The Unknown Ally: Irish Neutrality during World War II and a Consolidated Model Analysis of its Effects on Anglo-Irish Relations

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The Unknown Ally

Irish Neutrality during World War II and a Consolidated Model Analysis of its Effects on Anglo-Irish Relations

by

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Abstract

There is perhaps no more interesting and complex relationship between states than that of Ireland and the United Kingdom – a matter made all the more complicated by their disagreements during the Second World War. The objective of this thesis was to determine whether Ireland’s policy in the war could accurately be described as neutral and what effects this policy had on Anglo-Irish relations. In order to address these questions, this work studies contemporary government documents, media reporting, and personal correspondence, as well as considering pre-existing scholarship on the matter. The principal conclusion of this work was that Ireland substantially aided the Allied war effort, and that its policies during the conflict did not have any lasting negative implications for the state’s relationship with the United Kingdom.
This thesis is dedicated to the victims of the 4/15 marathon bombings, in hopes that the people of Boston, Belfast, and all cities of the world might one day see the end of politically motivated violence.
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1. Introduction

Mr. Churchill is proud of Britain’s stand after France had fallen and before America entered the war. Could he not find in his heart the generosity to acknowledge that there is a small nation that stood alone not for one year or two, but for several hundred years against aggressions that endured spoliations, famines, massacres in endless succession; that was clubbed many times into insensibility, but that each time on returning consciousness took up the fight anew; a small nation that could never be got to accept defeat and has never surrendered her soul?

- Taoiseach Eamon de Valera, addressing Ireland at the cessation of hostilities of the Second World War¹

Among modern states, the relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom stands out as one of the most interesting and complex. With an often violent shared history that reaches back into distant centuries, hope for a positive and equitable relationship often seemed impossibly beyond reach. Ireland’s decision to adopt a policy of neutrality during the Second World War did not, at first glance, seem to ameliorate this situation. Britain and its allies sought formal support in the conflict, but Ireland refused. This stance on the war naturally caused controversy at the time, as well as in retrospective scholarship and popular history alike. Nevertheless, a close examination of the state’s actions during the war brings into question how best to characterize the policy. With its clandestine activities and diplomatic maneuvering, Ireland may not have been truly neutral.

Besides being an interesting and often-forgotten aspect of World War II history, this question of Irish neutrality bears important implications for Ireland’s relationship

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¹ Eamon de Valera, “Taoiseach’s Broadcast to the Nation,” University Archives, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.
with the United Kingdom. Relations between the two states changed drastically in the time period immediately surrounding the conflict, with far reaching implications into the future as well. As such, while this paper will focus primarily on events which occurred in the past, it will also seek to establish links to the states’ current and future political relationship.

This thesis will demonstrate that Ireland’s participation in World War II was far more substantial than popular history’s depiction, and will offer an analysis of the effects of the state’s wartime policy on its relationship with the United Kingdom. In order to present these findings, I begin by laying out the historical background of Anglo-Irish relations, describing their interactions from the 1100s until the Second World War. I also present a model for understanding Anglo-Irish relations in this period, which is useful for depicting a shift in the relationship following the war. Next, the thesis changes its focus by analyzing Ireland’s actions during the war. I place significant emphasis on Ireland’s military contributions to the Allied cause – an aspect of World War II history often omitted or forgotten – that is of particular interest and relevance to understanding their relationship with the United Kingdom during and after the war. Finally, the work turns specifically to an analysis of Anglo-Irish relations at different points after the cessation of hostilities, observed through the lens of a new Consolidated Model of International Relations.

Ireland in the mid-20th century found itself caught up in a storm of significant moral and ideological struggles. Global conflict irrevocably altered the landscape of the
international community, the rise of fascism affected all nationalistic political movements, and the horrors of Nazism and the holocaust overshadowed the sociopolitical climate of Europe. In Ireland as well, new questions of identity arose about the nation’s position relevant to Britain, the international community, and – perhaps most importantly – the six partitioned counties of the North. As a result, Ireland’s stated policy of neutrality involves significant moral and ideological concerns.

There is a particular allure to writing about such controversial topics, made even more interesting by the fact that this particular matter is often forgotten or made a mere footnote in the history of a larger conflict. The inherent danger, of course, is that it would be quite easy for a scholar to become bogged down by the thorny moral questions and ideological quagmires inherent to such research. Though this thesis does not shy away from those concerns, I judge them to be of secondary importance to matters of legality and social change for the purposes of this work. By focusing primarily on these topics, the work seeks to clearly and effectively portray Ireland’s role in the war and the implications of its wartime policies for Anglo-Irish relations.

Definitions

There are two key terms in my work that will require definition before any analysis of Ireland’s position in the war and its relations with the United Kingdom: sovereign state and neutral state. The nature of these terms is complex and largely subjective based on one’s political philosophy and understanding of the international system, but they are not beyond definability.
The first is sovereignty. John Agnew argues that “effective sovereignty is not necessarily predicated on and defined by the strict and fixed territorial boundaries of individual states.”\(^2\) This claim bears particular relevance to Irish nationalism, which historically has upheld the claim that an Irish nation existed even at times where its borders and political institutions were under the control of Great Britain. In terms of the international system of states, sovereignty takes on a more particular and rigid definition than that which Agnew proposes – a legalistic paradigm that requires acceptance by established countries. I propose an alternative definition: a sovereign state is one that is free to execute policy within the bounds of reasonable international standards, to select its own political leaders, and to defend itself from aggression, all without oversight from any external governing body except those with which the state voluntarily aligns itself. This definition will be an essential aspect of my discussion of Irish self-determination, particularly relating to its foreign affairs.

Neutrality is another term that does not easily lend itself to clear definition, particularly in terms of complex policies such as those enacted by Ireland during World War II. For the purposes of this work, I turn to a consideration of international standards that existed during the period of the Second World War. At the time, state neutrality was defined by the Hague Conventions of 1907, a series of international agreements detailing the rules of combat. The conventions were established by 256 delegates from 44

“civilized nations.” Notably, nations deemed worthy of participation included Japan and several Latin American nations, widening the pool of mainstream states in the international system from the historically Euro-centric model. Under the provisions of Hague V, entitled “Convention respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land,” a series of mutual responsibilities exists between belligerent and neutral powers. Belligerents may not violate the territory of a neutral state or erect communication apparatuses “for the purpose of communicating with belligerent forces on land or sea, nor may they operate recruiting agencies for their respective militaries.” Likewise, a neutral power cannot permit any of those acts to occur within its territory and is required to intern any belligerent troops found in the state “at a distance from the theatre of war.” Similarly, Hague XIII, or the “Convention concerning the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers in Naval War,” sets principles for naval activities of neutral and belligerent powers. It holds that “belligerents are bound to respect the sovereign rights of neutral Powers and to abstain, in neutral territory or neutral waters, from any act which would, if knowingly permitted by and Power, constitute a violation of neutrality.” It also states in Article 9 that “a neutral Power must apply impartially to the two belligerents the conditions, restrictions, or prohibitions made

4 Ibid., 388, 391.
6 Ibid., Article 11.
by it in regard to the admission into its ports, roadsteads, or territorial waters, of belligerent war-ships or of their prizes.”

Though the relatively insignificant strength of the Irish Navy during the war made many clauses of Convention XIII irrelevant, Article 9 remains important because of a disagreement between Ireland and the United Kingdom over the use of Irish ports that I address further in the work. Bearing in mind the precedent of the Hague Conventions, I define a neutral state as one that adopts a stated policy of non-belligerency and abides by current international standards of neutrality without giving undue considerations or favoritism to belligerents on either side of a given conflict.

**Current Understandings of Irish Policy during World War II**

In considering existing scholarship on Irish policy during the war, two distinct trends emerge. The first holds that Ireland lacked the will to help the Allied war effort, and that draconian censorship measures imposed by the government kept the population strictly in favor of neutral policy. The second academic trend on this matter believes that Irish neutrality was not, in fact, very neutral at all. Scholars from this perspective argue that the Irish actually made significant contributions to Allied forces and, in particular, the United Kingdom. They suggest that maintaining the public image of neutrality served as a political tool to gain increased independence from British authority. In this work, I seek to determine which trend is most accurate and to analyze the implications for Anglo-Irish relations.

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8 Ibid., Article 9.
It should be noted that most scholarship on this topic almost invariably regards Irish policy as favoring the British in one way or another, though not all scholars agree that this represents a breach of neutrality. Regardless, most judge this Irish participation to be insignificant to the Allied cause. Conversely, some scholars – claiming that slight favoritism arose due to economic necessities on the part of the Irish – regard this policy as truly neutral. They note that the Germans, who – according to their own minister in Dublin – were not displeased with the Irish stance were made aware of concessions made to the British; thus, neutral policy and diplomatic ties with both governments could be maintained. Others, however, claim that the Irish never intended to be truly neutral, but rather that they assisted the Allied cause while merely pretending to remain a neutral power in order to achieve their own political goals. While these two broad distinctions between scholarly interpretations of Irish actions are a sound starting point for investigation, the complexities of the diplomatic balance struck by the Irish government does not easily lend itself to neatly-fitting labels. In fact, it is the complexity of the position that makes it so remarkable. Awkwardly positioned among great powers, outmatched in numbers and military strength, the new Irish state managed not only to defend its limited sovereignty but also to further develop it.

**True Neutrality**

Scholarship that claims Ireland had little or no positive impact on the Allied war effort does not entirely disregard the state’s contributions, but rather puts them in a wider context. While not an exhaustive selection, Brian Girvin, F.S.L. Lyons, J.J. Lee, Eunan O’Halpin, Ronan Fanning, and Thomas Hachev illustrate the sort of arguments put
forward from this perspective: Ireland was generally neutral, but it offered subtle support to the Allies for a variety of reasons.

Many scholars in this trend claim that this lopsided neutrality was essential for Ireland’s political ambitions. Brian Girvin of the University of Glasgow, for example, argues that evidence of broader Irish support for the Allies towards the end of the war was due to a “recognition that the Allies were going to win the war and [that] Ireland had to prepare diplomatically for the outcome.”\(^9\) Similarly, noted historian F.S.L. Lyons voices the opinion that maintaining neutrality was key to independence, because it “was not just the instinctive reaction of a small power to keep clear of the quarrels of big powers, it was the outward and visible sign of absolute sovereignty.”\(^10\) Ronan Fanning’s *Irish Neutrality – An Historical Review* similarly admits that neutrality served as a “means whereby the end of sovereignty might be freely expressed”\(^11\) but claims it was a true neutrality that did not significantly favor Britain and the Allies. He notes de Valera’s assertions that the Irish military would fight either Britain or Germany if either “breached its neutrality” and that the politically-skilled Taoiseach successfully resisted the political pressure from Churchill and Roosevelt to enter the conflict,\(^12\) even publically protesting the movement of American military forces through Ulster.\(^13\) Thomas E. Hachey states that any considerations given to the British were due to trade necessities, citing evidence

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\(^12\) Ibid., 31.
\(^13\) Ibid., 32.

Beyond these political concerns, some scholars claim that Ireland’s subtle support for the Allied war effort was actually necessary for the state’s survival. J.J. Lee of University College Cork, for example, argues that this policy evolved mostly due to a fear of British invasion. Lee asserts that the Irish government “rigidly maintained the formality of Irish neutrality right to the end…but he simultaneously took care to cooperate sufficiently with Britain, and later with the United States, to ensure that they did not feel provoked into aggressive action against Irish interests.”\footnote{J.J. Lee, \textit{Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 244} Lee admits that Ireland was not “strictly neutral,” but rather “benevolently neutral for Britain,”\footnote{Ibid.} but he claims that this is sufficient to characterize the policy as genuinely neutral nonetheless, particularly since Ireland ensured that Germany was content with its position, which was,
he remarks, “consistently urged by the perceptive Dr. Hempel, German minister in Dublin since 1937.”

Among scholarship supporting the view of Ireland’s wartime policy as truly neutral, a trend emerges that is quite critical of Ireland’s stance. Lyons – though he recognized the importance of Ireland’s assertion of independence for other Commonwealth states such as India – claimed that the government “trod its thorny neutral path” by ignoring many things about the war. He notes, for example, Dublin’s lengthy policy of pretending not to have knowledge of a transmitter inside the German embassy. Lyons also notes the draconian censorship methods employed by de Valera’s government in his famous analogy to Plato’s allegory of the cave. He compares the Irish people to the individuals in the cave, unaware of the realities of life carrying on outside. Lee also criticizes the censorship measures, noting what he calls a “thirst for ignorance.” He may, however, overstate the negative aspects of Irish domestic policies and ignore the important role that censorship played in maintaining balanced relations with Britain and Germany. Hachey takes a more balanced approach in his The Rhetoric and Reality of Irish Neutrality, but even he refers to censorship and “xenophobic isolationism” that characterized Ireland and helped it defend and maintain neutrality.

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19 Ibid.
20 Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine, 556.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 557-558.
Ireland is often criticized not only for its domestic policies during the conflict, but also for the international implications of its neutrality. In B.H. Liddell Hart’s “History of World War II,” Ireland gets very little mention; however, what little attention Hart gives the nation is presented with a quite negative tone that clearly demonstrates his displeasure with the state’s neutrality. The closing paragraph of Part V of his extensive history notes that “Eire’s refusal to allow the Allies use of her western and southern coastlines, even though she herself depended largely upon the supplies the convoys brought her, contributed immensely to the Allied losses in the Atlantic. And it was largely the Allies’ hold on Northern Ireland and Iceland that kept open the one remaining route to Britain.”

Though Hart’s work does not seem devoid of prejudice, his point cannot be forgotten – that neutrality may have come with a heavy price of human lives.

*False Neutrality*

The other major trend in scholarship on Ireland’s role in the war is that Ireland practiced a false form of neutrality, in which it enacted policies that substantially aided the Allied war effort. A key example of scholarship suggesting Ireland’s positive role in World War II and its political maneuvering toward complete self-determination is R.M. Smyllie’s “Unneutral Neutral Eire.” This is surprising since Smyllie’s work hints of anti-Irish prejudice. In fact, Hachey refers to him as “the anglophile editor of the *Irish Times*.” Nevertheless, Smyllie recognizes Ireland’s contribution to the Allied war effort and suggests that the Irish population largely supported the Allies, remarking that “there

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was a fairly strong dislike of the Nazi movement, particularly in Catholic circles, where Hitler, like Stalin, was regarded as a kind of anti-Christ.”

Furthermore, Smyllie implies that the Irish leaders tacitly approved Irish volunteers joining the British armed forces and that good relations existed between the Irish and British military leadership throughout the war. He notes that “neutrality, almost by definition, is something negative; but [the Irish prime minister] raised it to the dignity of a national principle, largely because he wanted to be able to prove to the world at large that, after more than seven hundred years of subjection to England, the 26 counties of Southern Ireland at last were really free.”

Whereas Smyllie and other contemporary observers focused more on social attitudes toward the war and general trends in government policy, T. Ryle Dwyer focuses more on the specifics of Irish support for the Allies. In his *Guests of the State*, Dwyer is less clear than other authors on whether he thinks Ireland’s wartime policy was truly neutral, but his overall arguments seem to support that neutrality – while believably acted out by the Dublin government – was not actually occurring. He notes that “there was never any doubt in the minds of either the Allied or the Axis representatives in Dublin that de Valera personally favoured the Allies.”

*Guests of the State* focuses on the internment of downed airmen over Ireland during the war. While they were not technically prisoners of war, these individuals were kept loosely in confinement, often

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28 Ibid., 320-321.
29 Ibid., 317.
with excellent perks and generous paroles.\textsuperscript{31} Both Allied and Axis airmen were detained, but it seems from Dwyer’s perspective that this policy was implemented in a way that strongly favored the Allies. For example, he notes an example where a German crew shot down over international waters was detained, even though they technically should have been released as distressed mariners under international law.\textsuperscript{32} “The niceties of neutrality,” Dwyer remarks, “were overlooked in favour of the Allies.”\textsuperscript{33} Dwyer also notes various instances where American airmen were taken into custody by either the Gardaí or the Irish government and then released, further suggesting that neutrality was not strictly enforced. Overall, Dwyer’s generally balanced work in \textit{Guests of the State} and other well-received books provides excellent insight into Irish policy, with perhaps a hint of bias in favor of the Irish, who are certainly portrayed positively in his writing.

\textit{Other Scholarship}

Beyond the two main points of view regarding Irish neutrality are other modes of scholarship that strongly reflect neither one point nor the other, but have particular importance to the broader themes of my work. One such article is Sean MacBride’s \textit{Anglo-Irish Relations}. In the work, he claims that socio-political similarities between Britain and Ireland facilitate their stable – if not always friendly – relations, noting that the two countries “are populated by people…who, in the main, speak the same languages; broadly speaking, they believe in Christianity and share the same ideals of life.”\textsuperscript{34} He

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 32.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 57.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
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also notes “the closeness of political philosophy shared by the people” of both islands, along with “stronger economic bonds than exist...between any other two countries in the world.”\(^{35}\) MacBride argues that a difficult past creates a negative feeling between the two cultures. Most importantly, he notes a misconception in British scholarship that views the Irish as “rather charming and amusing, but really quite unreasonable,” noting that British academics often adopt a condescending or a facetious tone” in their works on Ireland.\(^{36}\) I have noted such prejudicial tones in some of the works previously reviewed and agree wholeheartedly with the sentiments put forth by MacBride. Because his work is largely free of the prejudicial viewpoints espoused by some other scholars, it provides uniquely clear and valid insight into the topic at hand.

Kevin O’Rourke provides another example of scholarship that does not quite fit in the two major trends previously identified, but that strongly informs the questions posed in this thesis. In his article *Burn Everything British but Their Coal: The Anglo-Irish Economic War of the 1930s*, he discusses the economic issues that helped shape Anglo-Irish relations as war was dawning on Europe. Hoping to destabilize de Valera and his party, British ministers established trade sanctions on Ireland. O’Rourke claims that this move, “by damaging the interests of Irish farmers, would make de Valera’s minority government unpopular and lead to his replacement by the more cooperative *Cumann na nGaedheal* party,” and that, followed by a “general increase in Irish protectionism,” this

\(^{35}\) Ibid.  
\(^{36}\) Ibid., 259.
action was a severe miscalculation on the part of the British.” He claims that de Valera and the Irish won out in this economic warfare. In my opinion, this observation is important because this victory sets the stage for further tough stances on the part of de Valera and his *Fianna Fáil* government during the war, withstanding the significant level of public pressure levied on Ireland by Allied governments to make more decisive contributions to the war effort.

**Research Design**

Due to the high level of censorship that occurred in Ireland during the Second World War, it is difficult to determine how best to develop a research plan that takes into account the wealth of available primary source documents. Even the statements of political leaders – most importantly Taoiseach Eamon de Valera – cannot be taken at face value, because strategic language was crucial to maintaining the appearance of neutrality in the conflict. This is no less true for the other state and individual actors immediately relevant to Ireland’s decisions, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany. The governments of these nations also wished to promote a certain image in relation to Ireland, at times obscuring the truth in favor of more politically palatable alternatives. The only solution to this complex problem is to examine a wide variety of different types of documents. Fortunately, I had access to two particular libraries with uniquely large and comprehensive collections of Irish writings, documents, and artifacts—the John J. Burns Library at Boston College and the National Archives of Ireland in

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Dublin. I am very thankful for the archival staff at both libraries and their invaluable assistance to my research.

This thesis concerns itself much more with the “how” and “what” of Irish policy during the war than the “why,” simply because the reasons for the government’s stance seem rather self-explanatory. Ireland had many reasons for favoring the Allies through phony neutrality. Primarily, a show of neutrality firmly demonstrated its autonomy from the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. Likewise, as a small power, Ireland knew that it would likely incur extensive damages and loss of life – perhaps even its sovereignty – if it engaged in the war. Finally, there was a general recognition among the Irish leadership (to a slightly lesser extent among the public, due largely to censorship and to a lesser extent to militarized republicanism) that supporting the Axis cause was neither politically viable in neither the international community nor the morally-sound position to take.

How Ireland pursued these goals (and to what extent it achieved success) is a complex matter. Its policy required masterful politics from Irish leaders like Taoiseach Eamon de Valera; however, such a policy simultaneously required general support from the public. As such, this thesis focuses on various levels of analysis. A consideration of state agency will be important for analyzing how Ireland related to the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States during the Second World War. Similarly, a consideration of individual agency will be important for determining how leaders pursued policies
within their own states during the conflict. In terms of Anglo-Irish relations, this generally meant mobilizing public support through either propaganda or censorship.

This research is important for two primary reasons. First, by determining the true nature of Irish policy during the war and examining Ireland’s agency regarding its relationship with Great Britain and the Commonwealth, this research will serve to either exculpate the nation from undue criticism for its wartime policies or, conversely, to formally lay out its failed responsibilities. Either way, this thesis contributes to the historical record by looking at these questions together in a unique way from other existing scholarship. Second, though primarily historical in nature, the modern implications of this work are significant. By examining the history of the relationship between Britain and Ireland, specific trends might emerge that can shed light on specific problems such as the question of Scottish autonomy or the need to achieve a more lasting peace between unionist and nationalist communities in Northern Ireland.

More generally, this research and the Consolidated Model may influence how scholars, diplomats, and policymakers approach state relations. Furthermore, this new theory may be further refined and applied to additional international relations scenarios. I leave such extrapolations to other scholars, with hope that this thesis will be a starting point for more important work in the future.

This starting point requires a more focused scope, so for the purposes of this work, I address two specific questions. First, what was the true nature of Ireland’s
declared neutrality in the Second World War? Finally, how did this policy impact the relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom?
2. The Historical Background of Anglo-Irish Relations

To Ossory’s king they had pledged their word:
He stood in their camp, and their pledge they broke;
Then Maurice the Norman upraised his sword;
The cross on its hilt he kiss’d, and spoke:

"So long as this sword or this arm hath might,
I swear by the cross which is lord of all,
By the faith and honor of noble and knight,
Who touches you, Prince, by this hand shall fall!"

So side by side through the throng they pass’d;
And Eire gave praise to the just and true.
Brave foe! the past truth heals at last:
There is room in the great heart of Eire for you!

- Excerpt from *The Faithful Norman* by Aubrey de Vere, 1863

In order to understand the implications of Irish World War II policy on Anglo-Irish relations, it is first necessary to grasp the history of their relationship. Over 800 years of conflict and unbalanced sociopolitical interaction created a difficult relationship between the two nations, which colors their relationship well into the modern era. A thorough review of Anglo-Irish history reveals patterns of behavior that make the success of Ireland’s World War II policies all the more remarkable and illustrates the significant historical inertia that the fledgling country overcame.

Though the story of Ireland stretches far into myth and legend, the relevant history of its relationship with England begins in the 1100s with the Anglo-Norman invasion of the island. An internal power struggle between the kings and chieftains of

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Ireland would enable the English to take root and initiate a period of rule over Ireland that would last for approximately 800 years.

**The Pre-War Cycle of Anglo-Irish Relations**

The circumstances of the Norman invasion and the subsequent socio-political changes in Ireland mark the first example of the cycle of Anglo-Irish relations that would last until the Second World War. First, Irish leaders agree to participation in British governmental or military institutions, often due to the substantial economic opportunity and political capital available from collaboration with the British. Next, a popular sense of injustice develops among the people, followed by rebellion. Finally, the British suppress the rebellion and reinforce their institutional authority in Ireland, at which point the cycle begins again.

![Figure 1 – The Pre-War Cycle of Anglo-Irish Relations](image)

Though the types of political and military institutions that the British would establish in Ireland changed significantly over the 800 year period (as did the extent to
which Irish leaders were willing to participate in them), this cycle of behavior remained
the same – a fact which bears importance for two primary reasons. Primarily, it
illustrates the agency of Irish leaders and the Irish people in matters of their nation’s
history with the British. All too often, there is a tendency to consider the question of
Anglo-Irish relations in simple terms of conqueror and conquered. By illustrating the
role that Irish leadership and the Irish people play in the perpetuation of the cycle of
British power, however, this perspective comes into question. Additionally, the existence
of this cyclical behavior disproves speculation that more recent historical Anglo-Irish
disagreements are singularly rooted in religious causes, demonstrating instead how the
pattern began before Henry VIII’s landmark split with the Roman Catholic Church.

The Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland

Before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans, Ireland consisted of a patchwork of
kingdoms and principalities based on ancient clan arrangements that relied on a formal
system of tribute and fealty. Factions frequently warred with each other, establishing a
social order in which the various military forces on the island lacked the social cohesion
necessary to collaborate against potential invasion by an external force. In the 1170s, the
politics of Ireland were thrown into further upheaval with the ousting of the King of
Leinster, Dermot MacMurrough, by the High King of Ireland, Rory O’Connor. Seeking
to regain his kingdom, the exiled MacMurrough sought assistance from the Anglo-
Normans under Henry II, the Catholic King of England.
Even before MacMurrough’s invitation, Henry’s right to rule in Ireland may have been previously supported by papal authority. In 1155, Pope Adrian – notably the first and only English pope – is said to have promulgated the *Laudabiliter* at Henry’s request, a bull referring to the Irish as “a rude and unlettered people” that granted the English monarchy right of rule over Ireland so that the King might “subdue the people and make them obedient to laws, and root out from among them the weeds of sin…and…keep and preserve the rights of the churches in that land whole and inviolate.”\(^{39}\) Many historians dispute the authenticity of this document, noting its absence from papal archives and the similar absence in those records of any other documents pertaining to Ireland earlier than the 1200s.\(^{40}\) Regardless of the bull’s authenticity, Henry’s attempt to justify expanding his influence into Ireland by referencing the document again illustrates that the complex history of Anglo-Irish relations began long before any religious divide.

Henry hesitated to commit to the Leinster king’s request, but a small detachment of Norman knights under Richard de Clare, known as the Earl Strongbow, arrived without royal approval. Strongbow proceeded to subdue the Irish ruthlessly, quickly capturing Waterford and Dublin with brutal force. Irish historian Eleanor Hull claims that, after a period of siege at Waterford, Strongbow’s forces “poured into the town, and a scene of butchery shocking to contemplate ensued.”\(^{41}\) It is worth noting that such a depiction of the siege does not seem to be merely the result of biased historical


interpretation. In his book “Strongbow’s Conquest of Ireland”, English historian Francis Pierrepont Barnard describes the assault on Waterford in a similar manner, noting that “the besiegers poured eagerly into the city, butchered whole crowds of the citizens in the streets, and gained a most bloody victory.” Fearing a slaughter such as that which took place at Waterford, Dublin surrendered to Strongbow and his forces without significant protest.

Noting Strongbow’s successes and ruthless behavior, Henry had begun to fear the Earl’s political ambitions for Ireland and hastened to assert his own claim. Accepting fealty from MacMurrough, Henry acquiesced to the Leinster king’s request for military aid and arrived with an armada of over four hundred ships and a great army under his personal command. Announcing himself strictly opposed to Strongbow’s harsh tactics, Henry was welcomed by many of the Irish. With keen diplomacy, Henry quickly gained the friendship and allegiance of the leaders of southern Ireland. Finally, with the signing of the Treaty of Windsor in 1175, he solidified the British institutional power and marked the entry of English common law into the Irish legal tradition. Under the terms of the treaty, however, British rule was contained to specific areas in Leinster along the eastern coastline from Dublin to Dungarvan. O’Connor would maintain his rule over Connaught, but in his role as High King of Ireland, he established a feudal link in which

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Ireland owed allegiance and tribute to the British monarch. The age of British rule over Ireland had begun, based largely on an invitation from an Irish political authority.

The Anglo-Norman lords in Ireland did not abide by the terms of the treaty for long, expanding into new lands beyond the confines of Leinster. By the 13th century, British influence had spread beyond the pale, and English common law held jurisdiction over most of Ireland, though, as Otway-Ruthven notes, “it must be remembered that everywhere there were pockets of difficult country where the Irish were able to maintain a large degree of independence.”45 The laws of Britain, though present throughout the island, were not applied equally to all new Irish subjects. Though not completely without rights, many Irish were not legally admitted to English law, leaving them incapable “of holding land in fee and inheritance” and leaving Irishwomen married to Englishmen without entitlement to a dowry.46 Among other injustices, these began to change the opinion of the native Irish regarding their new Anglo-Norman rulers.

**The Scottish Alliance at Bannockburn**

With the Anglo-Norman lords disregarding the restrictions placed on them by the Treaty of Windsor, anger began to rise among the native Irish. An opportunity to strike back against English rule arose first not in Ireland itself, but in neighboring Scotland. In June of 1314, Scottish rebels and a number of Irish supporters took to the field at Bannockburn under Robert Bruce and achieved a decisive victory over the English. This result greatly encouraged the Irish, who invited a Scottish army to invade Ireland in an

46 Ibid., 12.
attempt to wrest political control from England’s grasp. Under Robert’s brother Edward Bruce, the army arrived in 1315, though – as David Cornell notes – it is unclear whether this was to create a Celtic alliance against the British or simply to deprive the English of Irish resources.\textsuperscript{47} Nevertheless, this action on the part of native Irish represents the first large scale popular uprising against British authority in Ireland and set an important precedent for the future as they “flocked to Bruce’s standard.”\textsuperscript{48} In 1317, however, a famine struck Ireland that sounded the death knell of the rebellion. Aided by this natural disaster and the Irish forces’ lack of siege machinery, the English managed to destroy the rebellion and expand their institutional power in Ireland.

**From the Normans to the Tudors – The Long Period of Suppression**

Throughout the 1300s, the Anglo-Normans became increasingly “Hibernicized,” adopting the Irish language, elements of Irish traditional law, and native Irish customs despite the constant state of warfare with various Irish chiefs. Despite limited victories such as the defeat of King Richard, the English managed to suppress Irish rebellion and ultimately maintain control of the island, albeit to varying degrees of success throughout the century. The War of the Roses provided a further opportunity for Irish rebellion, but the same political weaknesses and clan or familial divides that had plagued the cause of Irish independence for centuries prevented successful revolt. Even in the midst of a bloody Civil War, the English managed to suppress the Irish and maintain their political institutions.

When Henry VII, a prominent Tudor, took the throne of England in 1485, this lengthy period of suppression was replaced with the next stage in the cycle of Anglo-Irish relations: reinforcement of British institutional authority. He acted vigorously to strengthen English authority, but it was his son who would leave an even greater mark by working to move from a system of tribute and allegiance to that of a centralized state. In 1541, Henry VIII established the Kingdom of Ireland, legalizing positions in the Parliament of Ireland for Gaelic nobles. In joining this parliament, Irish leaders continued the cycle of Anglo-Irish relations by participating in this political institution of the crown. Of course, Henry VIII’s subsequent split from Catholicism further complicated politics in Ireland. Though the Irish leaders were willing to participate in Henry’s government, many of the Irish people were unwilling to adopt his new religion and abandon their Catholic traditions.

The Protestant Ascendency and Anti-Catholic Legislation

In the 16th and 17th century, English leaders encouraged the plantation of Ireland – allotting land to English farmers so that they might increase the number of pro-British, protestant subjects in the island. These settlers came in great numbers, drastically changing the political landscape of Ireland. In this period, the British also instituted a series of statutes called “Laws in Ireland for the Suppression of Popery,” commonly referred to as the Penal Laws. Designed to exclude Catholics from British sociopolitical institutions, these laws created strict limitations and inequitable burdens on Irish Catholics. Statute 7 Will III c. 15 (1695), for example, reads “Every person, except women, persons 16 years of age and under, and those paying only one shilling tax, who
fail to take the oath of allegiance and the declaration against transubstantiation, shall be charged double the tax he would otherwise pay.”

Similarly, 7 Will III c.5 (1695) decreed that “All papists within this kingdom of Ireland shall before the 1st day of March, 1696, deliver up to some justice of the peace or corporation officer…all their arms and ammunition, notwithstanding any licence [sic] or keeping the same heretofore granted.”

These statutes also placed strict limitations on Catholics in the political process and limited their right to own and inherit personal property.

These statutes caused a great deal of anger among the population of Ireland, but the British were able to suppress each of the numerous rebellions that sprang up. British institutional authority grew in strength through the 18th century, cemented fully in the sociopolitical realities of Ireland.

**The Emergence of the United Kingdom**

In 1800, mirroring acts passed by the Parliament of Ireland and the Parliament at Westminster established the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, strengthening direct British control over Irish affairs. This enhanced British authority most visibly came into effect due to article three of the Westminster Act, which decreed that “the United Kingdom be represented in one and the same Parliament, to be stiled the

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Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.”51 The Irish legislative body had been disbanded, and with it the only significant example of political devolution in Ireland at the time.

Upon passage of the act at Westminster, King George III addressed both houses of parliament, expressing his joy that Irish subjects would have “full participation of the blessing derived from the British constitution, and to establish, on the most solid foundation, the strength, prosperity, and the power of the whole empire.”52 This joy, however, was not shared by many of his subjects across the Irish Sea. A series of uprisings took place in Ireland throughout the 1800s, all of which were firmly suppressed by British authorities.

It is a matter of historical debate how the Act of Union managed to pass in the Parliament of Ireland. Many individuals at the time believed that Irish leaders had been bribed or otherwise convinced to sign the legislature with promises of power or political favor.53 A popular poem among Irish schoolchildren in the 20th century sums up this attitude:

_How did they pass the Union?_
_By perjury and fraud;_
_By slaves who sold their land for gold,_
_As Judas sold his God._54

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54 Ibid., 22.
Other scholars hold that bribery is not so much to blame, but rather a patronage system that – though unethical by today’s political standards – was perfectly acceptable at the time.\textsuperscript{55} Regardless, it is clear that in keeping with the cycle of Anglo-Irish relations, Irish leaders agreed to participate in this most direct example of a British political institution in Ireland.

**The Easter Rising and the War of Independence**

In April of 1916, an uprising in Dublin created an important turning point for the cause of Irish independence. Known as the Easter Rising, this rebellion consisted of a group of republican rebels that seized several key government buildings in Dublin, most notably the General Post Office on O’Connell Street. On the steps of the GPO, Pádraig Pearse – a key leader of the movement – declared an Irish republic before being soundly defeated by British army forces stationed in the city. The subsequent executions of the group’s leaders, which British authorities carried out with little concern for contemporary expectations of human rights, turned public opinion against the British in both Ireland and the international community. In this way, the cycle of Anglo-Irish relations continued – Irish leaders had agreed to British political institutions in the Acts of Union, a sense of injustice had been stirred up in the people, and now rebellion was set to take place.

In 1919, the War of Independence began in earnest. Under the leadership of Michael Collins, the newly-formed Irish Republican Army carried on the conflict for two years. As the British civil structure in Ireland collapsed, the unrecognized Irish

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 23.
legislature arranged alternate sociopolitical institutions as replacements. Irish police and courts free from British law came into existence for the first time in centuries. Finally, after suffering great losses and disruptions to civil society, the British agreed to peace negotiations in 1921.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921

The Irish War of Independence ostensibly granted freedom to Ireland. Under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, the British granted Ireland limited independence under the name “The Irish Free State”, but more accurately returned it to the sociopolitical status that it had held directly following the Treaty of Windsor in 1175. Just as the English had gained direct rule over the kingdoms of Leinster and Meath under the terms of that treaty, the Anglo-Irish Treaty reserved six counties of Ulster – Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, L/Derry56, and Tyrone – for the United Kingdom. Similarly, just as Irish leaders were given control over those lands beyond the pale in 1175 but were made to swear fealty to the British crown, the Anglo-Irish Treaty instituted an oath of allegiance to be taken by Members of the Irish Parliament. The oath, which would incidentally play a key role in inciting the Irish Civil War, read:

I…….do solemnly swear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the Irish Free State as by law established and that I will be faithful to H.M. King George V., his heirs and successors by law, in virtue of the common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain and her adherence to and membership of the group of nations forming the British Commonwealth of Nations.57

56 N.B.: The contentious issue of this place name has led to a standard abbreviation, L/Derry, which denotes an acceptance of “Londonderry” or “Derry” as acceptable.
In approximately 750 years, Ireland had come full circle in its relationship with Britain. Accepting the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which partitioned the island, maintained Ulster’s political status within the United Kingdom, and required a parliamentary oath of allegiance to the British monarch, Ireland held more or less the same level of independence and autonomy that it had during the reign of Henry II. With the treaty signed, it seemed that the cycle of Anglo-Irish relations was set to continue, since Irish leaders had once again submitted to a British political institution that held power over their island.

The British had suppressed the Irish revolution to the extent that it maintained royal control over the entire island and government control over approximately a quarter of its territory. They strengthened their institutional authority under the terms of the agreement, and Irish leaders signed on. Nevertheless, many on both sides of the Irish Sea disapproved of the treaty, creating a tense relationship between the United Kingdom and the new Irish Free State.

**The Anglo-Irish Trade War**

Unsurprisingly, this new institutional arrangement brought about complications in Anglo-Irish relations. From 1932 to 1938, both states found themselves embroiled in the Anglo-Irish Trade War, also known as the Economic War, which resulted from de Valera’s refusal to pay land annuities to Britain, a direct breach of agreements reached by
the two governments in 1923 and 1926. In response the British “reacted promptly and severely, imposing emergency duties on Irish agricultural exports, notably cattle,” a political decision explained by Britain’s recognition that de Valera was beginning an attempt to remove the constitutional ties between Ireland and the United Kingdom.  

Eventually, the British government recognized that maintaining the established constitutional relationship with Ireland would be better served with a conciliatory end to the trade war. As a result, an agreement between the two states was signed on favorable terms for the Irish. Most importantly, the British agreed to abandon their legal claim to several Irish ports, though they would later request access throughout the war. The proceedings even included a personally friendly gesture, in which Chamberlain “returned to de Valera the pair of field-glasses which he had handed over upon surrendering his command at Boland’s Bakery to the British at the end of the Easter Rising, more than twenty years before.” This symbolic move failed to overshadow the tensions that existed between Ireland and the United Kingdom, particularly as the threat of war loomed over Europe.

The Cycle Broken

With the successful conclusion of the trade war, de Valera set the stage to ultimately break the pre-war cycle of Anglo-Irish Relations, beginning the long process of dissolving constitutional ties with Britain and the Commonwealth that would define

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59 Ibid., 358.
Irish policy during World War II. As Ireland set out on a path of neutrality in the conflict, British leaders strongly considered an invasion of the 26 counties in response to the Irish refusal to participate— an act which would effectively have reintroduced the historical cycle. Such an invasion would have been akin to suppression of a rebellion, since these politicians and government officials believed that Ireland was reneging on its legal and moral responsibility to assist the Commonwealth of Nations in the conflict. In contrast to the pattern of behavior that had lasted for 800 years, however, they chose not to invade. Begrudgingly, the British accepted Irish neutrality.

There are several popular but incorrect opinions explaining why the British permitted the Irish to take this position. One such theory is that the powerful Irish-American political lobby in the United States could threaten American support of Britain in the war; however, I question this assertion, since – as I will illustrate later in this work – the United States was a vocal opponent of Irish neutrality. Others claim that the Irish policy success was merely a result of a changing world order; however, British policy towards its other imperial holdings suggests otherwise. One is left with only one logical conclusion – that Irish policy measures during World War II made neutrality tolerable for the Allies, and that Ireland ultimately broke the cycle of Anglo-Irish relations by the power of its own agency.

With the traditional cycle broken, a new era of Anglo-Irish relations began. How Ireland’s wartime neutrality would impact this relationship remained unseen, but for the first time in centuries, Irish leaders had positioned their nation in a manner that would
allow for lasting change. Ireland had an unprecedented opportunity to assert its sovereignty, demonstrate its independence from Britain, and charter its own course in the international community. Before any of this could occur, however, Ireland would need to weather the political instability of the Second World War, carefully maintaining a functional relationship with the United Kingdom while distancing itself from the same.
3. De Valera and Ireland’s Stated Wartime Policy

De Valera’s Ireland has been held up to criticism and even ridicule, depicted as an unrealistic over-romanticised vision of comely maidens and dancing at the cross roads. Yet de Valera was an astute politician with a specific political, cultural and national agenda. If his head appeared in the clouds, his feet were firmly on the ground.61

- Michelle Dowling, “‘The Ireland That I Would Have’: De Valera & the Creation of an Irish National Image”

To understand the nature of the shift in Anglo-Irish relations that occurred after World War II, an analysis of Irish wartime policy is required. The story would not be complete without a review of the man whose political machinations were critical for both the formation of this policy and Ireland’s push for independence in the 20th century – Eamon de Valera.

As Taoiseach, or Prime Minister, de Valera directed Ireland’s policy during the Second World War and promoted it abroad. His political cunning and stubborn refusal to bow to Allied requests for Irish participation in the war enabled the nation to remain ostensibly neutral and assert its independence. De Valera had long been a persistent thorn in the British government’s side due to his revolutionary zeal prior to and during the War of Independence. As a result, MI5 had unsurprisingly opened a personal file on

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the Irish leader in 1917 at the peak of his revolutionary activities. More unexpectedly, however, the file remained open until his death in 1975 – long after de Valera had transitioned firmly from revolutionary to statesman. The existence of this lengthy file illustrates de Valera’s importance and his unique history with Britain. He also had a complex history with the Irish as well. He was widely celebrated for his work in the cause of Irish independence, though many who had supported Michael Collins and the Free State government did not approve of his role in the Civil War. Nevertheless, de Valera ultimately managed to unite the Irish people and maintain domestic order during World War II, a troubling time that the Irish referred to as the Emergency.

In all, de Valera is an interesting and complex character, whose carefully constructed policies delivered Ireland from the brink of disaster to complete independence from Britain. He believed deeply in the notion of Catholic Ireland, but refused to acquiesce to the Church’s demands for loyalty to the Irish Free State during the Civil War. He was as comfortable fighting a revolution as he was running a government. He held highly-idealistic notions for his nation and its people, but also was very realistic about Ireland’s position in the international community. The ability to balance these seeming contradictions reflects the nuanced political strategies that de Valera employed to keep Ireland out of World War II.

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Biographical Information

Born in New York City in 1882 to an Irish mother and a Spanish father, Eamon de Valera (christened originally as Edward) might never have seen his ancestral home were it not for the death of his father. At two years of age, he was sent to County Limerick to be raised by his mother’s family in a one-room thatched cottage in Bruree.63 He attended school in that village and met Father Eugene Sheehy, a parish priest that provided his first introduction to Irish history and nationalism.64 After secondary school, de Valera enrolled at University College in Blackrock, County Dublin, one of the few institutes of higher-learning open to Catholics. The preeminent Trinity College, the highly-respected university with an almost exclusively Protestant student body, remained inaccessible.65

De Valera’s interest in politics and Irish nationalism was first demonstrated in 1908 when he joined the Gaelic League and “became enthralled with the efforts to revive the Gaelic language.”66 This preoccupation with the traditional Irish language continued visibly throughout his political career. A New York Times article from March of 1944 notes his “passionate insistence” that Ireland maintain the ancient language as a symbol of state sovereignty, even though his supporters “smile at this project as charmingly impractical.”67

63 T. Ryle Dwyer, Eamon de Valera, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980), 4-5.
64 Ibid., 5.
65 Ibid., 5.
66 Ibid., 6.
De Valera’s Politics

De Valera had been a radical proponent of Irish nationalism long before serving as Taoiseach. He was among the last Irish leaders to surrender to British forces after the Easter Rising, served as President of the radical Sinn Fein party, and led the Dail Eireann – an illegal legislative body unrecognized by the British – as Prionh Aire, or First Minister, in 1919.68 Well-known to the British authorities while in captivity following the Rising, de Valera would have been killed for his revolutionary activities were it not for his place of birth and subsequent American citizenship; however, though a US citizen by law, de Valera identified completely with the Irish cause. He once boldly stated, “I ceased to be an American when I became a soldier of the Irish Republic.”69 At the urging of prominent Irish-Americans, President Wilson directed the Ambassador to the United Kingdom to pressure the British cabinet to refrain from executing de Valera, a request to which they acquiesced.70

De Valera’s ideas on Irish foreign policy stemmed largely from his personal political ideology. A firm patriot, he believed in a highly-idealized image of Ireland. His speeches often alluded to Irish history and mythology, particularly its ancient Gaelic past.71 Likewise, he stressed the importance of Catholic Ireland and the equality, or even superiority, of Ireland’s history to that of Great Britain.72 In February of 1933, de Valera

70 Coogan, The IRA, 75.
71 Dowling, “The Ireland that I would Have,” 38.
72 Ibid.
gave a speech at the opening of the Athlone Broadcasting Station in which he described Ireland’s contributions to humanity, noting:

> The Irish genius has always stressed spiritual and intellectual rather than material values. That is the characteristic that fits the Irish people in a special manner for the task, now a vital one, of helping to save western civilisation. The great material progress of recent time, coming in a world where false philosophies already reigned, has distorted men’s sense of proportion, the material has usurped the sovereignty that is the right of the spiritual.

In these words, de Valera’s fatalistic view of Ireland’s importance is evident. This perspective contributed to his patriotic desire for Irish independence from the British crown and his steadfast refusal to submit to the expectations of the Commonwealth during the Second World War.

**Reasons for Neutrality**

De Valera argued that neutrality was the only practical option for Ireland during World War II for a variety of reasons. Primarily, he viewed neutrality as a necessary tool for promoting national self-determination and independence from the Commonwealth. As Fanning argues, Ireland’s neutrality served as a “means whereby the end of sovereignty might be freely expressed,” by clearly demonstrating Ireland’s ability to refuse the British call to arms. Though intended to send a message to the British, this strategy also had a powerful domestic impact in Ireland. Edouard Hempel, the German minister to Ireland, reported to his government that neutrality had a strong effect on the Irish people, noting that the policy “visibly strengthened Irish national self-

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73 Ibid., 39.
consciousness.” In this way, neutrality set a precedent for independence while simultaneously drawing the people of Ireland closer to de Valera’s view of Irish nationhood.

In addition to the Taoiseach’s goal of independence, there were a variety of pragmatic reasons to pursue a policy of neutrality. Most importantly, Ireland was clearly ill-equipped for participation in a large-scale war. The army had only 7,263 regular soldiers when hostilities commenced, a force primarily intended to counter the domestic threat posed by the IRA. Though a recruitment campaign increased the army’s strength to almost 41,000 by May of 1941, a shortness of small arms and a limited capacity for military production significantly diminished the force’s operational capabilities. Additionally, there were significant shortages of clothing and equipment for the troops, with many units unable to procure sufficient numbers of coats, socks, trousers, cutlery, and kit bags, among other items. The Irish Navy was likewise insufficient for the scale of World War II, consisting of only two small and lightly-armed vessels. By comparison, the United States Navy featured over 50 aircraft carriers by 1943 and

76 Ibid., 14.
81 N.B.: The General Report on the Army for the Year 1st April, 1940 to 31st March, 1941 has record of numerous smaller boats that were available for military use.
operated of thousands of ships in total.\textsuperscript{82} The Irish Air Corps was similarly unfit for combat, consisting of a small force that “operated aircraft which were mostly obsolete by the outbreak of hostilities in 1939.”\textsuperscript{83} While the skies over Britain swarmed with aerial warfare, the Irish force featured only this fledgling fleet of aircraft, which it used mainly for destroying anti-aircraft barrage balloons that detached from their moorings in Britain and floated into Irish airspace.\textsuperscript{84} In September of 1940, the Irish military submitted to government the “General Report on the Expansion, Organisation, Training, Equipment and Defensive Preparations of the Army During the Period Commencing 1\textsuperscript{st} May, 1940 and Ended 30\textsuperscript{th} September, 1940.” The report’s aircraft roster shows that the Air Corps had only 4 fighter aircraft, one of which was denoted “unserviceable.”\textsuperscript{85}

In addition to Ireland’s lack of military preparedness for the war, the island’s geographical location relative to Britain made neutrality an attractive policy. Allied and Axis forces alike noted that Ireland would make an ideal staging ground for an assault on England. A declared stance of neutrality, however, might dissuade belligerents from an attack on Ireland. Nevertheless, the possibility of attack from both Allied and Axis powers remained. British cabinet papers from 1940 show that certain members of the Allied war councils argued in favor of seizing Irish ports by force if necessary to keep

\textsuperscript{83} Defense Forces Ireland, \textit{The Irish Defense Forces 1940-1949}, XXVIII.
\textsuperscript{85} Defense Forces Ireland, “General Report on the Expansion, Organisation, Training, Equipment and Defensive Preparations of the Army during the period commencing 1\textsuperscript{st} May, 1940 and Ended 30\textsuperscript{th} September, 1940,” 7.
shipping lanes open to the United States. This dangerous combination of military weakness and strategic importance necessitated a careful neutrality, which de Valera and his government carried out with caution and tact. In the event that diplomacy and neutrality failed, however, the Irish military frantically attempted to prepare for invasion.

The “General Report on the Army for the Year 1st April, 1940 to 31st March 1941” notes the existence of two distinct plans for defense against invasion – one preparing to fight German troops, and the other preparing to fight English.

The internal threat of the IRA also encouraged de Valera to pursue a policy of neutrality. Throughout the war, a number of German spies arrived in Ireland by parachute and submarine, seeking to develop a relationship with the IRA. The practical value of this connection ultimately proved fruitless due to the IRA’s institutional weaknesses and the Irish government’s monitoring and suppression of their activities. Herman Goertz, a German military officer who had parachuted into County Meath in 1940, wrote,

The I.R.A. had become an underground movement in its own national sphere, heavily suppressed by men who knew all their methods...Their internal means of communication were as primitive as boys playing police and brigands...They had not a single wireless operator; they made no attempt to learn messages discipline; their military training was nil.

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89 Coogan, The IRA, 160.
Nevertheless, the threat of IRA collaboration with the Nazis was not unfounded. In 1940, British intelligence informed the Irish government “that an IRA-supported German invasion was imminent.”\textsuperscript{90} Likewise, Dutch officers found papers on the person of a captured SS soldier that described plans for an assault on Ireland as a precursor to a German invasion of Britain.\textsuperscript{91} Despite the IRA’s weaknesses, it was not entirely devoid of operational capability. In December of 1939, IRA volunteers raided an Irish Army weapons store in Phoenix Park in Dublin, stealing “the bulk of the Irish armed forces’ total supply of small-arms ammunition and a quantity of heavy explosives.”\textsuperscript{92} Though the Army managed to recover most of the material, the successful raid illustrates the capabilities of the well-armed and particularly militant IRA.\textsuperscript{93} The organization also established a liaison with the Abwher – the German intelligence wing – and prepared “Plan Kathleen,” a detailed plan for a German landing in Ireland.\textsuperscript{94}

As a result of these threats, de Valera championed legislation to crackdown on dissident activity. On June 14, 1939, he enacted the Offences Against the State Act, which “allowed for the setting up of a military tribunal, imprisonment, and detention without trial” and led to the internment of over 500 suspected IRA operatives during the war.\textsuperscript{95} Aggressive government policy like this would be the hallmark of Irish domestic policy during the war and an important aspect of the nation’s neutrality.

\textsuperscript{90} Gray, \textit{The Lost Years}, 9.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} John P. Duggan, \textit{Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich}, (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1985), 146.
\textsuperscript{95} Gray, \textit{The Lost Years}, 10.
Irish Neutrality Defined

Under the terms of the 1921 Treaty, the Irish Free State was required to “afford to His Majesty’s Imperial Forces…in time of peace such harbour [sic] and other facilities as are indicated in the Annex [harbour facilities at Lough Swilly, Berehaven, and Queenstown]” and “in time of war or of strained relations with a Foreign Power such harbour and other facilities as the British government may require for the purpose of such defense…”96 As a result, the British had a legal claim over these and other Irish ports and military bases in the event of war, circumstances that would enable enemies of Britain to disregard Irish claims of neutrality and engage them in the conflict.97,98

Negotiating an end to the Anglo-Irish Trade War, de Valera entered negotiations with the British government on this and other matters, travelling to London on January 17, 1938.99 As a result of his meetings with British representatives, the British government agreed to abandon their right to the use of Irish military bases and the three ports. This concession, in part a negotiation tactic to make partition more palatable to Irish representatives, also reflected an important reality of British power over a developed Irish state. As Sir Cyril Newall, the Chief of the British Air Staff noted, the loss of the ports “would be a nuisance but their importance was not sufficient to warrant the extensive effort necessary to hold them against a hostile Ireland, still less to effect their capture.”100 In short, the British could no longer easily force Ireland’s hand in policy matters with the threat of

97 *Dwyer, De Valera*, 103.
98 *Dwyer, Behind the Green Curtain*, 1.
99 *Dwyer, De Valera*, 104
100 Canning, *British Policy Towards Ireland*. 
military action. Disallowing British use of these treaty ports no doubt reassured the German government that, despite the “certain consideration” that Ireland would give Britain due to economic necessity, the nation was resolved to remain truly neutral in the conflict. In short, full Irish control over the ports made neutrality a plausible option for the government.

In order to further demonstrate its neutrality, Ireland also instituted policies that committed its security forces to interning downed Allied and Axis airmen captured on Irish soil. Referred to as “guests of the state,” crews from Allied and Axis powers were detained in loose confinement, often with generous perks and paroles. This theoretically ensured that military personnel of belligerent nations could not rejoin the conflict, an important responsibility of neutral nations according to contemporary international standards. Internment practices will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

Ireland also passed a series of laws, the Emergency Powers Acts, during the war that provided the government with extensive powers to limit civil liberties. Article 2 Section 1 of the Emergency Powers Act of 1939 stated:

The Government may, whenever and so often as they think fit, make by order (in this Act referred to as an emergency order) such provisions as are, in the opinion of the Government, necessary or expedient for securing the public safety or the preservation of the State, or for the maintenance of public order, or for the

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101 Dwyer, *Behind the Green Curtain*, 12.
102 Dwyer, *Guests of the State*, 32.
provision and control of supplies and services essential to the life of the community.\textsuperscript{103}

Other clauses of the act provide the government with broad authority to restrict and regulate commerce, seize private property, censor both the press and private means of communication, and detain individuals without trial.\textsuperscript{104} As mentioned previously, other legislation such as the Offenses Against the State Act provided the government with additional broad powers to limit the civil rights of Irish citizens in the name of national security.

These measures were used to control public opinion and maintain domestic order in an effort to maintain an effective policy of neutrality. This censorship enabled Ireland to, as Murphy and O’Neill argue, “make sure that it was quite neutral in public discourse.”\textsuperscript{105} As a result, access to outside information in Ireland was substantially limited, as government censors “operated under a policy of disallowing anything which raised any suspicion of bias” or that would inflame the population to support one side or the other.\textsuperscript{106} Many scholars condemn the severity of Ireland’s censorship measures. F.S.L. Lyons, for example, famously draws an analogy between Ireland during the war and Plato’s allegorical cave, arguing that the Irish people were kept ignorant of the

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 23-24
realities beyond their borders.\textsuperscript{107} Other scholars concur with Lyons, noting a general mood of xenophobia in Ireland during the war and raising moral concerns about the government’s domestic policies.\textsuperscript{108}

One action with particularly interesting moral implications took place upon the death of Adolf Hitler. In keeping with formal expectations of neutrality, the Taoiseach paid diplomatic respects to the German legation in Dublin, an act which an editorial in the\textit{Times of London} called “the strangest of all the strange pages that Mr. de Valera has written in Irish history.”\textsuperscript{109} Though substantially questioned at the time and in later writing, this act illustrates the dedication de Valera and his government had to demonstrating their separation from British authority. A sympathy call to the Germans could not harm the Allied war effort, but it sent a strong message that Ireland would no longer be ruled by foreign powers. It highlighted the image of neutrality that the Irish government had so painstakingly constructed and maintained throughout the course of the war.

Through all of this, de Valera exercised a great degree of personal political autonomy. His party,\textit{Fianna Fail}, held support from the opposition,\textit{Fine Gael}, on neutrality, greatly simplifying matters for the Taoiseach. James Dillon, however, who was deputy head of\textit{Fine Gael} did not abide by his party’s position on the matter. Addressing the\textit{Dail} in July of 1941, he admitted that the policy of neutrality had the

\textsuperscript{107} Lyons,\textit{Ireland Since the Famine}, 557-558.
\textsuperscript{109} Pamela Hinkson, “Eire and Hitler,”\textit{The Times of London} 15 May 1945, Infotrac.
support of the majority of the Irish people and the majority of his party, but “nevertheless contended that the policy was wrong.”\textsuperscript{110} Turning to a religious analogy, he compared Ireland’s neutrality to Pontius Pilate’s role in the crucifixion, and remarked, “I say we know, as between those parties [Allies and Axis], what the truth is – that, on the side of the Anglo-American alliance is right and justice and on the side of the Axis is evil and injustice.”\textsuperscript{111} Dillon would later resign from his position in the party do to its stance on the matter, and – despite several elections throughout the war – de Valera maintained his generally singular control over Irish politics.

**International Comparisons**

Ireland’s refusal to formally join the British war effort contradicted the policies of other Commonwealth states. Australia immediately committed itself to the conflict, stating that Great Britain’s declaration of war legally bound it to participation.\textsuperscript{112} New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa also declared war within a week, though none of these states supported Australia’s doctrine of automatic involvement.\textsuperscript{113} The British, however, concurred with Australia that members of the Commonwealth had such an obligation to participate in the fighting solely because of Britain’s declaration of war. Dominion Secretary Anthony Eden noted that England would neither accept nor formally

\textsuperscript{110} Dwyer, Behind the Green Curtain, 170.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 170-171.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
recognize Irish neutrality, for this would “surrender the hitherto accepted constitutional theory of the indivisibility of the Crown.”

Outside of the Commonwealth, other nations faced decisions like Ireland did. Sweden is a particularly relevant example, since it was “not only strategically surrounded by, but also economically dependent upon the nazi regime.” As a result, its geopolitical situation required a form of neutrality that provided slight favor to the Axis powers in contrast to Ireland’s considerations for the Allies. Sweden’s foreign policy considerations “almost exclusively focused on maintaining a functional and cordial relationship with Hitler’s Germany.” They went so far as to provide “direct logistical support to the German war effort,” a decision that puts Ireland’s neutrality in a new moral perspective.

Another comparable example is the passage of the Lend-Lease Act by the United States in 1941, prior to entering the war. The US remained neutral in the conflict for some time. In fact, as Murphy and O’Neill state, “it is conveniently forgotten that the United States was pulled into the war by a spectacular attack on its own soil, not by any moral compulsion.” Nevertheless, the United States practiced a neutrality – much like

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114 Ibid., 19.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid, 372.
the Irish – that favored the Allied cause. The Lend-Lease Act permitted the United States:

to manufacture in arsenals, factories, and shipyards… or otherwise procure, to the extent to which funds are made available therefor, or contracts are authorized from time to time by the Congress, or both, any defense article for the government of any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States.\textsuperscript{119}

The enacting of legislation that permitted the United States to send materiel to Allied nations, though not an exact parallel to Irish policy, illustrates that some states were able to avoid direct participation in the war without undue harassment from belligerent powers.

\textbf{De Valera and the Cycle of Anglo-Irish Relations}

Returning to a consideration of the Cycle of Anglo-Irish Relations that I propose in Chapter 2, the role of de Valera and Ireland’s neutrality is particularly noteworthy. As noted previously, this cycle – largely driven by the complicity of Irish leaders with British political institutions – breaks during the period of the Second World War. This abrupt disruption of a pattern of behavior which had existed for approximately 800 years was no accident, but rather a direct result of Eamon de Valera’s political decisions as Taoiseach.

At the inception of the Irish Free State, the nation was divided into two major political ideologies. One group, led by the brilliant military tactician Michael Collins, supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, accepting partition and the oath of allegiance

as necessary steps toward eventually attaining full independence. The other group, under
the leadership of de Valera, vehemently opposed the treaty. Examined more broadly, the
divide was between Collins, who participated in British political institutions by agreeing
to the oath of allegiance and Ireland’s place in the Commonwealth, and de Valera who
refused to accept these ties to Britain. This conflict quickly escalated into the Irish Civil
War. Though the pro-treaty faction won, Collins was assassinated in his home county of
Cork before the cessation of hostilities.

With Collins dead, de Valera found himself in an interesting position. Having
just lost the Civil War, he was in no position to lead the nation immediately; however,
Collins’ absence made him the only individual with the influence, charisma, and ability
to eventually take on such a role. Soon after the conflict he returned to politics,
becoming a member of the Dail (TD), President of the Executive Council, and finally
Taoiseach. All major Irish leaders that were agreeable to political affiliation with Britain
were gone. In this way, the British lost the institutional support from Irish leadership that
it had relied on to maintain its influence in Ireland. Consequently, de Valera gained the
opportunity to end the pre-war cycle of Anglo-Irish relations. He was able to exercise a
unique level of control over his country and its relationship with the United Kingdom and
the Commonwealth, which eventually led to legitimate independence for his beloved
nation.
4. Ireland’s Secret War

“The truth is, of course, that in a modern war there is no neutrality.”

– Eamon de Valera, addressing the Dail on the eve of the Second World War

Despite the carefully constructed image of Ireland’s neutrality in World War II, the nation’s policies involved far more than the economic considerations that Germany publically allowed Ireland to make regarding the Allies. In fact, Ireland actively aided the Allied cause in a variety of surreptitious ways, exercising caution to ensure that neither side of the conflict could offer demonstrable evidence that Ireland was not truly neutral as it claimed.

**The Irish Volunteers**

Throughout the war, a significant number of Irish citizens fought in all branches of the British armed services. The exact number of these “Irish Volunteers”, as they were known, is uncertain. Detailed records of their enlistment do not exist, since the British military was not permitted to officially recruit within Ireland’s borders and since, as a post-war London pamphlet notes, “in the conditions in some recruiting centres elsewhere, would-be recruits frequently thought it more prudent not to give their birthplace or addresses as being situated in Eire.”

Though the document does not delineate these conditions, one can imagine several reasons that Irishmen would like to hide their place of birth from military recruiters. First, it is likely that Irish applicants for the British

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120 Dwyer, *Behind the Green Curtain*, 12.
military faced prejudice on an economic, social, or ethnic basis. Additionally, such individuals would probably seek to limit records of their Irish heritage to prevent negative repercussions from their own countrymen, who might express displeasure with the Irish Volunteers for participating in a conflict for which Ireland remained neutral or simply for supporting the traditional enemy, Britain.

Despite this secrecy, it is estimated that 43,249 Volunteers made up the Irish contingent of the British military during the conflict. The aforementioned pamphlet also notes that the eight Victoria Crosses and one George Cross won by these Irish soldiers “proved either that their numbers were very much greater than is officially admitted, or else that the men were of extraordinarily fine quality as fighting men.”

Though exact numbers of Irish casualties are unavailable, it is believed that approximately 3,500 Volunteers from the Free State perished, along with an additional 3,500 soldiers from Northern Ireland. Particularly in light of their recognized gallantry in combat, these volunteers were not insignificant to the Allies, making the contribution of Irish manpower – albeit on an unofficial basis – worthy of remembrance. Bearing in mind the Allied-imposed isolation of Ireland in the months before Operation Overlord commenced on June 6, 1944, it is noteworthy that Irishmen from both sides of the border

122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
participated in the D-Day assaults, stationed aboard Royal Navy ships in the Channel, jumping with airborne units, and storming the beaches in considerable numbers.\textsuperscript{125}

The rigid government control of the press and private communication, as well as the abrogation of certain civil liberties in Ireland during the war, suggests that De Valera could have prevented the Irish Volunteers from fighting in the British military – political institutions and popular opinion would certainly not have stopped him from doing so. The fact that he avoided such a course of action illustrates the Irish government’s willingness to support the Allied cause; however, a related policy illustrates the limit to this allowance. Whereas Irish civilians were quietly permitted to join the British military, Irish soldiers who deserted the Defense Forces to fight for the Allies were punished upon their return to Ireland after the war.\textsuperscript{126} This made a critical public distinction between British soldiers \textit{from Ireland} and \textit{Irish soldiers} in the Defense Forces – the former appearing unsanctioned and the latter representing the Irish state, which needed to appear unified in its support of neutrality.

Though permitting Irish citizens to participate in the British military efforts represents a passive action on the part of de Valera and his government, the Irish enacted many policies that more actively served the Allied cause. These actions were conducted in a manner that either hid them from German attention or appeared ostensibly impartial, but their effects unquestionably benefitted the Allied war effort.

\textsuperscript{125} Wood, \textit{Britain, Ireland, and the Second World War}, 64-65.
Anglo-Irish Intelligence Sharing

G2 (Irish Army Intelligence), the Irish Defense Forces, and the Garda Siochana Special Branch remained in frequent contact with Allied military leaders throughout the war, sharing intelligence via a clandestine liaison between G2 and MI5 that de Valera had secretly approved. This collaboration also involved strategic planning for joint military efforts in the event of a German invasion of Ireland. Given de Valera’s public sentiments on neutrality, British military leaders and intelligence agents were surprised to have such a beneficial relationship with G2. They believed that Colonel Liam Archer, the agency’s director, “was more sympathetic than his political masters,” unaware that all of Archer’s actions were conducted with the Taoiseach’s full knowledge and approval. By maintaining this separation between stated government policy and practical implementation, Ireland contributed to the Allied intelligence gathering efforts without betraying its mission to achieve independence from the British and maintain a public façade of neutrality.

This intelligence that Ireland provided mainly pertained to German military aircraft and submarines that were operating near the island nation. For this purpose, the Irish military constructed radar stations along the coasts to monitor these German movements and established 24-hour report centers at Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and

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130 Ibid., 21.
Reports of submarine activity were secretly transmitted to representatives of the United Kingdom based in Dublin, who could then forward the appropriate directives to Allied military command. Reports on German aircraft, however, were handled differently. The Irish adopted a policy of broadcasting the locations of any belligerent aircraft approaching its airspace, a strategy that maintained the appearance of neutrality by making the information available to both sides of the conflict; however, these broadcasts were by design useful to the Allies only. The proximity of Royal Air Force and United States Air Force bases in Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the areas described in the broadcasts allowed Allied air units to respond promptly. The Germans, however, found themselves at a significant geographic disadvantage, since their aircraft were based too far away to react effectively.

Additional intelligence sharing revolved around the potential threat of IRA collaboration with the German military and intelligence services. Both G2 and the Garda Special Branch passed on information about the organization’s contacts with the Abwher, notably including plans for a German landing in Northern Ireland that was to be supported by republican militants. British-Irish collaboration against the IRA would continue to be a uniting factor in the future, making this wartime example particularly important.

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133 Dwyer, Grounded in Eire, 15.
**Biased Internment**

In addition to tracking belligerent aircraft, Ireland adopted a policy of internment for downed airmen who landed within its borders – an action expected of neutral states under international standards. As noted previously, this policy called for the detainment of all belligerents, or “guests of the state” as the Irish referred to them. In practice, however, Irish security forces and civilians proved somewhat inclined to turn a blind eye to some downed Allied pilots, who were then able to “escape” across the border to Northern Ireland. A report from the British Home Office supports this finding, noting that the Irish internment policy was “not as strictly enforced” with British and American airmen than it was with German ones.\(^{134}\) The same report claims that the Irish government readily dispatched information regarding Luftwaffe aircraft and personnel found within its borders to Allied command.\(^{135}\) Notable Irish historian T. Ryle Dwyer concurs that the internment policy favored the Allies, claiming that “allied personnel were often secretly spirited over the border or released on a pretext, while German airmen and sailors were almost invariably confined for the duration of the war, even when strictly they might have been released in accordance with international law.”\(^{136}\)

Whatever their actual intent, the Irish government clearly sought to maintain the image of neutrality regarding captured combatants. In a letter dated January 8, 1942, Colonel McNally at the Curragh internment camp reported the capture of an escaped

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\(^{135}\) Ibid.

\(^{136}\) Dwyer, *Guests of the State*, 245.
Allied prisoner and noted the political importance of how treatment of the internees was perceived:

…the German Internees…have commented upon our general attitude in connection with British attempts to escape. I quite realize how embarrassing this whole position can be for the Government and I have endeavoured all along to ensure that the treatment for each set of Internees is identical, but while the two sets of prisoners are held so close together there are numerous little incidents occurring which give one or the other side the feeling that there is preferential treatment.\[137\]

Keeping an unbiased image regarding internment was essential for publically maintaining the façade of neutrality. If the Germans had strong evidence that Ireland was returning or permitting the escape of downed Allied combatants, they may well have interpreted this practice as a belligerent act, which could lead to strong political and perhaps even existential ramifications for Ireland – the significantly weaker nation. Similarly, since Ireland also conceived neutrality as a symbol of independence from Britain, the perception of equal treatment of the prisoners of war was important for maintaining the public image of separation from the crown, the Commonwealth of Nations, and the United Kingdom.

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\[137\] Keefer, *Grounded in Eire*, 132-133.
Figure 2 - This internal Defense Forces memo, which discusses problems with the bicycling habits of interned German combatants, is indicative of the relative comforts and rights given to the “guests of the state”.

Of course, the internment policies practical implementation must be considered in light of geography. Although the simple crossing from Ireland to Northern Ireland facilitated the exodus of Allied pilots from Irish detention, no such easy means of escape existed for Axis airmen. As a result, these German escapees would be stuck in Ireland, where there was a high risk that they would attempt to make contact with the

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IRA, Nazi spies, or other dangerous elements that could pose a substantial threat to Ireland’s security. As a result, the security risk of allowing Axis soldiers and airmen to live within Ireland at large may have been a contributing factor to Ireland’s unofficial policy of inequitable internment practices. Nevertheless, the proportional ease with which Allied combatants could escape and the greater risk posed by Axis captives to Irish institutions were not defining aspects of the Irish policy decision. Instead, actions of the Irish government and security services demonstrated undeniable bias in favor of the Allied military effort and enabled many British and American airmen to find their way over the border and then back into combat.

**Spies in Ireland**

Spies of belligerent nations – particularly Germany – were a significant concern of de Valera and his government. As noted previously, their connections with the IRA represented a significant threat to Irish political institutions, and there are several notable instances of espionage in Ireland, though not to the extent claimed by Allied leaders. While the Irish government proved willing to counter the threat of Axis spying, they were more tolerant of Allied agents. In fact, it permitted the American Office of Strategic Services (the precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency), to send an advisor to Dublin to monitor the intelligence gathering and analysis performance of G2 and the Garda Special Branch.\(^\text{139}\)

Allied command feared that the German and Japanese diplomatic presence in Dublin was a front for espionage, and expressed particular concern about the German

legation’s radio transmitter, which de Valera convinced Hempel, the German ambassador, to take down and store in a Dublin bank.\textsuperscript{140} Had the Irish publically chosen to leave the transmitter intact, this would have represented a direct violation of the provisions of Hague V, which states that neutral nations cannot permit a belligerent state to erect such devices.\textsuperscript{141} Hempel’s willingness to acquiesce to this Irish request may have stemmed in part from his political history. His “membership of the Nazi party was nominal and reluctant, and his Irish appointment was attributed to the fact that a real Nazi would not get on with de Valera.”\textsuperscript{142}

Despite the removal of the transmitter, the Allies remained displeased with Ireland’s stance on Axis diplomats. On February 21, 1944, American Ambassador David Gray presented de Valera with a letter from Washington now known as the “American Note.”\textsuperscript{143} The letter demanded the immediate closure of all Axis diplomatic posts in Ireland in order to ensure that the German government was not practicing espionage in Dublin. Despite significant political pressure, de Valera refused to comply, and the foreign missions remained in operation throughout the war. It is noteworthy that the American Note played a bigger role than as just an intergovernmental communique. The propagandistic elements of this letter, which helped shape American and British public opinion of Irish neutrality, will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 63. 
\textsuperscript{141} Convention (V) respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land, International Committee of the Red Cross, Articles 1-4. 
\textsuperscript{142} Dwyer, Guests of the State, 14. 
\textsuperscript{143} Wood, Britain, Ireland, and the Second World War, 63.
Like in instances of captured airmen, it seems that there was fairly substantial bias when it came to handling agents of belligerent nations’ intelligence services. As mentioned previously, the American OSS had a known presence in Dublin, but Allied clandestine agents received preferential treatment as well. One notable example is that of Major Edward Byass, a British spy captured by Irish security forces, but then released. In contrast, the Irish imprisoned all captured German agents for the duration of the war.¹⁴⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Timothy McInerny, a United States Army intelligence officer based in Northern Ireland during the war, is another example of this biased treatment. A Boston Globe article published in 1946 notes that he frequently met with Irish military and intelligence officers during trips south of the border, and that these officers “referred to the Allies as ‘We’ and the Germans as ‘the Jerries.’”¹⁴⁵ The article concludes with a poignant description of the Irish attitude toward McInerny, stating,

No matter how strictly Mr. De Valera and his government interpreted the laws of neutrality, the people, on the other hand, paid little or no attention to them. To begin with, full permission of the Irish Government was accorded this officer to travel to and from his post in the north, the only requirement being that he dress in civilian clothes. The Irish had been looking on foreign uniforms for hundreds of years and had decided the only uniform that could be legally worn at the time in their country was their own.¹⁴⁶

The Irish distinction between Allied and Axis spies not only highlights the effort to assist the Allied cause, but also is an example of cooperation between the security forces of Ireland and the United Kingdom. Working against a common threat, this collaborative effort set an important precedent for the future of their relationship.

¹⁴⁴ Dwyer, Guests of the State, 20.
¹⁴⁵ William Millen, “Boston’s Lt Col “Tim” McInerny Flouts Notion the Irish were Neutral in the War,” The Boston Globe, 5 Jul. 1946, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
¹⁴⁶ Ibid.
Fortunately for the Ireland and the Allies, countering the threat of Nazi espionage in Ireland did not prove very difficult. As noted previously, weaknesses in the IRA limited the value of local contacts for German agents, but uncharacteristic failures in the German intelligence network also contributed to the failure of their efforts. Gunther Schuetz, an experienced German spy who parachuted into Wexford in 1941, is a telling example. He had been so poorly briefed by the Abwher “that he was convinced that the IRA and the Irish Army were one and the same.”\(^{147}\) Captured by the Irish, Schuetz did manage a daring escape from Mountjoy Jail by means of a self-fashioned grappling hook; however, he was soon recaptured and imprisoned for the remainder of the war.\(^{148}\)

In total, it is estimated that approximately 12 German spies were active in Ireland during the war.\(^{149}\) This relatively small number of agents and their inability to achieve any serious successes for the German war effort was due in part to de Valera’s crackdown on the IRA and on Axis espionage efforts, but also in part due to Ireland’s well-crafted neutrality. The government perpetuated an image that made neutrality palatable for the Allies and the Axis, ultimately convincing both sides that it was in their interest to respect Irish policy throughout the war and limit their espionage activities.

**Miscellaneous Considerations**

Though intelligence sharing, biased interment practices, and one-sided counterespionage were the main Irish contributions to the Allied war effort, the Free State provided several other means of assistance. One such action was that Ireland permitted

\(^{147}\) Gray, *The Lost Years*, 73.

\(^{148}\) Ibid.

\(^{149}\) Ibid., 77.
the Allies to use certain areas Irish territory on a limited basis. Though the issue of the treaty ports had threatened to rend the relationship between Britain and Ireland, the Irish did quietly permit the use of Lough Foyne, the airspace corridor at Lough Erne, and the Malin Head wireless facility.\textsuperscript{150} Other small actions that Ireland undertook to help the Allies included dispatching fire brigades to Belfast after German bombings\textsuperscript{151} and allowing the British certain considerations with Irish-registered petroleum tankers.\textsuperscript{152}

![Map featuring the approximate location of the Lough Erne airspace corridor](http://travel.state.gov/_res/images/countries/maps/large/ireland.gif)

\textbf{Figure 3 – Map featuring the approximate location of the Lough Erne airspace corridor}\textsuperscript{153}

It should be noted that Ireland’s military collaboration with Britain was not a one-sided affair. In an effort to ensure that Ireland would not fall into German control, Britain

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\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{152} Dwyer, \textit{Guests of the State}, 16.

\textsuperscript{153} Original image from State Department
 http://travel.state.gov/_res/images/countries/maps/large/ireland.gif
lent assistance to the fledgling Irish military. For example, the British armed forces furnished limited amounts of equipment, arms, and ammunition to the Irish, and on at least one occasion sent a Royal Air Force instructor to train Irish airmen.\footnote{Defense Forces Ireland, \textit{The Defense Forces 1940-1949: The Chief of Staff's Reports}, ed. Michael Kennedy and Victor Laing, (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2011), University Archives, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.}\footnote{Ibid., xxviii.} This spirit of collaboration hints at the true relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom during the war, suggesting that Irish policy had left the two nations on better terms than many historians might suggest or than the general public might recognize.

**Conclusion**

With such interaction with the Allied powers, it would be difficult to characterize Ireland’s policies as legitimately neutral; however, there were limits to its participation that irked Churchill, Roosevelt, and other important Allied leaders. Ireland’s failure to declare war, mobilize forces against the Germans, or allow Britain the use of the treaty ports complicated its relations with the Allies, and opened the door for some scholars to question the moral legitimacy of Ireland’s wartime policies. Beyond politics and strategy, however, many saw Ireland’s actions in a positive light rather than as an example of appeasement of the Nazis or spite for the British. Even Bertie Smyllie, the contemporary editor of the \textit{Irish Times} referred to as “an unabashed Anglophile” believed that Ireland’s policies aided the Allied war effort, coining the term “unneutral neutral Eire” to describe Ireland’s position in war-time Europe.\footnote{Murphy and O’Neill, \textit{High Destiny}, 31.} Nevertheless, unsatisfied
Allied leaders clamored for additional Irish participation in the conflict, obfuscating much of Ireland’s assistance in an effort to shame the nation into a declaration of war.

It is worth considering whether Ireland’s declared neutrality served Britain’s interest better than if they had declared war. If Dublin had provoked a German invasion by declaring its support for the Allied cause, the United Kingdom might have found itself completely surrounded. With Irish ports and air bases under Nazi control, Britain would likely have been cut off from U.S. shipping, subject to bombing runs from the East and West, and perhaps even to a land invasion. It is, of course, difficult to predict such outcomes – there are simply too many variables at play. What is clear, however, is that tactful diplomacy from Ireland and its willingness to walk the tightrope of neutrality during a global conflict kept the Germans at bay and likely saved Britain from conducting war on yet another front.

In Chapter 1, I define a neutral state as one that adopts a stated policy of non-belligerency and abides by current international standards of neutrality without giving undue considerations or favoritism to belligerents on either side of a given conflict. Clearly, Ireland’s actions during the war exceed the permissible limits of neutrality. Though careful to appear as though it was respecting the standards of state neutrality, Ireland actually gave substantial assistance to the Allied war effort. This raises an important question: If Ireland provided notable help to the United Kingdom during the conflict, why does history present a different narrative of Irish action during this period? The answer lies in the complex mechanisms of propaganda and censorship active
throughout the war, which shaped public perception of Ireland and significantly impacted Anglo-Irish relations.
5. Propaganda, Pressure, and the Public Perception of Irish Neutrality

“It may be observed that American city dwellers, denied the use of their motor cars for escape to sea and countryside, do not enjoy the thought of the representatives of Japan, Germany, and Italy driving their automobiles about Ireland with American gasoline.”

“American opinion feels a sense of grievance that you make no contribution to the maintenance of a supply line, by which in so important measure, your national economy is maintained.”

-Excerpts from a letter from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Eamon de Valera

Though over 60 years have passed since the end of hostilities, public perception of Ireland’s role in the Second World War remains decidedly negative. Historians and casual observers of world affairs often raise practical and moral qualms about Ireland’s refusal to participate in the conflict against the Axis powers, not realizing the significant contributions the nation made to the Allied cause. It may be worth noting that much of the scholarship on this topic is penned by English scholars, whose prejudicial view toward the Irish war effort is at times easily apparent. Nevertheless, this lopsided trend is not solely an invention of British popular opinion. Furthermore, neither academics nor the public are fully responsible for the general view of Ireland during the war. The responsibility lies largely with Allied public relations efforts at naming and shaming the Irish government in an effort to pressure the Free State into greater participation in the conflict.

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Allied Pressure and Propaganda

As noted previously, collaboration between the Irish and the Allied forces was not uncommon throughout the course of the war; however, Allied leaders still desired more assistance from the small nation. Seeking to increase Ireland’s participation in the conflict, they initiated a campaign of public pressure on de Valera and his government to openly declare war on Axis forces. Cole notes that “Britain and then the United States employed propaganda, and diplomacy that often resembled propaganda, in an effort to persuade Eire to set aside denial…, resentment…, and neutrality.”158 Some of these “diplomatic measures” included the publication of letters from Allied leaders to de Valera. One such letter was the famous “American Note” which demanded the expulsion of Axis diplomatic representatives from Ireland. The note, extensively reviewed in the American and British press, called the removal of these diplomats an absolute minimum requirement for Ireland. As printed in the Times of London, the letter also claimed that Irish neutrality favored the Axis powers, stating,

It has become increasingly apparent that, in spite of the declared desire of the Irish Government that its neutrality should not operate in favour of either of the belligerents, it has in fact operated and continues to operate in favor of the Axis powers and against the United Nations, on whom your security and national economy depend. One of the gravest and most inequitable results of this situation is the opportunity for highly organized espionage, which the geographical position of Ireland affords to the Axis and denies to the United Nations.159

Clearly, Americans were displeased with Ireland’s refusal to comply. As a March 1944 article in the New York Times hints, even such an “extreme measure” as military

intervention in Ireland was not out of the question.\textsuperscript{160} The same article, while refraining from directly attacking the Irish position, hints that the presence of Axis diplomats in Dublin could be threatening to the Allied cause.\textsuperscript{161}

Additionally, the Allies – particularly the British Ministry of Information – frequently used religion as a unifying theme in its propaganda tailored for Ireland, “connecting Britain’s cause in the war to the defense of Christianity”.\textsuperscript{162} Though used in this instance merely as a propaganda tool, the cultural similarities between Britain and Ireland (including religious similarities between Catholicism and Anglicanism) were a contributing factor to Ireland’s pro-Allied actions during the war and would play an important role in post-war Anglo-Irish relations.

\textbf{Irish Propaganda and Censorship}

Partially in response to Allied efforts to alter Irish policy, de Valera’s government used extensive propaganda in an effort to maintain public support for neutrality and to ensure foreign powers that Ireland did not hold undue favoritism toward one side or the other. Through the Government Information Bureau (GIB), Ireland circulated government ideology domestically via Radio Eireann, the Irish press, and in foreign newspapers throughout Northern Ireland and Britain.\textsuperscript{163} Complementing these efforts were stringent censorship measures that monitored “telegrams, wireless transmissions,

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\textsuperscript{160} “Espionage in Eire Called Impossible,” \textit{The New York Times}, 18 Mar. 1944, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.  \\
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{162} Cole, \textit{Propaganda Censorship and Irish Neutrality in the Second World War}, 133.  \\
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 22.
\end{flushleft}
the post, theatre, film, newspapers, journals and other print materials." Government officials could ban or edit foreign films, restrict importation of foreign news sources, and seize documents or pamphlets that were deemed threatening to Ireland’s position in the war.¹⁶⁵

The intent of this Irish censorship was two-fold. Primarily, the government needed to demonstrate a commitment to neutrality across all aspects of Irish media so that foreign belligerent powers would not have any reason to claim that Ireland had strayed from its stated policy. The Irish people’s attitudes made up an important secondary concern as well. Censorship allowed the government to monitor and control public opinion about the war, which protected against civil unrest or public demands for support for one side of the conflict or the other.

The government was not the only institution unleashing propaganda from within Ireland; the IRA unleashed its own propaganda as well. Using the slogan “IRISHMEN STOP AND THINK before you accept Churchill’s guns to fight for the British Empire,” it urged the people of Ireland to disregard Britain’s demands for Irish participation in the war.¹⁶⁶ Despite this effort, the government’s crackdown on dissident activity and its censorship measures largely neutered the IRA information campaign as well as much of its operational capabilities.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 31.
¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 32.
¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 23.
Axis Propaganda

The Fichtebund propaganda agency in Berlin distributed propaganda materials to subversive elements in Ireland throughout the war, but strict censorship measures made it difficult for the Nazis to reach the wider audience of the general Irish population. The radio was one means of distributing propaganda that the Irish censors could not fully stamp out. As a result, the Nazis employed Irish-language broadcasts, which were well received by Irish listeners since they represented the “first international recognition of the Irish language.”

Additionally, Nazi propaganda head Joseph Goebbels commissioned two anti-British movies set in Ireland during the war, Mein Leben für Irland (My Life for Ireland) and Der Fuchs von Glenarvon (The Fox of Glenarvon). These films featured plots that disparaged the history of British involvement in Irish affairs, and attempted to paint the United Kingdom as an aggressive oppressor of the Irish people.

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167 Duggan, Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich, 79-80.
Figure 4: Examples of Nazi Propaganda Films Tailored for Ireland

Public Perception of Ireland among the Allies

As a result of propaganda measures in Britain and the United States, public perception of Ireland remained generally negative in Allied nations throughout the war. The propaganda machine of the Allied forces had done its work well – limiting public exposure to Ireland’s contributions to the war while highlighting the limits of the nation’s participation in it. As a result, citizens of these countries felt that Ireland had abandoned them and failed to embrace its own moral responsibility.

One way in which this low public opinion is made evident is through an examination of the press in Britain and the United States. In this chapter, I primarily examine government publications and three major American newspapers, the Boston

\[\text{Images from http://stores.reichskino.com/media/00/a64734112eb6a6ce2c761e_m.jpg and http://img6.imagebanana.com/img/l0cwewew/37_MeinLebenfuerIrland.jpg}\]
Globe, the Chicago Daily Tribune, and the New York Times and one major British publication, the Times of London. Using the ProQuest Historical Newspaper database and the Gale Group Infotrac database, I found a significant number of articles published throughout the war on Irish policy.

**United States Media**

Each of these newspapers published extensively on Ireland and its neutrality throughout the war. Many articles were particularly critical of Ireland’s refusal to allow Allied use of Irish ports and its decision not to remove Axis diplomats from Dublin. Articles also promoted polling data about Irish-American displeasure with Irish policy, in an apparent attempt to sway political sentiments by illustrating that even those American citizens with closest ties to Ireland sought increased Irish participation in the war. Though many journalists explained the Irish perspective on the war and some potential reasons for the nation’s neutral stance, the vast majority were unforgiving and quick to cite the strategic advantages that Ireland was denying to the Allies.  

It is noteworthy that, in contrast to polling-data on the Irish diaspora’s stance on

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171 See Also William King, “Irish Frontier Provides Loopholes for Axis Agents,” The Boston Globe, 6 Feb. 1942, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.  
172 See Also Henry Harris, “British Gaze with Longing at those Irish Air Bases,” The Boston Globe, 8 Dec. 1940, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.  
175 See Also “Mr. De Valera’s Neutrality,” The New York Times, 12 Mar. 1944, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.  
neutrality, Irish-American media sources such as the *Gaelic American* and the *Irish World* came out vehemently against supporting the British in the early days of the war. Despite their efforts, these publications had no significant impact on public opinion in the United States.

There is an expected change in tone in the United States press after the events of Pearl Harbor and America’s entry into the conflict. An excellent example of this change can be found in two articles from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* – both published by Larry Rue of the Tribune press service. The first, published on August 20, 1941, blandly reports that the U.S. is pressuring Ireland to let Britain use the treaty ports before going on to describe Ireland’s shortage of wheat, coal, and gas. Only four months later, weeks after the infamous December 7th, Rue declares these ports “vital for America’s fight” and cites a British message to Ireland that bluntly demands that the Irish nation “face up to its responsibilities.” Americans may have been able to conveniently forget their own original neutrality in this conflict, which they now observed in terms of a great struggle between good and evil; however, their negative view of Ireland’s comparable position remained prevalent.

*British Media*

The *Times of London* published a variety of articles with thinly, if at all, veiled criticism of Ireland that undoubtedly impacted public opinion in Britain. Some of the

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disparagement came in the form of dry humor, such as the assertion that proposed legislation in the *Dail* that would enact mandatory military training for Irish citizens was a bill “of the kind which Irishmen love, and for which they doubtless feel that they have lately had all too little opportunity.” Others were more straightforward and clear in their assertion that Britain strongly condemned Irish neutrality. On March 15, 1944, the *Times* reported measures to isolate Ireland by preventing travel from the UK to the South of Ireland. It quoted Churchill’s statement that the Irish refusal to remove Axis diplomats from Dublin was a “substantial disservice to the Allied cause” and prominently displayed the British gratitude for Irish citizens who had disregarded their government’s stance and joined the British military.

British reporting also featured stories that were quick to draw connections between Ireland’s policies and Catholicism, displaying the emotional remnants of beleaguered Protestantism that had long fractured British society along religious lines. One such example occurred on Valentine’s Day of 1942, in a *Times of London* article describing rumors of a United States envoy to Dublin seeking permission to establish bases in the South. The first sentence of the article notes that the likely American representative, Associate Supreme Court Justice Frank Murphy, is “an Irish-American

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and a devout Catholic.” Similarly, a 1943 article suggests fears that Irish nationalism will lead to a form of Gaelic-Catholic oppression with hints of racially-supported fascism, noting:

It is sometimes suggested in Dublin that Eire’s nationalist idealism will find an outlet in the form of Roman Catholic and Gaelic totalitarianism somewhat akin to that which Dr. Salazar has established in Portugal. It is by no means an inconceivable eventuality, though others appear at least as likely; if the existing democratic form of government ended in a welter of small and ineffective groups, something of the kind might come. The appearance of some traces of anti-Semitism are at least suggestive, even if at present negligible. There was also certain evidence that some at any rate of the young Gaels are longing for opportunities of racial self-expression, and models, however discredited elsewhere, are not far to seek.

The allusion to fascism – particularly paired with the certain, albeit limited, accusation of anti-Semitism – would have stood out to contemporary British audiences as an implicit comparison between Ireland and the Axis powers. It is noteworthy, however, that despite the article’s assertion that the Irish were disinterested and uninvolved, it speaks to Eamon de Valera’s character and sense of purpose. Though the British may have held a great distaste for Ireland and its neutrality, certain elements in society demonstrated a measure of respect for the Taoiseach’s resolve.

Polling Data

Published polling data also provides valuable insight into public perception of Irish neutrality. In April of 1944, Gallup published the results of a poll which indicated the American public’s ignorance of Irish participation in the war. Among the “three out

187 Ibid.
of every five in the voting population who say they have heard or read about the United States request that Axis representatives be removed from Eire,” 66% responded that they “think the U.S. Should Do Something Further.” George Gallup himself notes in a contemporary *Boston Globe* piece that “the dominant group favoring further action by the United States say this country should use force if necessary to make Ireland get rid of Axis envoys.” The article also notes that an “almost equally large group” instead called for economic sanctions or dissolution of diplomatic relations with Ireland. It goes on to cite a 1942 Gallup poll which further expresses America’s frustration with Ireland, in which 90% of the public and 72% of Irish Americans responded that they “feel that Eire should cede use of strategic bases to the Allies” and in which 70% of Americans responded that Ireland should abandon its policy of neutrality.

**Conclusion**

As a result of this extensive propaganda and censorship, neither the public in Ireland nor in any of the Allied nations had an accurate lens through which to gauge the nature of Anglo-Irish relations during the war. The Irish people lacked access to legitimate news of the war and its participants, substantially limiting their understanding of their government’s position relative to that of the United Kingdom. Similarly, Ireland’s contributions to the war effort were ignored in Allied media, leaving the citizens

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189 Ibid.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
of those nations no alternative but to believe that Ireland was at moral fault – selfishly avoiding their responsibility to fight the Axis powers.

Perhaps the British felt this sentiment even more strongly than the citizens of other Allied nations because of their unique relationship with the Irish. Though their shared history had not been entirely positive, the recent end of the Economic War and the generous terms of the 1921 Treaty left many Britons with the feeling that Irish responsibilities as a member of the Commonwealth and as a potential new ally of the United Kingdom were not unreasonable. From the British perspective, Ireland’s legal duties as a Commonwealth member state were dwarfed by its moral duty, what many Britons saw as a simple matter of fairness in response lenient UK policy and an obligation to combat a clear evil.

Of course, the matter of Irish neutrality during World War II is a far more complex issue than this perspective recognizes. After Europe’s guns fell silent and the threat of Nazi aggression ended, the propaganda and censorship that hid Ireland’s wartime contributions faded as well. Slowly, the world learned of Ireland’s actual policies during the war; however, the damage had been done. Years of one-sided reporting and international pressure had painted Ireland in a very negative light – a portrayal that would have future implications for its relationship with the United Kingdom and that would remain the dominant story of the state’s actions during the war.
6. A Consolidated Model Analysis of Wartime Anglo-Irish Relations

“I am convinced that he is really genuine in desiring whole-hearted friendship and co-operation between the Irish Free State and Great Britain.”

- Dominions Secretary Malcolm MacDonald on de Valera, during 1938 treaty port negotiations 192

The relationship between any two nations is inherently complex and multifaceted, and that of Ireland and the United Kingdom is no exception. Their historical disagreements were further compounded by Irish policy during the Second World War, as well as subsequent Allied propaganda efforts that depicted Ireland very negatively in the eyes of the British public. Nevertheless, despite negative public opinion of Ireland during the war, the relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom may not have been as poor as one might assume. In order to discuss the relationship between these two specific nations, it is first necessary to determine what defines the nature of relations between countries generally.

Relationships between any two states are determined by the decisions and priorities of each individual state, which International Relations theory explains through the lenses of three main analytical models – realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Each model provides a perspective for examining state actions; however, they cannot effectively analyze the full spectrum of variables that impact state decision making processes. Realism disregards institutional power and social processes of ideological formation. Likewise, liberalism discounts the central importance of military strength and

192 Dwyer, Eamon de Valera, 104.
overemphasizes the ability of institutions to effect change in the international system. Finally, constructivism focuses solely on ideas and normative development, paying no mind to the tangible mechanisms that are essential to international relations.

**A Consolidated Model of International Relations**

Since the main theories of International Relations fail to accurately explain or predict state action, they cannot possibly analyze how states relate to each other – Ireland and the United Kingdom in this instance. In response to this shortcoming, I propose a model for analyzing the relationship between any two states based on four parts, listed here in order of importance from most to least: self-interest considerations, institutional interaction, domestic public sentiment, and the relationship among political elites. The better each state relates to the other on each level of the model, the better their relationship is.

**Self-Interest Considerations**

The most important facet of the model is a state’s self-interest considerations. If a state recognizes that it would be in its own interest to pursue a relationship with another state, it will work to establish and maintain positive relations with that other state. A given state’s self-interest considerations can be categorized into three distinct parts: national security, economic prosperity, and the maintenance of the national prestige – a state’s reputation based upon a socially-constructed identity.

This claim assumes that all states are rational actors – that their actions are the product of reasonable processes of self-interested decision making. Some might find this
proposition faulty, claiming that international actors do not all pursue rational strategies. Popular media, for example, often describes countries such as North Korea (DPRK) as an example of an irrational actor. In this particular example, the DPRK’s policy of antagonizing western powers with nuclear development and the maintenance of an oppressive regime are the particular actions that seem bizarre to casual observers. The DPRK’s actions, however, are the result of a rational decision making process that balances a multitude of interests and policy goals such as isolationism, centralization of governmental authority, and maintaining a balance of power against perceived external threats. Another popular example offered by those claiming that international actors are not always rational is that of Islamist terrorist organizations, whose religious fanaticism and use of suicide attacks seem unreasonable to many observers. The adoption of suicide tactics and adherence to religious extremism, however, can be explained as rational decisions. Suicide attacks are a solution to meeting an enemy in asymmetrical military conflict. Religious extremism, though it bears results which shock the conscience, is likewise a rational strategy of social formation in societies that lack other viable institutions.

It does not matter whether a policy is capable of producing objectively positive results, since the essence of national interest relies on the subjective view of the particular nation. As a result, state policies are always rational. Consequently, no state will undertake a course of action that does not seek to attain a policy interest. Though states might accept the incurrence of short-term losses, their policies are always intended to bring about long-term gains at a minimum cost and without ultimate abandonment of its values and identity.

Institutional Interaction

The next most important factor in determining how any two states relate to each other is the institutional interactions of the two respective states. Acting upon self-interest, states choose to participate in such institutions willingly. Overall, a higher level of positive institutional interaction between any two states results in a better relationship between them.

International institutions in the global system generally lack sufficient enforcement abilities to leverage hard power against a state; but these institutions exercise authority in other ways. Koenig notes, for example, that even when certain states are unwilling to participate in binding human rights conventions, there is a “norm cascade” that pressures reluctant states to participate.\(^\text{195}\) Interestingly, institutional regulations can seemingly impact how international actors behave beyond the scope of the particular restrictions. For example, Slaughter-Burley and Mattli demonstrate that the

European Court of Justice has had profound impact “on the politics of European integration, transforming political into legal issues with the aid of transnational networks of lawyers and judges.”

Likewise, Mitchell demonstrates that international regulation “on the kinds of tanks that ships are allowed to use…have had a dramatic impact on intentional [emphasis added] discharge of oil into the oceans.” Keohane suggests that these outcomes occurred because institutions “change the incentives for states to cheat…reduce transaction costs, link issues, and provide focal points for cooperation.”

In this way, states that participate in international institutions together naturally grow closer, essentially creating two identity groups: those who participate in the institution (and its set of normative expectations) and those who do not. Non-participating states become the psychological “other” and, depending on the moral gravity of the particular norm, may be vilified for their unwillingness or inability to support the institution and its accompanying norms.

The relationship between institutional interaction and positive relations between states is further demonstrated by liberal peace theory, which argues for “the tendencies of liberal states simultaneously to be peace-prone in their relations with each other and war-prone in their relations with nonliberal states.” If participation in the ideological institution of liberalism, along with its affiliated organizations (such as the United

197 Ibid.
198 Ibid., 49.
Nations and International Court of Justice), has a formative effect on state policy in such an important area as warfare, the power of such institutions cannot be underestimated. These institutions can significantly affect the policy choices of any given state and either encourage or discourage relations with another state depending on where that state lies in relation to the institution’s aims.

**Domestic Public Sentiment**

The public opinion of a state’s citizens also affects relations with another state, because governments of all types are on some level reliant on the support of its people. Recent events in the Middle East and the Maghreb have established that even the most autocratic states can find themselves subject to the will of the people if the government does not adequately respond to the pressures of domestic opinion. This public opinion impacts that particular state’s relationship with another state by influencing policymakers. Because of public opinion, leaders must concern themselves what Alon calls the “internal dimensions of the interests in survival of state and government” – re-election, defending government credibility, maximizing national economic indicators, and defending government policy on ideological grounds. Alon also describes internal polarity – “the degree to which power is concentrated within the state...[that] essentially focuses on the power of the government in relation to society.” Internal polarity is important because the more power government has over society, the less it has to alter policy to reflect public opinion. In short, the relationship between any two states is improved if public

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201 Ibid., 216.
sentiment in each state favors the other state and lessened if the public sentiment is negative. Furthermore, this result is magnified if the states feature internal polarity that grants power to the public over government authority and diminished in the opposite case.

**Relationship between or among political elites**

The relationships among political elites in any two states have an important impact on those states’ relations. The development of these elite relationships is fueled by shared ideological affinities and common experiences that bind individuals both socially and psychologically. These elites have significant authority over media, production, legislation, and other instruments of power. As a result, their interests and opinions can have a drastic effect on the policy interests of a state and its subsequent relationships with other states.

The relationships between U.S. presidents and British prime ministers provide several ideal examples for observing the effects of personal interaction among political elites in high politics. The importance of common experiences is demonstrated by the relationship between President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan. After Kennedy met Khrushchev in Vienna in 1961, he visited Macmillan at 10 Downing Street to discuss the summit. Both leaders had experienced the crushing responsibility of countering Soviet ambitions, leading Kennedy to later remark, “I feel at home with Macmillan
because I can share my loneliness with him.”  

The effect of ideological affinities can also be seen in the dynamic relationship between President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher, a “political match made in heaven” who were united by common political philosophy and similar religious upbringing.”  

Shared ideology also brought President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Blair together, both men strong believers in the neoconservative strategy to end terrorism and alter the political landscape of the Middle East. The effect of all of these relationships is evident: closer ties between the United States and Britain and the formation of new international norms and institutions.

Of course, the impact of interaction among political elites on inter-state relations is not limited to the United States and United Kingdom. Rather, this is a broadly-applicable political concept evident though the centuries. For example, intermarriage and family ties forged relationships between kingdoms across Europe in the middle ages. A more recent example is the current influence on Thai-Cambodian relations by the personal relationship between Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Thai Former Prime Minister Thaksin, who is related to the current leader, Yingluck Shinawatra.  

Similarly, former Secretary of State for East Asia Christopher Hill claims that the

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204 http://www.nationmultimedia.com/politics/Personal-ties-feuds-distort-Thai-Cambodian-relatio-30198641.html
personal relationship between leaders is essential to the future of the alliance between the U.S. and South Korea.\textsuperscript{205}

Political elites are not solely heads of government or state. Rather, this category includes military leaders, titans of industry or finance, influential legislators or judicial authorities, and any other individual with the resources and ability to impact state policy in a meaningful way. Though considered the least important aspect of the Consolidated Model, relations among these elites are still a highly important part of interstate relations that will be important for analyzing Anglo-Irish relations.

\textit{Symbiotic Relationship between Elements of the Consolidated Model}

It is important to note that each element of the model I propose extensively influences the others. National prestige, for example, is based in part on the domestic social processes that make up public opinion. The relationship among elites can impact domestic sentiment, since these elite individuals have a greater voice in any polity than the average system. Likewise, institutional interactions can develop relationships among elites who would otherwise not meet. Though I have attempted to demonstrate that there is a hierarchy of importance to state considerations that determine how they relate to other states, each aspect of the puzzle is important and cannot be discounted in an analysis of the relationship between any two states.

\textsuperscript{205} http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-personal-ties-that-bind
Having established a means by which to characterize the relationship between any two states and, in previous chapters, presented a detailed analysis of Irish policy during the Second World War, I turn now to a study of Anglo-Irish relations during the conflict. Using each element of the Consolidated Model, I will discuss how the two states interacted in order to determine the nature of their relationship. My analysis will be unable to meet the expectations of that trend among political scientists to seek empirical measurements of social phenomena; however, I believe that this is not so much a failure
but rather an attribute of the Consolidated Model. I intend for this model to be a balance between the numerical specificity of political scientists and the intentional disregard for certain variables held by IR theorists. As a result, I attempt to present all relevant variables for interstate relations without assigning them specific values – a fool’s errand, in my opinion, due to the incredibly complex and fluid nature of global politics. Instead, I rate each Anglo-Irish interaction using the Consolidated Model on the following scale: Very Negative Interactions, Somewhat Negative Interactions, Somewhat Positive Interactions, and Very Positive Interactions. Those interactions which are Very Negative are characterized by extremely negative sentiments from one or both states, which threatens their productive coexistence. Those which are Somewhat Negative feature a relationship in which the Consolidated Model aspect does not contribute to state relations, but does not threaten their ability to function together in the international system. Those interactions which are Somewhat Positive contribute to productive relations, but have significant negative factors as well. Finally, those which are Very Positive contribute strongly to relations between the two states without any significant negativity.

Anglo-Irish Relations and Self-Interest Considerations

Self-interest considerations for Ireland and the United Kingdom were particularly important due to the extreme necessities of wartime survival. Though most Britons agreed that the Irish should cede the treaty ports to the United Kingdom and declare war on the Axis powers, many recognized the value of a neutral Ireland that did not require defense or supply. Additionally, British cabinet members’ uncertainty on whether to use
military force to compel Irish participation in the conflict demonstrates that the UK’s national interest was not entirely well-defined in this area. Nevertheless, Britain clearly objected to Ireland’s increased efforts for separation from the Commonwealth and the United Kingdom – particularly in a time of war – and felt that Irish neutrality was a potential threat to British interests. Of course, Ireland’s desire for independence and isolation from the conflict constituted a national interest that was incompatible with British wishes. As a result, from both the British and Irish perspective, self-interest considerations divided the two nations rather than united them, creating a very negative interaction on the Consolidated Model scale.

*Anglo-Irish Relations and Institutional Interaction*

Institutional interactions between Ireland and the United Kingdom were unique during the war, particularly due to the unique political relationship between the two nations. The Irish Free State still maintained membership in the British Commonwealth; however, when the Commonwealth nations mobilized to support the British war effort, the Irish obviously declined to take that course of action. In this particular institution, then, the relationship between the two was poor.

More broadly, however, institutional interaction was largely positive. As noted previously, the two nations established secret networks of defense collaboration and intelligence sharing that contributed to the Allied cause and were widely praised among the military leaders of both Ireland and the United Kingdom. Likewise, many Britons and Irish recognized the similarities between their cultural institutions and religions.
Common ground of Christianity and western values helped establish a unity of thought between the historical enemies, which led many private Irish citizens to support the United Kingdom in the war and helped many individuals in Britain to better understand the Irish position on neutrality.

Overall, the disagreement between the two nations in the Commonwealth detracts from the value of their institutional interactions; however, the cultural institutions that they share and the establishment of links for military purposes represents a powerful new form of institutional interaction. As a result, I characterize the value of this interaction as somewhat positive.

**Anglo-Irish Relations and Domestic Public Sentiment**

On the British side, domestic public sentiment was bound to be negative due to the nature of Allied propaganda that I detail in Chapter 5. Led by the example of political elites and the government, the British public generally held a very low opinion of Ireland’s decision to remain neutral in the war. Hidden from knowledge of Ireland’s military and intelligence-sharing contributions to the war, the people believed that Ireland had a moral and legal obligation to participate in the conflict. They generally held the opinion that Ireland lived comfortably under the umbrella of British regional strength while English cities suffered carpet bombings and drastic shortages of food and supplies.

The Irish people held the United Kingdom in a higher regard, although – as noted previously – certain elements of the population remained vehemently opposed to all things British. Despite the efforts of the IRA and individuals with similar sentiments,
however, the Irish public had a generally positive feeling about the United Kingdom’s place in the war. Drastic censorship measures and travel restrictions imposed by the Irish government prevented most citizens from accessing the information needed to articulate a nuanced or well-informed opinion on the conflict, so this sentiment did not change or develop over the course of the war. The public maintained a favorable perspective on the United Kingdom – an important fact in light of the historical enmity between the two peoples. De Valera’s strategies had begun to set Ireland apart from the United Kingdom, but not by developing the hatred that had existed previously. If the Irish opinion of the British in the war proves anything, it is that this hatred was beginning to dissipate.

On the Consolidated Model scale, public opinion interactions were somewhat negative. The British did not think so poorly of the Irish that popular demonstrations or electoral changes forced the United Kingdom to take drastic measures against the Free State; however, they were significantly displeased by Ireland’s neutrality. Furthermore, the simple but positive Irish view of Britain during the conflict made the interaction more positive in two ways – first by keeping one side of the question (Ireland) positive and secondly, by establishing strict censorship, keeping any negative Irish opinions from reaching a British audience. Wartime measures tilted internal polarity in favor of the government, thereby limited the importance of domestic public opinion; however, it also involved substantial propaganda and censorship that shaped public perception.
At the very highest level, the relationship between two British and Irish political elites was exceptionally negative. Prime Minister Churchill and Taoiseach de Valera had a longstanding personal dislike for each other, an emotion which Churchill often expressed with his characteristic vigor. David Freeman notes the Prime Minister’s negative attitude in a paper published by the Churchill Centre in London:

[He] never understood the domestic political reality in Ireland during the war, resented de Valera’s stance, and failed to acknowledge the tacit assistance the Irish government did provide in the war against Germany. The source of both Churchill’s attitude and that of the Irish population which de Valera’s policy of neutrality reflected obviously pre-dated the 1939-45 conflict. Churchill and de Valera had a history that stretched back to the War of Independence, but their relationship does not adequately reflect the relationships among all British and Irish elites. Again, it is Irish military and intelligence-sharing efforts to aid the British war effort that redeems the relationship between the two states. As noted previously, this institutional development improved the relationship between military elites and some political figures, detracting from the negative implications of the personal disagreements between Churchill and de Valera. Nevertheless, this negative interaction between elites outweighs the positive ones because of the power of the two heads of state; therefore, I characterize the elites’ interaction as somewhat negative.

Conclusion

In short, the Consolidated Model analysis of Anglo-Irish Relations during the war is that the interactions between the two states were somewhat negative. Though the Irish practiced secret collaboration and tactful diplomacy to keep the British from initiating a radical response to Irish neutrality, this was not enough to characterize the relationship between the two states in a positive way.

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Figure 6: The Consolidated Model Analysis of Anglo-Irish Relations during World War II

Nevertheless, it is important to note the unique circumstances of wartime relations. Censorship and propaganda strongly affected domestic public sentiment and that the urgency of war had significant implications of self-interest considerations and institutional interactions. Understanding the relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom during the war illustrates the brilliance of de Valera’s policies and is a remarkably interesting aspect of history; however, the way that Irish neutrality affected Anglo-Irish relations cannot be determined solely by an examination of their relationship in this unique setting. Their relationship following the conflict is of equal importance, and it demonstrates how Irish policy during the war impacted the future of Anglo-Irish relations.
7. Anglo-Irish Relations in the Post-War Years

I send you my sincere good wishes on this day, being well aware of the neighbourly links which hold the people of the Republic of Ireland in close association with my subjects of the United Kingdom. I hold in most grateful memory the services and sacrifices of the men and women of your country who rendered gallant assistance to our cause in the recent war and who made a notable contribution to our victories. I pray that every blessing may be with you today and in the future.207

- King George IV to President O’Kelly, April 18, 1949

With the end of hostilities in World War II came an end to censorship and wartime propaganda. The world finally began to learn of Ireland’s contributions to Allied war effort, which drastically improved the relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom. In fact, in August of 1948, “members of the British cabinet were advised hat Anglo-Irish relations were ‘friendlier than ever’.”208 Despite this, the UK government began to receive rumors about the possibility of Ireland seeking total removal from the Commonwealth of Nations. This could set a precedent that the British government hoped to avoid, particularly with regards to its territories in India and Ceylon. As a result, cabinet secretary Sir Norman Brook drafted a statement about “the serious consequences” for Ireland if it attempted to leave the Commonwealth. In collaboration with Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the British government planned to formally release the statement “as part of a general constitutional pronouncement

defining membership of the Commonwealth” at a Commonwealth Prime Ministers meeting in October of 1948.  

The new Taoiseach, John Costello, knew that the forthcoming pronouncement marked an end of his hopes for Ireland’s tenuous membership in the Commonwealth to fade into obscurity and irrelevance. As a result he preempted the Commonwealth summit with a statement of his government’s intent to abolish all ties to the monarchy, avoiding a constitutional crisis with the United Kingdom but creating a delicate diplomatic situation. The British immediately refused the possibility of creating a tiered membership system in the Commonwealth, in which “associate” member states would not be subject to the crown. As a result, Ireland would either be a full member of the Commonwealth or entirely unassociated.

**Dissolving Ties with the Commonwealth**

Ireland’s desire to limit the power of the Commonwealth’s oversight had begun in force with de Valera’s rise to power as Taoiseach. Disregarding British protests, his government passed a series of legislative acts that limited the monarchy’s power over Ireland. The Constitution (Removal of Oath) Act of 1933, for example, abolished the practice of TDs taking an oath of allegiance to the crown. Likewise, the Oireachtas passed three bills in November of 1933 that “deprived the Governor General of his function of addressing messages to the Dail on the advice of the Executive Council as a

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209 Ibid., 69.
condition precedent to appropriations to money,” “abolished the right to reserve Bills for the King’s pleasure,” and “abolished the right of appeal to the Privy Council.”

During the British abdication crisis in 1936, the Irish government seized the opportunity to pass the Executive Authority Act, a piece of legislation that vested remaining political authority of the monarchy in the hands of the Executive Council. The Act described this last remnant of Ireland’s relationship with the Commonwealth in language intended to emphasize independence in clause three, which reads:

It is hereby declared and enacted that, so long as Saorstát Eireann is associated with the following nations, that is to say, Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, and South Africa, and so long as the king recognized by those nations as the symbol of their cooperation continues to act on behalf of each of those nations (on the advice of the several Governments thereof) for the purposes of the appointment of diplomatic and consular representatives and the conclusion of international agreements, the king so recognised may, and is hereby authorised to, act on behalf of Saorstát Eireann for the like purposes as and when advised by the Executive Council.

As a result of these Acts, Ireland’s membership in the Commonwealth of Nations had become a largely symbolic position by the start of World War II. Though seemingly innocuous, this arrangement irked the Irish people. Many sought full legal independence from Britain and the Commonwealth of Nations, and the government wanted a policy window in which they could institute a republic. At the same time, the Irish public was also growing increasingly aware of the benefits – primarily economic in nature – of association with the British government, presenting a case in which the heart of the

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212 Ibid., 395.
people leaned in one direction, but at times their head leaned opposite. It is important, however, to note that despite the formal dissolution of Commonwealth power over Ireland at this point, the nation was not fully sovereign. As defined in Chapter 1, a sovereign state is one that is free to execute policy within the bounds of reasonable international standards, to select its own political leaders, and to defend itself from aggression, all without oversight from any external governing body except those with which the state voluntarily aligns itself. Ireland’s membership in the Commonwealth could hardly be called voluntary, and Britain’s legal interpretation of this membership as requiring a shared declaration of war among all member states demonstrates that Ireland needed to assert its sovereign rights.

After the war, with the Commonwealth threatening to strengthen its hold over member states, the Irish government chose to act. In 1948, the Oireachtas passed the Republic of Ireland Act, a short piece of legislation that repealed the Executive Authority Act (1936), thereby withdrawing the power of the Commonwealth over Irish diplomacy. The Act also formally named the state the Republic of Ireland. Finally, it granted the Irish President the powers formerly reserved for the British monarch, stating that he or she “on the authority and on the advice of the Government, may exercise the executive power or any executive function of the State in or in connection with its external relations.” These measures, which served to invalidate Ireland’s dominion status, effectively removed the state from the Commonwealth.

The Ireland Act (1949)

In response to the Irish government’s passage of the Republic of Ireland Act, the British government passed the Ireland Act on June 2nd, 1949. The first clause of the legislation decreed Ireland’s unmitigated sovereignty, stating:

It is hereby recognized and declared that the part of Ireland heretofore known as Eire ceased, as from the eighteenth day of April, nineteen hundred and forty-nine, to be part of His Majesty’s dominions.215

The second clause, however, did not support nationalist ambitions in Ireland. Instead, it unequivocally upheld the partition of Ulster:

It is hereby declared that Northern Ireland remains part of His Majesty’s dominions and of the United Kingdom and it is hereby affirmed that in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of His Majesty’s dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the Parliament of Northern Ireland.216

Though the opportunity for the Northern Irish Parliament to cut ties with the United Kingdom seems like a nod to popular sovereignty in the north, it was no such thing. The pre-consociational legislature in the North featured very little nationalist participation, and as a result the language of the Ireland Act ensured the preservation of the 6-county enclave.

While partition still caused a great deal of consternation for the Irish public, the Ireland Act did offer some generous concessions. Section 2, for example, preserved the rights and privileges of Irish citizens under British law, declaring “notwithstanding that

216 Ibid.
the Republic of Ireland is not part of His Majesty’s dominions, the Republic of Ireland is not a foreign country for the purposes of any law in force in any part of the United Kingdom or in any colony, protectorate or United Kingdom trust territory.” To this extent, the Ireland Act represents a generous acceptance of Ireland’s declaration of a republic. Through ties forged in the complex relationship during the war, relations between the two states had begun to normalize. With the passage of the Republic of Ireland Act and the Ireland Act, this improved relationship now had institutional backing that would lead to further development.

**Consolidated Model Analysis**

In order to more specifically gauge the relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom in the post-war years, I turn again to a Consolidated Model analysis. Specifically, I focus on the period immediately following the passage of the Republic of Ireland Act and the Ireland Act, since these pieces of legislation best encompass the nature of the states’ relationship at the time.

**Self-Interest Considerations**

With the end of hostilities in World War II, the landscape of self-interest changed drastically for Britain and Ireland. The wartime urgency that had impacted negotiations and threats about the treaty ports, Axis spies, and Ireland’s neutrality dissipated without a central threat to either state, leaving no existential crisis to threaten the stability of Anglo-Irish relations.

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217 Ibid.
With Ireland’s demonstration of geopolitical shrewdness during the war and the passage of the Republic of Ireland Act and the Ireland Act, it was abundantly clear to the United Kingdom that an independent Ireland would make a better friend than enemy. The dissolution of the British Empire – particularly the independence of India – also diminished the incentive for the British to seek additional power in Ireland, since they no longer needed dominance over the island as an example to keep imperial colonies in line. The remaining self-interest considerations for the United Kingdom pertinent to Ireland were economic – developing a close trade relationship on friendly terms.

From the Irish perspective, self-interest still involved a vision of a united Ireland. In fact, the Irish would not abandon a constitutional claim over Northern Ireland until the 1998 signing of the Good Friday Agreement, which Amended Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution to include a recognition of the territory’s status in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, self-interest went further than this ideological view of an Ireland free of partition. It was undeniable throughout the economic struggles of the 1950s that Ireland needed a productive economic relationship with Britain, incentivizing and facilitating good relations generally.

Overall, the self-interest considerations that made up the relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom could be characterized as somewhat positive. Only the question of partition divided their national interests, but this identity-based issue is substantially outweighed by the economic incentive to pursue beneficial relations.

Institutional Interaction

By leaving the Commonwealth of Nations, Ireland’s institutional interaction with Britain as far as tangible organizations became largely non-existent in the years immediately following the war. Ireland would not participate in the newly formed United Nations until 1955, and the two states did not participate in any other significant organizations.

Nevertheless, there are striking institutional similarities between the two states. As noted previously, the religious and cultural likenesses contribute to improved relations. Likewise, the establishment of the Irish Presidency mimicked the government of the United Kingdom – a parliament overseen by a head of government, with a separate head of state that fulfills a largely ceremonial role.

Without shared membership in tangible organizations and with ruffled feathers still evident from Ireland’s choice to leave the Commonwealth, these cultural similarities are not enough to characterize institutional interactions between the UK and Ireland as positive. Instead, I assign a Consolidated Model rating of somewhat negative; however, this downgrade from the wartime rating of “somewhat positive” does not denote poorer relations. The most important aspect of the Consolidated Model is self-interest considerations, and in this area, relations improved. Furthermore, domestic public opinion and the relationship among political elites remain to be considered.
Public Opinion

With the threat to Britain alleviated, the United Kingdom no longer had an interest in obfuscating Irish contributions to the Allied war effort. Likewise, the conclusion of the Irish “Emergency” meant that censorship and travel restrictions were eliminated. As a result, the citizens of both states finally had open access to information about Ireland’s true colors during the war. Though the British people as a whole felt that Ireland should have participated more directly in the war, media reporting on Irish collaboration with the UK and the US led them to recognize Ireland’s work for the Allied cause. This led to an improvement of British public opinion of Ireland, though it was not entirely positive.

In Ireland, public opinion of Britain diminished because of language in the Ireland Act that institutionalized partition of the North by declaring “that in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of His Majesty’s dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the Parliament of Northern Ireland.” Public outrage led to an assertion in the Dail which re-asserted “the indefeasible right of the Irish nation to the unity and integrity of its national territory” and called upon “the British government and people to end the present occupation” of the North.

Overall, though the peoples of Ireland and the United Kingdom were looking to the future following World War II, centuries-old prejudices and societal memories

219 “Ireland Act, 1949”.
remained, particularly over issues such as partition. As a result, the states’ public opinion interactions can be gauged as “somewhat negative.”

*Relationships among Political Elites*

Among the political elites of Britain and Ireland, relationships were much improved from wartime levels. Though the war had brought secondary elites in government and the military together, the highest echelons of politics had held disdain for each other – most notably through the personal animosity between de Valera and Churchill. By the passage of the Ireland Act and Republic of Ireland Act, however, both of these men were no longer the head of government for their respective states. De Valera had been replaced by John Costello and Churchill by Clement Attlee, individuals without any notable history between them.

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<tr>
<td>Relationships Among Political Elites</td>
<td>Somewhat Positive</td>
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*Figure 7: Consolidated Model Analysis of Anglo-Irish Relations upon Recognition of the Irish Republic*

**Conclusion**

In the preceding chapter, I argued that relations between Ireland and the United Kingdom during the war were functional but largely negative on the Consolidated Model scale. Despite this negativity, the smooth (if not amicable) British acceptance of an Irish republic demonstrates that Irish policy during the war had no negative implications for
Anglo-Irish relations in the years following the conflict. The wartime era represented a significant turning point in the history of Anglo-Irish relations, with Ireland successfully asserting its independence from British political institutions. Under de Valera’s leadership, Ireland had stopped the inertia of the pre-war cycle of Anglo-Irish Relations, demonstrated its practicable independence from Britain, and navigated through the chaos of World War II with tactful diplomacy. Most importantly, the Irish government managed all of this without pushing the limits of British patience too far. It maintained a workable relationship with the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth of Nations even while working to limit the authority of those two governing bodies.

The glaring exception to Ireland’s success is the matter of partition. With the six counties of the North still under British control, some might argue that Ireland had not fully thrown off British political institutions, but that instead they had merely reached a territorial arrangement analogous to the island’s feudal past. There are, however, two key differences. Primarily, the establishment of an Irish President in the place of the British monarch in the south meant that the Republic was not under the authority of Britain in any form. More subtly, however, is the second difference. Though the Irish people expressed their desire for a united Ireland and the government maintained its constitutional claim over all of the island, the series of agreements with Britain in the first half of the 20th century, as well as the de facto acceptance of partition established a new trend in Irish policy toward the North – a begrudging and angry acceptance that the United Kingdom rules over Fermanagh, Tyrone, Derry, Antrim, Down, and Armagh. As the IRA underwent a revival in the 1950s and conflict brewed in the North, this
government policy would be put to the test with results that surprised some and angered many. Nevertheless, the constitutional position of Ulster – an issue that had long divided Ireland and the United Kingdom – began to lose relevance to their relations, which paved the way for the states to improve their relationship.
8. From the Troubles to the Future: Looking Forward at Anglo-Irish Relations

*The relationship between our two countries has never been stronger or more settled, as complex or as important, as it is today. Our citizens, uniquely linked by geography and history, are connected today as never before through business, politics, culture and sport, travel and technology, and of course family ties.*

-Joint Statement of Prime Minister David Cameron and Taoiseach Enda Kenny, March 12, 2012

Having left the Commonwealth of Nations, the 26 counties of the Republic entered the second half of the 20th century with myriad opportunities and challenges. The 1950s would bring economic difficulties to the island, but more importantly, it brought about important changes in Irish political life. For the first time in centuries, Ireland could pursue diplomatic relations with other states without the consent of the Westminster parliament, a UK-backed legislature in Ireland, or the British monarch.

As a result, one might expect a change of policy – a radical assertion of sovereignty via a rejection of all things British. The Irish did not choose this path, however, but rather continued the trend of improving relations with the United Kingdom. This decision is perhaps best exemplified in the Irish government’s actions during a period of heightened sectarian violence in Northern Ireland – the Troubles.

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The Troubles

In the late 1960s, Northern Ireland’s economy was particularly stagnant, creating a perfect storm in which a lack of economic opportunity and widespread sectarian tensions sharply divided society between Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists. This powder keg erupted in a new conflict that threatened Anglo-Irish relations – The Troubles. Beginning in earnest in 1967, this period of conflict pitted both communities against each other in the pursuit of mutually-exclusive visions of Ulster’s national identity, with widespread violence against militants and civilians alike. Psychological pressures based upon community identity prevented either side from deviating from these self-destructive policies, creating a particularly deadly cycle of violence. Though many contend that the Troubles came to a conclusion after the signing of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, sporadic violence in the North continues to this day.

Military and Police Collaboration

The Garda Siochana and Irish Defense Forces collaborated with British efforts to prevent violence in the Troubles and bring militants to justice. For these Irish security forces, this specifically meant patrolling the border and working to stop shipments of weapons and explosives from reaching Provisional IRA (PIRA) units in the North. This was no easy task. The border is 280 miles long with 260 crossing points, with many farms and villages split between the North and the South. The work was made particularly dangerous because there were PIRA units active in the Republic that

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responded to Irish/British collaboration with violence. 12 gardaí were killed during the Troubles, with many others injured.\(^\text{224}\) Garda stations in the northern counties of the republic came under attack multiple times, and some officers’ houses were petrol bombed.\(^\text{225}\)

Irish security services also worked to counter acts of terrorism away from the border. In particular, they collaborated with the British military and Royal Ulster Constabulary to seize weapons shipments from outside the island of Ireland. In the 1973 Claudia Incident, for example, Irish forces seized a ship carrying 250 Czech-made AK-47 rifles supplied by Libya.\(^\text{226}\) Another significant incident occurred at Dublin Port in 1979, where the Garda discovered cargo containing more than 150 guns and 60,000 rounds, many of which had been stolen from the U.S. military.\(^\text{227}\)

**British-Irish Institutions**

In addition to tactical and intelligence support to combating terrorism in Northern Ireland, the Irish government also supported a variety of institutions and agreements that helped bring an end to widespread violence. The most important of these was the Good Friday Agreement, a document that formally recognized the legitimacy of both national visions for Northern Ireland and altered many constitutional provisions regarding the

\(^{224}\) Ibid.  
\(^{225}\) Ibid.  
\(^{227}\) Ibid.
It established popular sovereignty in the North, recognizing “the legitimacy of whatever choice is freely exercised by a majority of the people of Northern Ireland with regard to its status, whether they prefer to continue to support the Union with Great Britain or a sovereign united Ireland.”229 The Irish government also agreed to amend the constitution, so that it abandoned the constitutional claim over all of the island of Ireland, the first de jure recognition of Britain’s authority over the North.230 The agreement also established a consociational legislature in Northern Ireland, with certain devolved powers from the Westminster parliament.231

Other important institutions that the Good Friday Agreement initiated include the North/South Ministerial Council, the British-Irish Council, and the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference – all of which created avenues for consultation and collaboration on matters of joint concern between Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the United Kingdom as a whole. These institutions provide a unique contrast with the previous conflict over membership in the Commonwealth of Nations. Unlike in the Commonwealth, where Irish participation inherently fell under some form of British authority, these institutions permitted membership on an entirely equal and independent basis.

228 “The Agreement,” Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
229 Ibid.
230 Ibid.
231 Ibid.
Immigration and Trade

Ireland and the United Kingdom share an important economic relationship based largely on immigration and trade. Approximately 42% of Irish exports are shipped to the UK, and Ireland is also the fifth largest market for British businesses. In 2011, the UK imported £17,297 million of Irish goods and services (3.3% of UK imports, compared to 9.4% from U.S. and 11.5% from Germany). In the same year, the UK exported £27,409 million of goods and services to Ireland (5.6% of exports, compared to 8.9% to Germany and 16.2% to U.S.). The British and Irish labor markets are also very closely linked, with substantial numbers of Irish workers in the United Kingdom and in other Commonwealth states such as Canada and Australia.

Leaders and Symbols

The current relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom is characterized by symbolic gestures that highlight their cultural similarities and shared history. Some examples are meant to heal societal wounds left over from the more negative aspects of that history. In Northern Ireland, for example, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was reformed after the Good Friday Agreement into a new body – the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The PSNI abandoned many of its predecessor’s symbols that tied it to the unionist community, adopting a logo that incorporates symbols of both Ireland and the United Kingdom. Combined with efforts to increase Catholic

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234 Ibid., 7.
representation on the police force, the adoption of new symbols made the PSNI more palatable to the nationalist community than the RUC, contributing substantially to maintaining the peace.

![Crest of the PSNI](http://www.radiokerry.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/psni-logo.jpg)

**Figure 8**: Crest of the PSNI. Note the juxtaposition of the crown and harp with the scales of justice between them.

Other examples of important symbolic gestures include the actions of British and Irish leaders, particularly the monarch. Queen Elizabeth’s visit to Ireland in 2011 exemplifies this trend. Speaking at Dublin Castle, she set a positive tone by beginning her speech with an Irish salutation, “A hUachtarain agus a chairde” – President and friends. She continued to address the crowd in a conciliatory tone, noting the ties shared by the Irish and British people, the links that, in her words, “make us firm friends

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and equal partners.\textsuperscript{237} The Queen also visited the Gaelic Athletic Association, an organization strongly linked to Irish nationalism, and accepted a gift of a hurley – the instrument used in hurling, Ireland’s national sport.

Queen Elizabeth’s visit to Ireland set the stage for an even stronger symbolic moment: the historic handshake between herself and Martin McGuinness, a powerful Sinn Fein leader and former IRA commander. The much-publicized handshake came to symbolize the progress of the peace process in Northern Ireland, but it also represented the strong relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom generally.

\textbf{A Consolidated Model Analysis of Anglo-Irish Relations: The Troubles to the Present}

Like with the other periods I examine in this work, the Consolidated Model provides insight into Anglo-Irish relations from the Troubles to the Present. Though this period spans several decades, making it significantly longer than the other time periods that I examine in this work, it makes up one relevant unit in which to analyze Anglo-Irish relations. The Troubles were a culminating effect of the centuries-old sovereignty debate between the two states, and the manner in which Ireland approached the conflict demonstrated the productive relationship that Ireland and the United Kingdom might enjoy.

\textsuperscript{237} Ibid.
Self-Interest Considerations

The self-interest considerations for British and Irish policy are highly compatible. The two states collaborate on security and economic matters, aligning themselves together in opposition to terrorism, international crime, and other societal ills. Significant trade and tourism between the two states contributes to their economic vitality, further drawing them together in shared self-interest.

As noted previously, one of the greatest conflicts in self-interest between the United Kingdom and Ireland had been the matter of partition. In the 1990s, however, this changed. Northern Ireland Secretary of State Peter Brooke stated that Britain had no “selfish, strategic, or economic interest in Northern Ireland.”238 Similarly, following the Good Friday Agreement, the Irish government’s removal of the constitutional claim over the North. The Republic’s recognition of the significant social and economic cost of absorbing the North also illustrates the lack of self-interest in the matter.

Despite the lack of British or Irish material interests in Northern Ireland it is worth noting the Consolidated Model’s other self-interest consideration – national prestige. Unionists in Ulster base their societal identity largely on their connection to Britain and Protestantism, making partition an important part of maintaining Northern Ireland’s image and, from their perspective, that of the United Kingdom. Likewise, the Irish generally maintain a desire for a united island; however, they recognize the

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incredible difficulties that such an arrangement would bring about. The heart may say yes, but the head logically says no.

This matter of prestige – though not inconsequential – is entirely overshadowed by the weighty importance of material self-interests that unite Ireland and the United Kingdom. As a result, their self-interest considerations can be considered “very positive” on the Consolidated Model scale.

**Institutional Interactions**

Though the institutional interactions between Ireland and the United Kingdom had diminished following Ireland’s departure from the Commonwealth of Nations, they have since rebounded forcefully. The multitude of international organizations and treaty agreements that both nations are party to creates substantial opportunity for developing closer relationships and collaborating on matters of mutual self-interest.

Most significant are the British-Irish and all-islands institutions that were established in this period. These organizations represent the first example of a British-Irish political body in which Ireland is a fully independent and equal agent, capable of making policy decisions without any British authority or oversight. A significant departure from the pre-war cycle of Anglo-Irish relations, these institutions highlight Ireland’s sovereignty to a significantly greater degree than when under the authority of the Commonwealth.

Finally, the increasingly high levels of tourism and immigration between the two countries only serves to highlight and enhance the shared cultural institutions of Britain
and Ireland. Overall, these institutional interactions can be characterized as “very positive” on the Consolidated Model scale.

**Domestic Public Sentiment**

In both Ireland and the United Kingdom, there is no notable matter of public sentiment that would affect their relationship. Generally, the public in each state perceives the other positively. The exception, however, is in Northern Ireland – still a highly-divided community between those who wish to be British and those who wish to be Irish. As a result, domestic public sentiment interactions can be characterized as “somewhat positive.” They are excellent in England, Scotland, Wales, and the Republic of Ireland, but still fairly poor in the North.

**Relationships among Political Elites**

Though political elites in Ireland and the United Kingdom never shared the unique relationships that several US Presidents and UK Prime Ministers had, their relationships remained generally strong during the troubles and after. There were moments of tension, but the leaders shared largely positive interactions. Lower-level political elites also had the opportunity for improved relations due to interactions in the various newly developed British-Irish institutions, which created essential shared experiences between individuals from both states.

The statements from political elites today could not contrast more definitively with the vitriolic language launched between de Valera and Churchill during the war. Positive remarks from the Taoiseach about the monarchy and conciliatory speeches from
the Queen about Irish autonomy marks a new era of Anglo-Irish relations, and creates opportunities for collaboration at the highest levels of government and society.

Though there are still some detractors from the positive relationship among political elites, particularly evident at times in the Stormont legislature in Northern Ireland, the political elites of Ireland and the United Kingdom share largely positive relationships. As a result, this aspect of the Consolidated Model analysis can be characterized as “somewhat positive.”

**Concluding the Consolidated Model Analysis**

In the period from the Troubles to the present, Ireland and the United Kingdom had a very favorable relationship, completing an increasingly positive trend in all aspects of the Consolidated Model.

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<tr>
<td>Relationships Among Political Elites</td>
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*Figure 9: A Consolidated Model Analysis of Anglo-Irish Relations from the Troubles to the Present.*

Notably, the two most important aspects of the model – self-interest considerations and institutional interaction – had the most significant improvement. This suggests that the pursuance of positive relations is a recognized interest of both states, and in a global
system increasingly dominated by international organizations, their beneficial institutional interactions will only reinforce this recognition.

![Consolidated Model Analysis of Anglo-Irish Relations since World War II.](image)

Figure 10: Consolidated Model Analysis of Anglo-Irish Relations since World War II.

Though the two remaining aspects – domestic public sentiment and relationships among political elites – did not see such success, their marginal improvement creates hope for future development. The fact alone that improvement of any sort took place speaks to the efficacy of both nations’ diplomacy and illustrates the possibility for historical enemies to overcome their differences, no matter how deeply ingrained.

Most importantly for this work, the Consolidated Model analysis indicates that Irish policy during World War II, though contrary to Britain’s stated wishes, did not have any lasting negative implications for Anglo-Irish relations. Ireland’s careful neutrality –
mixed with a significant amount of tactical and information-sharing support for the Allied cause – delicately maintained a workable relationship with the United Kingdom, and set the stage for even greater relations in the future. Therein lies the ultimate success of Eamon de Valera, his government, and the Irish people. Having lived under British authority for centuries, they managed to assert their independence from that foreign influence while still helping its war efforts. It is an extraordinary act of political will and diplomatic genius, with the Irish government pushing the limits of Allied patience as far as possible but still aiding the just side of a terrible war.

The Future

In previous chapters, I demonstrated that Irish policy in World War II had no negative impact on relations in the immediate post-war years. The two states overcame a difficult past political relationship, collaborated on important issues, and demonstrated a willingness to continue to improve their relationship in the future. Having shown that Anglo-Irish relations are on an improving trajectory and bearing in mind the closer integration of European states that has defined international politics of the past two decades, I can safely hypothesize that the United Kingdom and Ireland will continue to share a close relationship in the future.

What is more unclear is the future of the United Kingdom itself. With increasing political devolution, a constitutional question of independence in Scotland, and a strong nationalist movement in Wales, it is difficult to determine the future of Britain. A Scotland independent from the UK would doubtless set a precedent that might one day
stretch across the Irish Sea to Ulster, though social and economic difficulties make such a move improbable at present. Regardless of the North’s political status, Ireland’s process of gaining independence, forming a republic, and maintaining a positive relationship with the United Kingdom has created a different nation than that which existed in the past. It is no longer strictly a Catholic state, nor is it inhabited by “maidens dancing at the crossroads” as de Valera imagined. Instead, it is a modern country in its economy, its government, and its society. As a result, perhaps eventual unification between the North and South will not occur due to Irish prodding, but rather because the nation’s modern sentiments will make this process more palatable to Northern unionists. Only time will tell.

Ireland has undoubtedly come a long way since World War II. It currently holds the EU presidency, is a growing hub of European business, and has become recognized as a leader in innovation. As a frequent contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, it has maintained its neutrality while also becoming a partner in ensuring international peace and stability. Most importantly, it has asserted its power by throwing off its historical role as an occupied nation and becoming a partner nation instead. Thanks to government policy in World War II and careful relationship-building with the United Kingdom, Ireland is no longer a conquered nation or an oppressed people, but rather a strong, proud, and sovereign state.