's bailout in December 2010 further symbolised the increased economic cooperation that has emerged in recent decades. Thus, while past bitterness and wrongs will never be forgotten, common economic interests and a desire for peace has allowed these two states to build an increasingly strong relationship based on cooperation and respect.



**The Emerald Isle**, a seat of natural beauty and intense green vegetation - and the scene of recurrent historical drama.



# Northern Ireland and British-Irish conflict management

By Adrian Guelke

**Balancing.** Two events in May 2011 underlined the consolidation of Northern Ireland's political settlement. The first of these events was the outcome of the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Assembly had been established under the Good Friday Agreement of April 1998. Despite popular endorsement of the settlement in referendums in both jurisdictions in Ireland, implementation had proved anything but easy.



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The elections of May 2011 were the fourth set of elections to the Assembly but the first to occur on schedule after the devolved institutions had been functioning without suspension for a full four-year term. In their outcome they were first elections in which parties advocating co-operation under the Good Friday Agreement (and the subsequent additions of the St Andrews Agreement and the Hillsborough Agreement) had achieved an unequivocal victory on both sides of the province's sectarian divide. At the previous set of elections in March 2007, there had still been uncertainty as to whether the dominant party on the Unionist side of the divide, the Democratic Unionist Party, would be ready to share power with Sinn Féin.

The second event was Queen Elizabeth II's highly successful tour of the Republic of Ireland, the first state visit to the South by a British monarch since Irish independence. Britain had ruled the whole of Ireland on the previous royal visit by King George V in 1911. While many commentators expressed the view that the visit was long overdue in the light of the co-operation between the British and Irish governments following the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, representatives of Sinn Féin maintained that the visit was premature. However, the muted nature of the party's opposition underscored how far the Irish public had been won over both by the Queen's conduct during the visit and by the perception of the Northern Ireland settlement as a success for the two countries. It could be argued that a visit by the Queen to the Republic became a possibility once the terms of the Good Friday Agreement had been endorsed, since its provisions

effectively ended any semblance of conflict between the two states over the status of Northern Ireland. However, the settlement's fragility provided grounds for caution on the part of both governments. Indeed, as recently as the winter of 2009-10, the issue of the devolution of justice and policing powers had threatened to derail the settlement. The matter was resolved under the Hillsborough Agreement in February 2010 after prolonged negotiations in which the British, Irish and American governments had all played a role.

In the wake of the Hillsborough Agreement, it became possible to argue that the parties in Northern Ireland could largely be left to themselves to manage the province's affairs. However, some commentators have emphasised the need for the continued engagement of the two governments. For example, Andy Pollak wrote a piece in the Irish Times in January 2012 under the heading of "Dangerous for Dublin to turn away from the North" that highlighted the weaknesses of what he described as the 'uneasy marriage of convenience' between the DUP and Sinn Féin. Four broad areas continue to provide the basis for concern over the future of Northern Ireland. The first of these is the political polarisation that has run in parallel with the peace process and has resulted in the political dominance of respectively the DUP and Sinn Féin. At the same time, the fact that these two formerly extreme parties have been willing to co-operate can be seen as a remarkable achievement in itself, though critics in Northern Ireland of the functioning of the devolved government complain that this

co-operation has been on the basis of a crude division of the spoils that has done little to reduce sectarian divisions.

A second area of concern has been the growth of social segregation since the paramilitary ceasefires in the 1990s. The number of walls dividing communities along sectarian lines has increased markedly since the ceasefires. The explanation for this paradox lies in the persistence of a high level of low-level violence particularly at interfaces between the two communities. Residents close to the interfaces frequently complain of the harassment they are subjected to by thuggish elements in the other community and it is localised demands for protection that lie behind the building of peace walls, as the separation barriers dividing communities are euphemistically called.

When the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, addressed the Northern Ireland Assembly in June 2011 he expressed his dismay that the number of barriers had increased even since the St Andrews Agreement of 2006. He also deplored the cost of the duplication of public services as a consequence of segregation. A third area of concern has been the continuation of political violence by what the media has dubbed dissident elements, most notably the attacks on police officers and other members of the security forces by groups such as the Real IRA that have rejected the settlement embodied in the Good Friday Agreement. Over 140 people have died in political violence since April 1998. Admittedly, this amounts to a level of violence far below that during the province's troubles. Further, political support for the dissidents remains negligible.

A final area of concern has been the lack of agreement among the Northern Ireland political parties on dealing with the past. Attempts to tackle the issue have tended to generate recriminations rather than accord across the sectarian divide. The issue tends to be linked to the cold nature of the peace. This is reflected in relatively few gestures of reconciliation between representatives of the two communities as well as in antagonism at street level that regularly gives rise to rioting in the summer over Orange marches and other sources of tension between communities, especially in working class neighbourhoods. What these different areas of concern underline is that Northern Ireland remains a deeply divided society. They also underscore the crucial role played by the two governments in external conflict management of the situation.



**Atonement.** Civil rights mural in Bogside, Derry, made by "the Bogside Artists" and unveiled in 2004 to commemorate the start of the civil rights struggle of the 1960s. Photograph: Sean Mack.

# Relations between Britain and Ireland: the role of migration

By Patrick Fitzgerald

Historic migration between Ireland and Britain has arguably not been well understood at a popular level. Few of those now living on the British Isles fully appreciate the enduring two way exchange of peoples across the Irish Sea. Today, in the early twenty first century we can think about the Irish Diaspora in Britain and the British Diaspora in Ireland and an ongoing human and cultural exchange from west to east and east to west over the course of some 10,000 years. Whether originally by land bridge or not, migrants, including the



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Vikings of the ninth and tenth centuries, forged connections and inevitably helped shape relations between the two islands. This short article will focus upon migration from Ireland to Britain over the last four centuries, seeking to explore some of the major patterns and networks at work and finally to reflect upon the role of migration in determining British-Irish relations.

A review of the historiography relating to the Irish in Britain confirms that the story conventionally begins around 1800 and few of the general texts on the subject today have much to say about the Irish in early modern Britain. Whilst the scale of migration certainly increased significantly as industrialisation and urbanisation accelerated in Britain and population growth took off in Ireland in the early nineteenth century, we should not ignore earlier movement.

Migration waves in the two centuries preceding 1800 could be fairly concisely summarised. Arguably they served to compound in Britain three already strongly developed associations with the Irish, namely with Catholicism, the military and poverty. Irish migrants in this era, as later, were predominantly native Irish or Old English Catholics (descendants of pre-Reformation migrants from England) who could excite fear and suspicion in predominantly Protestant Britain. The migration flow was also disproportionately made up of military recruits, initially moving through Britain en route to the armies

of Catholic Spain and France and, from the mid-eighteenth century on, increasingly into the British army and navy. In addition, from as early as the later sixteenth century significant numbers of poor subsistence migrants entered western Britain in waves which coincided with periods of famine or warfare in Ireland. Many of those in English, Scottish or Welsh localities who directly encountered the Irish in this era witnessed beggars or vagrants seeking alms or recruits coming or going from the all too regular wars.

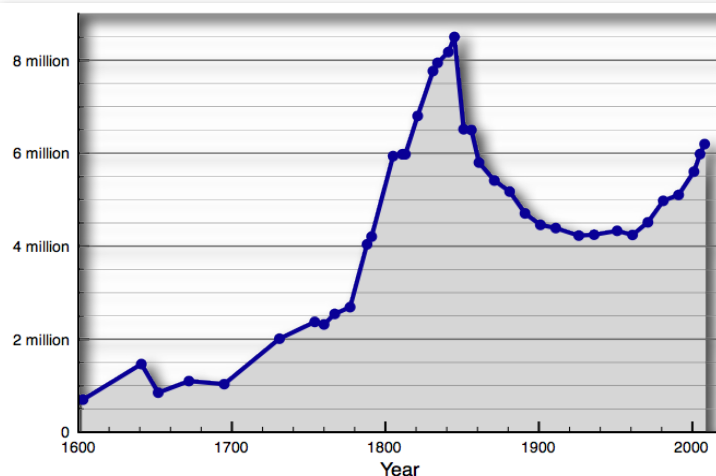
Attempting a brief and general characterisation of Irish migration to Britain over the course of the past two centuries is a more complicated affair. Here, much of the recent scholarship has sought to stress the diversity of migrant experience. Furthermore, we must remember that under the Union (1800-1920) all movement was technically internal migration and therefore poorly recorded by government. However, there are three broad points to emphasise. The first of these relates to the duration of the migrant's stay in Britain. In addition to Irish migrants permanently settling in the host society, there always remained a large proportion of migrants whose stay was temporary. Obviously geographical proximity and cheap and regular shipping made return or circular migration more feasible than was the case with transoceanic destinations. Seasonal agricultural labour migration allowed the "spalpeen" (itinerant labourer) the opportunity to travel to British farms at harvest time to gather the means to pay rents on Irish smallholdings and still return in time for the later Irish harvest. At its height in the mid-nineteenth century as many as 150,000 such labourers were crossing the Irish Sea annually. As time progressed this pattern diversified but the culture persisted and in Ireland's rural west in the mid-twentieth century large numbers of men came and went to Britain for factory work or construction jobs before returning

home, often for Christmas.

A second explanation as to why many Irish ended up merely sojourning in Britain relates to the prevalence of what is sometimes referred to as "stepwise" migration. Here migrants used Britain as a temporary staging post towards ultimate settlement in other, usually trans-continental, destinations. The hub of this phenomenon was Liverpool, the major port of departure to the New World for most Irish migrants, and indeed for many Scandinavian migrants, in the half century after 1820. Most Irish emigrants went on to the USA but many, both Protestant and Catholic, used Britain as a gateway to the British Empire. The role of the latter group within the Empire and the legacy of this added to the complexity of subsequent debates concerning Ireland and Colonialism.

Central to the underlying psychology of Irish migrants in Britain, therefore, was a sense of impermanence, of shallow roots and a perception that residence in Britain represented a second best option rather than the better place or final liberating destination of migrant dreams. Or perhaps, as some historians have countered, we are prone to exaggerate these dimensions of the migrant experience because they are more visible in sources generated by the host society. In short, we buy the British constructed stereotype of the rootless, feckless Irish drifter, dreaming of an old home in Ireland or a promised new home overseas, to the exclusion of more diverse but less audible or visible stories of actual Irish experience. Nonetheless, in thinking about Britain's place in the Irish Diaspora these themes of migrant fluidity within the context of a more rigid Old World host society remain central.

A third important dimension to understanding the migration from Ireland to Britain takes us back to geography and an appreciation of the distinct sense of connection between specific Irish regions and adjacent British regions across the Irish Sea. In very simple terms the developed shipping and trade links served to channel migration from an early point. Thus, Munster migrants from the south of Ireland crossed to south Wales and southern England, migrants from Ireland's central provinces of Leinster and Connacht made their way, often through Liverpool, into the north of England and the midlands, whilst Ulster migrants in the north dominated the flow across the North Channel to Scotland.



**Exodus.** Graph of Ireland's population size from 1600 to the present, cruelly illustrating the effects of potato famine of the 1840s and successive emigration waves.



# The role of migration (cont.)

By Patrick Fitzgerald

In terms of settlement patterns in Britain, the Irish from 1800 were, not surprisingly, particularly attracted to Britain's major urban centres. The huge influx of the Great Famine (1845-50) tended to concentrate in the poorest quarters of cities like London, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow, reinforcing the popular association between the Irish migrants and urban squalor and disease. These "little Irelands", in fact, very rarely constituted real ghettos and in time these concentrations reduced and the immigrant experience diversified but the patterns derived from geography continued to shape the particular character of the presence from Ireland. London, the Imperial capital, was always somewhat different with a distinct Irish elite, whilst Glasgow and Strathclyde, drawing in Ulster Catholics and Protestants, reflected the continuity of marked sectarian tension. Liverpool arguably, at least in England, was the city most marked by an Irish influence and no one today visiting Merseyside could hope to understand the unique personality of the place without making allowance for the prolific migration from Hibernia. The City's Catholic Cathedral, known in the Scouse (Liverpudlian) vernacular as "Paddy's wig wam" because of its unique architectural design is a built environmental marker of distinctiveness.

In recent years, historians have progressed beyond these urban concentrations to looking at the Irish in rural areas where the ethnic imprint was light or to focus upon sub-groups which challenged the proletarian Catholic stereotype; middle-class professionals, members of a metropolitan cultural elite and Episcopalians, Presbyterians and members of smaller Protestant sects. Here as elsewhere the reaction of the host society to the migrant from Ireland was conditioned by a range of factors, from social class, religion, gender, language, political allegiance, to the period of arrival.

In addressing the key issue of how Irish migrants on their part adjusted to Britain during the course of this long timeframe, we can think in terms of a broad spectrum stretching from virtually complete segregation through to virtually complete integration with significant space for "modulation" between these polarities. At the risk of over-simplification, the broad picture which emerges from a growing

body of scholarship emphasises the long term limitations of integration. Few migrants remained entirely segregated from the host society, even at the height of the Famine influx in the 1840s. However, later Irish migrants and second and third generation descendants still failed to simply melt away within the host community. Ethnic identity, though endlessly variable in its manifestations did not, by and large, just fade away. As important as structural factors within the host society were in determining these outcomes, the social networks used by individual migrants exercising agency are clearer to us today than was the case a generation ago. Increasingly nuanced understanding of these family, community and organisational networks and the constant renegotiation of contingent Irish identities inevitably raises issues concerning the influence of the migrants from Ireland in Britain upon relations between Britain and Ireland.

Interestingly, within a huge body of literature dealing with relations between Britain and Ireland significantly more attention has been directed towards the role of the British Diaspora in Ireland than to the Irish Diaspora in Britain. Irish settlers may never have created an autonomous community there but earlier tendencies to see their political involvement as largely indicative of fragmentation and isolation has been revised so as to allow for more telling participation in shaping working class political culture

in the long nineteenth century. The Irish Diaspora in Britain compared to that in North America was never seen to be as potentially potent a bulwark to nationalist ambitions at home and by the outbreak of the First World War the era of maximum ethnic political influence had passed. There was always a committed but small minority of settlers who supported Fenianism but violent republicanism's impact in Britain

"Liverpool arguably [...] was the city most marked by an Irish influence and no one today visiting Merseyside could hope to understand the unique personality of the place without making allowance for the prolific migration from Hibernia."

subsided after the 1920s IRA campaign. We still tend to forget about Irish Protestants whose Unionist leanings in part took popular expression through Orangeism, particularly in north-west England and southern Scotland. Opposition during the Home Rule era was channelled at the polls towards the Conservative and Unionist Party but as a lobby they carried

even less clout than Irish nationalists could exercise upon the Liberals.

Inevitably post-Partition relations between Britain and Independent Ireland were regularly preoccupied with the issue of Northern Ireland, the six Ulster counties which remained in the United Kingdom following the Government of Ireland Act in 1920. Little, if any, consideration has been given to migrants to Britain from Northern Ireland since 1920. Protestants have been assumed to have generally integrated easily whilst Catholics have been simply lumped in as part of an all-Ireland community, many merely assuming no sense of a separate Northern Ireland identity. The most recent "troubles" (1969-98) particularly through its manifestation in Britain left significant psychological scars for migrants from Ireland, as well as those inflicted on the victims of conflict in Northern Ireland.

The Queen's visit to the Republic of Ireland last year and current debates about Scottish independence serve to adjust the political landscape and perhaps challenge fixed identities. We might hope that in the future members of the Irish Diaspora in Britain and the British Diaspora in Ireland may "modulate" more freely and feel "at home" in the neighbouring island with ease.



Celtic FC. Glasgow is distinctive on mainland Britain in mirroring the tension between Catholic and Protestant sympathies otherwise encountered in Ireland. Here from Celtic Park, where the rivalry against Glasgow Rangers evokes a long historical-cultural pedigree.

# The Republic of Ireland and the British Crown

By Mary Kenny

In every society and at all times there is a notion of “political correctness” – that is, a kind of civic ideal of virtue to which we are encouraged to aspire. The prevailing “political correctness” in the Ireland of my childhood, in the 1950s, was concerned with a certain ideal of “upright republicanism”.



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Ireland had only been declared a Republic in 1948, and that, itself, was controversial, and not supported by all political parties: the situation was complicated by the partition of Ireland which had effectively taken place in 1921-22, with the six counties of Northern Ireland remaining British (and predominantly Protestant) and the majority 26 counties in the rest of the island being an independent Irish state (and predominantly Roman Catholic). Until 1948, however, Eire, the Irish state, retained a tenuous link with the British Commonwealth and thus the British Crown. At Easter 1949, after a bill had been put through parliament, Eire became a full Republic.

The republican ideal had a certain tradition in Irish history, and in culture, yet Irish republicanism mostly meant “opposition to the Crown”, and “anti-British” sentiment rather than the intellectual and political republicanism of France or Garibaldi’s Italy. Popular patriotic ballads lauded Irishmen who had died in rebellion against “the Crown”, such as the young volunteer Kevin Barry, who was executed in 1920 after a British court-martial. A rousing verse in the ballad of Kevin Barry goes: “Another martyr for old Ireland: Another murder for the Crown!” “The Crown” was a symbol of Ireland’s traditional oppression by England. British military troops operating on Irish soil were always disparagingly called “The Crown Forces”.

So this Irish Republicanism which was so much a part of our national values, meant, essentially being against “the (British) Crown”, and being against *fawning* towards any form of nobility, aristocracy or monarchy. The original aspirational declaration of the Irish Republic had promised that “all the children of the nation should be treated equally”, a notion that should eliminate social difference. There is an especially contemptuous word in the Irish language and used also in Hiberno-

English, for one who fawns: *shoneen*. (The orthodox Anglophone equivalent would be “lickspittle”.)

Republican virtue meant not fawning before monarchs or their representatives. It meant – and it is not a dishonourable concept – being proud and independent and self-reliant: one of the founding fathers of Irish independence, Patrick Pearse, often praised what he called “manliness”, which sounds to us, now, an archaic echo of the period of the First World War. But it had some resonance, and perhaps some usefulness for a poor nation seeking its own sovereignty. Republican virtue carried a degree of Spartan austerity – I remember being taught that while Britain had a newly-launched National Health Service (in 1948), Ireland was a poor country and such advantages were beyond our budgetary reach. But better to be poor and proud than parasitical.

Some observers have found it puzzling that while Irish Republicanism rejected notions of social deference, nevertheless enormous deference and respect were paid to the Catholic Church in Ireland at this time. The simplest explanation lies in the suggestion, made by more than one historian, that the clergy became “the native nobility” after the fall and exile of the Irish chieftains several centuries earlier. The village priest became the “head man” in the community, and since he sprang from the ordinary people, his position was dynastic, and he was bound, at least officially, by celibacy. In the 1950s, the Catholic Church also provided some of the ceremonial and pageantry that was lacking in Ireland after the abrupt termination of the British presence. Nature abhors a vacuum!

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When Queen Elizabeth II acceded to the



St. Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, the episcopal seat of the Roman Catholic archbishops.

throne of the United Kingdom in February 1952, it was reported in the Irish media – newspapers and radio were the main media at the time – but with restraint and austerity. There is always a sense of respect for the dead in Irish culture, so the death of her father King George VI was treated with dignity. But the coronation of Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey, the following year, in 1953, received minimalist coverage – as if to say that we mustn’t be *shoneens* when it came to monarchical display.

I was 9 in 1953, and staying with my aunt and uncle in Sandymount, a pleasant suburb of South Dublin (the poet W.B. Yeats had lived there, and the seafront also features in Joyce’s *Ulysses*). Sandymount, then regarded as a village, had a harmonious Catholic-Protestant mixture, although in certain areas, Catholics and Protestants kept to their own spheres – schools, dances, and sporting occasions, and to some extent even jobs.

And one evening, during that summer of 1953, my aunt and uncle, looking very conspiratorial, consigned me to a friend’s house, so they could go off to some secret destination. Some time later, my aunt confided to me where they had been, after she had extracted from me a promise that I would not disclose this to *anyone*. My uncle was a senior Civil Servant at Customs & Excise, and it could be harmful for his career if this were made known. It was then revealed to me that my relations had been taken by kindly Protestant neighbours to watch the film of the Queen’s Coronation. It had been shown in a Protestant church hall in Sandymount in a private viewing: it could not be shown in public cinemas because extreme Republicans had threatened to bomb any cinema which did so.

Many decades later, when researching my book *Crown and Shamrock: Love and Hate between Ireland and the British Monarchy* I discovered that a similar scenario had been enacted, in 1953, all over Dublin and other parts of the Irish countryside. Irish Protestants – who had a historic allegiance to the British Crown – were allowed a dispensation to show the Coronation film privately and discreetly. Many of them brought along Catholic friends, and the secrecy of the event probably added to the thrill. (Television was not yet available throughout most of Ireland.) The Coronation film itself was not particularly distinguished – it was just a news film, with some rather treacly commentary. But it was a glimpse of something splendid – a pageant which went back to William the Conqueror in 1066, and even at this distance I could understand why my aunt, in particular, was thrilled by it.



# The Republic of Ireland and the British Crown (cont.)

By Mary Kenny

Children pick up attitudes very shrewdly and I understood that we were not supposed to be interested in British royalty officially (foreign royalty might have certain dispensations: the Irish patriot Arthur Griffith had approved of the Norwegian monarchy in 1905 because it was elected). But we might be interested in it *secretly*. Glamorous pictures of Queen Elizabeth wearing ermine and a sparkling diadem crown were often smuggled to Dublin from friends in Northern Ireland, and there was an avid popular interest, notably among women, in the social activities of the royal family.

Gossip about Princess Margaret, the Queen's controversial sister, was common, while official culture kept its distance and sought to maintain republican uprightness. British-Irish relations were correct but cool enough during the 1950s anyway: the IRA (the guerrilla Irish Republic Army) were active in attacking the Border with Northern Ireland, and there was still some resentment, in Britain, that Eire had remained neutral during the Second World War.

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But the 1960s brought some sense of *détente*: there was more dialogue between Dublin and Belfast, with two modernising prime ministers, Sean Lemass, in Dublin, and Terence O'Neill in Belfast, meeting together. Princess Margaret came to visit the Irish Republic in 1965, the first direct member of the British Royal Family since 1922. Her husband, Lord Snowdon, had Irish connections and at Birr, County Offaly, in the midlands. Although there were some protests from extreme republicans, Margaret and her husband were met with enormous warmth from crowds of ordinary people.

It was a sign that attitudes were changing. British-Irish relations were also improving gradually, as politicians, diplomats and civil servants began to work together on Britain and Ireland's entry into what was then the Common Market. General de Gaulle was strongly opposed to Britain's entry: but nevertheless, in 1973, Britain, Ireland and Denmark acceded at the same time.

Then came, all through the 1970s and 1980s, the mournful events known as "The Troubles", when Northern Ireland exploded, first in peaceful civil rights demonstrations – Catholics had suffered disadvantages in Northern Ireland – and then with violence. Queen Elizabeth visited Belfast in 1977, and had one of the worst receptions of her reign: she

showed composure as missiles were hurled at her and her effigy was hung in public.

Two years later, in 1979, her husband's uncle, Lord Mountbatten, was killed by the IRA when holidaying off the west coast of Ireland. These were terrible events – and there were many terrible events, it must be said, on all sides. Yet Mountbatten's murder was widely, even passionately, condemned by the majority of Irish people.

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Cultures change, and attitudes to royalty became, in Britain itself, much less deferential from the 1980s onwards. With the advent of Princess Diana, the "royals" were increasingly presented as part of the repertory of "celebrities", rather than in the sometimes over-respectful manner of previous times. In Ireland, interest in British royalty was now open, and no longer considered a breach of "republican virtue". But suggestions that the Queen might visit the Irish Republic – it was one of the few countries in the world she had never visited – were met with resistance, concern, anxiety and sometimes hostility.

"[M]y relations had been taken by kindly Protestant neighbours to watch the film of the Queen's Coronation... It could not be shown in public cinemas because extreme Republicans had threatened to bomb any cinema which did so."

However, the onward march of better Anglo-Irish relations made it inevitable that this official visit must, sometime, take place. The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 marked one important political step forward, the

Belfast Peace Agreement of 1994 another. Prince Charles paid a cordial but low-profile visit to Dublin in 1995, which was to pave the way. Much work was done behind the scenes before the date was finally fixed: May 2011, one hundred years since a British monarch had last landed at Dublin – her grandfather, George V.

The Queen's visit was approached with much apprehension, generating an enormous amount of public correspondence in the Irish newspapers. Although the aloof attitudes of previous times had dissolved, there remained a residue of anxiety over the question of "fawning". Wouldn't it be terrible if any of our politicians were seen to "fawn"! And wouldn't it be mortifying if women started to curtsy to the Queen! (Only subject curtsy so it didn't apply.) A psychologist analysing this "fear of fawning" might even wonder if it suggested a sub-conscious attraction, which must be repressed, for royalty.



The visit had to be orchestrated with the maximum security, something which was rather regrettable, since many ordinary people wanted to see Elizabeth up close. And yet, it was a charming four days and as the Queen laid flowers before the monuments of Irish patriots – who had struggled against "the Crown" – it felt as though a great moment of reconciliation had taken place. There were many healing events during the visit, (and a true pleasure for Elizabeth also in seeing some fine Irish racehorses). The Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Enda Kenny said of Queen Elizabeth's visit: "She closed the circle of history."

"Friends and Equals" – thus, newspaper headlines summing up the event, referred to Ireland's relationship now with Britain. Whether a small country of under 5 million people can be truly "equal" with a former imperial power of more than 60 million is debatable. But there is a kind of equality in recognising that one can practice "republican virtue" without being hostile to a neighbouring monarchy: and one can practice royal grace without disparaging a neighbour's republicanism.

**Royal supremacy.** King George V, the last British monarch to visit Ireland (on his accession tour in 1911) prior to Elizabeth II's visit in 2011. The relationship between Britain and Ireland, and between the monarchy and republicanism, had come a long way in the full century in between.

# Anglo-Irish relations, elite Conservative rhetoric and citizenship identities

By Andrew Scott Crines

Anglo-Irish relations have historically been characterised as discordant. War, peace, dispute, negotiation - each contribute towards the description of a contentious historical relationship, polarised by advocates of either a united Ireland or integrated Union with the United Kingdom. As is to be expected, this adversarial relationship has been reflected in the rhetoric of political leaders on both sides of the Irish Sea.



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Yet, in more recent years, as diplomatic relations have improved through the process of negotiation in Northern Ireland, elite rhetoric has transformed in concordance with this reformed relationship. The Downing Street Declaration and the Good Friday Agreement emerged as important milestones in laying the foundations for an alignment of rhetoric between the political elites, underscoring closer ties between the two. Such an alignment is no easy matter to conduct. The relationship between Britain and Ireland has been a matter of some delicacy for political elites given the construction of national identity on both sides. As a political entity, "British" has been challenged by the post-1997 devolution settlements to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These are reflective of the onset of ethnic and civic nationalisms in the constituent nations of the United Kingdom, which includes the *de facto* emergence of the "English question": how should England itself be represented within the Union? Given the complexities facing British political elites within its own conception of nationhood, the way elite rhetoric is framed has garnered enhanced salience.

Such salience derives from the capacity of elite rhetoric to unite or divide on the basis of different conceptions of national identity. As an example, overtly English-focused rhetoric has the potential to generate a counter reaction amongst those of another identity. Yet, it must be remembered that *Englishness* itself is inadequate as a complete description of identity, given sub-divisions within the English nation exist between those who identify more with either a Yorkshire, Lancashire, or Cornish cultural construction. As such, the rhetoric utilised and deployed by political elites increasingly tends to reflect the subversion of a singular

definition of *British identity* by acknowledging the importance of counter identities, ethnic and constructed.

The ongoing economic crisis can serve to illustrate the models of Anglo-Irish rhetoric currently deployed in response to such dilemmas of identity.. This is an appropriate example as it illustrates the use of rhetoric by leading Westminster and Irish political elites upon an issue impacting both.

The fiscal crisis facing the Irish economy became a concern for David Cameron because of the potential impact upon the financial economy in Britain, rooted in the City of London. Faced with immediate impact upon this sector of the British economy, Cameron sought to highlight close relations between the two countries to legitimise intervention. He remarked "there is a great connection between Britain and Ireland - and that's why it's right we should stand ready to help the Irish economy." By drawing upon the immediate economic concerns, Cameron argued the "great connection" between Britain and Ireland would draw the two civic states together. The connection assumes a post-peace process closeness based upon mutual cooperation between London and Dublin towards finding a resolution to terrorism, disregarding the less than harmonious relationship prior to the process. Cameron's rhetoric enabled him to portray Britain as a saviour of the Irish economy, whilst safeguarding the City of London from what he saw as economic inclemency.

In contrast, the Irish Prime Minister Brian Cowen found himself in the role of an apologist. Through his political rhetoric, Cowen chose to accept a degree of responsibility through demonstrating his displeasure at the economic situation. "No one is more sorry about this situation than I am", he said. He emphasised this position saying "I apologise unconditionally about the situation this country finds itself in.

Don't think I'm equivocating in any way". Such rhetoric demonstrates a degree of subservience to those seeking to blame him for the economic situation whilst simultaneously buying into the narrative evolving through Cameron's rhetoric vis-à-vis Ireland in need of a British rescue. Such a position enabled Cameron and the Conservative Chancellor, George Osborne to portray Cowen as an embodiment of Irish economic impuissance.

Britain subsequently entered bilateral negotiations to provide a bailout to the Irish economy. Osborne's rhetoric argued "Ireland is a friend in need, and we are here to help". This rhetoric implies a friendship connection, yet for the British journal *the New Statesman*, UK financial exposure to the Irish debt is more likely to provide a pragmatic rationale for the demonstration of altruism. Indeed, such an analysis connects Anglo-Irish relations entirely to economic kinship and a shared economic model. Furthermore Osborne had argued previously that Ireland was a "shining example of the art of the possible in long-term economic policy-making". In order to fully appreciate this position, the Conservative economic ideology of laissez-faire individualism implies economic austerity similar to that of the Irish governing party Fianna Fáil's earlier approach. Such a comparison, therefore, is unsurprising.

To conclude, the use of rhetoric by both the UK Prime Minister and Chancellor was designed to highlight a long standing connection between Britain and Ireland, despite the historical divergences. Meanwhile, Cameron's use of rhetoric was also fine-tuned to safeguard the financial interests of the City of London and anchor Ireland to shared problems which require a common resolution. The differences of national identity, the complexities facing the British state concept, and the emergence of the financial crisis all pose significant challenges to political elites. In order to fully engage with contemporary economic controversies, Cameron adopted unifying rhetoric which subverts historical disharmony by building upon post-peace process agreements. This rhetoric, utilised to generate economic stability, tends towards ensuring conditions suitable to laissez-faire individualism between the two states, leading to increasing economic dependence of the Irish economy upon the British political elite. This, it could be argued, will have significant consequences for issues of national identities over the coming years, certainly once the economic crisis fades into history.



**Framing the Anglo-Irish relationship.** "Cameron's rhetoric enabled him to portray Britain as a saviour of the Irish economy, whilst safeguarding the City of London from what he saw as economic inclemency." Crown copyright / the Cabinet Office



# Why so little socialism on the Emerald Isle?

By Dag Einar Thorsen and Øivind Bratberg

"There is no man or movement in modern Irish history that can be intelligibly discussed apart from the Catholic Church in Ireland", wrote Emmet Larkin in the journal *Church History* in 1967. The title of his article was "Socialism and Catholicism in Ireland", two phenomena which, he contended, could hardly be compared since their position in Ireland was fundamentally unequal.



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However, the hegemonic position of Catholicism in the Republic of Ireland cannot in itself explain the moderate influence of socialism. Other predominately Catholic countries from Portugal to Belgium have for instance fostered a very influential socialist labour movement. We must therefore look towards other, contextual causes if we are to find a satisfactory answer to why socialism never took off in Ireland.

Such a broader look reveals that political life of the *Poblacht na hÉireann* is anything but conventional. Far from it, the legacies of Catholicism and Irish Nationalism contribute to a peculiar development of political parties which does not seem to follow a traditional Western European, or even a British pattern. Add to this the strange combination of Westminster-style institutions and a uniquely different electoral system based on the Single Transferable Vote (STV), and Ireland appears as something of a unique case.

Traditionally, the two dominant political parties have been the centre-right *Fine Gael* (FG), which roughly translates into "The Irish Family", and the more clearly (but not always consistently) right-wing party *Fianna Fáil – An Páirtí Poblachtánach* (FF), or "Warriors for Ireland – The Republican Party". Originally, the two parties emerged from a split within the original pro-independence movement. FG supported the development of an Irish Free State with some ties to the United Kingdom, whereas FF took up the view that Ireland instead should forge ahead towards complete sovereignty – which it did in 1937.

During the Republic of Ireland's first 70 years, FF consistently polled well ahead of all other parties. FG has therefore needed the support of Labour and other minor parties in order to unseat FF governments, and have indeed

done so on several occasions. This pattern was changed for five years in 1992, with the establishment of a rather peculiar coalition government made up of Labour and FF, who basically agreed to implement the centrist policies of FG, while doing their best to hold FG out of government. Around the turn of the century, however, FF moved towards ever more consistently right-wing economic policies, and governed until last year together with the Green Party and the Progressive Democrats, a libertarian party.

The Credit Crunch after 2008 severely damaged the reputation of FF, whose right-wing economic policies were widely seen as the main reason why Ireland was hit particularly hard by the global economic downturn. And after clinging on the reins of government for most of 2009 and 2010, the scene was set for early elections and a decisive victory for Labour and FG, who inherited a virtually bankrupt state.

Even last year's election showed that a significant number of Irish voters opted for FG rather than Labour, which went to the polls as the party of significant change after years of mismanagement. This inherent conservatism of the electorate is probably one of the most persistent features of Irish politics.

The limited success of Labour is a marked feature of the Irish exceptionalism. Political sociologists can point to the freezing of political cleavages at the formative period of the 1920s, which has enabled the two parties to remain predominant. To this structural explanation, popular leaders and clever political craft must be added. Certainly, FF has nurtured the legacy as guardian of the Irish nation with overwhelming success, combining this with a self-perception as the party of the common man (although often implementing economic policies not clearly in the interest of large swathes of the electorate).

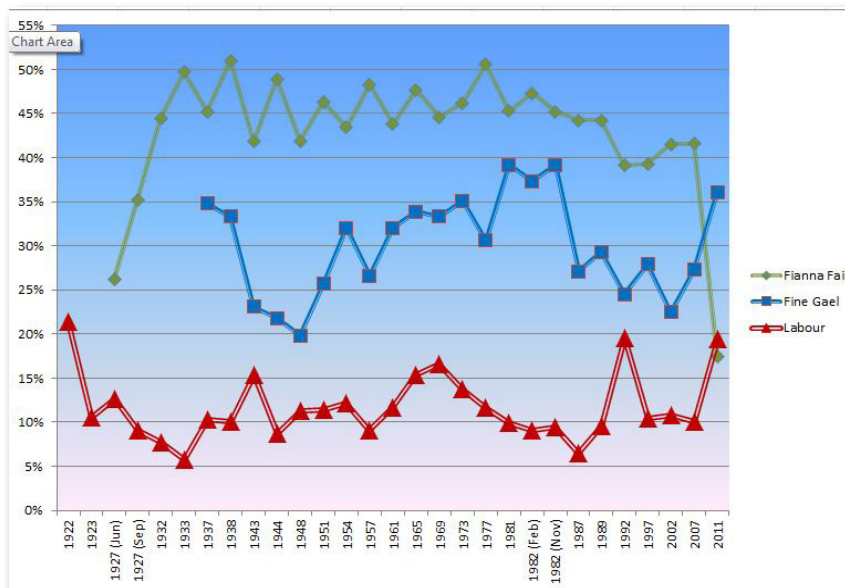
Another, and perhaps the most important explanation is that Labour in Ireland has never made a serious attempt to penetrate the rural areas, outside its traditional electorate of industrial workers in Dublin and the southern towns. A socialist party which does not succeed in gathering the support of the wider electorate will inevitably fail, no matter how strong a case could be made for the idea that a country needs change.

According to Larkin, the Catholic Church permeated almost every aspect of political and social life and thought in Ireland. The church could therefore not be the subject of analysis on the same level as the labour movement – a movement that has never, until quite recently, succeeded in becoming a significant force in Irish political life.

Larkin's study is somewhat dated from the perspective of 2012. One of his key observations, however, remains relevant, namely that the Catholic Church had developed a conservative – if not reactionary – position towards the labour movement early on, which it had held on to ever since.

In this, the Catholic Church in Ireland built its policies towards the emerging Labour Party and trade union movement on Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum* (On New Things) from 1891, which dismissed the whole idea of a potential conflict between workers and capitalists out of hand. This message has in all essence been reiterated by several popes including both the present and the penultimate.

Labour and the trade unions were consequently seen as a threat to the continued cohesion of existing institutions by the clergy and hierarchy of the Irish church, and ultimately as a threat to social harmony. Socialism was seen as a piece of misguided political analysis – if not as a form of potential heresy – to be abhorred and denounced at every opportunity, and with all means necessary.



Electoral performance of the three largest political parties in the Irish Free State (1922-1933) and the Republic of Ireland (1937-2011).

# Unhappy in their own way: comparing UK and Irish experiences of the global financial crisis

By Dermot Hodson

"Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way". These celebrated lines by Leo Tolstoy come to mind when comparing UK and Irish experiences of the global financial crisis. Although both countries were hard hit by the financial turmoil of 2007-2008 and although both are typically classified as so-called liberal market economies, the crisis played out differently on the two sides of the Irish Sea. This article discusses some of the key differences in this respect from a comparative political economy perspective.



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Cheap credit contributed in no small measure to the economic boom in the UK and Ireland prior to the global financial crisis. Between 1994 and 2007 real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by an average annual rate of 3.3% in the UK, the country's longest period of uninterrupted growth on record. Economic conditions in Ireland were more buoyant still, with real GDP growing by an average annual rate of 6.2% between 1987 and 2007. Having climbed higher during this period, Ireland fell further when the financial crisis struck. Whereas real GDP contracted by 4.4% in the UK in 2009, the corresponding figure for Ireland was an eye-watering 7.0%.

The manner in which Ireland's housing bubble burst is one reason why the real effects of the global financial crisis were more severe in this country than in the UK. The cost of housing surged in both cases in the 1990s and 2000s, with residential property prices rising by 232.8% in the UK and by 375.9% in Ireland between the final quarters of 1995 and 2007, according to data compiled by the Bank for International Settlements. The house price correction, when it came however, was much more severe in Ireland than the UK. Whereas the former saw residential property prices fall by 25.7% between the final quarters of 2007 and 2010, the latter saw a nationwide fall of just 4.9%.

Whether Ireland's membership of the euro area magnified this boom and bust is an important question for political economists. The Bank of England could have gone further in hindsight, but a series of interest rate increases between November 2006 and January 2007 took some of the heat out of the UK housing market before the global financial crisis struck. The Central Bank of Ireland, in contrast, found itself without a

dedicated instrument of monetary policy after the launch of the single currency in 1999. If euro area monetary policy was consequently too loose for Ireland in the run-up to the financial crisis, then it was arguably too tight in the immediate aftermath. The Bank of England started cutting short-term interest rates in December 2007, but the European Central Bank waited another year before doing likewise.

The European Central Bank was also comparatively slow to embrace unconventional monetary policies at this time. In March 2009, the Bank of England introduced the so-called Asset Purchase Facility, which it used to purchase £200 billion in private sector assets and government bonds in an effort to ease credit conditions and counteract the risks of deflation. The ECB followed suit in June 2009 with the more modest Covered Bond Scheme, which was used to purchase €60 billion in covered bonds, long-term debt securities backed by mortgages or public sector loans. This was followed in June 2010 by the more ambitious Securities Markets Programme, which allowed the ECB to purchase €275 billion in public as well as private debt securities as of January 2012. The slow speed at which these policies were introduced proved costly for Ireland, which saw the consumer price index contract by 1.7% in 2009 and by 1.6% in 2010.

To blame Ireland's economic woes on Frankfurt, however, would be to ignore the opportunities that Irish authorities had to rein in the country's runaway financial sector. A high-level report prepared by Peter Nyberg, a former official at the International Monetary Fund, offered a damning assessment of financial supervision in Ireland in the run up to the financial crisis. The Central Bank of Ireland, the report concludes, singularly failed to sound the alarm over the property boom in its regular reports on financial stability. Ireland's Financial Regulator, it is similarly suggested, stood by as greater competition in the banking sector produced a progressive reduction in credit standards.

Much the same story could be told about the shortcomings of the Bank of England and the UK Financial Services Authority, but the failure of financial supervision in Ireland proved altogether more costly for two reasons. Firstly, Irish banks took greater risks than their UK counterparts, with Anglo-Irish Bank and the Irish Nationwide Building Society developing a perilous business model based on the provision of loans to large property developers on the basis of loosely defined credit criteria. Secondly, lax financial supervision left the Irish government ill informed when it decided in September 2008 to guarantee all of the deposits and most of the liabilities of the country's banks.

Had Irish authorities been fully aware at this time about the catastrophic state of the country's banking sector, the Nyberg Report suggests, they would almost certainly have chosen an alternative course of action. One such possibility was the UK approach, which involved the full nationalisation of Northern Rock and the mortgage-arm of Bradford and Bingley in 2008 and the part nationalisation of the Royal Bank of Scotland and Lloyds Banking Group in 2009. This approach certainly cost the UK taxpayer dearly – the country's general government debt to GDP ratio rose from 44% in 2007 to 88% in 2012 – but the effect on public finances was nowhere near as dramatic as in Ireland, which saw its debt ratio rise from 24.9% to 117.5% over the same period.

The fiscal hangover from the financial crisis has paved the way for a period of austerity in both countries. The two sides pursued a similar strategy at first, with the Irish government committing in December 2009 to reduce government borrowing below 3% of GDP by 2014 and the UK government agreeing in June 2010 to eliminate the UK's structural deficit within a similar timeframe. Neither country proved able to stick to these targets, but Ireland's slippage, once again, had more dramatic consequences.

Having seen its budget deficit for 2010 swell to 31.3% of GDP as the full costs of guaranteeing Anglo Irish Bank and Irish Nationwide Building Society became apparent, Ireland had little choice but to seek external assistance. In November 2010, the Irish government secured €62.7 billion in financing from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund alongside €4.8 billion in bilateral loans from Denmark, Sweden and the UK. In return, the Irish government agreed to a further round of emergency tax rises and swingeing expenditure cuts with a view to eliminating its excessive deficit by 2015.



**Monetary authority.** Bank of England, Threadneedle Street, London.  
Photograph: Adrian Pingstone.



# Unhappy in their own way (cont.)

By Dermot Hodson

That the UK agreed to contribute an initial €3.8 billion to Ireland's rescue package could be viewed as a surprising show of solidarity towards its nearest neighbour at a time when George Osborne has been at pains to avoid similar commitments vis-à-vis other euro area members. It also undoubtedly reflected a large measure of self-interest, with Irish debtors owing an estimated €104.5 billion to UK banks and Ireland ranking as the UK's fifth most important export market. Osborne's predecessor, Alistair Darling, can certainly testify to the strength of financial linkages between the two countries, with Ireland's bank guarantee in September 2010 causing significant and destabilising financial flows from the UK.

With regard to fiscal austerity measures in the UK, George Osborne announced in November 2011 that there was next to no chance that it would eliminate its structural deficit by 2015 as planned. This announcement was made in spite of a further round of austerity measures, including an increase in the number of public sector job losses from 400,000 to 710,000 by 2017 and an acceleration of plans to raise the state pension age from 65 to 68, reflecting the heavy toll taken on public finances by the UK's deteriorating economic outlook. Having gambled on a rapid return to economic growth, the government saw the UK's real GDP growth forecast cut from 1.7% to 0.7% for 2011 and from 2.1% to 0.6% for 2012, with worse news still expected from subsequent revisions.

Whether Ireland could have avoided its sovereign debt crisis by being outside the euro area is, once again, an important question for political economists. The case for the prosecution here emphasizes Ireland's inability to rely on changes in the nominal exchange rate as a safety valve against a sovereign debt crisis. Sterling's nominal effective exchange rate, it should be recalled, depreciated by 26% between August 2007 and March 2009. The case for the defence emphasizes the inflationary consequences of dramatic exchange rate swings, with the annual rate of change in consumer prices reaching 4.3% in the UK in 2011, having averaged just 2% over the period 1992-2007.

Those who lament the loss of nominal exchange rate flexibility in Ireland ignore the operation of other adjustment mechanisms in the face of asymmetric shocks. A key mechanism in this respect, the theory of optimum currency area predicts, is labour mobility. Having seen significant net inward migration during the good times, Ireland has rapidly returned to its traditional position of being a country of net outward migration. Of the 76,400 people who emigrated from Ireland between April 2010 and April 2011, approximately 47%

"[T]he global financial crisis has played out quite differently in the UK and Ireland, even though both countries are typically classified as liberal market economies... Ireland [has seen] a deeper recession and a more severe fiscal crisis than the UK.

Ireland's membership of the euro area may have amplified these differences but a failure of financial supervision by Irish authorities was a key factor behind both the country's property bubble and the government's ill-fated bank guarantee."

were non-nationals according to Ireland's Central Statistical Office. This suggested that many of the people who came to Ireland in search of work during the boom years are returning to their home countries.

Relative wage and price adjustment is a more important adjustment mechanism still in the face of asymmetric shocks, according to the theory of optimum currency areas. Having seen its relative unit labour costs rise in the first half of the 2000s, Ireland subsequently experienced a reversal of this trend. Between 2006 and 2010 Irish unit wage costs fell by 16.0% against other euro area members and by 11.4% against its most important trading partners worldwide, helping to buoy demand for Irish exports at a time when domestic demand was sinking fast. This strategy seem to pay off, with Ireland's real GDP forecast to grow by 1.1% in both 2011 and 2012, although the worsening outlook for the euro area and world economies means that such forecasts will almost inevitably be revised downwards in due course.

Ireland's system of social partnership has always rested uneasily with its status as a liberal market economy. A surprising development in this context is the fact that the global financial crisis has not produced a national agreement between workers, business and the government of the kind that helped to counteract Ireland's economic crisis in 1987 and underpin its remarkable economic performance thereafter. Instead, discussions on a new programme of social partnership, known as 'Towards 2016', broke down in 2008, leading the government to conclude a deal on pay and pension reform with public sector workers alone as part of the so-called Croke Park agreement in June 2010.

The UK's more competitive approach to wage determination leaves little place for tripartism but the country has periodically

resorted to statutory public sector pay freezes during periods of economic turmoil. A succession of balance of payments crises in the 1960s, for example, saw the introduction of such measures by Conservative and Labour governments alike. The global financial crisis has witnessed the return of this standard operating procedure. In June 2010, Chancellor George Osborne announced a two-year pay freeze for public sector workers earning more than £21,000 per annum. This was followed in November 2011 by the announcement that public sector pay rises would average no more than 1% for a further two years after the original pay freeze comes to an end.

In conclusion, the global financial crisis has played out quite differently in the UK and Ireland, even though these countries are typically classified as liberal market economies. Worldwide liquidity and credit shortages after the turbulent events of August 2007 brought a sudden end to a prolonged period of economic boom in both countries, with Ireland experiencing a deeper recession and a more severe fiscal crisis than the UK. Ireland's membership of the euro area may have amplified these differences but a failure of financial supervision by Irish authorities was a key factor behind both the country's property bubble and the government's ill-fated bank guarantee.

Policy responses to the crisis in the two countries eventually settled on the same combination of fiscal austerity and unconventional monetary policies, but the adjustment process differed in other key respects with the UK experiencing a sharp depreciation of sterling, while Ireland relied on a combination of labour mobility and relative price and wage adjustment. Ireland's strategy helped to ensure a return to economic growth in 2011 but it currently faces the same uncertain outlook as the UK with fiscal austerity at home and the bleak prospects for the euro area and world economies continuing to bite.

Viewed through a wide-angle lens, Ireland and the UK's contrasting experiences of the crisis are reflective of the fact that the global financial crisis cannot easily be reduced to inherent contradictions in conventional models of capitalism. In fact, the performance of liberal market economies has varied considerably in the wake of the crisis, with countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand emerging relatively unscathed while the United States has taken a direct hit. Political economists will thus have their work cut out in the years ahead to understand how these varieties of liberalism emerged in the 1990s and 2000s and how they coped with the ongoing effects of the global financial crisis in the 2010s.

# "Eater and eaten": W.B. Yeats, Ireland and England

By Charles I. Armstrong

The beginning of the 1920s saw a particularly tense and formative period for the relations between Ireland and England. The end of 1921 had seen the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty, an agreement that marked the transformation rather than the cessation of the violent conflict that had racked Ireland since the Easter Rising of 1916.

The treaty established the existence of the Irish Free State, but, as a result of disagreement concerning its including an oath of allegiance to King George V, many Irish nationalists found the terms unacceptable. The Irish war of independence thus segued into Civil war, with considerable bloodshed and destruction. By January 1923, matters were grave: that month saw the execution of thirty-four imprisoned opponents of the treaty.

At this point, William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) – the Irish poet who had been elected into the Irish Senate the previous year, and whose winning the Nobel Prize in literature would be announced in November 1923 – travelled to London. His declared intention was to propose a modification of the treaty "that might have a great effect and bring peace much nearer." This trip is still shrouded in mystery. Four years later the republican politician Patrick McCartan claimed that Yeats had suggested to the British, with the backing of the Irish president W. T. Cosgrave, that the oath of allegiance should be scrapped. Yeats later denied the details of the story, but refrained from clarifying the specific content of his secret mission.

Although he is sometimes portrayed as an otherworldly figure, this anecdote reveals the canny, entrepreneurial side to Yeats. Not only a member of the first Irish senate, he also founded and was for many years instrumental in the running of the Abbey Theatre, the national theatre of the new nation. Whatever impression one gains from Yeats' neo-romantic leanings or passionate interest in esoteric thought and rituals, the man who so ably dealt with "theatre business, the management of men" (a quote from his poem "The Fascination of What's Difficult") was no idle dreamer. The anecdote also reveals something about



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Yeats's particular position with regard to Anglo-Irish relations. His place in the senate was based on his being considered – along with someone like the whiskey magnate Andrew Jameson – a representative for the Protestants of Ireland, a group that effectively had been displaced from the heart of Irish politics by the Catholic middle classes.

Yeats had however started his career as an admirer of the Catholics and a fervent nationalist. Early on, he had been a dominating force in the Irish literary revival, which sought to unearth a specifically Irish expression and tradition after centuries of foreign rule. Following this bent, the early Yeats explored Irish mythology and also wrote the controversial nationalist play *Kathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), albeit in a complex dialogue with the inspiration he received from his participation in a London-centred offshoot of the Decadent movement, the Rhymers' Club. As he wrote in the 1892 poem "To Ireland in Coming Times," he wished to "accounted be / True brother of a company / That sang, to sweeten Ireland's wrong, / Ballad and story, rann and song". Ironically, some of the conceptual oppositions underlying Yeats's thought at this time – melancholy, spiritual and primitive Ireland being

contrasted with an emotionless, materialist and decadent England – were based upon the Englishman Matthew Arnold's *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867).

By the time Yeats was appointed a senator, though, this early neo-romantic phase had become something of a distant memory. He had become disillusioned with the Irish nationalist Maud Gonne, to whom much of his early love poetry was addressed. He had also lost something of his faith in the Irish theatre, after there was major opposition to J. M. Synge's 1907 premiere of *The Playboy of the Western World* at the Abbey Theatre. Further, he had also come under the wing of the Irish Ascendancy figure Lady Augusta Gregory. Although Gregory assisted and complemented Yeats's focus on Irish identity and mythology, the alliance with her pushed Yeats into a direction that was more conscious of differences of class and religion within Ireland. There is also the matter of Yeats's acceptance of Prime Minister Asquith's offer, in August 1910, of a Civil List Pension of £150 per year. Even if Yeats insisted that he only would

"Early on, he had been a dominating force in the Irish literary revival, which sought to unearth a specifically Irish expression and tradition after centuries of foreign rule."

accept if the pension were not preclude his participation in any future Irish rebellion, this may have subtly steered him towards a position less outspokenly critical of the British Empire. Certainly, Yeats seems to have accepted Home Rule – rather than outright independence for Ireland – as the only realistic alternative to Ireland's current position at this point of his career, which explains why he was shocked when followers of his earlier writings were instrumental in the violent insurrection of the Easter Rising of 1916.

The poem "Easter, 1916" remains not only one of Yeats's most memorable and powerful lyrics, but also one of the central intersections between Irish politics and the arts. A key premise of the poem is that the rising has transformed rebels such as Connolly, Pierce and MacBride into tragic heroes. Whatever trivial roles they played in their prior lives, the tragic events that took place in the centre of Dublin has changed their significance for ever: "All changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born." The phrase "terrible beauty," however, signals towards the poem's ambivalence: the new Irish nation has been founded on a violent use of arms, and as such it cannot be contemplated in tranquility.



Poet and playwright. William Butler Yeats, 1911.

Photograph: George Charles Beresford.



## "Eater and eaten": W.B. Yeats, Ireland and England (cont.)

By Charles I. Armstrong

The speaker of the poem is also in two minds about the rebels: their singleness of purpose is presented as necessary in order to bring about major change, but also as a form of fanaticism: "Too long a sacrifice / Can make a stone of the heart." Finally, the poem also hesitates with regard to Britain. Even if Yeats was disgusted by the British decision to execute almost all of the rebels, he was not sure the rebellion itself was strictly necessary. Britain had, after all, promised the Irish home rule – and even if that promise had been deferred due to the onset of the Great War, he was not convinced it was an empty gesture: "Was it needless death after all? For England may keep faith / For all that is done and said".

Although "Easter, 1916" was relatively rapidly conceived and finished, publication of the poem was a more protracted affair: it took years before the larger public became aware of its existence. The reason for this delay has been subject to much recent scrutiny by Yeats scholars. It has been suggested that he either did not want to alienate his mainstream audience in England by openly embracing too radically nationalist ideas, or more specifically did not want to blot his copybook with British authorities – as he was engaged in complicated negotiations with the latter, at this time, concerning whether the Impressionist paintings of the late Hugh Lane (Lady Gregory's art-collecting nephew) were going to be permanently exhibited in Dublin (at Lane's Municipal Gallery) or in London (at the Courtauld gallery). Certainly, Yeats up to this time is always acutely conscious of the differences between his English and Irish audiences, sometimes tailoring different

publications for the specifics of the two market-places- London provided him with a living, and from 1896 to 1919 his primary residence was in 18 Woburn Buildings, not far from his favoured working space at the British Museum. With the establishment of the Irish Free State, however, there came fitting lodgings for the new senator in Dublin's central Merrion Square. Around this time, Yeats also acquired the highly symbolic home of the tower Thoor Ballylee (located close to Galway) on the west coast of Ireland for his English wife (Georgie Hyde Lees) and growing family.

This process of geographical reorientation did not provide Yeats with a radical simplification of his own affiliations, however. Instead, he soon embraced his Protestant roots in an outspoken manner that alienated large parts of the Irish public. Late in life, Yeats would speak out against the concept "Anglo-Irish," arguing that it was an instrument deployed to deny parts of the Irish population full rights and influence: "The Irish people are as much a unity as the German, French, or English people, though many strands have gone to the making of it". As a senator, however, Yeats's alliances tended to draw upon him precisely the label of Anglo-Irish. Most controversially, he defended the right to divorce by identifying it as a privilege particularly valuable to the Irish Protestants, "one of the great stocks of Europe". He also tended to embrace the heyday of the Ascendancy – the eighteenth century of Burke, Swift and Berkeley – as an Irish golden age, and saw the destruction of the Ascendancy Big Houses (including Lady Gregory's Coole Park) as a sign of cultural decadence.

Yeats's flirtation with fascism and embracing of eugenics in the 1930s has sometimes tended to overshadow more complex ironies in his late views. Another tendency of the final decade of Yeats's life is his repeatedly voicing rather strident attacks on Britain. He attacks British Imperialism in India and writes poems dismissing (what he believes to be) the forged diaries of Roger Casement. By this point, however, he himself has become aware of that his position with regard to English and Irish identity cannot be summarised in any simple way. His 1937 preface to a planned version of his collected words eloquently testifies to the ensuing complexity. Sometimes, he writes, he may have shirked from fully expressing his distaste for Britain: "there are moments when hatred poisons my life and I accuse myself of effeminacy because I have not given it adequate expression. [...] Then I remind myself that though mine is the first English marriage I know of in the direct line, all my family names are English, and that I owe my soul to Shakespeare, to Spenser and to Blake, perhaps to William Morris, and to the English language in which I think, speak, and write, that everything I love has come to me through English; my hatred tortures me with love, my love with hate. I am like the Tibetan monk who dreams at his initiation that he is eaten by a wild beast and learns on waking that he is himself eater and eaten." In the final reckoning, Yeats's ability to uphold this tension – and make it a constructive force underlying much that is valuable in his work – makes him a particularly eloquent and important exemplar of Anglo-Irish relations.



"A terrible beauty is born". Birth of the Irish Republic, oil painting by Walter Paget portraying the bombing of the General Post Office in Dublin, the rebel headquarters during the Easter Rising of 1916. National Museum of Ireland.



# Charles Kennedy addressing British Politics Society seminar

The Rt Hon Charles Kennedy, MP for the Liberal Democratic Party, visited Oslo exclusively to address a BPS seminar on 9 January 2012. The seminar, which was held at the University of Oslo, attracted a substantial audience. It had the title "A Liberal Vision for Britain".

Kennedy used the occasion to reflect upon a series of challenges faced by the Liberal Democrats since entering the coalition government in May 2010. He furthermore paid attention to the issue of Scotland, the seminar itself coinciding with the British government's announcement of plans for a Scottish independence referendum.

Mr Kennedy also discussed the current difficulties between Britain and the EU, highlighted by Prime Minister David Cameron's veto against tighter fiscal coordination among the member states.

Finally, the issue of tuition fees was discussed against the backdrop of the funding and guiding principles of the higher education sector in the years to come.



*Charles Kennedy* was party leader of the Liberal Democrats from 1999 to 2006. He has been a Member of Parliament since 1983 for the Scottish constituency of Ross, Cromarty and Skye (today Ross, Skye and Lochaber). Representing the Social Democratic Party

prior to its 1988 merger with the Liberal Party, Kennedy has retained his parliamentary seat at five subsequent general elections and remains a prominent voice within his party and in the British public on a broad range of political issues.



All photos: Tron Trondal, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo

## Membership 2012

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## Forthcoming edition of British Politics Review

The winter of 2012 has seen much debate around a certain Conservative premiership, namely that of Margaret Thatcher, as *The Iron Lady* has fascinated cinema audiences (and sparked much debate) for its portrayal of Mrs Thatcher.

In the forthcoming issue of *British Politics Review* we direct the attention towards a different prime minister; misunderstood and underestimated

according to his supporters, unable to govern the nation (and his party) according to his critics.

In May, twenty years will have passed since **John Major** secured Conservative victory in the first post-Thatcher elections in Britain. Major's win was unexpected, leading a government on the brink of exhaustion, in the midst of economic turmoil and fighting

against a reinvigorated Labour Party. Yet the Conservatives won, and they did so by a higher popular vote than ever obtained by Mrs Thatcher. From then onwards a lot went wrong. We address the unanswered questions about John Major's premiership and offer a broader analysis of the taciturn PM.

*The spring edition of British Politics Review is due to arrive in February 2012.*