

THE IRISH AND THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY:
THE IMPACT OF IRISH AND IRISH-AMERICAN ISSUES
ON U.S. PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

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Ph.D. Dissertation by

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This project explores the impact of Irish and Irish-American affairs on U.S. Presidential politics throughout American history. Scholars have given limited attention to the impact that political events in Ireland have had on U.S. presidential politics. Moreover, when historians have written about Irish Americans' engagement in U.S. politics, they generally have focused on their role in state and local politics, with scant attention to presidential politics other than the 1928 and 1960 elections. Irish Americans, however, have had a consistent and noteworthy impact on presidential careers, policies, and elections from the administrations of George Washington to Barack Obama. Utilizing U.S. Party Systems as an organizational framework, this project will take a conceptual/narrative look at the various ways that the Scots-Irish and then later the Catholic Irish in America, as well as the Irish who remained in Eire, have shaped, altered, and sometimes driven such presidential political factors as party nominations, campaign

strategy, elections, and White House policymaking. Indeed, this project unquestionably demonstrates that the Irish always have been and continue to be a potent force in American presidential politics.

To my handsome and generous husband John. I am beyond grateful for your endless kindness, humor, and strength. I love you intensely and always will.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The political developments in Ireland that periodically have influenced U.S. Presidential affairs have received limited attention from scholars. Moreover, studies of the Irish-American impact on U.S. politics generally have focused on state-and local-level activities. To the extent that the Irish-American role in presidential politics has been considered, most of the attention has been trained on the elections of 1928 and 1960. Yet in fact, Irish Americans and matters of special concern to them have had a consistent and important effect on presidential careers and campaigns, as well as on the policies and public actions of presidential administrations from George Washington to Barack Obama.

It is the contention of this study that Irish and Irish-American affairs have had a notable presence in American Presidential politics throughout all of U.S. history, from the American Revolution to modern days. It is hard to imagine a single ethnic group, both in their country of origin and as immigrants, that has consistently influenced American Presidential politics more in *both* domestic and foreign affairs than the Irish. Over the years, Irish and Irish-American events, issues, and personalities have had a meaningful impact on the early lives and political careers of presidents, party platforms and propaganda, electoral strategies and tactics, and presidential nomination and election results. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how often and how significantly Irish and Irish-American affairs have influenced American Presidential history. Only by reviewing the full extent of this interaction between presidential-level politics and Irish and Irish-American affairs can the role of the Irish as consistent forces in U.S. national

politics be completely understood and appreciated. That is the goal and thesis of this project; it is a challenging subject altogether worthy of a full study.

Literature Review:

The vastness and complexity of this topic has perhaps discouraged historians from attempting a full-length study. Indeed, no work covering the entire scope of the Irish influence on presidential politics exists.¹ To be sure, several works either directly or indirectly cover U.S.-Ireland diplomatic relations, and there are other studies that focus on either the Irish-American experience or various presidential administrations that include references to Irish influences on national politics. These sources, however, are generally very broad in scope, and thus do not focus strictly on presidential politics. Moreover, they are in another sense limited in scope, in that they typically do not cover the entire span of U.S. history.

Three good examples of diplomatic books that are both too broad in some aspects and too limited in others are Alan Ward's *Ireland and the Anglo-American Relations 1899-1921* (1969), Andrew J. Wilson's *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict 1968-1995* (1995), and Sean Cronin's *Washington's Irish Policy, 1916-1986: Independence, Partition, Neutrality* (1987). Ward's work explores how Irish issues in Ireland motivated Irish Americans, as well as the occasions when those influences affected the William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson administrations. Andrew Wilson's study focuses on America's response to the thirty-year era of unrest known "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland and the occasions when the

¹ This conclusion is based on a thorough search of ProQuest and World Cat databases including a search of ProQuest Theses and Dissertations Database and the World Cat Dissertations Database.

Gerald Ford through Bill Clinton Administrations involved the United States in that ongoing conflict. Cronin's monograph focuses on three phases of Ireland's twentieth-century history: independence, partition, and neutrality--and how the U.S. government remained resolutely supportive of British policy throughout them all. While all three books contribute to Irish historiography, none focuses exclusively on presidential politics or provides the complete story of the political dimension to Irish-American affairs. Moreover, Ward only covers the first twenty years of the twentieth century, while Wilson examines only the last thirty years. Also, as their titles suggest, the books by Ward and Wilson predominantly concern the reaction of Irish America to Anglo-Irish affairs rather than how the men in the Oval Office responded to those matters. Cronin skips the nineteenth century but does examine much more of the twentieth century than either Ward or Wilson. Nevertheless, Cronin limits his attention to diplomatic affairs concerning Irish independence, partition, and neutrality. For that reason, his work does not consider the many other occasions when Irish affairs influenced presidential politics, including for example John F. Kennedy's years in the White House.

Beyond these diplomatic studies, several books examine the wide-ranging subject of Irish America. A representative work in this genre is Lawrence McCaffrey's *Textures of Irish America* (1992), which recounts the rich Irish-American experience from the nineteenth century to the 1980s. Another good book of this type is Joseph O'Grady's *How the Irish Became Americans* (1973), which describes how the Irish ascended America's social and economic ladders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Texts such as McCaffrey's and O'Grady's provide extensive information; however, they generally give a mere passing mention to national politics, with far more attention trained

on Irish-American state and local politics, as well as Irish-American religious and cultural affairs.

Even monographs that focus entirely on individual presidential elections or administrations and their Irish connections tell at best an incomplete story. Mark Summers' *Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion: The Making of a President, 1884* (2000), for example, discusses the 1884 election and the Irish-American factor that likely determined the outcome. Similarly, *Kennedy and Roosevelt: The Uneasy Alliance* (1980), by Michael Beschloss, examines the political appeal Joseph Kennedy had among Irish-American voters during Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, and how on occasion that influence affected FDR's actions. Beyond that, *The Irish: America's Political Class* (1976), edited by James Walsh, is a compilation of articles by various authors about Irish Americans in politics across the years. Of the 22 articles in the book, only seven address national politics: one on the Federalist Party of the early republic, one on the 1916 election, three on Alfred Smith's 1928 "Brown Derby Campaign," one on John F. Kennedy and the 1960 campaign, and one comparing and contrasting the 1928 and 1960 contests. Summers', Beschloss', and Walsh's works all explore only a handful of moments when Irish Americans influenced national politics—with Summers and Beschloss each only examining a single presidential election or administration and Walsh focusing largely on the two most well-known Irish-American campaigns. This study, by contrast, will review all presidential elections and affairs influenced, to one degree or another, by Irish-American participation and perspectives.

Methodology:

Before detailing the methodology for this project, it should be stated that both the Scots-Irish (also referred to as Scotch-Irish) and the Catholic Irish are considered in this project.² Both groups of Irish have had important roles in presidential politics at different times in U.S. history. The Scots-Irish dominate the early sections of this study, from colonial times to the mid-1840s. Having fled to the United States during the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries to escape religious discrimination by England, the Scots-Irish played a crucial role in the Jeffersonian Democratic-Republican and later Jacksonian Democratic Party. However, during and after the Great Famine of 1845-1852, the majority of the Irish who flooded into the United States were Catholics from the southwestern and western areas of Ireland. To be sure, some poor Protestants, also victims of the Famine, came to the United States at this time as well. But with the Scots-Irish having mostly assimilated, generally through inter-marriage with other ethnic groups, into American society by the 1840s, it is the Catholic Irish who from then on have commanded most attention in the arena of presidential politics.

Even though the early American Irish and their descendants did not refer to themselves as Scots-Irish until the second half of the 19th century, for purposes of clarity

² The term “Scots-Irish” is a late nineteenth-century construct created by Protestant-Irish Americans who wished to distinguish themselves from the flood of poor, Catholic Irish who came to American shores during and after the 1840s. As described by Kerby Miller in *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (1985), Protestant Americans of Ulster descent wove the “Scotch-Irish Myth” to distinguish themselves as superior to the Catholic Irish. The “Scots” qualifier reckons back to the 17th and 18th centuries when many Scottish natives left their homeland for northern Ireland in order to escape the control of their English conquerors. America in the 18th century and early 19th century witnessed an influx of Scots- not Catholic Irish immigrants.

they shall be referred to as “Scots-Irish,” “Ulster Irish,” “Presbyterian Irish,” or “Protestant Irish” from this point forward. When describing the American Catholic Irish, the terms “Catholic Irish” or simply “Irish” or “Irish American” will be used. The term “Irish” also will be used to denote the Irish in Ireland. Occasionally, the term “Irish” will be used to identify the Irish collectively--Protestant- Catholic Irish Americans and the Irish in Ireland. Similarly, the terms “Irish American” or “Irish” sometimes will be used when referring to both Catholic and Protestant Irish Americans at the same time. The specific contexts in which these terms will be used should prevent any confusion on the reader’s part. Note that some quotes from sources included in this text will refer to the “Scots-Irish” simply as “Irish.” When confusion seems possible, every attempt will be made to clarify and clearly identify the group or groups being discussed.

Given the breadth and complexity of this project, several methods could have been used to complete it. It is important to establish what this study does *not* do. This work does not take an empirical approach to studying Irish and American Presidential relations. Such variables as voting behavior, economics, residence, labor, education, and other factors are addressed when appropriate, but they are not tested or controlled as they would be in a statistical, multivariable analysis. Instead this project utilizes a more conceptual, narrative approach, inasmuch as it seeks to break new ground and bring to full light a phenomenon--the consistent ways that Irish and Protestant/Catholic Irish-American issues have directly influenced presidential politics throughout the entirety of U.S. history--that to date has not received a full study. All aspects of politics are addressed in this work: presidential careers and policies, the press, presidential speeches, Congressional responses to Irish and Irish-American affairs, elections, nominations,

polling statistics when available, and party restructuring. The purpose of this project is to explore the occasions in every presidential administration when the Irish affected events in some capacity. With the narrative laid out, other scholars can expand upon the research via empirical methods in the future.

Sources:

This study is based upon both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consulted include: public papers, speeches, and letters of the presidents and other influential people, memoirs, diaries, news broadcasts, interviews, selected newspapers from key time periods, and the Congressional Record. Secondary sources provide necessary and helpful background and context for this study. Included among these secondary sources are monographs on specific political parties, historical events, Irish-American diplomacy, Anglo-American diplomacy, the Scots-Irish and Irish-American experience, notable presidential elections, and biographies of the presidents and other important political figures.

Organization:

Chapters in this study will roughly be divided by the years encompassing each of America's Six Party Systems inasmuch as each of these eras represents a significant shift in presidential politics. The ways that issues in Ireland, as well as, Scots-Irish and Catholic-Irish American affairs affect these party systems and the presidencies involved will be examined and analyzed throughout the study. Chapter 2 addresses the Scots-Irish immigrants' roles in developing and shaping the Early Republic and the Democratic-Republican Party. Chapter 3 explores the Jacksonian Democrats, the Whigs, the

assimilation of the Scots-Irish, the influx of Catholic Irish to America in the wake of the Great Irish Famine, and the American slavery debate. Chapter 4 addresses the Irish-American participation in America's Civil War, the Fenian Movement, and in the Republican and Democratic parties of the Gilded Age, particularly focusing on the 1884 and 1888 elections in which the Irish played decisive roles. Chapter 5 explains the Irish responses to America's politics of expansion, Wilson's foreign policy, and Catholic-Irish Al Smith's "Brown Derby" presidential campaign of 1928. Chapter 6 reviews the Irish Americans serving in the Franklin Roosevelt Administration and the Democratic Party, as well as the election of the first and thus far only Irish-Catholic President, John F. Kennedy. Chapter 7 explains the various presidential responses to the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland and Irish-American relations in the 21st century. A brief conclusion summarizing the study's findings completes the work.

Chapter 2: The Scots-Irish Role in the Colonial Period, American Revolution, and Early Republic (1656-1824)

The Presbyterian Irish in America, also known as Scots-Irish or Scotch-Irish, had begun arriving in the United States in significant numbers as early as May 1656. They came from Ulster, a northern province of Ireland, and their emigration to America continued for two centuries. The Scots-Irish would play an important role in America's early history, by helping to settle the frontier, fighting in the Revolution, and contributing to the development of America's first political party system.

The Colonial Period:

Protestant Irish emigrated from northern Ireland to North America in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries primarily for political, religious, and economic reasons. The root causes of their departure extend back to the twelfth century, when England began to exert its political influence over Ireland and then steadily tightened its grip on the island over the next several centuries.¹ Life got significantly worse for the Irish in the sixteenth century when King Henry VIII of England broke from Rome in 1534 and decreed that Anglicanism would be the realm's official religion.² Under pressure from Henry VIII, the Irish Parliament subsequently made him the King of Ireland in 1541, allowing him to suppress any threats real or perceived that Catholic Ireland could pose to Anglican England.³ Henry used this authority to sharply reduce the political and civil liberties of both Protestant and Catholic Irish; Catholics were especially anathema to the English, while the Protestant Irish suffered because of their allegiance to

¹ Christine Kinealy, *A Death-Dealing Famine* (Chicago, IL: Pluto Press, 1997), 17

² Marvin Perry, *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics, & Society*, vol. II (NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 393.

³ Kinealy, *Famine*, 17.

the Presbyterian, not Anglican, branch of the Protestant faith.⁴ Although both were victimized, the Protestant Irish had some advantages over their Catholic kinsmen: not only did the Protestant Irish endure comparatively less oppression, they also tended to be better educated and more financially solvent than the Catholic Irish at the time.⁵ This made the trans-Atlantic voyage a more feasible option for the Protestant Irish, and consequently by 1770 some 300,000 of them were living in America.⁶ “Both in size and in relative proportion,” Kerby Miller writes in *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America*, “Ulster Presbyterian emigration far overshadowed all other population movement from Ireland to colonial America.”⁷ Because the more desirable coastal lands already had been claimed, many Scots-Irish settled in the backwoods of Pennsylvania, Virginia, the Carolinas, and other frontier areas.⁸ Although these Protestant Irish encountered some resentment from colonists of Anglo-Saxon origin, the relatively few Catholic Irish endured far worse prejudice.⁹

Frontier life was difficult for the Scots-Irish. Yet, “Ulster training had inured them to hostile surroundings,” one historian has noted, “and their arrival in the colonies marks the beginning of a period of vigorous expansion”¹⁰ As Robert Leckie writes in *George Washington’s War: The Saga of the American Revolution* (1993), “No breed of frontiersman existed in America hardier than in these settlements of mostly Irish and

⁴ David Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle* (Lincolnwood, IL: Publications International, Ltd., 2009), 41-42.

⁵ Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), 152.

⁶ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 39.

⁷ Miller, *Emigrants*, 152.

⁸ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 41.

⁹ Miller, *Emigrants*, 147.

¹⁰ Henry Jones Ford, *The Scotch-Irish in America* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1915), 211.

Scots-Irish”¹¹ In his book *The Winning of the West*, the future President Theodore Roosevelt wrote admiringly of the Scots-Irish “backwoodsmen.” The “dominant strain in their blood was that of the Presbyterian Irish—The Scotch-Irish, as they are often called . . . Mingled with the descendants of many other races, they nevertheless formed the kernel of the distinctively and intensely American stock . . . fitted to be Americans from the very start.”¹² T.R.’s florid rhetoric, excessively romantic and triumphalist to modern readers, nevertheless expresses a basic truth. Like other groups, the Scots-Irish pioneers helped forge what would become the United States. Moreover, when the drive for independence emerged, the Scots-Irish would enthusiastically support that cause.

Scots-Irish in the American Revolution:

The Scots-Irish hatred for Britain did not dissipate upon their relocation across the Atlantic. In this they stood apart from most other colonists, who generally felt favorably inclined toward the Mother Country which intervened little in their affairs. That laissez-faire attitude, however, changed soon after the French and Indian War ended in 1763. The British victory in that conflict had been costly, and so the King and Parliament determined that more money should be extracted from the American colonies through taxation.¹³ Beyond that the British government issued the Proclamation of 1763, which prohibited American colonists from settling in the frontier western lands formerly owned

¹¹ Robert Leckie, *George Washington’s War: The Saga of the American Revolution* (NY: HarperPerennial, 1993), 583.

¹² Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, vol. 1, *From the Alleghenies to the Mississippi, 1769-1776* (NY : Putnams, 1899), Location 1317 (Kindle Edition).

¹³ James Henretta, David Brody, and Lynn Dumenil, *America: A Concise History*, vol. I (NY: St. Martin’s, 2006), 134.

by France.¹⁴ The Proclamation's intent was to forestall future conflicts between native-American tribes and colonists, who inevitably would seek expensive military protection from British troops.¹⁵

As frontier folk, the Scots-Irish particularly resented this restriction on their movement, and all the more so coming as an edict from their old oppressor.¹⁶ Now, however, other American colonists were also roused to anger at the British. James Webb, author of *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America* (2004) writes "As the American colonies moved toward declaring independence from Great Britain, the Scots-Irish were all but unanimous in their desire to be free of the English Government."¹⁷ Within twelve years, the war for American independence from Great Britain had begun.

Fighting against Britain first broke out around Boston in 1775. George Washington of Virginia, the Commander of the Continental Army, realized early on that the Scots-Irish wholly supported both him and the revolution. "When our friendless standard was first unfurled, who were the strangers who first mustered around our staff?" Washington once asked. "And when it reeled in the fight," he said by way of answering his own question, "who more brilliantly sustained it than Erin's generous sons?"¹⁸

Indeed, the Scots-Irish fought in the American Revolution with the same zeal that they had brought to claim the American wilderness. Estimates vary, but several historians assert with "certainty that thirty-eight percent of the rank and file of Washington's Army

¹⁴ James Webb, *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America* (NY: Broadway Books, 2004), Location 2285 (Kindle Edition)

¹⁵ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 132.

¹⁶ James Webb, *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America* (NY: Broadway Books, 2004), Location 2285 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁷ Webb, *Born Fighting*, Location 2316 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁸ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 41, 46.

were either born in Ireland or were the sons of men who had been born in Ireland.”¹⁹

While there were surely Catholic Irish included among the revolutionary soldiers, “Scots-Irish dominated the rank and file of George Washington’s Army.”²⁰ Most of the Scots-Irish soldiers remained embroiled in the action throughout the war, serving in the regular army--the Continental Line—and making up more than half of its units.²¹ The most successful of these units was the Pennsylvania Line, whose battle prowess inspired American General Henry “Light Horse Harry” Lee to remark that the group “might with more propriety have been called the Line of Ireland,” given how many Scots-Irish soldiers filled its ranks.²² The British themselves realized that many of their enemies were Ulster Irishmen. “The emigrants from Ireland,” General Sir Henry Clinton reported to London, “are our most serious opponents.”²³ “Call this war by whatever name you may,” a Hessian captain fighting for the British noted in 1778, “only call it not an American rebellion; it is nothing more or less than a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian rebellion.”²⁴ King George III of Britain echoed the Hessian Captain and characterized the war as nothing less than “a Presbyterian war,” an obvious reference to the religious faith of multitudes of Scots-Irish within the American ranks.²⁵

¹⁹ Daniel Cohalan, “Address of Honorable Daniel Cohalan at the Annual Washington Birthday Meeting of the Friends of Irish Freedom,” February 22, 1924. Box 23, Folder 8, Daniel Cohalan Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York. Also see, Michael O’Brien, *A Hidden Phase of American History* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub., Co, 1973). Also, Webb, *Born Fighting*, Location 2346 (Kindle Edition).

²⁰ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 42.

²¹ Webb, *Born Fighting*, Location 2346 (Kindle Edition).

²² Michael Costello, “The Irish and the American Military Tradition” in David Doyle and Owen Edwards, *America and Ireland, 1776-1976* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980)

²³ Costello, “The Irish and the American Military Tradition”, 220.

²⁴ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 42.

²⁵ Webb, *Born Fighting*, Location 2337 (Kindle Edition).

Washington tangibly demonstrated the gratitude he felt for his indomitable Irish troops. He made “Saint Patrick” the watchword on the night of March 17, 1776, when the Continental Army reclaimed Boston from British control.²⁶ Beyond that, Washington fully respected the Catholic Irish soldiers under his command. During the Boston campaign he prohibited the observance of “pope night,” an anti-Irish/anti-Catholic ritual performed every November 5, which consisted of burning in effigy the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Washington disgustingly decried “pope night” as “ridiculous and childish custom, void of common sense.” Its provocative insult to religion was “so monstrous” that it would not be “suffered or excused.”²⁷ Later, while quartered at Valley Forge on Saint Patrick’s Day 1777, Washington ordered that grog be made available to his entire army. No doubt the gesture pleased most of the men, but the nearly 40 percent of his troops who were of Scots-Irish or Catholic Irish origin surely were the most appreciative.²⁸ In 1780, Washington effectively proclaimed America’s first official Saint Patrick’s Day by granting his soldiers the day off while stationed in Morristown, New Jersey.²⁹ Finally, Washington’s confidence in those of Irish heritage can be seen in his appointments. Sixteen of his generals were of Irish descent, and five of his aides-de-camps (Joseph Reed, Joseph Carey, Stephen Moylan, John Fitzgerald, and James McHenry) were either of Irish birth or extraction.³⁰ Moreover, Irish immigrant John Barry from County Wexford served

²⁶ Bob Considine, *It’s the Irish* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 178.

²⁷ Carleton Beals, *The Brass-Knuckle Crusade: The Great Know-Nothing Conspiracy, 1820-1860* (Norwalk, Ct: Hastings House, 1960), 115.

²⁸ Beals, *The Brass-Knuckle Crusade*, 115.

²⁹ Kevin Coughlin, “Soak up Some History Before the Saint Patrick’s Day Parade in Morristown,” March 10, 2011. Accessed at <http://morristowngreen.com/2011/03/10/soak-up-some-history-before-the-st-patricks-day-parade-in-morristown/> Accessed 8/20/14.

³⁰ Costello, “The Irish and the American Military Tradition,” 221.

as the country's first flag officer. He was appointed to the rank of Captain in the Continental Army and is known to history as the "Father of the American Navy."³¹

Some Scots-Irish also gave financial backing to the struggle. In 1780, the Continental Army's supplies were drastically dwindling, and in response a group of Philadelphians contributed £300,000 to the revolutionary effort.³² One-third of that huge sum came from the local members of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick. Later in the war, these same men offered George Washington honorary membership in their fraternal order. Washington replied:

I accept with singular pleasure the Ensign of so worthy a fraternity as that of the Sons of St. Patrick in this city—a Society distinguished for the firm adherence of its members to the glorious cause in which we are embarked.³³

The United States prevailed in its revolution against Britain, and a few years later some of brightest minds in the new country met at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 in Philadelphia. At that gathering, James Wilson of Pennsylvania argued in favor of making non-native born Americans eligible for election to the House of Representatives. In a clear reference to the Scots-Irish, Wilson noted that "almost all the general officers of the Pennsylvania line of the late army were foreigners."³⁴ Wilson's motion passed, and the required residency for eligibility was set at seven years, allowing many of the foreigners who had fought in the Revolution to stand for federal office. This victory for immigrants in the House was also extended to the U.S. Senate.³⁵

³¹ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 44.

³² Considine, *It's the Irish*, 179.

³³ Considine, *It's the Irish*, 178.

³⁴ Ford, *The Scotch-Irish*, 518.

³⁵ Ford, *The Scotch-Irish*, 518.

With the Constitution ratified, the American people, surely including the Scots-Irish, cheered the unanimous election and reelection of Washington to the Presidency in 1788 and 1792. However, the good relationship forged in war that the Scots-Irish had long had with Washington, would be tested by the crucible of politics.

The Washington Administration and the Formation of the First Party System:

Washington had taken office without benefit of party support. Indeed, no political parties, as such, existed in the early years of his Administration. Before long, however, a cluster of issues emerged that divided the public into two opposing political camps, the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans.³⁶ These disputes included the fight over whether to create a National Bank, differing perspectives on the French Revolution, the Whiskey Rebellion, and the proposed Jay's Treaty with Britain.³⁷ While Washington, as the hero of the Revolution, largely managed to remain above the partisan fray, nonetheless he aligned himself with the Federalist positions on these issues.³⁸ This would put him in opposition to his once-ardent enthusiasts, the Scots-Irish, most of whom agreed with the Democratic-Republican positions on the great issues that confronted the young Republic.

The division between the first two American parties was quite stark. Federalists wanted a strong federal government complete with a National Bank, a robust business culture, and improved relations with the British; moreover, most Federalists viewed the ongoing French Revolution as the dangerous handiwork of radical fanatics.³⁹ The man

³⁶ Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (NY: Vintage Books, 2004), 216.

³⁷ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 215-225.

³⁸ Ellis, *His Excellency*, Chapter 6.

³⁹ John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 60-61.

most responsible for the development of Federalist ideology was the first Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. Thomas Jefferson, the first Secretary of State, and James Madison, the author of the American Constitution, principally formed the early Democratic-Republican platform of ideas. The party stood for states' rights (which made them opposed to a National Bank and later indisposed to rigorously condemn the Whiskey Rebellion), an agrarian economy, and friendly relations with Revolutionary France. Democratic-Republicans also harbored deep suspicions of Britain, and thus they would oppose the conciliatory, essentially pro-British Jay's Treaty.⁴⁰

For the Federalists, the establishment of a National Bank was the central feature of their domestic program. Such an institution simultaneously would endow the federal government with enhanced powers relative to the states while promoting a strong commercial economy.⁴¹ The Jefferson-led Democratic-Republicans--often referred to just as "Republicans"--at that time regarded this and related Federalist plans as a blueprint for creating an elitist society of wealth and privilege.⁴²

In 1791 Washington ultimately signed into law the bill establishing the Bank of the United States. Very few Scots-Irish immigrants publicly attacked Washington or the Bank at the time of its creation, but nevertheless their uneasiness about the Bank was evident enough that Jefferson and Madison visited many backcountry regions of Pennsylvania and New York during their clandestine, nine-hundred mile trek from Philadelphia to upstate New York following the passage of the Bank bill. The purpose of their tour was to rally

⁴⁰ Ellis, *His Excellency*, 227.

⁴¹ John Ferling, *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Rivalry that Forged a Nation* (NY: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), Location 4947 (Kindle Edition).

⁴² Ferling, *Jefferson and Hamilton*, Location 4841 (Kindle Edition).

Americans against the Bank, and Jefferson and Madison knew that the outlying areas, particularly those in Pennsylvania where Scots-Irish immigrants predominantly resided, included many voters distrustful of Hamilton and his policies.⁴³ One prominent Scots-Irish leader, William Duane, later articulated the Scots-Irish, anti-Bank sentiments—describing the institution as a “monopoly,” a “British-controlled engine of oppression,” and a bastion of privilege.⁴⁴ But in the 1790s, the Scots-Irish looked to Jefferson and his budding Republican party to fight the Bank on their behalf. Of course, it also had to have been of concern to these Scots-Irish Americans that their hero Washington apparently had aligned himself with those who seemed determined to recreate the United States in the image of hated, strongly centralized Britain.

The French Revolution alienated the Scots-Irish from the Federalist Party--and therefore indirectly from Washington--even more. In 1789 middle-and lower-class French citizens, tired of their country’s elitist political and social structure that was dominated by the King, Catholic Church, and aristocracy demanded more rights and opportunities. Republicans like Jefferson supported the French revolutionaries’ efforts and urged President Washington to aid them in their struggle for freedom. But Washington and Federalists like Hamilton wanted no role in the French fight, viewing it as a dangerously volatile European affair.⁴⁵ Scots-Irish Americans agreed with the Republicans.⁴⁶ As Paul Jones writes in *The Irish Brigade*, “For an Irishman [in America] that [supporting the French Revolutionaries] was the single great test. In his eyes,

⁴³ Ferling, *Jefferson and Hamilton*, Location 4911 (Kindle Edition).

⁴⁴ David Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 149, 93.

⁴⁵ Ellis, *His Excellency*, 211.

⁴⁶ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 42.

England was the oppressor, and France a liberator”⁴⁷ Scots-Irish rallied to back the French because they were the traditional enemy of Britain, and had been the ally of the United States in the Revolutionary War. Moreover many Irish exiles, over the years, had gone to France seeking and receiving refuge for religious persecution. France also provided education to some Irishmen who had been deprived of such in Ireland because of the Penal Laws.⁴⁸ Beyond that, the Scots-Irish supported the French rebels because of a link between the French revolutionaries and an organization back in Ireland that many Scots-Irish Americans much admired in the 1790s.

This was the United Irishmen, a group of middle-class, mostly Protestant rebels intent on freeing Ireland from British subjugation.⁴⁹ The United Irishmen came into existence in 1791 in Belfast and later spread to Dublin. United Irishmen leaders like Theobald Wolfe Tone, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, and Napper Tandy sought to stir up revolutionary fervor in Ireland, but some also traveled to the United States seeking support.⁵⁰ The United Irishmen credited the French Revolution—“the brightest, and yet the bloodiest page in the annals of man”—as their inspiration.⁵¹ In time the French revolutionaries would provide the United Irishmen three expeditions of aid to wage their own rebellion. Scots-Irish Americans appreciated the help French rebels consistently provided the Irish nationalists, leading them to back the French revolutionaries abroad and, by extension, the Republican Party at home.⁵²

⁴⁷ Paul Jones, *The Irish Brigade* (Washington, D.C.: Robert B. Luce, 1969), 59.

⁴⁸ Jones, *The Irish Brigade*, 59.

⁴⁹ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 12.

⁵⁰ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 42. Also, see the beginning chapters of Wilson, *United Irishmen*.

⁵¹ Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 23.

⁵² Jones, *The Irish Brigade*, 59.

Consequently, Scots-Irish Americans and recent United Irishmen immigrants in America chafed at President Washington's refusal to assist the French revolutionaries. According to Washington biographer Joseph Ellis, in the pages of two prominent Republican newspapers, the *National Gazette* (which had been co-founded secretly by Jefferson and Madison) and *Aurora*, "Washington himself now replaced Hamilton as the central target."⁵³

The Whiskey Rebellion further eroded the political connections between the Scots-Irish and Washington. In 1791, at Treasury Secretary Hamilton's urging, Congress approved a 25 percent excise tax on liquor.⁵⁴ This measure enraged the small distillers of western Pennsylvania, many of whom were Scots-Irish.⁵⁵ The tax reminded them of the revenue-raising measures the British had imposed before the Revolutionary War, conveniently ignoring that they now had the vote and political representation, unlike before the Revolution. Much as the colonists had done then, these distillers began protesting this tax. Their opposition steadily intensified until, in 1794, the distillers outright refused to pay the taxes and forcibly prevented government collectors and inspectors from doing their jobs.⁵⁶ In the face of this defiance to federal authority, President Washington personally led a force of 15,000 troops into Pennsylvania to quell the insurrection.⁵⁷ As it turned out, the resistance collapsed shortly before Washington arrived in the region, but a number of the "Whiskey Rebellion" ringleaders were arrested.⁵⁸ Contemporaries regarded the episode as one of Scots-Irish making. Several Federalist-minded newspapers, such as *The*

⁵³ Ellis, *His Excellency*, 224.

⁵⁴ Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 63.

⁵⁵ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 51.

⁵⁶ Ray Nicholas, *The Invention of the American Political Parties* (NY: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 186.

⁵⁷ Nicholas, *American Political Parties*, 187.

⁵⁸ Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 64.

Connecticut Courant, blamed the Scots-Irish “rabble” for the unpatriotic “grumbings” that had initiated the uprising.⁵⁹ As the paper saw matters, “the overflowing mass of their [Europe’s] multitudes have more or less tainted the healthy mass of our large towns.”⁶⁰ As was well-known, the majority of the Europeans then residing in western Pennsylvania were the Scots-Irish. By contrast, *The National Gazette* defended the Whiskey Rebellion and received numerous letters in support of its stance. This in turn brought criticism from Federalists. One such critic remarked that perhaps some of the incendiary letters to the *National Gazette* had been written by “a person who, after landing from a vessel from Ireland, followed his nose from hence to Harrisburg without turning to the right or left.”⁶¹

Some Federalists, Washington included, viewed the rebellion as less a spontaneous protest and more the result of an organized political conspiracy against the government itself. Under particular suspicion were various “Democratic Societies,” a collection of activist organizations that modeled themselves on the Sons of Liberty and whose membership rolls included many pro-French, anti-British, pro-Republican men living in western Pennsylvania and New York, home of many Scots-Irish residents.⁶² These groups identified themselves as defenders of freedom. Wary of all political factions, Washington blamed these groups for the Whiskey Rebellion. “I consider,” he stated, “this insurrection as the first formidable fruit of the Democratic Societies.”⁶³ Washington went further in a letter to fellow-Federalist John Jay, calling these groups “self-created societies, wch. [sic]

⁵⁹ Thomas Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 135.

⁶⁰ Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 135.

⁶¹ Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 135.

⁶² Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 92. Also, Nicholas, *American Political Parties*, 188.

⁶³ Ellis, *His Excellency*, 224.

have spread themselves over this country, and have been labouring incessantly to sow the seeds of distrust, jealousy, and of course discontent; thereby hoping to effect some revolution in the government”⁶⁴ After Washington had put down the insurrection, he addressed Congress and explained his action as having been made necessary by “certain self-created societies” that threatened the survival of the Union.⁶⁵ Federalists in the Senate commended the President for his message.⁶⁶

Washington’s denunciation of the Democratic Societies appalled Republican Madison, who wrote to fellow Republican James Monroe that the President’s words had been the “greatest error in his political career.” Jefferson agreed, calling Washington’s statement about the Democratic Societies “one of the extraordinary acts of boldness of which we have seen so many from the faction of monocrats.”⁶⁷ A number of Americans, including large numbers of Scots-Irish, shared these sentiments—not surprising, given that Scots-Irish had participated in the Rebellion and “many members involved in the rebellion were members of the western societies.”⁶⁸ Washington later would pardon those involved in the Rebellion. The Scots-Irish appreciated that gesture, and the Whiskey Rebellion hardly extinguished the respect the Scots-Irish had long had for Washington. This was evident in the quick collapse of the Rebellion as the federal troops, headed by Washington himself, moved steadily deeper into the western Pennsylvania backcountry. Yet the episode inevitably aroused lingering concerns that the great man had allowed himself to

⁶⁴George Washington to John Jay, November 1-5, 1794. John C. Fitzpatrick, ed. *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, vol. 34 (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), 17.

⁶⁵ Ellis, *His Excellency*, 224.

⁶⁶ James Tagg, *Benjamin Franklin Bache and the Philadelphia Aurora* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 219.

⁶⁷ Jules Witcover, *Party of the People: A History of the Democrats* (NY: Random House, 2003), 34.

⁶⁸ Tagg, *Bache*, 218.

become somewhat estranged from the ideals of republicanism and legitimate protest, both important ideals to the Scots-Irish.⁶⁹

Of all of Washington's executive decisions, his support of Jay's Treaty in 1794 led to the most outward display of intensified Scots-Irish antipathy toward him. Named for the lead American negotiator John Jay, this Federalist-sponsored treaty with Britain consisted of various U.S. concessions pertaining to trade relations between the two countries, in return for which the British agreed to evacuate their remaining forces from the American Northwest.⁷⁰ Britain's practice of seizing American trade vessels, which had occasioned the Washington Administration's desire to seek an accord with Britain in the first place, went unmentioned in the treaty's final text. Along with many other Americans, the Scots-Irish looked on incredulously as the country for which they had fought to become free of Britain was now, under Federalist leadership, seemingly acquiescing to British domination by diplomatic means. When the Republican Party vociferously opposed Jay's Treaty, calling it a "pact with the British Satan," angry Scots-Irish had yet another reason to align with the Jeffersonians.⁷¹

Still more converts to the Republican banner soon came with the arrival to America of self-styled United Irishmen immigrants, who began coming to the United States in 1795. Most were Protestants, but some Catholics also joined their ranks. Indeed, at about this time Catholic Irish, both United Irishmen and others, were beginning to leave British

⁶⁹ Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 94.

⁷⁰ Ellis, *His Excellency*, 226-227.

⁷¹ Ellis, *His Excellency*, 228.

oppression to start a new life in America. In the decade of the 1790s, some 60,000 Irish (80% Protestant and 20% Catholic) entered the United States.⁷²

Early on, Republican leaders realized the added political strength that the United Irishmen represented. As such, Republican U.S. Congressman Blair McClenachan, speaking at an anti-Jay's Treaty protest in Philadelphia, made a point of announcing the presence of Archibald Hamilton Rowan, one of the founding members of the United Irishmen.⁷³ Speaking to a crowd of which at least one-fifth was of Irish origin, McClenachan ended his speech by requesting "three cheers for the persecuted patriot, Hamilton Rowan." Throwing a copy of Jay's Treaty into the crowd, McClenachan encouraged the audience to "kick this damn treaty to hell."⁷⁴ Yet the Senate ratified Jay's Treaty by a vote of 20-10, exactly the two-thirds margin required by the Constitution.

The victory did not mollify Washington's attitude toward a group that had sought to derail Jay's Treaty. When Senator Pierce Butler, a Federalist-turned-Republican, brought Rowan into Secretary of State Edmund Randolph's office for an introduction shortly after the ratification, the gesture angered the President. "The introduction of A.R.H. to you was, I conceive," Washington wrote Randolph, "more the effect of design than of ignorance or inadvertency. The impropriety of the measure was too palpable" The President concluded, "One can scarcely forbear thinking, that these acts are part of a premeditated system to embarrass the Executive government."⁷⁵

⁷² Hans-Jurgen Grabbe, "European Immigration to the United States in the Early National Period, 1783-1820," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 133 (June 1989), 194.

⁷³ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 41.

⁷⁴ William Drummond, ed., *Autobiography of Archibald Hamilton Rowan, Esq.* (Dublin: Thomas Tegg and Co., 1840), 326. Also, Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 41.

⁷⁵ George Washington to Edmund Randolph, July 24, 1795. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington*, 247.

The two most ardent United Irishmen opponents of Jay's Treaty were James Reynolds and William Duane.⁷⁶ Both men joined a Philadelphia club whose founding purpose was to attack President Washington and his decision to sign Jay's Treaty.⁷⁷ Beyond that, both Reynolds and Duane worked closely with the founder and first editor of *Aurora*, Benjamin Franklin Bache, who opened his columns to their anti-Washington editorials.⁷⁸ Duane later became editor of *Aurora*, while Reynolds continued to rail against Washington even after he left office.⁷⁹ "If ever there was a period for rejoicing," Reynolds wrote in *Aurora* of Washington's departure from the Presidency, "this is the moment—every heart, in unison with the freedom and happiness of the people ought to beat in exaltation, that the name of WASHINGTON from this day ceases to give currency to political iniquity; and to legalize corruption."⁸⁰ In like manner, Duane wrote, under the pseudonym Jasper Dwight, a scathing pamphlet in the form of a letter to Washington, criticizing his "Farewell Address" as well as the first President's character and service to the United States:

But, however willingly every man must allow these obligations and objects to have been binding and wise, I apprend I have already flew that you have not adhered to that rigid and neutral justice which you profess—every concession to Britain and prejudice of France was a deviation from neutrality and, above all, every neglect of justice to our own rights and character as a nation was a departure from the spirit and basis of the neutral principle . . .

. . . I have done, Sir, what I deem a duty; you are unhappily fond of flattery; indirect praise is to you the language of sincerity . . . my earnest wish is to expose

⁷⁶ Wilson, *United Irishman*, 41.

⁷⁷ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 42.

⁷⁸ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 42.

⁷⁹ William Duane to Thomas Jefferson, March 24, 1800. Barbara O'Berg, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 31 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 454.

⁸⁰ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 42.

the PERSONAL IDOLATRY into which we have been heedlessly running
[sic]⁸¹

To be sure, the attacks by Reynolds and Duane on Washington did not resonate with all Scots-Irish Americans. During the Revolutionary War, Scots-Irish soldiers had revered Washington as their great hero, and that image remained “deeply embedded within the Irish-American consciousness” during Washington’s presidency, notwithstanding the vitriol directed at him by the most virulent United Irishmen.⁸² Even Matthew Carey, a United Irishmen who operated out of Philadelphia, worried that men like Reynolds “did more to injure the cause of Democracy than all the efforts of its enemies could have done in five years.”⁸³ Carey went even further, once telling Reynolds “that if I were a leading Federalist, I would give [you] 500 dollars a year to take an active part in the affairs of the Democrats”⁸⁴ Archibald Hamilton Rowan, too, understood the spell Washington had over all Americans, even those that did not agree with the first President’s politics. Rowan himself, revered the man, writing shortly after Washington’s death, “I respect Washington’s character, and will respect his memory.”⁸⁵ Still, Scots-Irish Americans supported the United Irishmen for their nationalism, and “many of those who were Federalists” because of their loyalty to Washington “broke with the party over its British

⁸¹ William Duane, *Letter to George Washington President of the United States: Containing, Strictures on his Address of the Seventeenth of September, 1796, Notifying his Relinquishment of the Presidential Office* (Baltimore, MD: George Keatinge’s Book-Store, 1797), 41, 44.

⁸² Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 42.

⁸³ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 42.

⁸⁴ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 42.

⁸⁵ Drummond, ed., *Autobiography of Archibald Hamilton Rowan*, 347.

trade policy and Jay's Treaty which they saw as direct support of Ireland's oppressor England."⁸⁶

It came as no surprise that the United Irishmen actively campaigned in 1796 for Republican Presidential candidate Jefferson. Besides Duane and Reynolds, United Irishmen Mathew Carey and John Daly Burk of pro-Adams Boston did all they could to help Jefferson.⁸⁷ Carey's mobilization of the Pennsylvanian Scots-Irish vote contributed to Jefferson's winning the Keystone State.⁸⁸ Burk campaigned by calling for the next President to be "a hater of monarchy" and a lover of liberty and France—an obvious reference to Jefferson.⁸⁹ United Irishmen Tench Coxe, John Beckley, and Duane also recruited Scots-Irish to the Jeffersonian cause, and found an easier time of it with Washington out of the presidential picture.⁹⁰ But much to the chagrin of these United Irishmen, the Federalist nominee, Vice President John Adams of Massachusetts, prevailed, while under the existing rules Jefferson became the second Vice President.

John Adams and the Federalist Party:

Having retained control of the Presidency, the Federalists further established themselves as a party of pro-British and nativist proclivities. They remained unapologetically hostile toward immigrants, and made no effort to enact universal, white male suffrage in federal elections. Rather, Federalists referred to the Irish, particularly those connected to the United Irishmen, as "so many serpents" intent on destroying the

⁸⁶ Carter, "A "Wild Irishman" Under Every Federalist's Bed. Naturalization in Philadelphia, 1789-1806," in James Walsh, ed., *The Irish: America's Political Class* (NY: Arno Press, 1976), 333.

⁸⁷ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 43.

⁸⁸ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 42.

⁸⁹ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 43.

⁹⁰ Carter, "A "Wild Irishman," 333.

new Republic.⁹¹ All these stances sharply contrasted with the Republicans' "asylum of liberty" rhetoric, obviously far more welcoming of immigrants and supportive of expanding the suffrage.⁹² Federalists recognized with trepidation that the foreign-born had been a big part of the 1796 Republican vote, notably the Scots-Irish who lived in the cities of Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia. Looking toward the 1800 election and a likely Adams-Jefferson rematch, Federalists feared they would be swept out of power by a tidal wave of immigrant votes, especially those of the Scots-Irish.⁹³ An examination of the *Index to Records of Aliens' Declarations of Intention and/or Oaths of Allegiance, 1789-1880* of Philadelphia indicates that the Federalists had good cause for such fear. The Irish constituted more than 50% of all aliens naturalized in the years between 1789-1806, and after 1797 they made up a greater portion of the total number of foreign-born persons granted citizenship than all other ethnic groups combined.⁹⁴

The Federalist who perhaps most memorably expressed his party's fear and loathing of the Scots-Irish was Massachusetts Congressman Harrison Gray Otis. "If some means are not adopted," Otis wrote despairingly to his wife, "to prevent the indiscriminate admission of wild Irishmen and others to the right of suffrage there will soon be an end to liberty and property."⁹⁵ In 1797 Otis proposed a tax of twenty dollars on certificates of naturalization, as a means of limiting such applications for citizenship among Scots-Irish immigrants. Naturally, Jeffersonians immediately attacked the tax as an anti-immigration

⁹¹ John Miller, *The Alien and Sedition Acts* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951), 45.

⁹² Edward Carter, "A "Wild Irishman" Under Every Federalists Bed: Naturalization in Philadelphia, 1789-1806," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 94 (July, 1970), 333.

⁹³ Carter, "A "Wild Irishman," 333.

⁹⁴ Carter, "A "Wild Irishman," 335, 339.

⁹⁵ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis, 1765-1848: The Urbane Federalist* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 107.

ploy “to cut off an increasingly important source of Republican strength.”⁹⁶ Then on July 1, 1797, Otis defended his tax before the House of Representatives in his forever-infamous “Wild Irish” speech:

The Amendment will not affect those men who already have lands in this country, nor the deserving part of those who may seek an asylum in it. Persons of that description can easily pay the tax; but it will tend to foreclose the mass of vicious and disorganizing characters who cannot live peaceably at home, and who, after unfurling the standard of rebellion in their own countries, may come hither to revolutionize ours. I feel every disposition to respect those honest and industrious people . . . who have become citizens . . . but I do not wish to invite hordes of wild Irishmen, nor the turbulent and disorderly of all parts of the world, to come here with a view to disturb our tranquility, after having succeeded in the overthrow of their own Governments.⁹⁷

Otis did not get his tax proposal passed; to the contrary, he made himself and his Federalist Party even more vulnerable to immigrant retribution. The Philadelphia *Daily Advertiser*, edited by an Irishman, harshly reminded Otis that the American War for Independence had been won by the Irish.⁹⁸ The Republican-leaning Boston *Independent Chronicle* happily reprinted the *Daily Advertiser*’s editorial, accompanied by an “Irish Epistle to H.G. Otis” supposedly penned by “A Tame Wild Irishman.” Two verses of that poem read:

For tho’ you “don’t want population”
By Jasus your credit is poor,
‘Twas the *Irish* and *African* nation
That made your *Election* so sure.

Young man, we would have you remember

⁹⁶ James Morton Smith, *Freedom’s Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1956), 23.

⁹⁷ Morison, *Otis*, 108.

⁹⁸ Carter, “A “Wild Irishman,” 334.

While we in this country can tarry,
 The “*Wild Irish*” will choose a new member
 And will ne’er vote again for *young Harry*.⁹⁹

Recognizing his political blunder, Otis claimed that his comments had been over-generalized. Honorable Scots-Irish men, he now averred, were welcome in the United States. Only “vicious and disorganizing characters who could not live peaceably at home” should be barred from entering the country.¹⁰⁰ Federalist newspapers also came to Otis’s defense, writing that his speech only had referred to the “restless malcontents, the *wild* beasts of all nations, natives of America as well as Europe”¹⁰¹ But these explanations did not impress the Scots-Irish, who soon enough had what they regarded as positive proof that the Federalists were their enemies and Republicans their political benefactors.

In 1798, a Federalist Congress passed the notorious Alien and Sedition Acts, which President Adams signed into law. Although the domestic-political implications of these measures are especially relevant to this study, it should be noted that these laws came into being because of prevailing international conditions. With France and Britain once again at war with one another in the 1790s, both countries sought to block neutral U.S. trade with the other belligerent. Jay’s Treaty temporarily settled this issue with Britain, but France would not cease seizing American merchant vessels on the high seas. Then, amidst an effort to resolve the dispute diplomatically, the French demanded a bribe from American negotiators in advance of formal talks—an episode known to history as the XYZ Affair.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Morrison, *Otis*, 107-108.

¹⁰⁰ Carter, “A “Wild Irishman,” 334.

¹⁰¹ Morrison, *Otis*, 108, 109.

¹⁰² David McCullough, *John Adams* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 495.

This French mendacity enraged the American public, and in 1798 the two countries suddenly found themselves in an undeclared naval war.¹⁰³ In such an environment, the Alien and Sedition Acts passed.¹⁰⁴ The laws limited the civil liberties of groups and individuals that the Administration deemed dangerous to national security.

But beyond their national-security implications, the Alien and Sedition Acts also sought to seriously circumscribe the voting power of immigrant groups.¹⁰⁵ This of course included the Irish, whose emigration to the United States intensified in 1798. In that year, amidst America's problems with France, the United Irishmen staged a rebellion against British control in Ireland. The rebellion failed, and most of the rebel leaders were either captured or executed by British authorities.¹⁰⁶ A by-product of this unsuccessful rebellion was an influx of United Irishmen and their supporters who emigrated to the United States in order to escape punishment and settled in the countryside as well as in major cities like New York and Philadelphia.¹⁰⁷ Not surprisingly, this greatly alarmed many members of the Adams' Administration and other Federalist Party politicians. As historian Robert Ernst writes in his biography about John Adams' Minister to Britain, *Rufus King: American Federalist*, the Federalists believed the "Irish revolutionaries . . . would flock to the Jeffersonian standard like children to a parade . . ."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ McCullough, *Adams*, 499.

¹⁰⁴ Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 102.

¹⁰⁵ Carter, "A 'Wild Irishman,'" 336-337.

¹⁰⁶ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 184-185.

¹⁰⁷ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 185. Also Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 43. Also, Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Ernst, *Rufus King: American Federalist*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 264.

To delay that eventuality as long as possible was the purpose of the Naturalization Act (one of four laws that comprised the “Alien and Sedition Acts”). The Naturalization Act required an alien to reside in the United States for fourteen rather than five years, and to have five rather than one year of state residency, before that individual could apply for citizenship and thus be eligible to vote.¹⁰⁹ The accompanying Sedition Act criminalized criticisms of the government, that is, the Federalist-run government. The intent of this direct assault on the First Amendment was of course to silence Republican newspapers, including those edited by Irishmen.¹¹⁰

President Adams made his Secretary of State, Timothy Pickering,¹¹¹ the chief enforcement officer of the Alien and Sedition Acts.¹¹² Pickering did so by maintaining an extensive correspondence with state officials, particularly in areas such as New York City and Philadelphia, which had liberal immigration policies and where United Irishmen were active.¹¹³ In August 1798 the U.S. District Attorney for Pennsylvania, William Rawle, informed Pickering of some “secret projects” involving the United Irishmen, and the next day U.S. District Judge Richard Peters of Philadelphia alerted Pickering that there were “some Rascals . . . both Aliens and infamous Citizens” that he wanted to confront, legally and decisively.¹¹⁴ Realizing that both men were referring to “the same discontented characters which infest our country,” Pickering encouraged Rawle and Peters to act

¹⁰⁹ Carter, “A “Wild Irishman,” 336-337.

¹¹⁰ Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies*. (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 84.

¹¹¹ For more information See, Gerald R. Clairfield, *Timothy Pickering and the American Republic* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980).

¹¹² Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 84.

¹¹³ James Morton Smith, *Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1956), 163.

¹¹⁴ Smith, *Freedom's Fetters*, 163-164.

collaboratively to root out these supposed undesirables.¹¹⁵ For his part, Pickering promised Rawle that he would “do anything to aid the measures you think proper respecting them,” and would “cheerfully” do anything to protect Pennsylvania and the country from such “Irish Villains” as self-proclaimed United Irishman William Duane and Archibald Hamilton Rowan, who Rawle had “reason to apprehend are plotting mischief against [the] country.”¹¹⁶ Rowan boldly spoke out against the Alien and Sedition Acts and Pickering’s well-known suspicion of him. In a letter to the Secretary of State shortly after the Acts had passed, Rowan likened the Adams Administration to the British Government, inasmuch as both made him the “victim of false evidence in my own country” and sentenced him “to live under the lash of arbitrary power.”¹¹⁷ Rowan’s letter went unanswered.¹¹⁸ Increasingly, the Adams Administration was coming to regard Scots-Irish United Irishmen as radicals who warranted arrest and expulsion from the country.

Another Federalist, Minister to Prussia John Quincy Adams, the President’s son, also supported the Alien and Sedition Acts through his speeches and writings. When the Virginia and Kentucky legislatures passed resolutions protesting the controversial Alien and Sedition Acts, the younger Adams responded by accusing the members of the legislatures of collectively possessing “either an incurable distemper or at least one from which recovery is very distant.”¹¹⁹ Some thirty years later, the Irish and other immigrant groups would punish Quincy Adams for this defense of his father’s policies.

¹¹⁵ Smith, *Freedom’s Fetters*, 163-164.

¹¹⁶ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 84. Also, Smith, *Freedom’s Fetters*, 164. And, Drummond, ed., *Autobiography of Archibald Hamilton Rowan*, 323.

¹¹⁷ Drummond, ed., *Autobiography of Archibald Hamilton Rowan*, 323.

¹¹⁸ Drummond, ed., *Autobiography of Archibald Hamilton Rowan*, 324.

¹¹⁹ Ernst, *King*, 262.

Somewhat surprisingly, the actual impact of the Alien and Sedition Acts was minimal, particularly on United Irishmen. The only United Irishman who even came close to expulsion from the country was John Daly Burk, editor of the New York City-based *Time-Piece*, by far the most radical newspaper in the city. Aaron Burr, at the time a prominent New York Republican, aided Burk through state patronage.¹²⁰ Burr astutely realized that Burk could serve to bring the Scots-Irish voters in the state even more firmly into the Jeffersonian cause. Burk gladly accommodated, branding the Federalists as “coward traitors” while lambasting Adams as a “mock Monarch.”¹²¹ Burk even charged that the XYZ Affair had been made up for the purpose of initiating war with the French and thereby silencing Scots-Irish Americans.¹²² However, after reports surfaced that Burk privately had spoken favorably of a French invasion of America, Pickering charged him and his co-editor with seditious libel.¹²³ Burk denied the accusations and New York Democratic-Republicans raised \$2,000 to pay his bail.¹²⁴ Ultimately Burk was let off, and while the government’s crackdown on the *Time-Piece* may have had something of a chilling effect on the paper’s subsequent editorials, the Adams Administration, fearing the Scots-Irish outcry that would surely ensue, knew better than to shut down the *Time-Piece* outright.¹²⁵

Although the Alien and Sedition Acts proved unsuccessful, the Federalists’ attempts to slow the stream of United Irishmen coming to America proved fruitful. John

¹²⁰ Ted Widmer, *Martin Van Buren: The American Presidents Series, 1837-1841* (NY: Times Books, 2005), Location 490. (Kindle Edition)

¹²¹ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 49.

¹²² Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 49.

¹²³ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 49.

¹²⁴ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 50.

¹²⁵ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 56.

Adams' Minister to Britain, Rufus King, worked hard to stop the immigration of United Irishmen after their failed rebellion against Britain.¹²⁶ King began his efforts even before the rebellion officially ended, so concerned was he that those "ignorant, ill-governed, oppressed and wretched" United Irishmen would flee to the United States.¹²⁷ King also recruited other members of the Administration to his cause. He wrote to Secretary of State Pickering of his concern about the United Irishmen, stating that "Their Principles and Habits would be pernicious to the Order and Industry of our People . . . I cannot persuade myself that the Malcontents of any character or country will ever become useful Citizens of ours."¹²⁸

King even campaigned to stop the British from sending Irish prisoners to America. He asked the Duke of Portland at the British Home Office to persuade his government and Irish authorities not to allow Irish prisoners to emigrate to America.¹²⁹ In response Charles Cornwallis, the British general who had lost at Yorktown during the Revolution but now Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, gave King his sincerest promise that "not one of the Traitors . . . shall be suffered upon any account whatever" to leave for America without the expressed permission from King himself.¹³⁰ Federalists celebrated as King boasted that he had slowed down Irish emigration and won the "honor" of the Irish rebel leaders' "cordial and distinguished Hatred."¹³¹ President John Adams was also satisfied, inaccurately believing that the United Irishmen no longer would pose a threat to the country and his Administration. As for the Irish in both Ireland and the United States,

¹²⁶ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 55.

¹²⁷ Ernst, *King*, 261.

¹²⁸ Ernst, *King*, 261.

¹²⁹ Ernst, *King*, 263.

¹³⁰ Ernst, *King*, 263.

¹³¹ Ernst, *King*, 261.

“they never forgave Rufus King,” whom the Scots-Irish derisively nicknamed “Refuse King.”¹³² Their undiminished anger would come back to haunt King when he became a presidential candidate in 1816.

Troubles for the Federalist Party would begin much earlier. In 1800, a Federalist Congressman from Connecticut named Uriah Tracy traveled to Pennsylvania to get a sense of that state’s political situation. To his chagrin Tracy discovered that many Federalist officeholders recently had lost their elections, having been voted out by “every scoundrel who could read and write.”¹³³ Tracy felt he knew who these scoundrels were: “In my very lengthy journey through this State,” he wrote, “I have seen many, very many Irishmen, and with the few exceptions, they are United Irishmen, Free Masons, and the most God-provoking Democrats this side of Hell.”¹³⁴ Tracy’s assessment was accurate: in 1799 more than 60% of Pennsylvania eligible voters participated in the state elections, and Republicans won due to a high Irish immigrant turnout.¹³⁵

Unfortunately for the Federalists, a similar trend was occurring elsewhere. By 1800, “the alliance between the native democracy and the Irish vote . . . was already cemented.”¹³⁶ Aaron Burr used his leadership of Tammany Hall, a New York City political organization, to rally the Irish, working-class vote in New York behind Thomas

¹³² Ernst, *King*, 264 and Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 55.

¹³³ Uriah Tracy to Oliver Wolcott, August 7, 1800. George Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams, Edited from the Papers of Oliver Wolcott Secretary of the Treasury*, vol. ii (NY: Burt Franklin, 1971), 399.

¹³⁴ Uriah Tracy to Oliver Wolcott, (August 7, 1800) in George Gibbs, ed., *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and Adams*, 399.

¹³⁵ Edward Larson, *A Magnificent Catastrophe: The Tumultuous Election of 1800, America’s First Presidential Campaign* (NY: Free Press, 2007), 60.

¹³⁶ Morrison, *Otis*, p. 107.

Jefferson in that year's presidential election.¹³⁷ Indeed, "Tammany used every influence, social and political, to carry the city for Jefferson."¹³⁸ Ironically, in the early nineteenth century Tammany Hall, even as its leaders energetically mobilized the Irish vote, did not permit Irish membership into the society itself. Of course that would soon change: the Irish would come to dominate Tammany Hall. The association between Irish America and Tammany would help win many an election, starting in 1800 when they worked together to deliver New York City to Jefferson.¹³⁹

Jefferson also benefited in 1800 from the respectful relationship he had cultivated with Scots-Irish leaders. United Irishman leader Rowan supported Jefferson, and once referred to him as one of the "friends of universal freedom."¹⁴⁰ Moreover, over the years Jefferson had befriended William Duane, a man whom some moderate Republicans feared because of his radical rhetoric. Jefferson himself would come to describe Duane as "overzealous," yet ultimately a good man who subscribed to the views of "a great portion of the republican party."¹⁴¹ Jefferson and Duane corresponded frequently with each other during the 1800 campaign, and they would continue to do so for the next 20 years.¹⁴² Indeed, many a Federalist and Democratic Republican alike knew that Duane had "the confidence" of Thomas Jefferson.¹⁴³ For his part, Duane used his position as editor of the

¹³⁷ Terry Golway, *Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics* (NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014), 6. Also, Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 49.

¹³⁸ Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall* (NY: Burt Franklin, 1917), 14.

¹³⁹ Joseph O'Grady, *How the Irish Became Americans* (NY: Twayne Publishers, 1973), 69.

¹⁴⁰ Archibald Hamilton Rowan to Thomas Jefferson, July 19, 1798. Barbara O'Berg, ed. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 30, 460.

¹⁴¹ Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of the American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (NY: W.W. Norton and Company 2005), 107.

¹⁴² See William Duane, *Letters of William Duane: 1760-1835* (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2010).

¹⁴³ Kim Phillips, "William Duane, Philadelphia's Democratic Republicans, and the Origins of Modern Politics." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (July 1977), 382.

extensively-read *Aurora* to print every insult he could muster about President Adams during the 1800 election year. In fact, Duane attacked Adams so viciously that the President complained to Pickering, “Is there anything evil in the regions of actuality or possibility that the *Aurora* has not suggested of me?”¹⁴⁴ Jefferson appreciated Duane’s efforts during the campaign and called *Aurora* “the rallying point for the Orthodox of the whole union,” and “our comfort in the gloomiest days.”¹⁴⁵

Jefferson prevailed over Adams in 1800 by an Electoral College vote of 73-65, while in the popular vote Jefferson won, 41,330-25,952.¹⁴⁶ The Republicans also took control of Congress from the Federalists. Jefferson’s victory was indeed also a triumph for the Scots-Irish. As editor-in-chief of the *Irish American Chronicle* David Hogan states, “In 1800, the Irish exiles and their Irish-American allies organized what could be called the first ethnic voting bloc in U.S. history. They supported Thomas Jefferson, whom they regarded as a true republican.”¹⁴⁷ Adams and the Federalists knew Scots-Irish leaders had contributed decisively to their loss. After the elections, “Adams named Duane as one of the three or four men most responsible for his defeat,” and Federalists subsequently made it their “utmost ambition” to keep “Duane and his Gang from the supreme Power.”¹⁴⁸

Bitterness aside, the sharp rebuke at the polls they got in 1800 forced Federalists, however begrudgingly, to modify their stance toward immigrants, including the Scots-Irish. In Philadelphia, for example, the Party set up a “committee to aid the naturalization

¹⁴⁴ Larson, *A Magnificent Catastrophe*, 81.

¹⁴⁵ Phillips, “William Duane, Philadelphia’s Democratic Republicans, and the Origins of Modern Politics,” 368.

¹⁴⁶ Morrison, *Otis*, 190.

¹⁴⁷ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 43.

¹⁴⁸ Phillips, “William Duane, Philadelphia’s Democratic Republicans, and the Origins of Modern Politics,” 368, 369.

of foreigners.”¹⁴⁹ But irrevocable damage had been done to the Federalist cause. The historian Jay Dolan observes in his book *The Irish Americans* that the election of 1800 “not only spelled the defeat of the Federalist and their anti-Irish legislation, but it also helped to cement the bond between the Irish and the democratic political tradition.”¹⁵⁰ Democratic Republicans viewed the Scots-Irish as one of their “core constituencies,” while Scots-Irishmen, and particularly the United Irishmen, regarded Jefferson’s win as an Irish victory that soon would bring about an end to anti-Irish bigotry in America.¹⁵¹ This premature, overly optimistic assumption no doubt inspired still more emigration from Ireland to the United States, and thus before long the Jeffersonian-Republican ranks swelled even more with new voters. The Scots-Irish had made themselves a potent political force. They would continue to be so for years to come, contributing to a Republican dynasty that would last through the election of 1824.¹⁵²

The Era of Democratic-Republican Presidents and the War of 1812:

Owing to diplomatic developments, the deep antipathy that Scots-Irish Americans felt for Britain further solidified their allegiance to the United States and, as events played out, to the Republican Party. Once again Britain and France were at war with one another, and once again each country seized American vessels trading with the belligerent.¹⁵³ In the summer of 1807, American and Britain nearly went to war after the British warship *Leopard* fired upon the American vessel *Chesapeake* and impressed (kidnapped) four crew

¹⁴⁹ Carter, “A “Wild Irishman,” 343.

¹⁵⁰ Jay Dolan, *The Irish Americans* (NY: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 47.

¹⁵¹ Phillips, “William Duane, Philadelphia’s Democratic Republicans, and the Origins of Modern Politics,” 384.

¹⁵² Phillips, “William Duane, Philadelphia’s Democratic Republicans, and the Origins of Modern Politics,” 367.

¹⁵³ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 242.

members, trying them as deserters and executing one of them.¹⁵⁴ Jefferson and his fellow Republicans were outraged, but none more than the United Irishmen, who wanted retaliation. Upon hearing of the *Chesapeake* incident, United Irishman radical John Burk exclaimed, “Four of our citizens are borne off, wretched victims to satiate the rage of the British Moloch.”¹⁵⁵ John Binns, a Dublin native, a United Irishman, and the editor of the Philadelphia *Democratic Press*, echoed Burk’s sentiments, writing about the “unanimous desire for revenge.”¹⁵⁶ Not all Americans were as outraged about the incident, however. The irrepressible Rufus King, for one, charged the captain of the *Chesapeake*, Commodore James Barron, of “gross military indecorum” for employing deserters as crewmen.¹⁵⁷ For his part, President Jefferson reacted ineffectually to the *Chesapeake* incident by persuading Congress to enact an embargo law prohibiting trade with both Britain and France.¹⁵⁸

This Embargo Act of 1807 had to be repealed in 1809 because of widespread opposition to it, especially in New England.¹⁵⁹ That left Jefferson’s successor James Madison to contend with the crisis in American trade that had been created by the Anglo-French conflict. France’s Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte shrewdly promised to refrain from capturing any more American ships, while Britain delayed making a similar promise; also the British were guilty of impressing American sailors--many of them Scots-Irish--and

¹⁵⁴ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 240-241.

¹⁵⁵ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 79.

¹⁵⁶ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 79.

¹⁵⁷ Ernst, *King*, 302.

¹⁵⁸ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 241.

¹⁵⁹ Reginald Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812* (NY: A.S. Barnes & Company, Inc., 1962), 142.

forcing them to serve in the British navy.¹⁶⁰ Consequently, Madison in June 1812 asked for and received a Congressional declaration of war against Britain.¹⁶¹

Scots-Irish Americans cheered. “SONS OF ERIN, ASSEMBLE” became the rallying cry as they rushed to organize themselves into militias.¹⁶² Some United Irishmen joined existing militias, while others created companies of their own. In Petersburg, Virginia, John Burk became captain of a Rifle Company and instructed men of Irish origin on frontier warfare.¹⁶³ The journalist-turned-soldier William Duane helped organize the Baltimore Republican Greens, whose emerald banner depicted an eagle with the inscription, “*Fostered under thy wing, we die in thy defense.*”¹⁶⁴ Once the war broke out, Duane published numerous military manuals urging the Americans to utilize a Napoleonic style of fighting in lieu of the British-type that Americans had been using for decades.¹⁶⁵ Duane also became the Adjutant General of the Delaware River region, and he pushed for an American invasion of British-controlled-Canada.¹⁶⁶ That ill-fated invasion began on July 12, 1812. Among those who marched behind General William Hull en route to Canada was Richard Caldwell, who had been a general in the United Irishmen’s failed 1798 Revolution.¹⁶⁷ Throughout the struggle in Canada, Duane continued to concoct plans for annexing the huge British territory, despite repeated American losses in that region.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁰ Horsman, *War of 1812*, 30 and Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 77-78.

¹⁶¹ Horsman, *War of 1812*, 260.

¹⁶² Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 79.

¹⁶³ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 79.

¹⁶⁴ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 79.

¹⁶⁵ William Duane to Thomas Jefferson, July 17, 1812. Duane, *Letters of William Duane*, 350-351.

¹⁶⁶ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 84.

¹⁶⁷ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 84.

¹⁶⁸ William Duane to James Madison, September 20, 1812. Duane, *Letters of William Duane*, 358.

Additionally, Scots-Irishmen rallied to the cause to defend American borders. When New York City appeared vulnerable to a British invasion in 1814, some 1,500 Irishmen volunteered to complete the defense ramparts at Fort Greene, in Brooklyn, New York.¹⁶⁹ Beyond that, a number of the War of 1812 heroes were of Scots-Irish descent, including the foremost of them all, General Andrew Jackson, the victor at the Battle of New Orleans.¹⁷⁰ As the prominent twentieth-century Irish-American leader Daniel Cohalan said of the Scots-Irish patriotism during the War of 1812: “There was a community of language in 1812, when the infant country again had to fight for its existence against England because of England’s encroachment upon our commerce and because of taking our men from the ships and forcing them to work on English ships.”¹⁷¹

Even beyond their deep-rooted hatred for the British, the Scots-Irish had special motivation to support the war effort. In October 1812, British Prince Regent George IV issued a proclamation decreeing that all British subjects captured while fighting for the American cause would be executed as rebels-in-arms. Then, on November 20, 1812, British officers aboard a prison ship in Quebec singled out 23 of the captured American sailors because of their Irish-sounding speech and overall appearance, and said these seamen would be treated as “Traitors . . . guilty of the basest and most unnatural crime that can disgrace human nature, raising their patricide arms against the country that gave them

¹⁶⁹ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 84-85.

¹⁷⁰ Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Bank War* (NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967), 21.

¹⁷¹ Cohalan, “Address of Honorable Daniel Cohalan at the Annual Washington Birthday Meeting of the Friends of Irish Freedom,” February 22, 1924. Daniel Cohalan Papers.

birth.”¹⁷² Britain said it would execute these men in accordance with the Prince Regent’s recent directive.¹⁷³

Understandably alarmed, a group of naturalized Scots-Irish citizens led by John Binns met in early 1813 in Philadelphia. They drafted a petition signed by 1,875 naturalized citizens demanding that Congress and the President retaliate against British soldier-prisoners for every American soldier treated as though he were a British traitor.¹⁷⁴ The petition reminded the federal government that appeasing Britain impressment and the torture of Irish soldiers would greatly diminish the number of Irish enlistments.¹⁷⁵ According to the petition, 500 Irishmen in Philadelphia alone had enlisted in the army to fight for America, even though they as of yet had “never been naturalized.”¹⁷⁶ The petitioners argued that “every man who fights the battles of the country is entitled to its protection whether he be, or be not, a citizen.” The *National Intelligencer* agreed: “On the question who are our citizens and who are British subjects, we are now at issue. Our seamen, our soldiers are not her subjects.”¹⁷⁷

Binns and his colleagues succeeded in getting President Madison to act. Declaring that Britain’s policy toward the Irish was “repugnant to reason and humanity,” the President promised to protect all citizens, regardless of nationality, who were fighting for “the rights & safety, of their adopted Country.”¹⁷⁸ For its part Congress passed a bill giving the President the power to retaliate against the mistreatment of American prisoners-

¹⁷² Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 358-359.

¹⁷³ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 359-360.

¹⁷⁴ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 359.

¹⁷⁵ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 359.

¹⁷⁶ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 359.

¹⁷⁷ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 359.

¹⁷⁸ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 87.

of-war.¹⁷⁹ Madison used this power to direct that 23 British prisoners be held as hostages until the 23 Irish-born American soldiers held in Quebec were released.¹⁸⁰ In response, the British confined 46 additional imprisoned Americans as hostages and threatened executions, whereupon America responded likewise.¹⁸¹

Ultimately, the British capitulated in this dangerous game of one-upsmanship. There was an exchange of prisoners, and the Prince Regent's proclamation had no effect on subsequent British actions during the war.¹⁸² The naturalized Scots-Irishmen who successfully had sought Madison's intervention regarded the episode as fresh confirmation that the Republican Party was their rightful political home. At the same time, the affair instilled the Scots-Irish with even more confidence that they possessed political clout within the Republican organization, a state-of-affairs obviously much to their liking.¹⁸³

For the Federalists, meanwhile, the War of 1812 proved politically ruinous. Many in that party still regarded England favorably, hardly an advantageous posture under the prevailing circumstances. Moreover, many Federalists distrusted Madison and felt that the War of 1812 was an unnecessary conflict. Displaying extraordinarily poor political acumen, some Federalists publicly justified British transgressions, even including the Prince Regent's proclamation.¹⁸⁴ Naturally the Scots-Irish reacted by portraying their Federalist adversaries as traitors to America. Perhaps the loudest voice to criticize the Federalists along these lines belonged to United Irishman Matthew Carey. Beginning in

¹⁷⁹ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 360.

¹⁸⁰ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 360

¹⁸¹ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 360.

¹⁸² Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 87.

¹⁸³ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 85, 87.

¹⁸⁴ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 359.

August 1812, Carey sent letters to President Madison warning him that radical Federalists had been plotting to secede from the Union “[a]s early as 1793.”¹⁸⁵ According to Carey, “To this [Federalist] project everything has been rendered subservient.” For his part Madison calmly refused to abide by Carey’s demands to endorse new laws that would have made any adverse act against the Union a “high crime and misdemeanor, subject to a severe penalty.”¹⁸⁶ But internal, political conflicts of this sort continued throughout the war, with the most violent Republican-Federalist occurring in Baltimore in the summer of 1812. As might be expected, the Scots-Irish were deeply involved.¹⁸⁷

On June 20 Alexander Contee Hanson, the editor of the *Federalist Republican*, published an editorial that referred to the ongoing War of 1812 as an “unnecessary” conflict “entered into from . . . motives . . . of undisguised foreign influence.”¹⁸⁸ Hanson’s *Federalist Republican* was the most-influential pro-Federalist paper in Baltimore, and now its editor pledged in this editorial to use “every constitutional argument and every legal means” to end the present war with Britain.¹⁸⁹ Baltimore, however, was at this time heavily Republican, its population including large numbers of immigrant Scots-Irish, Catholic Irish, Germans, and French.¹⁹⁰ These immigrants largely supported the war, and predictably they reacted quite negatively to Hanson’s words.¹⁹¹ Consequently, just two days after the editorial had been published, an angry mob destroyed

¹⁸⁵ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 85.

¹⁸⁶ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 86.

¹⁸⁷ Clanes Royster, *Light-Horse Harry Lee and the Legacy of the American Revolution* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 157.

¹⁸⁸ Royster, *Light-Horse Harry Lee*, 157.

¹⁸⁹ Donald Hickey, *The War of 1812: Writings from America’s Second War of Independence*. (NY: The Library of America, 2013), 54.

¹⁹⁰ Royster, *Light-Horse Harry Lee*, 157.

¹⁹¹ Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 54.

the newspaper's office building and ran Hanson out of town.¹⁹² Hanson's persecutors included many Irish immigrants, as well as native-born, middle-class citizens.¹⁹³ Clearly they sought to silence the loudest local Federalist voice opposing the war with Britain.

Then matters in Baltimore got even worse. After a month of planning in nearby Georgetown, Hanson moved to retake possession of his newspaper office, so that he could "wrest[le] Baltimore from the tyranny of the mob."¹⁹⁴ For that purpose he recruited Federalists, friends, and family from different parts of Maryland to make up a force that would serve as Baltimore's "saviors."¹⁹⁵ Some notable people joined Hanson's ranks, including the distinguished Revolutionary War veterans James Lingan and Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee.¹⁹⁶

Hanson's return to Baltimore aroused the Republicans anew. Some of them set out to attack him and his Federalists friends at Hanson's home.¹⁹⁷ They did so quite viciously, forcing the Federalists to retreat to a Baltimore jail in search of refuge.¹⁹⁸ The mob then proceeded to storm their cells. Cornered, Lingan defiantly showed the rioters the scars he had received during his Revolutionary War service, when all of his present persecutors "were in France or among the bogs of Ireland."¹⁹⁹ In response the mob killed Lingan, the only person to die in this uprising.²⁰⁰ At the end of the attack, even as a badly wounded

¹⁹² Paul Gilje, "The Baltimore Riots of 1812 and the Breakdown of the Anglo-American Mob Tradition," *Journal of Social History*, 13:4 (Summer 1980), 548-549. Also, Royster, *Light Horse Harry Lee*, 157.

¹⁹³ Royster, *Light Horse Harry Lee*, 157.

¹⁹⁴ Royster, *Light Horse Harry Lee*, 158.

¹⁹⁵ Gilje, "Baltimore Riots of 1812," 552. Also, Royster, *Light Horse Harry Lee*, 158.

¹⁹⁶ Royster, *Light Horse Harry Lee*, 158.

¹⁹⁷ Gilje, "Baltimore Riots of 1812," 552.

¹⁹⁸ Royster, *Light Horse Harry Lee*, 162.

¹⁹⁹ Royster, *Light Horse Harry Lee*, 164.

²⁰⁰ Gilje, "Baltimore Riots of 1812," 555.

Lee and other Federalists lay helpless before them, the mob members joined hands and merrily sang a pro-Irish tune: “*We’ll feather and tar every d-----d British tory, And this is the way for American glory;*” interspersed in this mocking chant came a cry, “three cheers for Jefferson and Madison”²⁰¹

Federalists readily discerned the Scots-Irish role in the Baltimore violence. The Federalist-minded *Connecticut Journal*, for example, characterized the editor of the Baltimore *Whig* as an “Irish Robespierre who had promoted the violence.”²⁰² Moreover, the Federalist-dominated Maryland House of Delegates organized a committee to investigate the riot. This committee concluded that the rioters were savages and that the “Irishman was the most noted for his savage threats.”²⁰³ The committee also described the rioters as “. . . those citizens who have sought an asylum here from the oppressions of their own governments, [and who] attempted [in Baltimore] to gratify their embittered passions by proscriptions of each other To this source may be traced those convulsions of the city, where the United Irishmen . . . were the most prominent.”²⁰⁴ George Washington Parke Custis, a Federalist spokesman, gave the funeral oration for the murdered General Lingan. In his remarks Custis did not directly blame the Scots-Irish, but he did tellingly lament that in the “good old Federalist times” no one would have harmed Lingan.”²⁰⁵ Those days were now gone for good.

To his credit, President Madison did not initiate any federal-level reprisals against his Federalist adversaries. This of course enraged his more-militant supporters like Carey,

²⁰¹ Royster, *Light Horse Harry Lee*, 164.

²⁰² Royster, *Light Horse Harry Lee*, 164-165.

²⁰³ Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 57.

²⁰⁴ Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 57, 58.

²⁰⁵ Gilje, “The Baltimore Riots of 1812,” 558.

who in 1814 wrote the President to say that any future “rapine, desolation and slaughter” perpetrated by Federalists would be the consequence of continued presidential inaction.²⁰⁶

Unmoved, Madison replied to Carey in a conciliatory manner, thanking him for his “valuable and seasonable service” and “laudable views.”²⁰⁷

Refusing to be dissuaded, Carey sought ways to create divisions within the Federalist Party. In 1815 he published a book titled the *Olive Branch*, which acknowledged that pro-Union Federalists should be considered patriots and that Republicans should work peacefully with them. He also argued, however, that radical New England Federalists who contemplated disunion should be regarded as traitors to the political, social, and economic interests of the American people.²⁰⁸ “It cannot be any longer doubted,” Carey claimed, “that there exists a conspiracy in New England, among a few of the most wealthy and influential citizens, to effect a dissolution of the union at every hazard, and to form a separate confederacy.”²⁰⁹ By framing his argument this way, Carey successfully “foment[ed] social conflict in the region” and thereby weakened an already struggling Federalist Party.²¹⁰

The Disintegration of the Federalist Party:

In 1816 the Federalists nominated their last presidential candidate, Rufus King. His opponent was Republican James Monroe, the final Founding Father to become

²⁰⁶ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 86.

²⁰⁷ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 86.

²⁰⁸ Matthew Carey, *The Olive Branch: Or, Faults on Both Sides, Federal and Democratic. A Serious Appeal on the Necessity of Mutual Forgiveness and Harmony* (Philadelphia: Published by Author, 1815), 9.

²⁰⁹ Carey, *Olive Branch*, 9.

²¹⁰ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 86.

President, and whose background included service in all four previous administrations.²¹¹ Monroe prevailed over King in the Electoral College, 184-34.²¹² The victory had been all but foreordained. The Federalists' opposition to the War of 1812, which ended on a glorious note for the United States when Andrew Jackson prevailed in the conflict's famous Battle of New Orleans, hurt them badly. Worse, the apparent willingness of some New England Federalists to consider secession at the Hartford Convention of December 1814-January 1815 made them seem traitorous to many.²¹³ Also, the Federalists continued to oppose universal white male suffrage.²¹⁴ A final helpful factor for the Republican effort was that Monroe enjoyed considerable support among the Scots-Irish, while King remained very unpopular with them. After all, King had spent a good deal of the 1790s and early 1800s demonizing United Irishmen, and Republicans did not hesitate to raise that issue during the 1816 campaign.²¹⁵ Monroe, on the other hand, supported United Irishmen and once had provided help to two founding members of the group, Wolf Tone and Archibald Hamilton Rowan, prior to the Rebellion in 1798. Much to the embarrassment of President Adams, the then-Minister to France Monroe gave Rowan and Tone a letter of introduction when they visited France seeking support for their fight against Britain.²¹⁶ Monroe allowed his name to be used for the "authenticity of what you may advance, and you may add that you have reason to think that I am in a degree, apprised of your

²¹¹ David Whitney, *The American Presidents: Biographies of the Chief Executives from George Washington through Barack Obama* (NY: Reader's Digest, 2012), 54-55.

²¹² William Shade and Ballard Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1 (NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 195.

²¹³ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 187.

²¹⁴ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 258.

²¹⁵ Ernst, *King*, 349.

²¹⁶ Harry Ammon, *James Monroe: Quest for National Identity*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 135.

business.”²¹⁷ Scots-Irish Americans remained grateful to Monroe and continued to despise their old enemy King, and their votes expressed as much in 1816.²¹⁸

Monroe won uncontested reelection in 1820, and in 1824 all the various Presidential aspirants could plausibly claim to be “Republicans.”²¹⁹ In the absence of an opposition, factionalism inevitably broke out, effectively destroying the Jeffersonian Republicans. With the demise of the Federalists, America’s First Party System disintegrated.

Conclusion:

From colonial times through the American Revolution, and then during the course of the First Party System, the Scots-Irish played an influential role in American presidential politics. Upon crossing the Atlantic, the Scots-Irish never contented themselves with being a silently, passive immigrant group hoping to survive unnoticed in North America. Instead they responded to American developments through the prism of their ideology and attitudes that had been acquired back home, and ultimately they helped shape the fate of the colonies and the political course of their new country. The Scots-Irish deserve much credit for bringing the Republic into existence, inasmuch as they were the most dedicated and numerous soldiers under Washington’s command during the American Revolution. The Scots-Irish also contributed to the rise of the Democratic-Republican Party, which obliged them to forsake the political faction to which Washington himself unofficially belonged, the Federalist Party. This became inevitable once the Federalists

²¹⁷ Ammon, *James Monroe*, 135.

²¹⁸ Ernst, *King*, 349.

²¹⁹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 214-215.

made deals with Britain and some of its members expressed nativist remarks intolerable to the Scots-Irish. By the late 1790s, national politicians in both parties well understood the importance of the Scots-Irish to the Democratic-Republicans. The Federalists naturally saw the Scots-Irish as a political threat, and consequently did all they could--most memorably the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts--to remove or at least disenfranchise Erin's sons in America. The Democratic-Republican victory in 1800 and that Party's domination throughout the first 24 years of the nineteenth century, a period that included the War of 1812 against Britain, also came about in part because of Scot-Irish efforts. By the beginning of the Second Party System in 1824, the Scots-Irish still actively identified with the Democratic Republican Party. However, as the Scots-Irish inevitably began assimilating into Anglo-Saxon American society, and as the Catholic Irish began fleeing Ireland for America in greater numbers, realignments in political loyalties would occur. These dynamics would shape the next phase of Irish-American involvement in U.S. presidential-level politics during the Second Party System.

Chapter 3: Jacksonian Democracy, the Antebellum Period, and the Coming of the Catholic Irish to America (1824-1859)

America's Second Party System began and ended amidst political tumult. It started with John Quincy Adams allegedly stealing the presidency from Andrew Jackson in 1824-25, and ended on the eve of the Civil War with the nation splitting apart over the issue of slavery.¹ The Scots-Irish helped shape the Second Party System, as they had with the First. These Ulster Protestants still dominated the emigration out of Ireland to America during the early years of the Second Party System, but in this era's later years the large numbers of Catholic Irish who came to America eventually would greatly exceed the Scots-Irish role in U.S. politics. Beginning in the 1820s, America absorbed a steadily growing Catholic Irish emigration, motivated by bad economic times and by enduring resentment over the Act of Union of 1800, which had dissolved the Irish Parliament and left the British government in complete control of Ireland.² Then came the Great Irish Potato Famine of 1845-1852, a catastrophe that swelled enormously the Catholic Irish migration to America's shores.

These Irish-American Catholics would encounter much nativism in their new homeland--indeed, considerably more than the Scots-Irish had experienced before them. But Catholic Irish Americans soon found a political home in the new Democratic Party, and many among them swiftly demonstrated a keen knack for political organization.³ Indeed, back home, numerous Irish Catholics had learned how to politically organize and mobilize by serving as members of the Catholic Association and Repeal Association,

¹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 237.

² Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 196.

³ Kevin Kenny, "Abraham Lincoln and the American Irish," *American Journal of Irish Studies*, 10 (2013), 41.

both founded and led by the great nationalist and Catholic leader Daniel O’Connell.⁴ When they came to the United States, they employed those skills to promote the Democratic Party, which “assiduously cultivated the Irish vote.”⁵ This occurred even as the Scots-Irish, having by now fully assimilated within the “old-stock” American population, increasingly aligned themselves with the Democrats’ great rival, the new Whig Party.

The years of the Second Party System also witnessed the birth of Manifest Destiny. The Irish-American journalist-editor John O’Sullivan coined this term in 1845 to describe America’s supposedly God-given right to expand west without regard for the native Americans and Mexicans already living in that vast region.⁶ Manifest Destiny ultimately led to the Mexican-American War of 1846-48, a conflict in which some Catholic Irish soldiers would have an important, indeed unique role.⁷

Overshadowing all other issues during the antebellum era, of course, was the debate over slavery and the consequent drift toward Civil War. Once again, Irish Americans would contribute in meaningful ways to that significant chapter in the nation’s history.

⁴ Thomas Hachey, Joseph Hernon, and McCaffrey, *The Irish Experience: A Concise History* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 61-62.

⁵ Kenny, “Abraham Lincoln and the American Irish,” 42.

⁶ John O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17 (July 1845): 5-10. Accessed at: http://www.historytools.org/sources/manifest_destiny.pdf Accessed 10/11/14.

⁷ See: Robert Miller, *Shamrock and Sword: The Saint Patrick’s Battalion in the U.S.-Mexican War* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, Press, 1989).

The First Scots-Irish President Andrew Jackson:

By 1824, only the Democratic-Republicans existed as a viable national party. But without Federalist opposition to keep them united, Democratic-Republicans began to factionalize.⁸ As a result, in 1824 four candidates ran for president under the Democratic-Republican banner: Secretary of the Treasury William Crawford, Speaker of the House Henry Clay, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, and Tennessee Senator and War of 1812 hero Andrew Jackson.⁹ Scots-Irish voters strongly favored Jackson.¹⁰ He was the son of Ulster Irish immigrants who emigrated to America in 1765; he had come from humble beginnings, he had been born and raised in the backwoods of the Carolinas, and he had lost most of his family in the American Revolution.¹¹ In the 1824 election, Jackson won the most popular and Electoral College votes, but in the multi-candidate field he did not win the required majority of Electoral votes, which meant that the choice now fell to the House of Representatives. That body had to decide among the three top finishers, Jackson, Adams, and Crawford.¹² However, when Crawford suffered a massive, incapacitating stroke, only Jackson and Adams remained as viable contenders. Then came a private meeting between Adams and the influential Speaker Clay, during which they allegedly forged a notorious “corrupt bargain.”¹³ Clay threw his support to Adams, who won the House vote and became the sixth President. He then promptly appointed Clay as his Secretary of State, at the time generally regarded as the post most

⁸ Robert Remini, *The Election of Andrew Jackson* (NY: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1963), 17.

⁹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 215-216.

¹⁰ David Noel Doyle, “Scots Irish or Scotch Irish,” in J.J. Lee and Marion Casey, eds., *Making the Irish American History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (NY: NYU Press, 2007), 167.

¹¹ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 69

¹² Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 222.

¹³ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 222-223.

likely to lead to the Presidency. An enraged Jackson called Clay “the *Judas* of the West” and his disappointed backers cried foul, both vowing to exact revenge in 1828.¹⁴

Adams’ election ended the First Party System and ushered in the Second. Those who coalesced around Adams became known as National Republicans--and later the Whigs. Jackson’s supporters called themselves Democrats.¹⁵ Like the Federalists, National Republicans-Whigs advocated a strong national government, a federal bank, high tariffs, and federally funded internal improvements projects intended to expand the home market and bring about robust economic expansion.¹⁶ Democrats stood for states’ rights, an end to the national bank, and low tariffs.¹⁷

The second President Adams did not have a successful time in the Executive Mansion. Among his enemies were the Scots-Irish, many of whom either remembered or had been told by Jacksonians about his backing of the infamous Alien and Sedition Acts from his father’s administration. Jackson’s supporters reminded the Scots-Irish and other nationalities that “there was always a distinct possibility that John Quincy Adams might revive” those discriminatory laws.¹⁸ John Quincy Adams was himself no fan of the Irish. Back during his father’s administration he had identified some of them as “tools of Burr,” referring of course to prominent Democratic Republican Aaron Burr and his influence over the Scots-Irish in the 1800 election.¹⁹

¹⁴ Remini, *Election of Andrew Jackson*, 25.

¹⁵ Henretta, Dumenil, and Brody, *America*, 329.

¹⁶ Henretta, Dumenil, and Brody, *America*, 329.

¹⁷ Henretta, Dumenil, and Brody, *America*, 330.

¹⁸ Remini, *Election of Andrew Jackson*, 104.

¹⁹ Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams: Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848* (NY: Fabri Press, 2008), Location 7097 (Kindle Edition).

By the late 1820s, white males largely had obtained universal suffrage, and consequently “in no time the Irish developed a powerful voting bloc” in certain states.²⁰ In New York, Martin Van Buren, then a U.S. Senator from that state and the “architect of the Democratic Party,” did much to organize the Irish vote there.²¹ Building up to the 1828 election, “control of Tammany [the main Democratic organization in New York City] had fallen into the hands” of Van Buren.²² According to Michael Hogan in his book *Irish American Chronicle*, “By the 1820s, Tammany was a loyal ally of the Democratic Party[,] . . . recruited [Irish Americans] to increase Tammany’s power . . . and, in 1828 supported Andrew Jackson for President.”²³ Hogan continues, “The fact that he was the son of Irish immigrants only made Tammany’s appeal to the Irish—who could now vote—that much more apparent.”²⁴ Van Buren deserves much credit for being one of the “farsighted sachems” of Tammany to actively enlist the Irish--before long he attracted enough Irish voters to create a powerful political machine that he would put at Jackson’s disposal.²⁵

As he prepared to seek reelection, Adams had to contend with a religious controversy his opponents utilized against him in order to secure Scots-Irish votes. Following his father’s death in 1826, the second President Adams converted to Unitarianism, which denies the existence of the Holy Trinity, embraces the concept of

²⁰ Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1970), 222.

²¹ Widmer, *Martin Van Buren*, Location 1104 (Kindle Edition).

²² O’Grady, *How the Irish Became Americans*, 70.

²³ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 65.

²⁴ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 65.

²⁵ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 65. Also, O’Grady, *How the Irish Became Americans*, 70.

one God, and questions the divinity of Jesus Christ.²⁶ Many Democrats, including the Scots-Irish, accused Adams of being an atheist.²⁷ Seeking to stoke this issue for all it was worth, the opportunistic Van Buren piously asked, “Does the old gentleman have prayers in his house?”²⁸ The Presbyterian Reverend Ezra Stiles Ely, a nationally-known Philadelphian clergyman and Jackson backer, delivered a sermon to his largely Scots-Irish congregation in which he attacked politicians who refused to acknowledge the divinity of Christ. Ely bellowed, “. . . it is the duty of our rulers to serve the Lord and kiss the Son of God.” He continued, “All who profess to be Christians of any denomination ought to agree that they will support no man as a candidate for any office, who is not professedly friendly to Christianity” No one in the congregation could have missed the implied reference to Adams. Then, speaking in more affirmative terms, injecting politics into his remarks, Ely proclaimed, “Let us elect men who dare to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ for their Lord”²⁹ Taking his cue, Jackson wrote a published letter to Reverend Ely in July 1827 to reassure him that he, Jackson, would never permit presidential power ever to turn him away from God and His divine Son.³⁰

Jackson stated:

Having been educated and brought up under the discipline of the Presbyterian rule (my mother being a member of that Church) I have always had a preference for it . . . I have thought one evidence of true religion is, when all those who believe in the atonement of our crucified Saviour are found in harmony and friendship together . . . I can assure you no change of circumstances, no exalted office can

²⁶ Lynn Hudson Parsons, *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 173.

²⁷ Parsons, *Birth of Modern Politics*, 173.

²⁸ Parsons, *Birth of Modern Politics*, 174.

²⁹ Ezra Stiles Ely, “The Duty of Christian Freemen to Elect Christian Rulers,” (Seventh Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA, July 4, 1827) reprinted by Sabina Americana Print Editions 1500-1926 (Independence, KY: Cengage Learning, 2014), 6, 10, 14.

³⁰ Parsons, *Birth of Modern Politics*, 174.

work a change upon me. I will remain uniformly the same, whether in the chair of state, or at the Hermitage. My habits are too well fixed now to be altered.³¹

Catholic Irish also backed Jackson during the 1828 campaign. They believed the Democratic claim that he would serve as the “people’s president”—that is, all the people, immigrants included. Moreover, Adams foolishly made a number of remarks critical of the Roman Catholic Church, calling it among other epithets “a portentous system of despotism and superstition.”³² Such comments inevitably drew Catholics—including the newly arrived Irish Catholics—even more firmly into the Jackson camp. During a campaign dinner for the General in Charleston, South Carolina, a Catholic Bishop gave the toast while he and others encouraged both Protestant and Catholic Irishmen to vote for Jackson, the “son of Irish parents.”³³ In New York, a Jackson orator declared himself proud that the “hapless island, the seat of so much persecution and yet the theatre of sublime displays of heroism and magnanimity . . . was the native country of those who gave him [Jackson] birth.”³⁴

Democratic leaders also lauded Jackson’s Irish background in cities like Boston and New York. In Boston they “proclaim[ed] Jackson as an Irishman . . . and [held] him up as the champion of the poor against the rich”³⁵ In New York, “the darling of the Irish,” Governor DeWitt Clinton, reminded New Yorkers that they had a patriotic duty to elect into office one of their own.³⁶ Duff Green, editor of the District of Columbia’s *U.S.*

³¹ Andrew Jackson to Ezra Stiles Ely, July 12, 1827. Harold Moser and J. Clint Clifft, eds., *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, vol. VI, 1825-1828 (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press), 359.

³² Parsons, *Birth of Modern Politics*, 174.

³³ Parsons, *Birth of Modern Politics*, 175.

³⁴ Parsons, *Birth of Modern Politics*, 175.

³⁵ Remini, *Election of Andrew Jackson*, 104.

³⁶ Remini, *Election of Andrew Jackson*, 105.

Telegraph, was a “major propagandist . . . especially among the Irish and the Scots-Irish” for Jackson.³⁷ Green wrote, “General Jackson, it is well-known, is the son of honest Irish parents . . . That natural interest which all true hearted Irishmen feel in the fame of one who has so much genuine Irish blood in his veins”³⁸ Clinton and Green linked Jackson’s Irishness with the candidate’s humble upbringing and democratic world view, which appealed both to Scots-Irish, Catholic Irish, and non-Irish alike.

The pro-Adams press did little to improve their candidate’s standing with the Irish. The *Advocate*, a New York paper that backed the incumbent, published an editorial critical of Irish Americans. “When we look at the population of some districts of our country, mixt up with the dregs of all nations;” the paper lamented, “when we are told that we have among us *half a million* of Irishmen, and when we know that they are all linked together and move in phalanx, we are constrained to say, that the character of our country is degraded with the connexion [sic].”³⁹ Seizing the opening provided, the Jacksonian *Argus* reprinted the *Advocate* editorial under the headline, “Irishmen! Sons of Erin. Look at what follows, and if you have a drop of true Irish blood in you, let it boil as you read.”⁴⁰ Other anti-Jackson literature also mentioned his ethnicity. One pamphlet for example duly noted the General’s Irish roots, and then solemnly averred that “To have been born in Ireland implies no reproach.” For their part, the Adams people tried to attract Irish voters in Massachusetts by arguing that Britain preferred Jackson because it wanted to see “the principles, on which a republican government rests, proved to be

³⁷ Remini, *Election of Andrew Jackson*, 105.

³⁸ Remini, *Election of Andrew Jackson*, 105.

³⁹ Parsons, *Birth of Modern Politics*, 175.

⁴⁰ Lee Benson, *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 321-322.

fallacious.”⁴¹ Presumably, the line of reasoning was that the election of a popular people’s hero like Jackson somehow would undermine republican principles. Although the American electorate in 1828 still was majority Anglo-Saxon, candidates understood that there were sufficient numbers of Scots-Irish and Catholic Irish voters who would punish anyone at the polls whom they perceived as overly pro-British.⁴²

The attacks on Jackson did not work, and he won handily, getting 178 Electoral College votes to Adams’ 83.⁴³ Notably, Jackson won both New York and Pennsylvania with margins appreciably swelled by newly enfranchised Irish voters.⁴⁴ Indeed, in New York, “Tammany took full advantage of the expanded rolls of voters, turning out huge numbers to benefit the presidential candidacy of a man who came to symbolize the new democratic age: Andrew Jackson the son of Irish immigrants.”⁴⁵ Meanwhile “in Philadelphia, Adams’ defeat was fashioned in large measure by his failure to attract votes from among the German, Irish, and Scots-Irish population.”⁴⁶

As President, Jackson did not disappoint the Irish. They particularly liked his opposition to rechartering the Second Bank of the United States. Congress had re-chartered this institution in 1816, five years after the First National Bank’s charter had expired. Jackson regarded the Bank as “in fact, but one of the fruits of a system at war with the genius of all our institutions . . . [It is] the means by whose silent and secret

⁴¹ Parsons, *Birth of Modern Politics*, 175.

⁴² Parsons, *Birth of Modern Politics*, 175.

⁴³ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol.1, 242.

⁴⁴ Herman Hailperin, “Pro-Jackson Sentiment in Pennsylvania, 1820-1828,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine and Biography*, 50:3 (1926), 235. Also Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 242.

⁴⁵ Golway, *Machine Made*, 8.

⁴⁶ Remini, *Election of Andrew Jackson*, 194.

operation a control would be exercised by the few over the political conduct of the many . . .”⁴⁷ In a December 1829 message to Congress Jackson suggested that the Bank’s very legitimacy was open to doubt: “Both the constitutionality and the expediency of the law creating this bank are well questioned by a large portion of our fellow-citizens.”⁴⁸

Jackson’s opponents in the emerging National Republican Party favored rechartering the Bank.⁴⁹ That group’s leader, Henry Clay, teamed with the director of the National Bank, Nicholas Biddle, and other businessmen and politicians to defend the institution as fundamentally necessary for maintaining the country’s fiscal stability.⁵⁰ Moreover, Clay regarded the National Bank as the linchpin to his proposed “American System,” a package of national-government measures, all opposed by Jackson, that the Senator thought would greatly expand the U.S. economy.⁵¹

Jackson’s Irish supporters reflexively disliked the National Republicans which like its Federalist predecessor, had a deserved nativist reputation.⁵² Clay, who would seek the Presidency in 1832, astutely tried to neutralize that image by making several bids for Irish support. During a March 20, 1829, dinner speech in Hagerstown, Maryland, Clay offered toasts to his “American System”, the Constitution, and to Irish-

⁴⁷ Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Beliefs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 20-21.

⁴⁸ Andrew Jackson, “First Annual Message: Fellow Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives,” December 18, 1829. James D. Richardson, ed., *Messages and Papers of the Presidents--Andrew Jackson*. vol. 2, part 3 (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), Location 136 (Kindle Edition).

⁴⁹ Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Bank War* (NY: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967), 76.

⁵⁰ Remini, *Jackson and the Bank War*, 65.

⁵¹ Henretta, Brody, Dumenil, *America*, 325.

⁵² Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 341-342. Also, Kenny, “Abraham Lincoln and the American Irish,” 41.

Catholic freedom.⁵³ “The Irish Catholic,” Clay said as he lifted his glass, “success to his struggles for liberty.”⁵⁴

Clay was referring to the Catholic Emancipation movement in Ireland, which finally achieved success in April 1829 with the British Parliament’s passage of the Roman Catholic Relief Act.⁵⁵ That measure repealed some remaining Penal Laws that had deprived Catholics of their civil liberties in Ireland. Learning of this, Clay wrote a letter to the British Minister to the United States, Charles R. Vaughan, to “congratulate you on the final success of the measure for the emancipation of Irish Catholics. By its adoption, [British Prime Minister] Lord Wellington has secured for himself more imperishable fame than all his splendid military victories could entitle him to.”⁵⁶

But the National Bank issue remained the central concern to Americans. Jackson made destroying the “Monster,” his campaign focus in the 1832 election.⁵⁷ His opponent Clay foolishly persuaded Biddle in 1832 to seek an early renewal of the National Bank’s charter.⁵⁸ Biddle agreed and Clay pushed such a measure through Congress. Upon hearing of the bill, Jackson stated to his Minister to Britain, Martin Van Buren, “The bank, Mr. Van Buren, is trying to kill me, *but I will kill it!*”⁵⁹ In keeping with his promise, Jackson defiantly vetoed the legislation and skillfully framed the issue as a fight

⁵³ Henry Clay, “Speech at Hagerstown, MD,” March 20, 1829. Robert Seager II, ed., *The Papers of Henry Clay*, vol. 8, *Candidate, Compromiser, Whig, March 5, 1829-December 31, 1836* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 15.

⁵⁴ Clay, “Speech at Hagerstown, MD,” March 20, 1829. Seager II, ed., *Papers of Henry Clay*, vol. 8, 15.

⁵⁵ Kinealy, *A Death-Dealing Famine*, 27.

⁵⁶ Henry Clay to Charles R. Vaughan, June 18, 1829. Seager II, ed., *Papers of Henry Clay*, vol. 8, 69.

⁵⁷ Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Bank War*, 45-46.

⁵⁸ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1945), 86-87.

⁵⁹ J.C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1920), 625.

between the common man and wealthy elites, winning over a wide spectrum of ordinary citizen-voters.⁶⁰

Jackson's Democratic colleagues helped in the fight against the Bank, particularly Senator Thomas Hart Benton from Missouri. Benton and Jackson had once been bitter enemies and actually shot each other in a barroom brawl in 1813.⁶¹ Despite their past altercation, Benton had shifted to Jackson after the "corrupt bargain" of 1824 and the two soon became great friends.⁶² In 1832, Benton defended Jackson's Bank veto, and cleverly depicted the Bank as a source of Britain's financial strength. Benton well knew how many Americans, especially the Scots-Irish, hated Britain and any institution that increased that country's power. Speaking on the floor of the U.S. Senate after Jackson's July 1832 veto, Benton declared that, "Foreigners now own one fourth of this bank; they may own the whole of it! What a temptation to them to engage in our elections!"⁶³

Benton continued:

And can it be supposed that the British stockholders are indifferent to the issue of this election? That they, and their agents, can see with indifference, the re-election of a man who may disappoint their hopes of fortune, and whose achievement at New Orleans is a continued memento of the most signal defeat the arms of England ever sustained?⁶⁴

By presenting Jackson as a past and present warrior against British interests, Benton and others helped build a coalition around Jackson consisting of ethnic groups like the Scots-Irish and Catholic Irish.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Schlesinger, Jr., *Age of Jackson*, 92-93.

⁶¹ Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Bank War*, 78.

⁶² Remini, *Election of Andrew Jackson*, 20.

⁶³ Thomas Hart Benton, *Thirty Years' View*, vol. I (NY: O. Appleton and Company, 1854), 261.

⁶⁴ Benton, *Thirty Years' View*, 261.

⁶⁵ Wilson, *United Irishmen*, 93.

Irish America's support for Jackson and hatred for the Bank became quite obvious throughout the 1832 campaign, particularly in cities like New York. An Irish-Catholic New York newspaper, the *Truth Teller*, routinely published the minutes of Tammany meetings held in different wards throughout New York City, all which celebrated Jackson and denigrated the Bank. During a Tammany meeting in the 6th Ward, members announced that they would “repel with indignation attempts to slander one [Jackson] who has during two wars successfully defended their liberties and whose integrity and ability to preside over the Union have been so triumphantly exhibited during the last 3 years.”⁶⁶ Tammany members of the 14th Ward called upon their delegates to “give their votes to no man, particularly a candidate for Congress, who is not known to be a fervent supporter of the present General Administration in all of its prominent measures, especially that leading one, its opposition to the United States Bank on account of the unconstitutionality of its character.”⁶⁷ At a public meeting of both Catholic and Scots-Irish Americans in Newark, New Jersey, which undoubtedly included many Tammany members, the attendees pledged “to ensure the reelection of Andrew Jackson to the presidency.”⁶⁸

Clay's support of the Bank destroyed any hope he had of winning Irish Americans' votes. A poem published by the *Truth Teller* editors for its Irish-American readers revealed raw hatred for the institution.

The age of reform is at hand—

Freemen, your rights do secure.

For the veto and liberty firmly stands, the rich now are up against the poor . . .

⁶⁶ *Truth Teller*, September 29, 1832.

⁶⁷ *Truth Teller*, September 29, 1832.

⁶⁸ *Truth Teller*, September 29, 1832.

Old Hickory is the man that did dare
 Himself, single-handed, alone—
 To veto this mammoth of power so rare;
 Will the people look silently on?⁶⁹

A satirical editorial published by a *Truth Teller* reader stated that a Clay presidency would bring about “the establishment of British nobility who will annually draw from the Bank of the United States 3 millions of dollars” and the “pressure of having high taxes in order to enrich the blue-light Federalists and Hartford Convention manufacturers.”⁷⁰

The anti-Bank, anti-Clay sentiments prevailed. Jackson easily defeated Clay by a 219-49 count in the Electoral College, with the Irish vote contributing solidly to the President’s reelection victory.⁷¹ For example, “In Pennsylvania,” William Shade and Ballard Campbell note in their *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, “Jackson was supported by the large Scotch-Irish population”⁷²

Once again Jackson fulfilled his supporters’ expectations. Reelected, he immediately sought to remove all Federal deposits from the Bank and prohibit state deposits to it.⁷³ Interestingly, Jackson was only able to remove the deposits once he fired his newly appointed Secretary of the Treasury, William J. Duane, the son of United Irishman and editor of the Jeffersonian *Aurora*, William Duane.⁷⁴ Like most Scots-Irish men, William J. Duane hated the Bank, however he believed that rashly pulling the

⁶⁹ *Truth Teller*, October 6, 1832.

⁷⁰ *Truth Teller*, October 20, 1832.

⁷¹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 263.

⁷² Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 261.

⁷³ Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Bank War*, 109.

⁷⁴ Jon Meacham, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House* (NY: Random House, 2008), 257, 268.

deposits out of the Bank could be damaging to the American economy.⁷⁵ As Secretary of the Treasury, he had been empowered to decide the fate of public deposits and, given his sentiments, had refused to take them from the National Bank.⁷⁶ U.S. Attorney General Robert Taney did not share Duane's aversion to deposit removal. Consequently, Jackson replaced William J. Duane in the fall of 1833 with Taney and the deposits were removed, effectively killing the Bank.⁷⁷ The Bank would officially meet its demise in 1836 when Jackson let its Charter expire.⁷⁸ As for the National Republicans, they soon changed their name to the Whig Party, which would be the Democrats' main opponent for the balance of the Second Party System.⁷⁹

Martin Van Buren, William Henry Harrison, and John Tyler:

Jackson's Vice President, Martin Van Buren, ran for the top job in 1836. Although a master political tactician, Van Buren had a dandified demeanor that repelled some people.⁸⁰ One of the most famous, indeed legendary, Scots-Irish Americans of all--the frontiersman-soldier-Congressman Davy Crockett--derisively called Van Buren "Aunt Matty," who was so "laced up in corsets" and effeminate that it would be "difficult to say, from his personal appearance, whether he was a man or woman"⁸¹ Others criticized Van Buren for being too tolerant of Catholics. In 1829 he had written a

⁷⁵ Meacham, *American Lion*, 257.

⁷⁶ Meacham, *American Lion*, 257-258.

⁷⁷ Meacham, *American Lion*, 268.

⁷⁸ Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Bank War*, 109.

⁷⁹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 273.

⁸⁰ Widmer, *Martin Van Buren*, Location 1351 (Kindle Edition).

⁸¹ Widmer, *Martin Van Buren*, Location 1351 (Kindle Edition).

supportive letter to the Vatican, a gesture that generated accusations that he was conspiring in some nefarious “popish plot” against America.⁸²

Of course, such claims also had a positive side, as they made Van Buren more popular with the Irish-Catholic immigrant population. This group was starting to become a formidable voting bloc, with more than 200,000 settling in New York alone in the 1830s.⁸³ Another fact in Van Buren’s favor was that he would become, if elected, the first President born a U.S. citizen, not a colonist; that is, as Van Buren biographer Ted Widmer observed, Van Buren would not be the “bastard offspring of the British Empire.”⁸⁴ It may have been a small point, but it was one that Irish-American voters, in particular, could appreciate.

To be sure, Van Buren’s greatest advantage in 1836 was the fact that, however unlike Jackson he may have been, nonetheless he could rightfully claim to be the political heir to the retiring and much-beloved Old Hickory—a reality that resonated with Irish Americans. The Tammany Society duly recognized Van Buren’s “virtue and talent” as Vice President in the Jackson Administration.⁸⁵ Moreover, the St. Patrick’s Society of New York deemed Van Buren an “eminent statesman and incorruptible republican” during the 1836 campaign year, largely because of his relationship to Jackson.⁸⁶ Indeed, Irish Americans often viewed Van Buren and Jackson as a tag team--leaders dedicated to

⁸² Widmer, *Martin Van Buren*, Location 1331 (Kindle Edition).

⁸³ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 65.

⁸⁴ Widmer, *Martin Van Buren*, Location 1819 (Kindle Edition).

⁸⁵ *Truth Teller*, October 6, 1832.

⁸⁶ *Truth Teller*, April 2, 1836.

“the defense of the Constitution” and the cause of the common man.⁸⁷ When Jackson backed Van Buren’s candidacy, the Democratic Party rapidly fell into line behind him.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, the Whigs in 1836 ran several Presidential candidates hoping to prevent Van Buren from getting an Electoral majority and then somehow prevailing in the House vote.⁸⁹ The bizarre strategy did not work: Van Buren captured 170 of the 294 Electoral College votes cast, and won the Presidency.⁹⁰

Unfortunately for Van Buren, the Panic of 1837 swept in almost soon as he was inaugurated, lasted for four years, and destroyed his Presidency.⁹¹ William J. Duane had been right in his fears about removing deposits from the National Bank inasmuch as this action caused the depression. But of course the voters, including the Irish Americans who had backed Jackson in 1836, blamed the incumbent Van Buren, not the retired Old Hickory.

As if the bad economy were not enough trouble for him in 1840, Van Buren had to contend with a brilliant campaign waged that year by his Whig opponents. Borrowing from the very strategy that the Democrats had used to elect Jackson, the Whigs nominated General William Henry Harrison, another War of 1812 hero, and presented him to the people as a backwoods everyman figure--never mind the reality of his aristocratic Virginia upbringing and long record as a politician.⁹² Harrison, known as “Tippecanoe” for his 1811 victory in that famous battle, perpetuated the charade by

⁸⁷ Thomas O’Connor to Martin Van Buren, May 6, 1834. Box 2, Folder 64, Thomas O’Connor Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

⁸⁸ Widmer, *Martin Van Buren*, Location 1355 (Kindle Edition).

⁸⁹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 275.

⁹⁰ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 282.

⁹¹ Whitney, *American Presidents*, 89.

⁹² Whitney, *American Presidents*, 91-93.

describing himself as a “homespun Buckeye hero who . . . lived in a log cabin and drank hard cider.”⁹³ What came to be known as the “Log-Cabin Campaign” of 1840, the Whigs made a concerted effort to undo their nativist reputation by reaching out to immigrant voters. Not only did Whigs put out word that Harrison liked a good drink as a not-so-subtle way of reassuring Irish immigrant voters that their candidate was no temperance fanatic, they also infused a little Irish culture into Whig celebrations.⁹⁴ For example, at the “Battleground Celebration” in Indiana at the site of Harrison’s Tippecanoe victory, Whigs decorated a log cabin with a shamrock and sang the following jingle:

Here’s to our fathers and mothers
Likewise to ould [sic] Ireland, too
Down with Martin Van Buren,
And up with Tippecanoe.⁹⁵

In his campaign appearances, Harrison personally reached out to those with ties to other lands, including the Irish. “I can put my hand on my heart,” he solemnly pledged during a speech he gave in Cincinnati, “and say that my republican sympathy for the people of Germany, Ireland, England, or any other land, has been and is warmed into active existence by the remembrance that liberty is equally dear to all of us.”⁹⁶

Harrison won an electoral landslide, carrying 19 states to Van Buren’s 7 and prevailing in the Electoral College, 234-60.⁹⁷ Significantly, Harrison won in states that previously had gone to Jackson, including New York and Pennsylvania, both of which

⁹³ Robert Gunderson, *Log Cabin Campaign* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 1.

⁹⁴ Gunderson, *Log Cabin Campaign*, 154.

⁹⁵ Gunderson, *Log Cabin Campaign*, 154.

⁹⁶ Gunderson, *Log Cabin Campaign*, 169.

⁹⁷ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol.1, 301.

had large immigrant populations.⁹⁸ Amidst the helpful context of the Panic of 1837, the Whigs had effectively sold their candidate to working-class laborers, many of Irish nationality.

Harrison died of pneumonia a month into his presidency.⁹⁹ For the first time the Vice President, John Tyler, succeeded to the Presidency by dint of tragedy. Tyler accomplished little in the White House. Until his Vice-Presidential nomination by the Whigs, he had been a Democrat, and thus that camp regarded him as a traitor.¹⁰⁰ Whigs also soon came to hate him because, acting on his Democratic convictions, he twice vetoed bills to re-charter the National Bank. Yet, he did gain some favor with Irish Catholic groups, owing to his and his son Robert Tyler's support of the Repeal Movement in Ireland.¹⁰¹

In the mid-nineteenth century, Catholics in Ireland strongly favored the repeal of the Act of Union of 1800. This measure had dissolved Ireland's Parliament and in return had given the Irish some representation in the British Parliament.¹⁰² But that representation insufficiently protected Irish interests, and so as a practical matter the Act of Union tightened Britain's control over Ireland.¹⁰³ Catholics particularly supported the Repeal Movement because they suffered far more under British rule than did their Protestant Irish brethren. The Repeal Movement's main leader was Daniel O'Connell,

⁹⁸ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 301.

⁹⁹ Whitney, *American Presidents*, 96.

¹⁰⁰ Whitney, *American Presidents*, 97.

¹⁰¹ J.J. Lee and Marion Carey, eds., *Making the Irish American History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (NY: New York University Press, 2006), 201.

¹⁰² Kinealy, *Death-Dealing Famine*, 25.

¹⁰³ Kinealy, *Death-Dealing Famine*, 25.

known to his many admirers as the “Great Liberator.” He had led the Catholic Emancipation effort, which in 1829 succeeded in having the remaining Penal Laws (including the prohibition against Catholics holding political office) abolished.¹⁰⁴ That impressive achievement, coupled with his formation of the Repeal Association in 1840 to work for Irish independence, won O’Connell a devoted following not just in his homeland but also among Irish-American Catholics, many of whom remained “sensitively alive to the sufferings of their fellow countrymen.”¹⁰⁵

Empire State Irish Americans organized a group known as the New York Repeal Association.¹⁰⁶ The President of the Repeal Association, Assemblyman Thomas O’Connor, identified the group’s purpose in a July 1841 address to its members:

We arraign the British government at the bar of public opinion before the whole human family as our judges. We charge that foreign government, having obtained by particular combination of circumstances, by subtleties and intrigues, a control in Ireland, has violated every confidence and exercised power, without any regard whatever to the interests or natural rights of the Irish people.

. . . We are associated to give them such aid as we can tender without violating the happy laws under which we live. We invoke the expression of the opinion of all nations, in support of the Irish people. We may rely confidently on that of the citizens of the United States of America. They have always raised their cheering voice in favor of every people who have struck for liberty. To this general rule, there is no exception, I trust there never will be one.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Hachey, Hernon, and McCaffrey, *Irish Experience*, 63.

¹⁰⁵ Lee and Carey, eds., *Making the Irish American History*, 200.

¹⁰⁶ William Seward to E.S. Derry, Esq., and Others, November 3, 1841. George Baker, ed., *The Works of William H. Seward*, vol. III (NY: Redfield, 1853), 490.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas O’Connor, “Address Delivered Before the Irish Repeal Association of the City of New York,” July 27, 1841. Box 3, Folder 10, Thomas O’Connor Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York, 5, 8.

Members of the New York Repeal Association invited New York Governor William Seward to join, as he was one of the few prominent Whigs who genuinely sympathized with the Irish.¹⁰⁸ Seward declined the invitation because he felt that as governor it unethical to align himself with one civilian group over another.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, in the early 1840s Seward helped organize various Repeal meetings that expressed sympathy for the Irish. Moreover, in 1841, Seward wrote to an attorney, “I desire to see a representative parliament in Ireland, for the sake of the people of Ireland, but more for the sake of the great cause of human liberty.”¹¹⁰ Later Seward would express even more unequivocally his support of the Irish when he wrote, “. . . whether I receive smiles and stripes for it—living and dying—I shall ever remain the faithful friend of Ireland and Irishmen.”¹¹¹

In Philadelphia, Irish Americans organized two National Repeal Conventions. Robert Tyler attended the second of these rallies in 1843, and he went to several other such events.¹¹² No doubt influenced by his son’s example, President Tyler in July 1843 declared himself “the decided friend of Repeal of the legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland. I ardently and anxiously hope that it may take place and I have the

¹⁰⁸ Walter Stahr, *Seward: Lincoln’s Indispensable Man* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 61.

¹⁰⁹ Seward to Derry, Esq., and Others, November 3, 1841. George Baker, ed., *The Works of William H. Seward*, vol. III, 490.

¹¹⁰ Seward to Derry, Esq., and Others, November 3, 1841. Baker, ed., *The Works of William H. Seward*, vol. III, 492.

¹¹¹ William Seward to James Maher, and Others, March 15, 1844. Baker, ed., *The Works William Seward*, vol. III, 500.

¹¹² Lawrence McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 139.

utmost confidence that Ireland will have her own Parliament, in her own capital, in a very short time. On this great question I am no half-way man.”¹¹³

To be sure, Repeal leaders reacted warily to this support from the Tylers. First there was the problem of President Tyler’s nation-wide unpopularity, plus many in both America and Ireland suspected that political calculation accounted for Robert Tyler’s support of Repeal. James Haughton, a Dublin Quaker-philanthropist and abolitionist, stated:

I believe in my soul that Robert Tyler is one of the greatest enemies of Irishmen and of Irish liberty on the face of the earth. He knows that our countrymen have much political power in America. He is anxious to gain their suffrages for his party; these are cheaply purchased by a few hollow-hearted and fiery speeches in favour of Irish independence, and by a willingness to contribute to our Repeal fund.¹¹⁴

Yet on some level, Repeal advocates in America had to be pleased that any sitting President of the United States backed their cause. After all, Henry Clay and Democrat James K. Polk, who would be their parties’ respective Presidential nominees in 1844, remained intentionally silent on the issue.¹¹⁵

The Catholic Irish-American support for Repeal was unequivocal, but their adherence to O’Connell came with one major caveat. O’Connell was an outspoken abolitionist, a viewpoint not widely shared by either Catholic or Protestant Irish Americans in antebellum times.¹¹⁶ As a member of the British Parliament

¹¹³ McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America*, 139.

¹¹⁴ John Murphy, “The Influence of America on Irish Nationalism,” in David Noel Doyle and Owen Dudley Edwards, eds., *America and Ireland, 1776-1976: The American Identity and the Irish Connection* (Westford, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 110.

¹¹⁵ Lee and Carey, eds., *Making the Irish American*, 201.

¹¹⁶ Christine Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell and the Anti-Slavery Movement: ‘The Saddest People the Sun Sees’* (London: Pickering and Chato, 2011), Location 159 (Kindle Edition).

(notwithstanding his advocacy of Repeal), O’Connell in 1839 pointedly refused to meet with the pro-slavery American Ambassador in London, Andrew Stephenson, whom O’Connell denounced as a “slave-breeder.”¹¹⁷ Stephenson childishly challenged O’Connell to a duel, a confrontation that never took place but became exciting fodder for American and British news stories and editorials. The dispute also drew comment in Congress. Senator Clay, a slaveholder, condemned O’Connell, but John Quincy Adams, now a Massachusetts Congressman and an ardent abolitionist, criticized Stephenson.¹¹⁸ The episode put Irish Americans in a quandary. They respected and admired O’Connell, but few agreed with him on slavery, inasmuch as most Irish in America aligned with the Democratic Party, which opposed abolition.¹¹⁹

None of this deterred O’Connell. In 1841 he and two other well-known Irish abolitionists and fellow delegates to the June 1840 Anti-Slavery Society Convention in London, James Haughton and Richard Webb, collaboratively wrote “An Address of the People of Ireland to their Countrymen and Countrywomen in America,” which denounced American slavery.¹²⁰ Anti-slavery groups in Ireland obtained 60,000 signatures from Irish citizens in support of the Address.¹²¹ But in America the Address met a different response: most Irish Americans in 1842 refused to sign it. The *Boston Pilot*—the oldest American-Catholic newspaper still in publication and the “thermometer of Irish feeling in this country,” according to Massachusetts abolitionist John Collins—

¹¹⁷ Christine Kinealy, “The Irish Abolitionist Daniel O’Connell,” *Irish America*, Accessed at: <http://irishamerica.com/2011/08/the-irish-abolitionist-daniel-oconnell/> Accessed 6/23/14.

¹¹⁸ Kinealy, “The Irish Abolitionist Daniel O’Connell,” <http://irishamerica.com/2011/08/the-irish-abolitionist-daniel-oconnell/>

¹¹⁹ Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell and the Anti-Slavery Movement*, Location 159 (Kindle Edition).

¹²⁰ Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell and the Anti-Slavery Movement*, Location 2039 (Kindle Edition).

¹²¹ Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell and the Anti-Slavery Movement*, Location 2039 (Kindle Edition).

led the opposition against the Address.¹²² In February 1842 the *Pilot* warned O’Connell and others against linking abolitionism to Repeal.¹²³ The paper predicted that Irish Americans would never enter “the vortex of abolitionism” that currently was dividing America, and counseled Irish Americans to beware British propagandists who claimed to be humanitarians but in fact wanted to destroy the Union.¹²⁴ As the *Boston Pilot* would later explain on June 25, 1842, Irish Americans were not necessarily pro-slavery, but they were not pro-abolitionist, either.¹²⁵ Irish-born editor of the *Boston Pilot*, Patrick Donahoe, personally informed Collins who later relayed the message to Webb, “It would not do for them to take hold of the question of abolition.”¹²⁶ Another Boston paper with a wide Irish-American readership, the *Catholic Diary*, agreed. It criticized William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the Boston abolitionist paper the *Liberator*, for presenting O’Connell’s Address on January 28, 1842, in Boston’s Faneuil Hall to a crowd of 3,000, of which 1,200 were Irishmen.¹²⁷ The *Catholic Diary* wrote, Garrison and the “illustrious Liberator [O’Connell]” have “no right to shackle the opinions of the Irishmen of America . . . We can tell the abolitionist that we acknowledge no dictation from a foreign source.”¹²⁸ In response, Garrison wrote a letter to Richard Webb, apologizing for the *Boston Pilot*’s and *Catholic Diary*’s responses to the Address:

. . . Our meeting in Faneuil Hall, to unrol [sic] the Irish Address, with its sixty thousand signatures, was indescribably enthusiastic, and has produced a great

¹²² John W. Collins to Richard Webb, January 1, 1842. Clare Taylor, ed., *British and American Abolitionists* (Liverpool: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), 161. Also, Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (NY: Routledge, 1995), 12-13.

¹²³ Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 13. Also *Liberator*, February 18, 1842.

¹²⁴ *Boston Pilot* reprinted in the *Liberator*, February 25, 1842. Also Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 13.

¹²⁵ Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell and the Anti-Slavery Movement*, Location 2072, 2108 (Kindle Edition).

¹²⁶ Collins to Webb, January 1, 1842. Taylor, ed., *British and American Abolitionists*, 161.

¹²⁷ Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell and the Anti-Slavery Movement*, Location 2083 (Kindle Edition).

¹²⁸ *Catholic Diary*, reprinted in the *Liberator*, March 4, 1842.

impression on the public mind. I am sorry to add, and you will be no less ashamed to hear, that the two Irish papers in Boston sneer at the Address, and denounce it and the abolitionist in the true pro-slavery style. I fear they will keep the great mass of your countrymen here from uniting with us.¹²⁹

Irish Americans in New York City echoed their Boston brothers in rejecting the Address. The *New York Herald* referred to the Address as a nefarious ploy to “enlist the Irish to join the bloody crusade against the South”¹³⁰ The Irish-American New York Bishop John Hughes wrote a letter to the *New York Courier and Enquirer*, in which he stated:

. . . I am no friend of slavery, but I am still less friendly to any attempt of *foreign origin* to abolish it. The duties of naturalized Irishmen, or others, I conceive to be in no wise distinct or different from those of native born Americans. And if it be proved that an attempt has been made by this Address, or any Address, to single them out in any question appertaining to the foreign or domestic policy of the United States, in any other capacity that which is common to the whole population, I then think it will be their duty to their country and their conscience to rebuke such an attempt come from what foreign source it may, in the most decided manner and language that common courtesy will authorize.¹³¹

Garrison and his Western New York Anti-Slavery Committee feared the influence Hughes and the others would have on the Irish-American population. After Hughes’ statement, Collins, a member of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Committee, wrote to Webb encouraging O’Connell to directly contact American newspapers and promote abolitionism with a “trumpet tongue.”¹³² To Collins, abolitionists faced an uphill battle with Irish Americans. He wrote:

¹²⁹ William Lloyd Garrison to Richard Webb, February 27, 1842. Clare Taylor, ed, *British and American Abolitionists. An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), 169.

¹³⁰ *New York Herald*, February 11, 1842.

¹³¹ Hughes’s statement was printed several places. Here it is taken from the *Liberator*, March 25, 1842, which reprinted it from the *New York Courier and Enquirer*.

¹³² John W. Collins to Richard Webb, April 2, 1842. Taylor, ed, *British and American Abolitionists*, 174.

This [anti-abolitionist] position taken by those associations, journals, and individuals . . . to a very great extent moulds and governs the sentiments of the Irish emigrants; unfortunate for us—nearly all the Irish are associated with the large democratic party which is no more nor less than a conspiracy against the principles of true democracy.¹³³

Unsurprisingly, Irish Americans in the South were even more outraged with O’Connell than their countrymen in the North. On several occasions after 1842, the *Boston Pilot* reported that the Address led a number of Southern Repeal societies to disband—consequently causing a notable decrease in their financial contributions to Ireland.¹³⁴

As Christine Kinealy, the foremost scholar on this subject, writes in *Daniel O’Connell and the Anti-Slavery Movement: ‘The Saddest People the Sun Sees,’* Irish Americans “disliked being singled out on such a controversial issue, [and] were embarrassed by it.”¹³⁵ Kinealy also notes that even among those Irish Americans who “opposed slavery privately, openly siding with the abolitionists was not acceptable—a fact that their co-patriots in Ireland did not always understand.”¹³⁶ Catholic Irish Americans, in particular, found abolitionism a dangerous issue to get behind inasmuch as they already were subject to rampant, nativist prejudice in America, and did not want to risk further alienation.¹³⁷ Moreover, Irish Americans viewed abolitionism to be a radical response to slavery. A *Truth Teller* “letter from the editor” had explained as early as 1835:

We think abolitionists wrong—totally wrong in their opinions as to the expediency or propriety of liberating the slaves; we look upon their efforts in the

¹³³ Collins to Webb, April 2, 1842. Taylor, ed, *British and American Abolitionists*, 174.

¹³⁴ Madeline Hooke Rice, *American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy: Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law*, No. 508 (NY: Columbia University Press, 1944), 83.

¹³⁵ Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell and the Anti-Slavery Movement*, 2037 (Kindle Edition).

¹³⁶ Kinealy, *Daniel O’Connell and the Anti-Slavery Movement*, 2066-2067 (Kindle Edition).

¹³⁷ Rice, *American Catholic Opinion and the Slave Controversy*, 84, 83.

cause of ‘emancipation’ as calculated to produce serious and lamentable consequences¹³⁸

O’Connell conspicuously did not comprehend the Irish-American dilemma. He expressed his disappointment that Irish Americans seemed incapable of regarding American slavery and Irish oppression as equal evils in an eloquent October 1843 speech he gave to the Loyal National Repeal Association.¹³⁹ He stated:

How can the generous, the charitable, the humane, and the noble emotions of the Irish heart have become extinct amongst you? How can your nature be so totally changed as that you should become the apologists and advocates of the execrable system which makes the property of his fellow man—destroys the foundation of all oral and social virtues—condemns to ignorance, immorality and irreligion, millions of our fellow creatures...?

It was not in Ireland that you learned this cruelty. Your mothers were gentle, kind, and humane. Their bosoms overflowed with the honey of human charity . . . How then can you be so depraved? How can your souls have become stained with a darkness blacker than the Negro’s skin?¹⁴⁰

The 1844 Election:

In 1844, the Whigs nominated party stalwart Henry Clay for president. The Democrats chose the little-known former House Speaker James Knox Polk, protégé of his fellow Tennessean Andrew Jackson.¹⁴¹ An ardent expansionist, Polk said that America should reclaim" the Oregon Territory from Great Britain (this faraway, little-explored land had been jointly administered by the two countries.)¹⁴² Of course there would be no

¹³⁸ *Truth Teller*, September 5, 1835.

¹³⁹ See Daniel O’Connell, *Address by The Liberator before the Loyal National Repeal Association on October 11, 1843 in reply to an Address from the Cincinnati Irish Repeal Association*. (Memphis, TN: Qontro Historical Reprints, 2009).

¹⁴⁰ O’Connell, *Address by The Liberator before the Loyal National Repeal Association on October 11, 1843 in reply to an Address from the Cincinnati Irish Repeal Association*, 9.

¹⁴¹ Whitney, *American Presidents*, 102.

¹⁴² Whitney, *American Presidents*, 104.

slavery in Oregon, so Polk's stance won favor in the North. But Polk also appealed for Southern support by demanding that the United States annex slave-holding Texas, which recently had won independence from Mexico.¹⁴³ In contrast to Polk's bold assertions, Clay flip-flopped on the Texas acquisition issue.¹⁴⁴ In another phase of the campaign, Polk rallied the northeast cities behind his candidacy, reminding immigrants, mostly of Irish extraction, that the Whigs were not a party of all the people. In large measure that was true, as the Whig coalition consisted of evangelical Protestants, prosperous farmers, skilled and highly paid industrial workers, and pro-temperance fanatics—but not Irish Americans.¹⁴⁵

Polk narrowly won the 1844 election, 170-105 in the Electoral College.¹⁴⁶ The decisive factor was the presence of the Liberty Party, which favored abolition and drew away from Clay just enough anti-slavery votes in the critical state of New York to give its electoral vote to pro-slavery Polk.¹⁴⁷

Polk's triumph also can be attributed to the backing he got from naturalized Irish immigrants and other ethnic groups who lived in New York City and Philadelphia.¹⁴⁸ Polk won New York and Pennsylvania by the scant margin of 5,106 and 6,322 votes respectively.¹⁴⁹ As Noel Ignatiev states in *How the Irish Became White*, "By 1844, the

¹⁴³ Whitney, *American Presidents*, 104.

¹⁴⁴ Henry Clay, "Annexation of Texas to the United States as a Territory," reprinted in *Clay Tribune*, May 4, 1841. Also, Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 391.

¹⁴⁵ Kenny, "Abraham Lincoln and the American Irish," 41-42.

¹⁴⁶ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 320.

¹⁴⁷ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 318-319.

¹⁴⁸ Christine Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland: The Kindness of Strangers* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 120

¹⁴⁹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 318-319, 320.

Irish were the most solid voting bloc in the country, except for the free Negroes, and it was widely believed that Irish votes provided Polk's margin of victory in that year."¹⁵⁰

The bitter Whigs blamed their loss primarily on the ethnic vote, not the Liberty Party or Clay's ambiguity on Texas. John Quincy Adams, for one, lamented in his diary, "The partial associations of Native Americans, Irish Catholics, abolition societies, liberty party, the Pope of Rome, the Democracy of the sword, and the dotage of a ruffian [Andrew Jackson]" had defeated Clay and were "sealing the fate of this nation, which nothing less than the interposition of Omnipotence can save."¹⁵¹ The New York Whig Millard Fillmore blamed his party's defeat on "abolitionists and foreign Catholics."¹⁵² Horace Greeley, the famous journalist and at the time an ardent Whig, remarked that in 1844, Irish and other "immigrants by tens of thousands were naturalized expressly to vote against Nativism," one of the cornerstone positions of the Whig Party.¹⁵³ J.W. Mighels, a self-described "native-born Whig" from Maine, blamed the Irish for Clay's defeat even before Clay actually had lost. Immediately after casting his ballot for president, Mighels wrote to Clay, "I have this moment returned from the polls, but alas! With what an overwhelming sense of shame and indignation! Knowing that we are to be prostrated in the dust by an army of *Irish* paupers, set on and marshaled by their infernal priest!!! God Almighty save us!!!"¹⁵⁴ Ambrose Spencer, the president of the 1844 Whig National

¹⁵⁰ Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 75.

¹⁵¹ Remini, *Clay*, 663.

¹⁵² Millard Fillmore to Henry Clay, November 11, 1844. Melba Hay, ed., *The Papers of Clay*, vol. 10, *Candidate, Compromiser, Elder Statesman, 1844-1852*. (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 144.

¹⁵³ Horace Greeley, *The Autobiography of Horace Greeley: Or, Recollections of a Busy Life: To Which Are Added Miscellaneous Essays and Papers* (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2014), 165.

¹⁵⁴ J.W. Mighels to Henry Clay, November 11, 1844. Hay, ed., *The Papers of Clay*, vol. 10, 145.

Convention, came to the same conclusion: “The foreign vote . . .” he wrote to Clay after the results were in, “destroyed your election.” Spencer contended that “the naturalization laws must be altered—they must be repealed and the door forever shut on the admission of foreigners to citizenship, or that they undergo a long probation—I am for the former.”¹⁵⁵ Spencer continued, “[T]he Germans and the Irish ‘can never understandingly exercise the franchise.’”¹⁵⁶ Clay himself explained “the general wreck of the Cause” by noting that “. . . if the recent foreigners had not been all united against us; or if the foreign Catholics had not been arrayed on the other side . . . we should have triumphed.”¹⁵⁷

Only William Seward among the elite Whigs, a long-time supporter of the Irish, conceded that his party had itself to blame for the loss. In Seward’s view, not only had Clay hurt himself by being unclear about the annexation of Texas, the Whigs had unnecessarily antagonized ethnic voters.¹⁵⁸ The “jealousy of the Whig Party, or a portion of it, against foreigners and Catholics,” Seward wrote Clay, “has been a serious evil . . .” The Whigs’ contempt for the foreign-born, Seward continued, “awakened religious prejudices and animosities . . . in . . . [such cities as Philadelphia] and New York.”¹⁵⁹

The Great Famine and Irish-Catholic Emigration to America:

During the Polk Administration, Irish emigration to America began to grow substantially. This came about primarily because of the Great Irish Famine. In the summer of 1845, a fungus named *Phytophthora infestans* infected the Irish potato crop,

¹⁵⁵ Ambrose Spencer to Henry Clay, November 21, 1844. Hay, ed., *The Papers of Clay*, vol. 10, 156.

¹⁵⁶ Spencer to Clay, November 21, 1844. Hay, ed., *The Papers of Clay*, vol. 10, 156.

¹⁵⁷ Remini, *Clay*, 664.

¹⁵⁸ William Seward to Henry Clay, November 7, 1844. Hay, ed., *The Papers of Clay*, vol. 10, 142.

¹⁵⁹ Seward to Clay, November 7, 1844. Hay, ed., *The Papers of Clay*, vol. 10, 142.

ruining some 30-40% of the harvest. (The potato was the only food that farmers could grow on the rocky, tiny terrain that British authorities, over centuries of colonization, had allotted to the Irish Catholics who lived in Ireland.) In 1846, the blight returned to Ireland, this time destroying 90% of the crop and ultimately causing more than a million deaths. For many Irishmen and women, the only available option was to ship out and begin a new life in America.¹⁶⁰

As a result, what had been a steadily growing stream of Irish Catholics entering the United States in the early decades of the nineteenth century now became a flood during the Famine Years of 1845-1852.¹⁶¹ At the height of the Famine in 1847, more than 230,000 people left Ireland.¹⁶² Between 1845 and 1855 nearly 1.5 million Irish arrived in the United States.¹⁶³ “[I]n many crucial respects,” writes Kerby Miller in his book *Emigrants and Exiles*, Irish “emigrants to North America during the years of 1845-1855 were significantly different from their pre-Famine predecessors.” Those earlier immigrants had consisted mainly of skilled workers who believed they could be even more successful and prosperous in America.¹⁶⁴ By contrast, those who fled Ireland during the Famine were significantly “poorer and less skilled than those who embarked before the potato blights.”¹⁶⁵ Moreover, because the Catholic Irish had been hardest hit by the Famine, immigrants of that religious background vastly outnumbered new Protestant Irish arrivals, a complete reversal of the earlier Irish immigration pattern.

¹⁶⁰ For information on the Great Potato Famine see Kinealy, *A Death-Dealing Famine*.

¹⁶¹ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 295.

¹⁶² Jay Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History* (NY: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 74.

¹⁶³ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 291.

¹⁶⁴ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 295.

¹⁶⁵ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 295.

Politically, these new Americans of Irish-Catholic descent overwhelmingly would gravitate to the Democratic Party, a development that would affect politics for the balance of the Second Party System, and beyond.¹⁶⁶

In humanitarian terms, the suffering caused by the Famine horrified the American people. Many urged America's political leaders to help Ireland however possible.¹⁶⁷ Ironically, given the strong Irish-American identification with the Democrats that so quickly set in, some of the major public figures who supported such aid belonged to the Whig Party. None other than Henry Clay, while speaking in New Orleans in February 1847, declared, "All considerations of fastidious delicacy and etiquette should be waived and merged into a generous and magnanimous effort to contribute to the relief of the sufferings which have excited our feelings."¹⁶⁸ Referencing the role Irish Americans had played in America's wars, Clay observed "That Ireland, which has been in all the vicissitudes of our national existence our friend, and has ever extended to us her warmest sympathy—those Irishmen, who, in every war in which we have been engaged, on every battlefield . . . have stood by us, shoulder to shoulder, and shared in all the perils and fortunes of the conflict."¹⁶⁹ He concluded, "We are commanded, by the common Saviour of Ireland and of us, to love one another as ourselves . . . Let us demonstrate our love, our

¹⁶⁶ Kenny, "Abraham Lincoln and the American Irish," 41-42.

¹⁶⁷ Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland*, 119.

¹⁶⁸ Henry Clay, "Speech in New Orleans," February 2, 1847. Hay, ed., *The Papers of Henry Clay*, vol. 10, 303.

¹⁶⁹ Clay, "Speech in New Orleans," February 2, 1847. Hay, ed., *The Papers of Henry Clay*, vol. 10, 303.

duty, and our gratitude to Him by liberal contribution to the relief of His suffering Irish children.”¹⁷⁰

Another prominent Whig, Kentucky Senator John Crittenden, proposed in February 1847 that the United States send \$500,000 in federal aid to Ireland and Scotland, which also was suffering from the potato blight.¹⁷¹ On the Senate floor, Crittenden delivered a passionate justification of his bill:

. . . The whole world has heard of the calamity which has fallen on these countries of the scarcity and famine which prevail there. I do not rise with an empty parade of words to impress the picture of a famishing people upon the minds of this honorable body. I wish only to discharge what I consider a solemn duty. As representatives of the people it is our duty to carry out their views, as they have been presented to this body . . . We are, to a great extent, the descendants of the people of Ireland, the kindred, the offspring, of Irishmen and every day the tie is strengthened and endeared by emigrants coming to our shores to become one with us. This famine fills the world with the voice of lamentation. Are we not bound as men and Christians to listen and respond?¹⁷²

Some Democrats supported sending federal aid relief to Ireland. Senators Edward Hannegan of Indiana, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, and Lewis Cass of Michigan (all three of Scots-Irish extraction) voted for Crittenden’s bill, which passed the Senate and then went to the House of Representatives.¹⁷³

But in a further irony, given how ardently Irish Catholics would back the Democratic Party, many Democratic Congressmen opposed Crittenden’s measure. Such Democrats believed that the Whig stance in favor of aiding Ireland was a transparently

¹⁷⁰ Henry Clay, “Speech in New Orleans,” February 2, 1847. Hay, ed., *The Papers of Henry Clay*, vol. 10, 304.

¹⁷¹ Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland*, 129.

¹⁷² Senator John Crittenden, “Speech on the Poor of Ireland,” February 26, 1847. Mrs. Chapman Coleman, *The Life of John J. Crittenden: With Selections from His Correspondence and Speeches*, vols. 1-2 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1873), 1: 287, 288.

¹⁷³ Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland*, 121.

manipulative ploy to catch Irish-American votes. Moreover, some Democrats regarded the Crittenden bill as an unconstitutional use of federal power.¹⁷⁴

President Polk, who probably owed his election to the Irish vote, also opposed the relief measure. In a diary entry dated March 2, 1847, he wrote:

If the Bill which has passed the Senate a day or two ago appropriating half a Million of Dollars to be donated to the Government of Great Britain for the relief of the suffering poor of Ireland and Scotland should pass the Ho. Repts and be presented to me, I could not approve it. I stated my reasons at some length, the chief of which was the want of Constitutional power to appropriate the money of the public to charities either at home or abroad.¹⁷⁵

As it happened, Polk never got to veto Crittenden's proposal, as it died in the House Ways and Means Committee. Despite his opposition to federal aid to Ireland, Polk urged his fellow Americans to give freely from their private funds to this worthy cause. He himself contributed \$50 of his own money for relief, albeit only after Secretary of State, James Buchanan, a man proud of his Scots-Irish heritage, contributed \$100.¹⁷⁶ These good examples sparked other fund-raising efforts on Ireland's behalf. None other than the nativist and future Know-Nothing presidential candidate, Millard Fillmore, contributed \$50 to Famine relief. As he put it, "No man who has a heart can fail to feel for suffering Ireland."¹⁷⁷ Moreover, newly-elected Congressman Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, donated £5.¹⁷⁸ Overall, at least one million American dollars in aid was sent to Ireland from America through established channels.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland*, 121-122.

¹⁷⁵ Milto Milton Quaife, ed., *The Diary of James K. Polk President: During His Presidency--1845-1849*, vol. II (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co, 1910), 396.

¹⁷⁶ Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger*, 123.

¹⁷⁷ Robert Scarry, *Millard Fillmore* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001), 96

¹⁷⁸ Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland*, 209.

¹⁷⁹ Kinealy, *A Death-Dealing Famine*, 113.

The Mexican-American War:

Polk's Presidency is best remembered for the Mexican-American War, in which some Irish Americans acted in a memorable and highly controversial manner, with political implications that extended well beyond the conflict itself.¹⁸⁰ A promoter of Manifest Destiny, Polk greatly expanded America's borders. After annexing Texas and successfully adding the Oregon Territory via treaty with Britain, Polk set his sights on Mexican-owned California. When Mexico refused to sell that territory, Polk instigated a war that began on April 25, 1846.

The morality of the Mexican-American War sharply divided Americans. Many in the opposition Whig Party saw the conflict as a brazen grab for Mexican territory. In their condemnation of Polk's war policy, some Whig politicians explicitly mentioned the relief proposals to aid famine-ravaged Ireland as an example of "using money to save lives as opposed to killing them," as Polk was doing in Mexico.¹⁸¹ In a November 1847 speech, the indefatigable Henry Clay went so far as to compare the current relationship between the United States and Mexico with that of Britain and Ireland. "Every Irishman hates, with a mortal hatred, his Saxon oppressor," he said. "Although there are great territorial differences between the condition of England and Ireland, as compared to that of the United States and Mexico, there are some points of striking resemblance between

¹⁸⁰ See Michael Hogan, *The Irish Soldiers of Mexico* (Charleston, SC: Createspace, 2011).

¹⁸¹ Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland*, 121.

them.¹⁸² In other words, in both circumstances there was an aggressor state, those being the England and the United States.

Undoubtedly such unflattering comparisons irritated Polk, but he soon would have to contend with a more serious problem involving the Mexican-American War and Irish Americans. This came about when some Irish Catholics serving in the U.S. Army decided that they could not in good conscience war against a Catholic nation like Mexico; indeed, they resolved to fight on Mexico's side.¹⁸³ (That many Catholic Irish-American soldiers were being mistreated by the U.S. Army obviously gave the men further impetus to deflect.)¹⁸⁴ A Catholic Irish American named John Riley organized such men into a special unit of the Mexican Army called the St. Patrick's Battalion.¹⁸⁵ Although the Battalion did not exclusively consist of Catholic Irish-American soldiers, they made up a majority of the troops and the Battalion carried a banner with "Erin Go Braugh" and an image of St. Patrick adorning it."¹⁸⁶ To solicit recruits, Riley appealed to men of Irish-Catholic background who were angry that Anglo-Saxon, Protestant America had attacked Catholic Mexico.¹⁸⁷ Mexico of course welcomed their help--General Santa Anna, Mexico's leader, printed pamphlets entitled "Mexicans to Catholic Irishmen" calling them to join the Battalion's cause."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² Henry Clay, "Speech in Lexington, KY," November 13, 1847. Hay, ed., *The Papers of Henry Clay*, vol. 10, 368-369.

¹⁸³ Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 3.

¹⁸⁴ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 101.

¹⁸⁵ Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 3.

¹⁸⁶ Hogan, *The Irish Soldiers of Mexico*, 113.

¹⁸⁷ Hogan, *The Irish Soldiers of Mexico*, 114.

¹⁸⁸ Hogan, *The Irish Soldiers of Mexico*, 114.

Despite the Irish-Mexican efforts, by 1847 regular American forces had captured about 72 Battalion soldiers.¹⁸⁹ These deserters were court-martialed, and the responsibility for determining their punishments fell up the U.S. Army's top field commander, General Winfield Scott.¹⁹⁰ Thirty-nine of the deserters received the death sentence, while others like Riley got spared that fate only because they had deserted before Congress officially had declared war against Mexico.¹⁹¹ Those allowed to live, however, were subjected to torture. Riley and his comrades each received 15 lashes "well laid on their bare back," and all were branded with a "D," signifying deserter.¹⁹² A witness reported that the prisoners, after receiving the lashes and the branding, were then "tied to the trees in front of the Catholic church on the plaza."¹⁹³ Mexicans who viewed the executions and punishments described the scenes as the "mutilations of the unfortunate Irish."¹⁹⁴ As word spread throughout Mexico, citizens were horrified by the "tortures and executions of 'our luckless Irish soldiers.'"¹⁹⁵

Although Polk condoned the punishments levied on the deserters, he also worried about the diplomatic and domestic reaction they might cause.¹⁹⁶ Naturally the enemy had every incentive to foment such a reaction, and Mexican newspapers quickly reported on the deplorable tortures that the U.S. Army had inflicted on its own citizens. "Among the European volunteers whom the American army has hired to kill us, there are many

¹⁸⁹ Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 92.

¹⁹⁰ Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 102.

¹⁹¹ Hogan, *The Irish Soldiers of Mexico*, 200. Also Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 102.

¹⁹² Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 102.

¹⁹³ Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 103.

¹⁹⁴ Hogan, *The Irish Soldiers of Mexico*, 206.

¹⁹⁵ Hogan, *The Irish Soldiers of Mexico*, 206.

¹⁹⁶ Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 160.

unfortunate men who are convinced of the injustice of this war . . .” the editor of *Diario del Gobierno* informed his Mexican readers, “[They] have passed over to our army to defend our just cause.” The editorial continued, “This day, in cold blood, these [Americans] . . . from an impulse of superstition, and after the manner of savages and as practised in the days of Homer, have hanged these men as a holocaust . . .”¹⁹⁷ More than a century later, Irish-American historians would validate these Mexican propaganda messages. Michael Hogan for example writes in *Irish Soldiers in Mexico*, “If the Americans had lost the war with Mexico and Nuremberg-type trials had been held,” Scott and his generals would have struggled to explain their sadistic actions.¹⁹⁸

In response, Polk sent two Jesuit chaplains to Mexico to counteract the growing sentiment that the U.S. government was anti-Catholic.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, Polk directed his two top generals in Mexico, Scott and Zachary Taylor, to issue proclamations assuring the Mexican people that religious tolerance would be observed by American forces.²⁰⁰ Taylor complied: “Your religion, your altars and churches, the property of your churches and citizens, the emblems of your faith and its ministers,” he proclaimed to the people of Mexico, “shall be protected and remain inviolate.”²⁰¹ Scott echoed Taylor, telling the Mexicans that “We are the friends of the peaceful inhabitants of the country we occupy, and the friends of your holy religion, hierarchy, and its priesthood.”²⁰² To demonstrate

¹⁹⁷ Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 111.

¹⁹⁸ Hogan, *Irish Soldiers in Mexico*, 207.

¹⁹⁹ Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 160.

²⁰⁰ Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 160.

²⁰¹ Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 160.

²⁰² Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 160.

the American Army's tolerance toward Catholics, Scott also praised "our gallant Roman Catholic soldiers who had done so much honor to our colors" ²⁰³

Mexican generals responded by distributing literature urging more Catholic American soldiers to desert. General Santa Anna, Mexico's leader, issued a pamphlet that read: "Irishmen! Listen to the words of your brothers, hear the accents of a Catholic people . . . Is religion no longer the strongest of human bonds? . . . Can you fight by the side of those who put fire to your temples . . . ?" ²⁰⁴

These controversies notwithstanding, America triumphed over Mexico and acquired vast new territory through the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. ²⁰⁵ Polk chose not to seek a second term, so Irish Americans had no chance to express at the polls whatever animosity they continued to feel toward him. Another presidential hopeful, however, would not be so fortunate. ²⁰⁶

The 1848 Election, Irish Division, Antebellum Nativism, and the Know-Nothing Party:

In 1848 Scott, hoping to capitalize on his Mexican-American War-hero status, ran for the Whig presidential nomination. Working against his ambition, however, was his punishment of the Saint Patrick's Battalion deserters, something that many Irish Americans, including the vast majority who had remained loyal during the Mexican-

²⁰³ Hogan, *Irish Soldiers in Mexico*, 213.

²⁰⁴ Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 162-163.

²⁰⁵ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 395.

²⁰⁶ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 395.

American War, remembered and held against the General.²⁰⁷ Worse yet for Scott's prospects, back in 1844, some two years before the Mexican-American War, Scott had written a lengthy, nativist-minded letter to the *National Intelligencer*.²⁰⁸ In this letter Scott advocated a longer naturalization time for immigrants and the denial of suffrage to all foreign-born citizens.²⁰⁹ Of course this ill-conceived letter resurfaced in 1848, and in combination with the Saint Patrick's Battalion affair, it gave Scott an anti-Irish image he could not shake. The General tried to undo the damage, telling an Irish-American correspondent that he now entertained "kind and liberal views towards our naturalized citizens."²¹⁰ But it was too late. When the Democrats nominated Michigan's Lewis Cass, of Scots-Irish extraction, the Whigs knew that Scott, widely perceived as anti-Irish, would not defeat him.²¹¹ Consequently, the party chose the other major Mexican-American War hero-general, Zachary Taylor, as their nominee, and he won a close race by the Electoral College count of 163-127.²¹² Taylor died suddenly in July 1850, and so Vice President Millard Fillmore of New York became President.²¹³

During this period of the late 1840s and early 1850s, nativism emerged as a major force and factor in American politics. Joining the ranks of the increasingly vocal xenophobic Americans were, ironically enough, the Scots-Irish.²¹⁴ They made it clear

²⁰⁷ Charles Winslow Elliott, *Winfield Scott, the Soldier and the Man* (NY: The MacMillan Company, 1937), 632.

²⁰⁸ Carleton Beals, *Brass-Knuckle Crusade: The Great Know-Nothing Conspiracy: 1820-1860* (NY: Hastings House, 1960), 148.

²⁰⁹ Beals, *Brass-Knuckle Crusade*, 148.

²¹⁰ Elliott, *Winfield Scott*, 591.

²¹¹ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 112.

²¹² Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 342.

²¹³ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 398.

²¹⁴ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 323, 494.

that not only did they not regard these Catholic Irish newcomers as kinsmen, the Protestant Irish actively disliked their Catholic counterparts.²¹⁵ Several reasons account for this animus. By the 1850s, many Scots-Irish could trace their American roots back for many generations, and many had intermarried with Anglo-Saxons and persons from other ethnic groups. Consequently, the Scots-Irish and their children were now regarded simply as “old-stock” Americans.²¹⁶ Moreover, in the course of becoming fully assimilated, Scots-Irish Americans had begun to do better economically, which not only further distanced them from the comparatively poorer Catholic Irish but also led many of them to abandon the Democratic Party in favor of the pro-business Whigs.²¹⁷ More generally, the Catholic Irish had become an “important negative reference group for them [the Scots-Irish],” inasmuch as the latter well knew that the Catholic Irish were widely regarded as drunken paupers who contributed to the squalor of the nation’s cities, and the Scots-Irish simply did not wish to be associated in the popular mind with their disreputable cousins.²¹⁸ Indeed, it was during this period that the Protestant Irish began making a point of publicly separating themselves from the Catholic Irish, soon referring to themselves as “Scots-Irish”—a term now retroactively used to describe all early-American Protestant Irish.²¹⁹

Forgetting the prejudice their forebears had endured, the Scots-Irish readily identified with other nativist Americans horrified at the “wily serpent” that had

²¹⁵ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 156, 323.

²¹⁶ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 494.

²¹⁷ Mark Noll and Luke Harrow, eds., *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 134.

²¹⁸ Noll and Harrow, eds., *Religion and American Politics*, 134.

²¹⁹ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 156.

“approached our Eden with such caution, that even his slimy tracks were invisible, for a long time, to our sight.”²²⁰ These nativists resolved to stop foreign countries from “vomit[ing] . . . their refuse” upon “our shores.”²²¹ In 1849 this angry but diffuse nativist movement coalesced around a secret organization, the Order of the Star Spangled Banner.²²² On November 10, 1854, the *New York Tribune* used the term “Know-Nothing” to describe this clandestine organization, because members of the group always claimed to “know nothing” when asked about their organization’s activities; the nickname caught on to the point where the nativists proudly used it themselves.²²³ The Know-Nothings’ membership consisted mostly of middle-class Protestants of anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant opinion.

The Whig Party, which already had a record of hostility toward foreigners, made a strong bid for Know-Nothing support. “It is not to be denied or disguised,” one Whig remarked, “that the great body of genuine Whigs have a strong odor of Americanism about them.”²²⁴ Yet even so, the Whigs knew that they would have to play a kind of double-game, appealing to nativist prejudices in some areas, while also trying to persuade immigrants, particularly the Irish, that they had nothing to fear from Whiggery.²²⁵ It was not an easy balancing act.

²²⁰ Stephen Maizlish, “The Meaning of Nativism and the Crisis of the Union: The Know Nothing Movement in the Antebellum North,” in William Gienapp, ed. *Essays on American Antebellum Politics, 1840-1860* (Arlington, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1982), 166.

²²¹ Maizlish, “The Meaning of Nativism and the Crisis of the Union,” 166.

²²² Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 86.

²²³ *New York Tribune*, November 10, 1854.

²²⁴ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1970), 196.

²²⁵ Michael Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 125.

For the 1852 presidential election, the Whigs replaced Fillmore with General Scott as their nominee, and the Democrats nominated a northern pro-slavery candidate, Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire.²²⁶ Recalling Scott's past troubles with Irish Americans and realizing the importance of immigrants in the 1852 election, the Whigs did all they could to persuade those voters that the once-nativist Scott "had changed his stripes and loved everyone."²²⁷ To that end, the Whigs circulated pro-Irish tracts on Scott's behalf and reminded voters of their party's support for Famine relief.²²⁸ In another gesture designed to attract Irish votes, Scott and other Whigs publicly changed their previous pro-temperance stance.²²⁹

Scott's attempts to refurbish his image with the Irish were so clumsy that they made him look ridiculous. Once, while he was giving a speech in Cleveland, an Irish man in the crowd heckled Scott about his past anti-Irish statements and actions; in response the General replied, "I love that Irish brogue. I have heard it before on many battle-fields, and I wish to hear it many times more!"²³⁰ Not surprisingly, such efforts failed utterly with Irish voters. Democratic papers dredged up the statements Scott had made about foreigners in the 1840s, even as the Mexican-American War deserters whom Scott had ordered tortured or executed were held up as martyrs.²³¹ Meanwhile, the General even lost favor among some Protestant Whigs who were "disgusted at the course Scott has taken to secure the Catholic vote."²³² For its part, Tammany Hall

²²⁶ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 354.

²²⁷ Stahr, *Seward*, 134. Also, Beals, *Brass-Knuckle Crusade*, 153.

²²⁸ Holt, *Political Crisis of the 1850s*, 125.

²²⁹ Holt, *Political Crisis of the 1850s*, 125.

²³⁰ Elliot, *Winfield Scott*, 637.

²³¹ Elliot, *Winfield Scott*, 631-632.

²³² Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s*, 126.

reminded Irish newcomers in New York City that they would surely be better off having “Americans” not “Englishmen”—that would be the Whigs--run the country.²³³ Pierce won decisively with 254 electoral votes to Scott’s 42. Congressman and Nativist Nathaniel P. Banks of Massachusetts best explained the outcome: “the foreign vote held the balance of power in the nation and had elected Pierce and defeated Scott.”²³⁴

The Implosion of the Whig Party and the Approach of Civil War:

By the mid-1850s slavery, not nativism, became the country’s central political issue.²³⁵ Increasingly, people’s sectional loyalties to the North or South proved stronger than their party loyalties. This reality became apparent in the wake of Pierce’s disastrous decision to sign the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, which provided that the decision as to whether the territories would allow slavery would be determined by “popular sovereignty”—which meant that voters in those regions could vote, if they so chose, to extend slavery to all the territories in the United States.²³⁶ Many Americans in the North, including a growing number of Democrats, regarded this as intolerable. But at least the Democratic Party, controlling the Presidency and resultant federal patronage, managed to hold together during the sectional crisis of the 1850s.²³⁷ The Whigs, not having such a reason to remain intact as a national organization, fractured along sectional lines, and after 1854 dissolved as a political party.²³⁸

²³³ Alfred Connable and Edward Silverfarbe, *Tigers of Tammany: Nine Men who Ran New York* (NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), 117.

²³⁴ Beals, *Brass Knuckle Crusade*, 152.

²³⁵ Bruce Levine, “Conservatism, Nativism, and Slavery: Thomas R. Whitney and the Origins of the Know-Nothing Party,” *The Journal of American History*, 88:2 (Sep., 2001), 487.

²³⁶ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 401-402.

²³⁷ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 402.

²³⁸ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 374.

From the ashes of the Whig Party, the Republican Party formed. On most issues, nativism included, this new party resembled Whiggery, except for its more definitive stand against the spread of slavery to the territories. In the 1856 Presidential election, the Republicans ran their first presidential candidate, the famed explorer John C. Fremont of California.²³⁹ The Democrats nominated James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, and the Know-Nothing Party put up former President Fillmore as its standard bearer.²⁴⁰ Notably Buchanan was of Scots-Irish descent and once said, “My Ulster blood is my most priceless heritage,” in proud declaration of his ancestry.²⁴¹

For their part, Irish Americans overwhelmingly supported Buchanan.²⁴² As the New York newspaper *Irish News* reported, “With bigotry on the side of Fillmore and intolerance on that of Fremont, the liberal and enlightened principles of Buchanan stand in remarkable contrast.”²⁴³ Irish Americans feared Fillmore and all members of the Know-Nothing Party who believed that if a man “be Roman Catholic, he cannot be president of the United States,” or even a contributing member of society.²⁴⁴ They similarly did not trust Republicans, who they viewed as only slightly more tolerant than the Know-Nothings. Moreover, Irish Americans feared the slavery stance of the Republican Party would lead the country into a devastating war. An editorial in the *Irish News* stated, “Useless to wage war on the South, contrary to the Constitution, and law,

²³⁹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 374.

²⁴⁰ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 403.

²⁴¹ Catherine Nash, *Of Irish Descent: Origin Stories, Genealogy, and the Politics of Belonging* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 149.

²⁴² Kerby Miller and Patricia Mulholland Miller, *Journey of Hope: The Story of Irish Immigration to America* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 20.

²⁴³ *Irish News*, September 27, 1856.

²⁴⁴ *Irish News*, September 27, 1856.

for the purpose of effective abolition, argues a recklessness of behavior unworthy of intelligent mind or good citizen.”²⁴⁵

Buchanan prevailed in 1856, by an Electoral College count of 174 to Fremont’s 114. With slavery dividing the nativist vote, the Know-Nothings did poorly, and Fillmore only received 8 electoral votes.²⁴⁶ To be sure, nativist sentiments hardly died away, and indeed some significant people supported Fillmore’s bid in 1856.²⁴⁷ For example, a mere three weeks after the vote future First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln wrote a letter to her half-sister in which she stated, “I have always been a great admirer of his, he made so good a president and is so just a man and feels the *necessity of keeping* foreigners within bounds.”²⁴⁸

As President, Buchanan followed Pierce's example of being a "Northern man with Southern principles" regarding slavery. As such, he welcomed the Supreme Court’s infamous 1857 *Dred Scott* ruling, which held that slaves were property and thus did not enjoy any rights as citizens.²⁴⁹ Also during Buchanan’s Administration, “Bleeding Kansas” served as a prologue to the great conflagration that lay just ahead. Buchanan did nothing to alleviate the rapidly escalating crisis.²⁵⁰ Soon enough all Americans, including the Irish Americans, would have to decide where they stood on the issue of civil war.

²⁴⁵ *Irish News*, September 27, 1856.

²⁴⁶ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 1, 379.

²⁴⁷ Scarry, *Fillmore*, 285.

²⁴⁸ Scarry, *Fillmore*, 285.

²⁴⁹ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 406.

²⁵⁰ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 406.

Conclusion:

The Second Party System was a transformative time for both Protestant and Catholic Irish Americans. During the first half of the Second Party System, Irish Americans (males) earned suffrage, helped elect the first Scots-Irish President, advocated for Repeal in Ireland, and became well-recognized participators in the Democratic Party. During the System's second phase, the United States witnessed an influx of Catholic Irish as a result of the Great Irish Famine. Catholic newcomers flocked to the Democratic Party while an increasing number of Scots-Irish Americans turned to the Whig Party. Anti-Catholic nativism became more virulent in American society during the later years of the party system; nonetheless, the slavery issue ultimately consumed the era. By the end of the Second Party System, Irish Americans pensively watched as sectional differences moved America closer and closer to Civil War. The North and South would soon test Irish Americans' loyalties to their new homeland, as both sides called men of all creeds and nationalities to the battlefields.

Chapter 4: The Civil War Era, Fenian Movement, and Gilded Age (1860-1896)

About 3,525,000 Irish-Catholic immigrants landed on America's shores between the years 1845-1860.¹ They, their offspring, and future waves of Irish-Catholic new arrivals would play an important role in U.S. political history in the decades that followed. These Irish Americans would fight in both the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War. Shortly thereafter, an Irish-American nationalist group known as the Fenians attempted to weaken Britain by invading British Canada from American soil. Then, throughout the subsequent period known as the "Gilded Age," Irish Americans became an increasingly potent voting group, most memorably demonstrated in the presidential elections of 1884 and 1888.

America's Third Party System came into existence because the politicians of the Second Party System could not resolve the slavery issue. When the Whig Party imploded along sectional lines in the wake of the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, the new Republican Party emerged.² The brief but intense life of the Know-Nothing Party further scrambled party affiliations, but that nativist movement soon disintegrated over the larger issue of slavery. The 1860 presidential election brought more political upheaval. Democrats refused to renominate Buchanan, even as their Party fractured into Southern and Northern wings, which respectively nominated as their presidential candidates John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky and Stephen Douglas of Illinois.³ Also entering the contest was the "Constitutional Union Party," led by the border-state politician John Bell of

¹ William Dunning, *The British Empire and the United States* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), 195.

² Whitney, *American Presidents*, 123.

³ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 409.

Tennessee.⁴ The Republican Party put up as its standard bearer an Illinois lawyer-politician named Abraham Lincoln. After Lincoln won, seven Southern states seceded, and were soon joined by four more. When the new President determined that they would be restored to the Union by force, the country plunged into civil war.

The Civil War, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Francis Meagher:

About 20,000 Irish Americans fought for the Confederacy, predominantly in units organized in Virginia and Louisiana.⁵ Several motivations account for why these Irish Americans aligned with the Grey. Many coveted the wage that came with serving in the Confederate Army. Moreover, slavery, which the Confederacy defended, seemingly benefitted Irish laborers, in the sense that freed Blacks presumably would work, for less pay, the same sort of menial jobs that the Irish held. Also, support for the Confederacy came mostly from the Democratic Party, the political affiliation of most Catholic Irish. Finally, given that the Civil War fundamentally concerned the right of states to disengage themselves from a centralized national authority, some Irish Americans compared the Southern perspective on that issue to the struggle of the Irish people to attain their sovereignty by breaking free of Britain.⁶ An 1860 editorial in the *Irish News* stressed the Irish-American sensitivity to self-determination when it lambasted “[t]he Republican Party . . . for corrupt purposes overriding the free will of the majority of the people [Southerners] in affairs relating to their domestic affairs.”⁷

⁴ Whitney, *American Presidents*, 145.

⁵ Lar Joye, “Irishmen in the Confederate Army”, *History Ireland*, 18:1 (January/February 2010), p. 40, 40.

⁶ Jones, *The Irish Brigade*, 68-69.

⁷ *Irish News*, August 25, 1860.

However, a far larger number of Irish Americans—at least 150,000 of them-- fought for the North.⁸ Most participated in non-ethnic units, but some joined fellow Irish volunteers to organize all-Irish regiments like the 9th Irish Massachusetts, the 23rd Illinois, the 63rd and 88th regiments of New York, and, most famous of them all, the 69th New York State Militia—later known as the 69th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment or the “Fighting 69th.”⁹

By now most self-identified Irish Americans were Catholic, yet they fought on the Union side despite the continued Anglo-American discrimination against them. Also, these Irish Americans fought bravely for a Commander-in-Chief, Lincoln, a man whom the Irish historically had never supported because of his affiliation with the nativist Whig and later Republican parties.¹⁰ For example, in 1858 an influential Irish-American and Democratic New York newspaper, the *Irish American*, had lauded the victory of Democratic Senator Stephen Douglas over Republican Lincoln in the Illinois U.S. Senate race. Referring to the outpouring of excitement over Douglas’s win, the *Irish American* had written, “We see by every mail, and almost by every flash, some new evidence of the general joy with which the success of the ‘little giant’ and the Democracy in Illinois is regarded by this country.” The paper continued, “. . . all true Democrats” voted for Douglas.¹¹ During the 1860 election, Irish Americans again had not backed Lincoln—and instead supported either Douglas or Breckinridge.¹² To them, Lincoln personified the partisan radicalness of the Republican Party. An 1860 editorial in the *Irish News*

⁸ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 128.

⁹ Susan Ural Bruce, “Remember Your Country and Keep up Its Credit”: Irish Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865, *The Journal of Military History*, 69:2 (Apr., 2005), 333.

¹⁰ Kenny, “Abraham Lincoln and the American Irish,” 49.

¹¹ *The Irish American*, December 4, 1858.

¹² O’Grady, *How the Irish Became Americans*, 46.

explained: “Lincoln . . . [is] the representative of that Northern sectional, that geographical party, which Washington forewarned to unite to put down.”¹³ Moreover, the Irish viewed Lincoln as an abolitionist, intent on dangerously transforming the country. “All citizens of the United States,” a reader of the *Irish News* wrote, “are opposed to the election of Lincoln . . . and are in favor of preserving the Union of these states upon the basis of the Constitution”¹⁴ Tammany Hall agreed with the *Irish News*’ assessment of the Republican Party and Lincoln. In April 1860 the Democratic Republican Committee of New York City held a meeting in Tammany and issued an address equating abolitionism to “fanaticism” and linked the anti-slavery movement to Republican Party leaders. The address stated, “We do not impute to the Republican party the deliberate design of stirring up insurrection in the Southern States, although the speeches of some of its leading men express a willingness that the slavery controversy should be brought to such an issue.”¹⁵ A vote for Lincoln, as Tammany perceived it, was a vote for war. Unsurprisingly, in 1860 Lincoln had run poorly in the Irish-Catholic strongholds of the northeastern cities despite his national victory. Lincoln acknowledged this reality in February 1861 while visiting New York City’s Mayor Fernando Wood and other local dignitaries. In expressing thanks for the welcoming reception he had received, the President-elect noted that it had been prepared “by the people who do not, by a large majority, agree with me in political sentiment.”¹⁶

¹³ *Irish News*, September 8, 1860.

¹⁴ *Irish News*, October 6, 1860.

¹⁵ *Irish News*, April 28, 1860.

¹⁶ Jones, *Irish Brigade*, 54.

Several reasons explain why so many Irish Americans backed the Union cause despite their displeasure with its Commander-in-Chief. Some did so in the hope of proving their patriotic loyalty to Protestant-majority America. “On the eve of the war, the Irish knew that they still did not belong,” Joseph O’Grady explains in his book *How the Irish Became Americans*. “The war gave them the opportunity to earn a new reputation and to take another step toward becoming Americans.”¹⁷ Other Irishmen with poor prospects joined the Union Army for the daily meals and regular wage that came with military service. Some Irishmen genuinely felt that the fate of all future democracies, perhaps Ireland among them, depended on the preservation of the United States.¹⁸ A number of Irish Americans took up Union arms after they sensed a British bias toward the Confederacy. As historian Robert Athearn writes in his monograph about the great Irish American Civil War hero, Thomas Francis Meagher, “The Irish were reminded that England favored the South. That was almost reason enough in itself to support the North.”¹⁹

The most virulently anti-British group of Irishmen regarded the Civil War as an opportunity to advance their own cause. These men hoped to obtain, through Civil War service in either the Union or Confederate armies, the military training they would need for a future attack against the hated British. These Irishmen belonged to the American Fenian Organization—the U.S. branch of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) that had been organized by John O’Mahoney and others in 1858.²⁰ O’Mahoney served as a

¹⁷ O’Grady, *How the Irish Became Americans*, 46.

¹⁸ Michael Cavanagh, ed. *The Memoirs of General Thomas Francis Meagher* (Worcester, Mass: The Messenger Press, 1892), 371.

¹⁹ Robert G. Athearn, *Thomas Francis Meagher: An Irish Revolutionary in America* (NY: Arno Press, 1976), 103.

²⁰ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 128-129.

Colonel in the 99th New York Regiment. Other prominent Fenians who also served as Union Army officers included two native-born Irishmen, Colonel Michael Corcoran and Brigadier General Thomas Francis Meagher, both of the 69th Regiment.²¹

Whether they enlisted out of patriotism, pragmatism, or Fenianism, the Irish fought bravely during the Civil War. Their “proud record” in that conflict the historian Paul Jones writes, “established the image of an Irish-American community dedicated to the flag of the United States and the Union.” Indeed, Jones further observes, no one who saw the Irish “go into battle against all odds could have any doubt of the Irish American’s right to full citizenship.”²²

Any account of Irish-American heroics on behalf of the Union cause begins with the all-Irish New York 69th militia. Colonel Corcoran, born in Irish county Sligo, was the commanding officer of that militia. He had made his anti-British sentiments clear in 1860, when he refused to lead his militia in a New York City parade honoring the visiting Prince of Wales. For this defiance the army court-martialed Corcoran; however army officials excused his disobedience following the outbreak of war and the consequent need for his services.²³

During the Battle of Bull Run in July 1861, Colonel Corcoran and his 69th militia fought as part of Colonel William Tecumseh Sherman’s brigade.²⁴ The Confederates captured Corcoran at Bull Run and did not release him until a year later, making him the first Irish hero of the Civil War. Meagher too fought at Bull Run, as a field officer and

²¹ Bruce, “Remember Your Country and Keep up its Credit,” 335.

²² Jones, *The Irish Brigade*, 255.

²³ Athearn, *Meagher*, 92-93

²⁴ Athearn, *Meagher*, 98.

Corcoran's special aide.²⁵ In the aftermath of that lost battle, Meagher rose to the defense of the 69th when he concluded that the unit either had been ignored or poorly portrayed in accounts of the battle. Meagher particularly objected to a part of Sherman's official report that said the 69th "held the ground for some time, but finally fell back to disorder"—a characterization that Meagher lambasted as slander.²⁶ In response to Sherman, Meagher wrote "The Last Days of the 69th in Virginia," which was printed in the *Irish American*, the *New York Daily Tribune*, and in booklet form.²⁷ Of Sherman, Meagher wrote: "Whatever his reasons for it were, in this and other instances, Col. Sherman exhibited the sourest malignity towards the 69th."²⁸ Consequently, the *Irish American* depicted Sherman as a "specimen of the men [to] whose elevation to positions for which they were entirely unfit may clearly be traced the disaster that have befallen the Army of the Potomac."²⁹

Soon after Bull Run, discussion circulated in Union military circles about creating an all-Irish Brigade consisting of the 63rd, 69th, and 88th New York Volunteer Infantry units. The job of recruiting enlistments for such a force fell to then-Colonel Meagher.³⁰ To that task he brought some prior military experience obtained before Bull Run. Back in his home country, he had been one of the leaders of the Young Ireland Rebellion of 1848, a failed attempt to free Ireland from Britain's control. Later he escaped from penal

²⁵ Athearn, *Meagher*, 99.

²⁶ Athearn, *Meagher*, 99.

²⁷ Athearn, *Meagher*, 99.

²⁸ *New York Daily Tribune*, August 16, 1861.

²⁹ *Irish American*, August 17, 1861.

³⁰ *Irish World*, November 5, 1904. Also, Athearn, *Meagher*, 100.

servitude in Van Dieman's Land to the United States and took up residence in New York City.³¹

Given the opportunity to organize the Irish Brigade, Meagher promptly showed himself to be a born promoter. Meagher electrified every crowd he spoke to about joining the Brigade on behalf of the Union cause. Fully understanding of why Irish Americans hesitated to support a party and a country that had treated them unfairly, he directly addressed those concerns in his speeches encouraging men to enlist. "I ask no Irishman to do that which I myself am not prepared to do," he said at an August 1861 New York City rally. "My heart, my arm, my life are pledged to the national cause, and to the last it will be my highest pride, as I conceive it to be my holiest duty and obligation, to share its fortunes." Recognizing Lincoln's unpopularity among Irish Americans, Meagher continued, "I care not to what party the Chief Magistrate of the Republic has belonged. I care not upon what plank or platform he has been elected. The platform disappears before the Constitution"³² Meagher then revealed that he, like many of those in the crowd, was a Democrat—an announcement that produced thunderous applause. Yet, Meagher continued, "[t]he honor and glory of the nation's flag" trumped even party loyalty in this perilous time. Meagher concluded by asking the men before him whether they would stand with him and fight; they roared back, "We Will! We Will!"³³

Meagher made similar appeals for Irish troops throughout 1861. Again his ethnic kinsmen followed him. Indeed, at Meagher's September 1861 Boston Music Hall rally the demand to hear him speak became so great that swindlers forged tickets for the

³¹ See Cavanagh, ed., *Memoirs of General Thomas Francis Meagher*.

³² Cavanagh, ed., *The Memoirs of General Thomas Francis Meagher*, 415.

³³ Jones, *Irish Brigade*, 99.

event.³⁴ In the Hall, Meagher promised his audience that the “Irish regimented together, carrying the green flag with the Stars and Stripes and the state arms, will one day find themselves in the Irish Brigade . . .” fighting with honor.³⁵ After one rally in New York City at the Academy of Music in October 1861, the *New York Times* reported, “If the complete success of the Irish brigade depended upon the meeting at the Academy of Music, last evening, it would be most indubitably assured.”³⁶ At that rally, Meagher reminded “Erin’s most stalwart sons and fairest daughters” in the crowd that they had always helped others fighting for freedom even as Ireland remained in Britain’s clutches. “Ireland had shown,” he cried, “that although weak at home, [it is] strong abroad.”³⁷

Like Lincoln, Meagher regarded America as history’s great experiment in democracy. Thus, Ireland itself had a stake in a Union victory, for its defeat would suggest that democracy could not endure even in countries that had adopted it--and what would that bode for a people like the Irish who looked forward to achieving their own freedom in the future? To Meagher, the South’s rebellion could not compare to Ireland’s struggle for independence. The “hot, violent southerners” had no reason for secession, Meagher stated in a September 1861 speech. “What single grievance is there to justify . . . rebellion? What inch of territory was invaded? What single item of . . . State rights which the Constitution gives . . . was in the slightest degree violated or impaired”--as was being done by the British in Ireland.³⁸

³⁴ Athearan, *Meagher*, 102.

³⁵ Jones, *Irish Brigade*, 101.

³⁶ *New York Times*, October 7, 1861.

³⁷ *New York Times*, October 7, 1861.

³⁸ Athearan, *Meagher*, 103.

As a nationalist, Meagher also regarded the Civil War as an excellent training ground for Irish in a future war with Britain. As Meagher observed to Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Nugent of the 69th Regiment in April 1861:

It is a moral certainty that many of our countrymen who enlist in this struggle for the maintenance of the Union will fall in the contest . . . But even so; I hold that if only one in ten of us come back when this war is over, the military experience gained by that one will be of more service in the fight for Ireland's freedom than would that of the entire ten as they are now.³⁹

The November 1861 *Trent* Affair gave a boost to Meagher's campaign to recruit the Irish. This episode began when American Navy Captain Charles Wilkes stopped and boarded the neutral British ship, *Trent*, as it was sailing from Havana to Europe. Ignoring the maritime rules regarding search and seizure, Wilkes captured two Confederate diplomats, James Mason and John Sidell, who had been aboard the *Trent*. "The Britons were furious; there was much loose talk of war," the historian George Herring has written.⁴⁰ But many northerners, including Irish Americans, hailed Wilkes's action; it pleased them that a Union Captain had shown the gumption to assert himself against Britain.⁴¹ Reporting on the widespread support of Wilkes, the *New York Times* wrote, "The whole country now rings with applause of his bold action."⁴² President Lincoln, however, understandably feared that an aroused Britain might well align with the Confederacy. Accordingly, he acquiesced to Britain's demand that Mason and Slidell be released.⁴³

³⁹ Cavanagh, ed., *The Memoirs of Meagher*, 369.

⁴⁰ George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 232.

⁴¹ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 233

⁴² *New York Times*, November 17, 1861.

⁴³ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 233.

That effectively ended the crisis, but the episode reinforced in Irish-American minds a sense that Britain favored the Confederacy. That, suspicion coupled with Meagher's continued recruitment efforts, spurred many Irish Americans to fight for the Union. By 1862 the Irish Brigade numbered 2,500 strong, additional units like the 116th Pennsylvania having been organized.⁴⁴ In recognition of his efforts, Meagher in February 1862 got promoted to the rank of Brigadier General, and command of the Brigade he had done so much to create.⁴⁵

The Irish Brigade fought gallantly, and helped the Union Army win key victories at Antietam and Gettysburg. But it was its participation in a Union loss—the Battle of Fredericksburg--that catapulted the Irish Brigade to national fame. On December 13, 1862, the Brigade and other Union troops stormed up Marye's Heights in Virginia toward well-positioned Confederate forces. The Irish Brigade got the furthest, but still the attack failed, and the Brigade suffered such decimating casualties that it was nearly destroyed.⁴⁶ Yet the valor its men had shown at Fredericksburg left lasting impressions even among Confederate leaders. "Your soldier's heart," General George Pickett wrote to his wife, "almost stood still as he watched those sons of Erin fearlessly rush to their death" General Robert E. Lee himself exclaimed that "never were there men so brave."⁴⁷ Poems like "At Fredericksburg-Dec. 13, 1862," by John Boyle O'Reilly, and "The Fighting Race" by Joseph I.C. Clarke, commemorated the brave Irish who had fought in that battle. One stanza of O'Reilly's poem reads:

⁴⁴ Jones, *Irish Brigade*, 104.

⁴⁵ Athearn, *Meagher*, 109.

⁴⁶ Jones, *Irish Brigade*, 157.

⁴⁷ Joseph Hernon, Jr. *Celts, Catholics, and Copperheads: Ireland Views the American Civil War* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968), 18.

In front of the guns they re-form an attack;
 Six times they have done it, and six times retreated;
 Twelve hundred they came, and two hundred go back.
 Two hundred go back with the chivalrous story.
 The wild day is closed in the night's solemn shroud;
 A thousand lie dead, but their death was glory
 That calls not for tears—the Green Badges are proud!⁴⁸

Clarke echoed O'Reilly:

“Oh, the fighting races don't die out,
 If they seldom die in bed,
 For love is first in their hearts, no doubt,”
 Said Burke; then Kelly said:
 “When Michael, the Irish Archangel, stands,
 The angel with the sword,
 And the battle-dead from a hundred lands
 Are ranged in one big horde . . .⁴⁹

More than forty years later, the Irish Brigade's bravery at Fredericksburg still had not been forgotten. Delivering a speech in New York City to the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick in 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt referred to the fateful battle and the Irish Americans who had brought honor to America. “Some of those whom I am addressing,” Teddy Roosevelt remarked, “served in the immortal Brigade which on the fatal day of Fredericksburg left its dead closest to the stone wall which marked the limit that could not be overpassed even by the highest valor.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ John Boyle O'Reilly, “At Fredericksburg-Dec. 13, 1862”

⁴⁹ Joseph I.C. Clarke, “The Fighting Race.”

⁵⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, “Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Dinner,” March 17, 1905. Box 2, Folder 7, William Cockran Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York, 20.

Yet even as many Irish Americans celebrated Meagher and the Irish Brigade, the Irish back in Ireland regarded them in far less adulatory terms. Many in Ireland disliked how many of their kin were fighting and dying for a host country that discriminated against Erin's emigrants.⁵¹ Meagher assured both the Irish in America and Ireland that the Irish men lost were not because of "insufficient food, or clothing, or undue labor, or neglect of any kind, or sickness, but hard fighting of the enemy that had thinned the ranks"⁵² Meagher, although gifted with an obvious talent for swaying Irish Americans toward the cause, could not so persuade the Irish back in Ireland. By 1863, they cursed Meagher—the man they viewed as the Irish Pied Piper—who had marched Irish Americans to early graves at the behest of a Republican president trying to save a Union that continued to mistreat them.⁵³ When Meagher began recruiting for fresh Irish Brigade troops after Fredericksburg, Irish nationalists reacted harshly, no doubt impeding Meagher's efforts. "If by his eloquence, or the prestige of his name," Irish critics said of Meagher, "four or five thousand more Irishmen can be trapped into serving in the ranks of President Lincoln, then there is so much trouble saved to the Federal recruiting officers."⁵⁴

The Conscription Act of 1863 made the Irish in Ireland even angrier about the Civil War. This measure called for the drafting of 200,000 men, allowing for exemptions of anyone who could pay \$300 or find a substitute. With its population of 800,000 in 1863, New York City stood out as the prime target for conscription, rendering the poor

⁵¹ Hernon, *Celts, Catholics, and Copperheads*, 18.

⁵² *Irish American*, August 2, 1862.

⁵³ Kenny, "Lincoln and the American Irish," 51.

⁵⁴ Hernon, *Celts, Catholics, and Copperheads*, 18.

Irish immigrants who had surged into this urban region in the mid-1800s highly vulnerable to induction into the Union army.⁵⁵ These Irish Americans, laborers for the most part, had not answered Meagher's earlier calls to join the cause, and such people were no more interested now in putting their lives at risk for a cause in which they felt they had minimal stake.⁵⁶ The Irish-American *Boston Pilot* reflected the disgust of its readership when it stated on May 5, 1863, that even "aliens who have declared their intention to become citizens will be subject to the coming draft . . . [the purpose being] to inflict punishment on the unnaturalized Irish, because enlistments fell off, on account of the absurd proclamation to emancipate the slaves in the revolted states."⁵⁷ Of course, the *Boston Pilot* was referring to Lincoln's January 1863 Emancipation Proclamation which freed slaves in captured Confederate states.

Irish-American anger exploded in a four-day draft riot in New York City that lasted from July 13-16, 1863.⁵⁸ Angry that Lincoln's Republican Party had refused to accept them as full and equal citizens but was now asking them perhaps to die for the democratic cause, these laborers took to the streets in protest.⁵⁹ Their sense of injustice grew, as city newspapers like the *New York Herald* complained that "the rich could avoid" the draft but the immigrant "poor man . . . was compelled to go to war."⁶⁰ Moreover, after the Emancipation Proclamation many Northern Irish cringed at "the prospect of being drafted into a war whose aims had fundamentally changed from

⁵⁵ Toby Joyce, "The New York Draft Riots of 1863: An Irish Civil War?" *History Ireland*, 11:2 (Summer 2003), 22.

⁵⁶ Joyce, "The New York Draft Riots," 22.

⁵⁷ Kenny, "Lincoln and the American Irish," 51.

⁵⁸ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 136.

⁵⁹ *New York Times*, July 14, 1863.

⁶⁰ *New Jersey Herald*, July 14, 1863.

preserving the Union to destroying slavery . . . The result, Irish Americans believed, would be an influx of cheap black labor into the North.”⁶¹ During the riots, several thousand New Yorkers, most of them Irish immigrants, attacked Republicans and those whom they associated with this party: the rich, law enforcement, and most disgracefully, the vulnerable African-American population.⁶² Ironically, many of the police officers attacked were of Irish extraction. As the melee worsened, Irish and other ethnic laborers burned city draft offices and ransacked African-American homes, “[s]hout[ing] ‘Burn the niggers’ nest.”⁶³ One particularly heinous episode occurred when a crippled black coachman named Abraham Franklin got pulled from his house, hanged, and later dragged “through the streets by the genitals to the cheers of onlookers” by an Irish youth.⁶⁴ On occasion, merely the sight of a well-dressed man could incite beatings and the heckling shout, “There’s a \$300 man!”⁶⁵ Although initial reports about the number of casualties from the riots proved to be inflated, even so more than 100 people died and about 2,000 suffered injuries during these four days of mayhem, which only ended when Lincoln sent in Union Army troops, many of them Irish-American, to restore order to the city. In the aftermath of the riots comparatively few New York City residents got drafted, and not many rioters received any punishment.⁶⁶

Yet it cannot be said that the Draft Riots had the effect on public opinion that its participants undoubtedly desired. The violence committed to avoid conscription horrified many moderate Irishmen in New York City. To be sure, such people in New York City

⁶¹ Kenny, “Lincoln and the Irish American,” 51.

⁶² Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 137.

⁶³ Joyce, “The New York Draft Riots,” 24.

⁶⁴ *New York Times*, July 14, 1863. Also Joyce, “The New York Draft Riots,” 24, 26.

⁶⁵ Joyce, “The New York Draft Riots,” 25.

⁶⁶ Golway, *Machine Made*, 81.

did not join the Republican Party; however, many did sever their former allegiance to the “Peace Democrats” wing of their party.⁶⁷ Instead, tentatively and probably somewhat reluctantly these Irish New Yorkers aligned themselves with the “War Democrats” who on the whole supported Lincoln’s efforts. Those who had this change of mind included Irish moderates, Irish Catholic clergy, and Irish-American soldiers who had come to regard the rioters as “tainted with disloyalty and insurrection.”⁶⁸

This strong negative reaction to the Peace Democrats affected the course of New York and Irish-American political history by enabling the rise of the notorious William Marcy (Boss) Tweed. As leader of New York City’s War Democrats during the Civil War, Tweed took over New York City politics with the backing of a machine that relied on a solid Irish vote.⁶⁹ Tweed would continue to control New York City until 1871, and the political organization he led, Tammany Hall, remained dominant in city politics long after his simplistically corrupt ways ultimately brought about his downfall. Ironically, the New York Draft Riots, in some respects one of the low points in Irish-American history, helped put in motion events that would propel Irish Americans to lofty heights of power in the country’s largest city.⁷⁰ This would have major implications for future presidential elections in which victory hinged on the Empire State.

Politically, what concerned President Lincoln, of course, was his 1864 reelection bid, against former Union General George B. McClellan. Among those supporting Lincoln’s second-term bid was Thomas Meagher. Following the Fredericksburg disaster, he had failed to fully rebuild the Irish Brigade. Having fallen somewhat out of favor with

⁶⁷ Joyce, “The New York Draft Riots,” 26.

⁶⁸ Joyce, “New York Draft Riots,” 26, 27.

⁶⁹ Joyce, “New York Draft Riots,” 26.

⁷⁰ Golway, *Machine Made*, 82.

the press and the War Department, Meagher subsequently resigned as general in May of 1863—a decision he would come to regret.⁷¹ Lincoln restored Meagher's commission in December via telegram stating that he, Lincoln, "Shall be very glad for you to raise three thousand (3,000) Irish troops . . .," and the President gave him a new command in the western theater of the War. A grateful Meagher proceeded to seize every opportunity to praise the President, sometimes even to the point of criticizing his fellow Irishmen.⁷² In January 1864 Meagher delivered a funeral oration for Michael Corcoran, who had died a month prior; in his speech, Meagher stated that "with the riots in this city, last July, the Irish element was . . . identified" as the instigators.⁷³ As if that did not anger the Irish enough, Meagher later claimed that "there was no Democratic party or Republican party or a Know-Nothing party"--a seeming disavowal of his own loyalty to the Democratic Party. By way of rebuttal, the New York *Irish American* contended that Meagher's words had been "not only inappropriate but totally uncalled for."⁷⁴ Then, just weeks before the 1864 election, Meagher went even further, writing a letter published on October 15 by the incredulous *Irish American*, which in part read:

As for the bulk of the Irishmen in the country, I frankly confess to an utter disregard, if not to a thorough contempt of what they think or say of me in my relations to the questions or movements that are supposed or designed to affect the fortunes of the nation, or actually do so. To their own discredit and degradation, they have suffered themselves to be bamboozled into being obstinate herds in the political field, contracting inveterate instincts, following with gross stupidity and the stoniest blindness certain worn out old path-ways described for them by their drivers, but never doing anything worthy of the intellectual and chivalrous reputation of their race . . . [to be a Democrat was to be part of] a selfish and conscienceless faction.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Athearn, *Meagher*, 126.

⁷² Cavanaugh, ed., *Memoirs of Meagher*, 489.

⁷³ *New York Times*, January 23, 1864.

⁷⁴ *Irish American*, January 23, 1864.

⁷⁵ *Irish American*, November 12, 1864.

Meagher followed up this blast with a pro-Lincoln speech, which Republican Vice-Presidential nominee Andrew Johnson encouraged him to make, before the House of Representatives.⁷⁶ Meagher's oration was titled, "The National Cause and the Duty of sustaining the National Government and the War." This address confused many Irish Americans about their hero Meagher. The *Irish American*, for example, reacted negatively to the address, complaining, that Meagher had chosen to abandon his nationality and join a "selfish and conscienceless faction," the Republican Party.⁷⁷

Despite the large number of Irish Americans enlisted in the Union Army, many Irish northerners remained loyal Democrats in 1864. Northern cities with high ethnic and Catholic populations, particularly Irish-American ones, had little love for Lincoln.⁷⁸ Except for his soldiers, Lincoln had not won over Irish Americans. In addition to his Republican affiliation, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Conscription Act continued to rankle many Irish Americans. On the night that the Democratic Party nominated McClellan for president, Tammany organized a ratification meeting in City Hall to denounce "the imbecility of the administration of Abraham Lincoln" in his leadership of the war and "its ruinous financial policy."⁷⁹ Tammany also declared that Lincoln had "forfeited the confidence of the loyal States; usurped powers not granted by the Constitution; endeavored to render the executive, aided by the military, superior to the judicial and legislative branches of the Government, and assumed to destroy life and

⁷⁶ Athearn, *Meagher*, 134.

⁷⁷ *Irish American*, October 15, 1864.

⁷⁸ John Waugh, *Reelecting Lincoln: The Battle for the 1864 Presidency* (NY: Crown Publishers, 1997), 353.

⁷⁹ Myers, *History of Tammany Hall*, 206.

confiscate property by its unconstitutional proclamations.”⁸⁰ The *Irish American* echoed Tammany’s distaste for Lincoln. Three days prior to the 1864 election, the newspaper urged its readers to vote against the incumbent:

Mr. Lincoln’s Administration has endeavored to substitute a government of force for that of right, and to replace the voluntary obedience of love by the subjection of fear. These are the first of the insidious approaches by which despotism ever seeks to win its way to absolute authority . . . In voting for General McClellan, on the contrary, the American people are giving their suffrages for one whose whole record indicates his devotion to the old traditions of the Republic—to the unity of the States, and the stability of those institutions, left us as constitutional guides and landmarks by the wise and patriotic men who laid the foundation of our national greatness.⁸¹

Irish Americans agreed and voted overwhelmingly for McClellan.⁸² He received 90% of the vote in New York’s heavily Irish Sixth Ward, and two-thirds of the city as a whole went Democratic.⁸³ Nonetheless, despite McClellan’s “heavy Irish support,” he only won three states, New Jersey, Kentucky, and Delaware, losing to Lincoln in the Electoral College 221 to 21 votes.⁸⁴

As it turned out, major Union victories in Georgia and the Shenandoah Valley had inspired the Northern electorate as a whole to give Lincoln a second term. Irish Americans in general were not happy with the results. The *Irish American* conceded, “The great Democratic Party of the nation is checked for the moment,” because Lincoln’s party “so narrowly escaped overthrow.”⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Myers, *History of Tammany Hall*, 206.

⁸¹ *Irish American*, November 5, 1864.

⁸² Susannah Ural Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865* (NY: NYU University Press, 2006), 226.

⁸³ Kenny, “Lincoln and the American Irish,” 53.

⁸⁴ Kenny, “Lincoln and the American Irish,” 53. Also, Bruce, *Harp and the Eagle*, 232.

⁸⁵ *Irish American*, November 19, 1864.

As for Meagher, during the Reconstruction Era he received a political appointment as acting Governor of Montana. But he died in office on July 1, 1867, after falling off the deck of the steamer *Thompson* while allegedly intoxicated.⁸⁶ Despite Irish American's disappointment in Meagher's choice to align himself with the Republican Party later in his career, they deeply mourned his passing and hailed him as a great hero. The short-lived, New York-based Fenian newspaper *Irish People*, the New York Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick, and the Irish-American Thomas Francis Bourke⁸⁷ Circle of Massachusetts, and other Irish-American organizations ran articles and passed resolutions commemorating Meagher and his past glories.⁸⁸ The Thomas Francis Bourke Circle spoke for many when it said of Meagher:

That his career during the late rebellion has added fresh laurels to his glory, and that in raising the famous "Irish Brigade," and marshalling his countrymen under the fostering banner of that flag which he had sworn to protect and defend, has endeared his name to every American, given the Irish people a name and a solid respectability, which they could never otherwise have attained; and weaved around his name a chaplet of glory and hallowed associations as imperishable as the name of the fields he won⁸⁹

The Fenian Movement and Andrew Johnson:

In April 1865 the Civil War ended in a Union victory, but President Lincoln, the victim of assassination, as the conflict's final casualty. Along with the rest of the nation, Irish Americans mourned the loss of their president, and in time came to regard him as a "great man of the people."⁹⁰ In 1865 the grief-stricken country, suffering emotional

⁸⁶ *New York Times*, July 8, 1867. Also, Ahearn, *Meagher*, 165.

⁸⁷ Thomas Francis Bourke was a Fenian who fought for the Confederacy in the American Civil War and later in an ill-fated 1867 invasion of Ireland to throw off British rule. He was captured by British authorities and sentenced to death in April 1867.

⁸⁸ See *Irish People*, August 17, September 9, 14, 1867.

⁸⁹ *Irish People*, September 14, 1867.

⁹⁰ *Irish World*, February 19, 1898.

wounds that would take generations to heal, embarked on the arduous task of Reconstruction. Yet for a small number of Americans of Irish extraction, the war's end mainly meant that they could now devote themselves to launching from U.S. territory their long-planned battle against Britain.

These people, organized as the Fenian Brotherhood, had grown in strength and numbers during the preparatory Civil War years. The group's members largely resided in the northeastern and Great Lakes regions of the country.⁹¹ As they had planned, their participation in the Civil War had left many Fenians battle-tested and eager to transition from saving the Union to rescuing Ireland.⁹²

In October 1865 the Fenians held a major meeting that organizers called the Philadelphia Congress.⁹³ At this gathering, the Fenians ousted their original leader, John O'Mahoney, and replaced him with William Roberts, a master fundraiser who his supporters believed would prove more proactive and realistic in attacking Britain.⁹⁴ The September 1866 proceedings of the Fifth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood explain the group's frustration with O'Mahoney: "For two years the promised revolution in Ireland was being postponed every six months; but it was certain to commence in the Fall or Winter of 1865—September was named, then October, then November, and December."⁹⁵ Some also accused O'Mahoney of misappropriating Fenian funds, which

⁹¹ Dale Knobel, *"America for Americans": The Nativist Movement in the United States* (NY: Twayne, 1996), 170.

⁹² Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 129.

⁹³ *New York Times*, December 11, 1865.

⁹⁴ See *Irish American*, April 14, 1866 for the story.

⁹⁵ Fenian Fifth National Congress, "Proceedings of the Fifth National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood at Troy, NY with Message of WM. R. Roberts, President of the Fenian Brotherhood," September 1866, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

provided further support for his ousting.⁹⁶ Fenians now put their faith in Roberts, who pushed for an early invasion of British Canada rather than Ireland.⁹⁷ His audacious plan envisioned a takeover of Canadian territory, followed by an exchange of it in return for Britain's granting independence to Ireland.

For several reasons, the Fenians believed the U.S. government would not stand in their way. First there was the fact that federal government officials, initially at least, did not take the Fenians very seriously.⁹⁸ Also, many politicians by this time had become reluctant to antagonize Irish Americans unnecessarily, given their growing political power.⁹⁹ Moreover, Secretary of State Seward, who retained that office under Lincoln's successor Andrew Johnson, was a long-time friend of immigrants, particularly the Irish, who hoped he would not hinder their efforts to win independence for Ireland. Still another factor seemingly working in the Fenians' favor was the anti-British sentiment that ran rampant in post-Civil War America, owing to a widespread belief that Britain had supported the Confederacy by allowing British Canada to give sanctuary to draft-dodgers and even some Rebel raiding parties.¹⁰⁰

Finally, the American government remained furious with Britain for its having built some ships that it then sold to the South, which of course the Confederates promptly armed and used against the Union Navy.¹⁰¹ Those British-constructed ships had captured many Union vessels and inflicted large cargo losses on the North. One Confederate ship

⁹⁶ *New York Times*, December 11, 1865.

⁹⁷ Timothy Meagher, *The Columbia Guide to Irish-American History* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), 251.

⁹⁸ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 254.

⁹⁹ Stahr, *Seward*, 466.

¹⁰⁰ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 253-254.

¹⁰¹ Daniel Malloy Smith, *The American Diplomatic Experience* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 177.

in particular, the raiding vessel *Alabama*, destroyed or captured at least 67 Union ships.¹⁰² Understandably, the U.S. government blamed Britain for having constructed it, in violation of at least the spirit of international neutrality laws. American officials demanded compensation from Britain for the losses it had suffered because of the *Alabama*.¹⁰³ Naturally the British felt otherwise, and so the controversy lingered, much to the Fenians' delight as they moved finally to put their long-awaited grand scheme into operation.¹⁰⁴

Three times between 1866-70 the Fenians attacked British-Canada.¹⁰⁵ Rather incredibly, the displaced O'Mahoney, unwilling to accept his ousting, organized a rump faction of Fenians who initiated the first assault on British Canada, in April 1866, before Roberts' Fenian troops could organize.¹⁰⁶ O'Mahoney hoped to seize the Canadian-owned Campobello Island, but the assault, led by "General" Fenian leader Bernard Killian was a fiasco and ended with American General George Meade, best known for his victory at Gettysburg, seizing Fenian ships en route to the Island before they could even enter Canadian territory.¹⁰⁷ Notably, at Secretary Seward's urging the U.S. government did nothing to punish those involved in O'Mahoney's misadventure.¹⁰⁸ Then on June 1, Roberts, wholly undeterred by O'Mahoney's failure, went ahead with his own plan for invading Canada. Led by Roberts and former Union General T.W. Sweeney, about 1,300

¹⁰² Smith, *American Diplomatic Experience*, 179.

¹⁰³ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 255.

¹⁰⁴ See *Irish Citizen*, January 1867-October 1869. This NY, pro-Fenian, Irish-American newspaper makes numerous anti-British references to the *Alabama* controversy.

¹⁰⁵ Leon O'Broin, "The Fenian Brotherhood," in Doyle and Edwards, eds., *America and Ireland, 1776-1976* (Westwood, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 122-124.

¹⁰⁶ John MacDonald, *Troubling Times in Canada: A History of the Fenian Raids of 1866 and 1870* (Lexington, KY: Fili-Quarian Classics, 2010), Location 299 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁰⁷ MacDonald, *Troubling Times in Canada*, Location 299, 308 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁰⁸ Stahr, *Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man*, 466, 467.

Fenian Civil War veterans crossed the Niagara River from Buffalo, New York, into Upper Canada. Angrier at this second Fenian assault than he had been about the initial foray, President Johnson condemned the invasion and dispatched troops to stop the Irish expatriates.¹⁰⁹ Although some Fenians made it into Canada and fought skirmishes with Upper Canadian militia, the invasion attempt collapsed--“[d]esertion was taking place by wholesale”--after Johnson ordered the arrest of the would-be invaders, including Roberts and Sweeney, and sent troops to block the Fenian retreat back into Buffalo.¹¹⁰

On June 5, 1866, Attorney General James Speed sent a message to appropriate district attorneys and U.S. Marshals that stated:

By direction of the President, you are hereby instructed to cause the arrest of all prominent, leading, or conspicuous persons called ‘Fenians’ who you may have probable cause to believe have been or may be guilty of violations of the neutrality laws of the United States.¹¹¹

Then on June 6, President Johnson issued a proclamation reminding Americans that attacking Canada was illegal. He stated:

Whereas it has become known to me that certain evil-disposed persons have, within the territory and jurisdiction of the United States . . . [and] are still engaged in providing and preparing means for a military expedition and enterprise . . . against the colonies, districts and people of British North America . . . I, Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, do admonish and warn all good citizens of the United States against taking part or in anywise aiding . . . or abetting . . . unlawful proceedings and I do exhort all Judges, Magistrates, Marshals, and officers in the service of the United States to employ all lawful authority and power to prevent and defeat the aforesaid unlawful proceedings . . .¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ O’Broin, “The Fenian Brotherhood,” 123.

¹¹⁰ *Charleston Daily News*, June 11, 1866.

¹¹¹ James Speed, “From the Attorney-General’s Office,” June 5, 1866. James D. Richardson, ed. *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents—Andrew Johnson*, vol. 6, part 2 (Lexington, KY: Filiquarian Publishing, LLC., 2014), 152.

¹¹² *New York Times*, June 7, 1866.

After this proclamation, Seward urged the President and the British Government to extend mercy to the captured Fenians; Seward also saw to it that his letters suggesting as much got printed in American newspapers as the *New York Times*.¹¹³ As Walter Stahr in his book, *Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man* suggests, “Seward tried to recover some goodwill among Irish voters . . .” who had been angered by Johnson’s chastisement.¹¹⁴ Yet, many disappointed Fenians felt betrayed by Seward after the botched 1866 invasions. The pro-Fenian, New York-based *Irish Citizen* expressed that frustration years later when it wrote of Seward:

He is the man whose secret encouragement sent bands of Irish citizens over the Canada frontier in reliance upon whispered assurances that this Government would not interfere with their expedition—and who afterwards in his character as an English detective and police—officer, stopped and baffled them, turned back their supplies and left them disarmed and famished in the presence of the enemies.¹¹⁵

Ultimately, the Johnson Administration treated Fenians mildly. A few Fenians, including their two leaders, did get arrested; however, nearly all of them were quickly released. The American government also provided transportation out of Canada for Fenians and appealed to Canadian authorities to release those Fenians captured during the invasion.¹¹⁶ With the *Alabama* dispute still unresolved, the Johnson Administration could work up little outrage against these spirited but ultimately rather pitiful Irish assaults on British territory, even if those raids had been illegally initiated from U.S. soil. To the Administration and the American public at large, “nothing whatever ha[d] been

¹¹³ See for example, *New York Times*, July 27, 1866.

¹¹⁴ Stahr, *Seward*, 468.

¹¹⁵ *Irish Citizen*, October 24, 1869.

¹¹⁶ O’Grady, *How the Irish Became Americans*, 54.

accomplished by what they [the Fenians] had already given” in the botched raids, but at least the Fenians had managed to annoy the British.¹¹⁷ Moreover, some historians such as John MacDonald author of *Troubling Times in Canada*, believe that “[i]n view of the fact that he [Johnson] held back the issuance of his proclamation forbidding a breach of the Neutrality Act for *five full days after* the Raid had been made [proves] there was manifestly some understanding between President Johnson and the Fenian leaders . . .

”¹¹⁸

For its part, Britain grew concerned that other such attacks might prove more dangerous, especially if the United States continued to do little to stop them.¹¹⁹ Accordingly, Britain offered in late 1866 to arbitrate the bill that the United States had submitted for damages done by the *Alabama*.¹²⁰ However, Britain’s adamant refusal to admit its indirect recognition of the Confederacy and responsibility for the indirect damages created by the *Alabama* ended any opportunity for settlement. The diplomatic feud between Britain and the United States remained unresolved when Republican Ulysses S. Grant, the former commanding general of Union forces, became president in 1869.¹²¹

Ulysses S. Grant and the Fenians:

Grant had won a landslide electoral victory over Democrat Horatio Seymour in 1868, 214-80 in the Electoral College.¹²² He enjoyed huge popularity among Southerners

¹¹⁷ *New York Times*, May 15, 1866.

¹¹⁸ MacDonald, *Troubling Times in Canada*, Location 362 (Kindle Edition).

¹¹⁹ Smith, *American Diplomatic Experience*, 179.

¹²⁰ Smith, *American Diplomatic Experience*, 179.

¹²¹ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 254.

¹²² William Shade and Ballard Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2 (NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 441.

(who appreciated his humane policies while overseeing the post-Civil War military occupation), newly freed blacks, and of course Union veterans. Knowing that many of those soldiers were of Irish-American descent, the Republican Party in 1868 campaigned hard to appeal to that traditionally Democratic voting bloc.¹²³ The Party organized Irish Republican clubs and printed campaign posters on green paper adorned with shamrocks.¹²⁴ Some Irishmen made speeches for Grant and called upon Irish veterans to “rally ’round the flag” for their former commander.¹²⁵ Grant himself persuaded the editors of *The Irish Republic*, David Bell and Michael Scanlan, to move their headquarters from Chicago to New York to promote his candidacy in that key state.¹²⁶ According to the historian Carl Wittke, the Democratic *Irish People* also became pro-Grant during the campaign, albeit probably because of a bribe from the Republican Party.¹²⁷

To be sure, an Irish-American vote for Grant did not generally mean a new-found loyalty to the Republican Party. In reporting on Grant’s victory, papers like the *Irish American* pointedly criticized Republicans. “Before his term expires,” the editor of the *Irish American* predicted, “I have no doubt General Grant will find the party by which he has been elected as hostile as they have been to Mr. Johnson, but without the power to do as much mischief now.”¹²⁸ The Democratic-minded *Irish Citizen* continued to assert their belief that the Republican Party was the “Radical” political organization and even

¹²³ Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (NY: Russell and Russell, 1956), 172-173.

¹²⁴ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 172.

¹²⁵ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 172.

¹²⁶ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 172.

¹²⁷ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 172.

¹²⁸ *Irish American*, November 14, 1868.

accused New York Republican Governor Reuben Fenton of pardoning criminals so that they could vote for Grant.¹²⁹

President Grant shrewdly dispensed federal patronage jobs to Irish-American leaders. For example, Major James Haggerty, a Fenian, became consul in Glasgow, Scotland, even though the British refused to recognize him. General Patrick H. Jones became postmaster general of New York, and Michael Scanlan received a position in the Department of Internal Revenue.¹³⁰

However, Grant undermined his popularity among the Irish who had voted for him with his reaction to a third and last Fenian attempted invasion of Canada, in May 1870.¹³¹ The Civil War officer Captain John O'Neill led this attack, after William Roberts had relinquished his position.¹³² The Fenians forces moved toward Montreal from Vermont, but once again they met ignominious defeat.¹³³ Grant and his Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, reacted far more sternly to this latest Fenian escapade than had Johnson and Seward four years earlier.¹³⁴ On May 24 Grant issued the following proclamation:

Now therefore, I, Ulysses S. Grant, President of the United States, do hereby admonish all good citizens of the United States and all persons with the territory and jurisdiction of the United States against aiding, countenancing, abetting or taking part in such unlawful proceedings, and I do hereby warn all persons that by committing such illegal acts they will forfeit all right to the protection of the Government or to its interference in their behalf to rescue them from the consequences of their own acts; and I do hereby enjoin all officers in the service of the United States to employ

¹²⁹ *Irish Citizen*, November 7, 1868.

¹³⁰ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 173.

¹³¹ *New York Times*, May 25, 1870.

¹³² Meagher, *Columbia Guide to Irish-American History*, 251.

¹³³ *New York Times*, May 25, 1870.

¹³⁴ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 254.

all their lawful authority and power to prevent and defeat the aforesaid unlawful proceedings, and to arrest and bring to justice all persons who may be engaged therein.¹³⁵

In retrospect it seems clear that the Administration's desire finally to settle the *Alabama* dispute largely accounts for Grant's hostile reaction to the Fenians. Ultimately the two countries agreed to the 1871 Treaty of Washington, in which Britain apologized for the damages done by the Confederate raiders it had built and agreed to pay reparations for any direct (but not indirect) costs incurred by those losses.¹³⁶ For its part, America formally recognized the new "dominion" status of Canada.

In 1872 Grant won another landslide reelection over Horace Greeley, who years earlier had donated money for Irish Famine relief.¹³⁷ But Greeley never had a chance against the President. Probably the historian Carl Wittke best explains the electoral dynamics, insofar as the Irish were concerned, of that 1872 contest: "Grant's military record probably was his greatest asset with his Irish comrades-in-arms."¹³⁸ Absolutely nothing that Greeley might have done could have overcome that advantage enjoyed by his opponent.

The Beginning of the Gilded Age--Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, and Chester Arthur:

During the 1876 and 1880 presidential campaigns, both Republicans and Democrats made strong bids for the burgeoning Irish-American vote. After the Civil War

¹³⁵ Ulysses S. Grant, "By the President of the United States of America, A Proclamation," May 24, 1870. John Simon, ed. *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, vol. 20 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), 151.

¹³⁶ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 255.

¹³⁷ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 173.

¹³⁸ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 174.

Irish emigration to America averaged around 72,000 people per year; this figure dropped somewhat during the Panic of 1873, but then rose again in the late 1870s and early 1880s as the U.S. economy rebounded while Ireland's continued to decline.¹³⁹ "The annual average over the entire [1880s] decade was 65,751."¹⁴⁰ In 1876 Republicans worked to persuade Irish voters that their candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio, had no animus toward the Irish. This they had to do because Democrats were circulating rumors that early in his career Hayes had had "flirtations" with the Know-Nothing Party.¹⁴¹ Republicans also let it be known that Hayes did not believe in temperance, a movement abhorred by many Irish Americans.¹⁴² Indeed, Republicans sometimes let on to Irish audiences that Hayes often stopped for an "eye-opener" in a German saloon in Cincinnati.¹⁴³

To help garner further Irish-American support for their candidate, Republicans also referenced previous pro-tolerance speeches Hayes had made while serving as an Ohio Representative in the U.S. Congress. In August 1867 for example, Hayes had stated:

The bitter strifes between Christians and Jews, between Catholics and Protestants, between Englishmen and Irishmen, between aristocracy and the masses are only too familiar . . . [u]nder the partial and unjust laws of the Nations of the Old World . . . But under just and equal laws in the United States, Jews, Protestants, and Catholics, Englishmen and Irishmen, the former aristocrat and the masses of the people, dwell and mingle harmoniously together.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 347.

¹⁴⁰ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 347.

¹⁴¹ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 174.

¹⁴² Wittke, *Irish in America*, 174.

¹⁴³ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 174.

¹⁴⁴ Rutherford B. Hayes, "Speech of General R. B. Hayes Delivered at Lebanon, Ohio," August 5, 1867. J. Q. Howard, ed., *The Life, Public Services, and Select Speeches of Rutherford B. Hayes* (Cincinnati, OH: Robert Clarke & CO, 1876), Location 163 (Kindle Edition).

Hayes, Republicans argued, was a true American who promoted democracy for all and scorned the Old-World oppression of weaker peoples—a message sure to appeal to Irish Americans. The Republican efforts may possibly have made the difference. In one of the closest and most controversial elections in U.S. presidential history, Hayes barely prevailed over his opponent, Sam Tilden of New York, by the Electoral College count of 185-184.¹⁴⁵

When Hayes did not seek a second term, the Republicans in 1880 nominated James Garfield of Ohio, with Chester Arthur of New York as his running mate. During the campaign, Arthur made it clear he was of partly Scots-Irish extraction.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, in this campaign the Republicans cleverly used the Democrats' low-tariff stance to portray them as favoring Britain, which as the world's foremost exporting power at the time desired free-trade policies.¹⁴⁷ This active pursuit of Irish-American support by the party that traditionally had not appealed to this constituency underscores the powerful political force that the Irish had become--and would long continue to be. Garfield won over Winfield Scott Hancock 214-155 in the Electoral College.¹⁴⁸ Then after Garfield's assassination during his first year in office, Arthur became president. He soon had to deal with a domestic problem that had its roots in the ongoing Anglo-Irish discord.

In Ireland, Charles Stewart Parnell had become the leader of a group known as the Land League. Founded in 1879, the League was a legal institution that nonetheless inspired illegal acts—boycotts and acts of violence--in protest against British landlords

¹⁴⁵ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 478.

¹⁴⁶ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 174.

¹⁴⁷ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 174.

¹⁴⁸ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 498.

who had exploited their poor Irish tenants.¹⁴⁹ Many of the arms and explosives that the Land League used in its more aggressive operations had been obtained from Irish-American sources.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, some Irish Americans were even returning to their homeland to join the Land League.¹⁵¹ To counteract this group's efforts, the British Parliament in 1881 passed the Coercion Act, which empowered police to arrest not merely anyone thought to have committed a crime, but also anyone thought *likely* to commit a crime.¹⁵² Once arrested under such a charge, the prisoner could be held indefinitely without trial. In due course Parnell and many of his followers were arrested; those detained included some of the Irish-American citizens who had returned to Ireland to participate in the fight against Britain.¹⁵³

Their arrests sparked a fiercely negative outcry in Washington. Secretary of State James G. Blaine demanded that the British release the captured Americans, and his successor James Frelinghuysen did the same.¹⁵⁴ In April 1882 Frelinghuysen accused Britain of giving no "sufficient reason why an American citizen should remain incarcerated without accusation, without chance of trial, without opportunity for release."¹⁵⁵ The British refused to comply, and instead encouraged the U.S. government to redirect its anger toward the Irish-American newspapers that had been encouraging arms shipments to Ireland on behalf of the Land League.

¹⁴⁹ T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin, eds., *The Course of Irish History* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1967), 285, 286.

¹⁵⁰ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 138-139.

¹⁵¹ Justus D. Doenecke, *The Presidencies of James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1981), 70.

¹⁵² Doenecke, *Presidencies of Garfield and Arthur*, 70.

¹⁵³ Doenecke, *Presidencies of Garfield and Arthur*, 70.

¹⁵⁴ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 282.

¹⁵⁵ Doenecke, *Presidencies of Garfield and Arthur*, 138.

For a time, a crisis with Britain seemed imminent. However, two factors worked to calm the situation. One was a general realization that the Irish-American prisoners apprehended by British authorities were “shady characters” who had sought to use their U.S. citizenship as a shield while they violated British law. Even Blaine, previously a defender of all the captives, later rethought matters, after he concluded upon an examination of the evidence that one of the captive Americans was a “pestiferous fellow” who had falsified his passport and had a criminal past.¹⁵⁶ Violence committed by the Irish nationalists also softened America’s anger at the British. Reports of bombs exploding in British train stations and in the House of Commons dissuaded many Americans from supporting the Irish revolutionaries.¹⁵⁷ For his part, President Arthur took active measures to stop the export of arms to Ireland from America. In return, the British released some of their American captives. This seemed a fair compromise to many Americans, who were ultimately unwilling to risk an all-out conflict with Britain merely to assist the Irish.¹⁵⁸

Arthur also interacted with the Irish on the domestic front. Soon after assuming the presidency, he worked directly with Alexander Sullivan, the first president of the Irish National League in the United States and the head of the secret nationalist group, Clan na Gael.¹⁵⁹ The Irish National League, through Sullivan, complained to Arthur about two incidents that occurred in the 1880s. The first was the purchase of American lands by British speculator-investors. Sullivan proposed that Arthur and the U.S. government

¹⁵⁶ Doenecke, *Presidencies of Garfield and Arthur*, 70.

¹⁵⁷ Doenecke, *Presidencies of Garfield and Arthur*, 138.

¹⁵⁸ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 282.

¹⁵⁹ Meagher, *Columbia Guide to Irish-American History*, 466.

restrict such sales of American land to foreigners. Sullivan also sought to halt the admission of destitute Irish into the United States.¹⁶⁰ This problem intensified after the British government in 1882 passed the Arrears of Rent Act, which financially facilitated the emigration of very poor Irish peasants.¹⁶¹ Many established Irish Americans did not want these new arrivals inasmuch as they regarded their departure from Ireland a ploy by the British government to discard the very Irish paupers that its policies had created.¹⁶² In April 1883 nearly 1,200 Irish Americans held a convention in Philadelphia and passed a resolution rejecting Britain's attempts to flood America with the wretched poor from their native land of Ireland.¹⁶³ Armed with this resolution, Sullivan and several other prominent Irish Americans visited President Arthur in June 1883, to implore him to restrict immigration. In his request Sullivan asked Arthur, "Shall a foreign Government be permitted to reduce by law and force to pauperism large numbers of those from whom it claims allegiance and to whom it owes the protection due subjects, and then compel the Republic of the United States to receive and provide for them?"¹⁶⁴ After this meeting, Arthur called upon officials to turn away poor Irish immigrants under the powers provided by the Immigration Act of 1882.

In responding affirmatively to Sullivan's request, Arthur enhanced, by rather ironic means, his popularity among some Irish Americans. Health considerations, however, led him to decide not to seek a second term. Republicans in 1884 resolved to

¹⁶⁰ Meagher, *Columbia Guide to Irish-American History*, 156.

¹⁶¹ *New York Times*, August 1, 1882.

¹⁶² *New York Times*, June 24, 1882.

¹⁶³ *New York Times*, June 24, 1882. Also, Meagher, *A Columbia Guide to Irish-American History*, 157.

¹⁶⁴ *New York Times*, June 24, 1882.

strengthen further their standing with Irish Americans. The candidate they chose that year, James G. Blaine of Maine, seemed a perfect fit for that strategy.

The Power of Irish Americans in Gilded Age Presidential Politics--The 1884 and 1888 Elections:

Both the 1884 and 1888 presidential elections turned on the Irish-American vote. In each campaign Irish Americans asked themselves whether they should continue to back the Democratic Party, which after all had long provided a more welcoming environment than had the Republicans, whose ranks included many anti-Catholic, anti-Irish voters. Nevertheless, 1884 and 1888 proved that the Irish were willing to consider voting Republican if that Party's candidate appealed to them, or if the Democratic nominee did not. How the Irish voted was significant, because according to the 1880 Census some 1,855,000 Irish-born immigrants lived in the United States, with 499,455 of them residing in New York State.¹⁶⁵ Thus the Irish vote easily could tip the balance in New York, and the verdict in that Electoral-rich state could determine the national election.

In 1884 the Irish vote seemed heavily stacked, for once, in the Republicans' favor. Their party's Presidential nominee, former Secretary of State Blaine, had been an outspoken supporter of Irish independence and a well-known defender of the Irish Land League.¹⁶⁶ He also had a history of being anti-British, "ever ready to twist the lion's tail," and Irish Americans remembered and appreciated his having criticized the British

¹⁶⁵ Allan Nevins, *Grover Cleveland a Study in Courage* (NY: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1938), 170.

¹⁶⁶ Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 170.

over the Coercion Act a few years earlier.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, Blaine had Irish-Catholic roots: his mother had been an Irish Catholic and his sister was the mother-superior of a Catholic convent. Blaine was Scots-Irish Presbyterian because of his parents' decision to raise their sons Protestant like the father, and their daughters Catholic like the mother.¹⁶⁸ In keeping with Republican economic doctrine, Blaine advocated a high tariff in furtherance "of the principle of protection to American labor and to American capital."¹⁶⁹ Many Irish Americans agreed with such a stance, purely on the assumptions that it would reduce trade between the United States and Britain and give work to American instead of British laborers.¹⁷⁰ Irish Americans had long backed the Democrats in spite of their disapproval of its traditional low-tariff policy, but in 1884 the tariff question just seemed one more reason for Irish Americans to switch sides and vote for a man they liked, Republican nominee Blaine.¹⁷¹

Worse yet, it seemed, for the Democrats in 1884, their nominee Grover Cleveland of New York was no friend of the Irish. As Mayor of Buffalo in 1882 and then as Governor of New York from 1883 until his ascension to the Presidency, Cleveland regularly battled Tammany Hall and its leader, the Irishman "Honest" John Kelly.¹⁷² As governor, Cleveland opposed the nomination of a Tammany favorite, Thomas F.

¹⁶⁷ Doenecke, *Garfield and Arthur*, 70.

¹⁶⁸ *Irish World*, November 1, 1884. Also, Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 170.

¹⁶⁹ James G. Blaine to the Honorable John B. Henderson and others of the Committee, etc., etc., "Letter of Acceptance," July 15, 1884. Walter S. Vail, ed., *The Words of James G. Blaine on the Issues of the Day: Embracing Selections from his Speeches, Letters, and Public Writings: Also an Account of his Nomination to the Presidency, His Letter of Acceptance, a list of the Delegates to the National Republican* (Boston: Harvard University Library, 1981), 275.

¹⁷⁰ *Irish World*, October 18, November 1, 1884. Also, Thomas Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism, 1870-1890* (Philadelphia: T.B. Lippincott, 1966), 140.

¹⁷¹ *Irish People*, September 14, 1867.

¹⁷² Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 140.

O'Grady, for a seat in the New York State Senate.¹⁷³ Cleveland was also said to have both an anti-Catholic and anti-Irish streak, characteristics that the Irish, particularly in New York, often referenced in their attacks on Cleveland.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, one Brooklyn Irishman called Cleveland "as brutal an anti-labor tyrant as any of the blood-sucking landlords of Ireland" because of his low-tariff stance.¹⁷⁵ Irish Americans, especially those associated with Tammany Hall, had openly opposed the prospects of Cleveland as the Democratic presidential nominee in 1884. At the July Democratic National Convention, O'Grady responded virulently to Cleveland supporter General Edward Bragg of Wisconsin who had implicitly criticized Tammany Hall by lauding the men of Wisconsin who "love Cleveland for his character, but . . . love him also for the enemies he has made." To the cheers of the Tammany Democrats around him, O'Grady shouted, "On behalf of his enemies, I reciprocate that sentiment."¹⁷⁶ But Cleveland came away with the nomination anyway, and so it appeared that he would need to overcome large numbers of Irish defections in order to prevail in the general election.

Both Blaine and Cleveland had members of their respective parties bolt upon their respective nominations for president. A number of well-off Protestant Republicans and former Know-Nothings chafed at the overtures Blaine was making to the Irish and to Catholics. One Republican newspaper announced that in Blaine's nomination it saw the "Pope's toe moving toward the presidential mahogany."¹⁷⁷ On the Democratic end, Irish leaders emphatically declined to support Cleveland. Influential New York Irish-

¹⁷³ Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 140.

¹⁷⁴ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 175.

¹⁷⁵ Mark Summers, *Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion: The Making of a President, 1884* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 211.

¹⁷⁶ Nevins, *Cleveland*, 153.

¹⁷⁷ Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 140-141.

American newspaper editors like Patrick Ford of the *Irish World* and Clan na Gael member, John Devoy, of the *Irish Nation* endorsed Blaine.¹⁷⁸ Ford went as far to say that “It has been truthfully declared that ‘James G. Blaine is a better Democrat than Grover Cleveland.’”¹⁷⁹ He also accused the Democrats of getting money from Britain to promote a low tariff and help free trade.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, the *Irish World* encouraged its ethnic brethren to vote Republican in 1884 and thereby break the Irish “bondage to the sham Democracy.”¹⁸¹ The newspaper asked its readers, “Who and what is Grover Cleveland that citizens of Irish blood should support him?”¹⁸² Other Democratic defectors to Blaine included Colonel Richard O’Sullivan, a Fenian veteran; Dr. William Carroll, one of the original leaders of the Clan na Gael; and Patrick Egan, a Fenian and active Land Leaguer who had come to the United States in 1883.¹⁸³ Additional well-known Irish Americans like businessman John Jay O’Brien and Fenian Edward O’Meagher Condon also switched to Blaine. Alexander Sullivan stepped down as president of the Irish National League to work for the Blaine campaign.¹⁸⁴ Then, Patrick Egan succeeded Sullivan and used his position to become an active Blaine spokesperson, calling Cleveland an “enemy of every just right of the toiling millions” and a “pet candidate of . . . the English press.”¹⁸⁵ The *Irish World* substantiated Egan’s attacks by cleverly printing headlines and statements from popular London newspapers endorsing Cleveland. The *London Telegraph* wrote, “HURRAH FOR CLEVELAND! *The Irish-American citizens’ hatred*

¹⁷⁸ See for example *Irish World*, November 8, 1884.

¹⁷⁹ *Irish World*, October 25, 1884.

¹⁸⁰ *Irish World*, October 25, 1884.

¹⁸¹ *Irish World*, November 1, 1884.

¹⁸² *Irish World*, November 1, 1884.

¹⁸³ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 175.

¹⁸⁴ Summers, *Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion*, 212.

¹⁸⁵ Summers, *Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion*, 212.

of Cleveland is the best certificate obtainable for his election.” The *London Times* referred to Cleveland as “the best choice possible,” while the *London Standard* stated, “A more satisfactory result than the choice of Cleveland could hardly be desired.”¹⁸⁶ Clearly, London editors provided Irish Americans all the proof they needed that Cleveland was Britain’s candidate.

What was most ominous of all for Cleveland’s prospects was that many Tammany Hall men followed their leader Kelly’s example and refused to back him, with many throwing their all-out support to Blaine. On July 28, 1884, Irish-American independents held a Blaine rally in New York City. Prominent members of Tammany Hall took the platform to boost Blaine and denounce Cleveland. Others spoke, as well; Judge John Brennan of Iowa, for example, said at the rally, “If ever I go to heaven and met them [Cleveland supporters] there, I hope God will let me camp on the outside.”¹⁸⁷ To many Irish Americans, Cleveland was their political enemy, anti-Catholic and, as a low-tariff advocate, a “standard-bearer of British Free Trade.”¹⁸⁸ With him as president, Irish-American leaders claimed that Irish-American laborers would surely suffer as the wealthy in Britain got richer from low-tariff exports to the United States.¹⁸⁹

To be sure, the long-standing Irish-American mistrust of the Republican Party did not disappear simply because of their admiration for Blaine. As Mark Summers writes in his book *Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion: The Making of a President, 1884*, “Anyone who imagined a united Irish American vote for the Republicans . . . was deluding himself

¹⁸⁶ *Irish World*, July 12, 1884.

¹⁸⁷ Nevins, *Cleveland*, 170.

¹⁸⁸ Summers, *Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion*, 214.

¹⁸⁹ *Irish World*, November 1, 1884.

. . . .”¹⁹⁰ Summers continues, “Blaine could not erase memories of the long anti-Catholic tradition of his party”¹⁹¹ Still, sufficient numbers of Irish Americans seemed ready to follow the advice of many of their leaders and vote for Blaine to enable him to win New York State and thus the presidency.

But Blaine did not win. An anti-Irish, anti-Catholic remark made by a speaker at a New York rally for Blaine during the last week of the campaign cost him the election. At this event, a Presbyterian minister named Samuel D. Burchard crassly referred to the Democratic Party as the party of “Rum, Romanism and Rebellion.”¹⁹² Blaine, who was in attendance, did not disavow the slur—whether because he did not hear it, failed to perceive its importance, or simply froze at a critical moment will never be known with certainty. Shrewd Democratic operatives pounced, printing handbills with the quote and distributing them to thousands of Irish and other Catholic voters. As one Democrat excitedly exclaimed, “This sentence must be in every daily newspaper in the country . . . no matter how, no matter what it cost . . . If anything will elect Cleveland, these words will do it.”¹⁹³ The ever-astute *New York Times* agreed. On November 1, 1884, it wrote, “Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion are three words that will cost the Republican Party all of the Irish votes it would have received had not these words been used by the spokesperson for the ministers who called on Mr. Blaine in New York.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Summers, *Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion*, 216.

¹⁹¹ Summers, *Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion*, 216.

¹⁹² Wittke, *Irish in America*, 176.

¹⁹³ H. Wayne Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877-1896* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 227-228.

¹⁹⁴ *New York Times*, November 1, 1884.

The *Times* was right. Until Burchard uttered those fateful and infamous words, “it seemed almost certain,” the historian Allan Nevins has written, “that the covert opposition of Tammany would defeat the Democratic ticket in New York and hence the nation.”¹⁹⁵ But Burchard’s one-sentence alliterative epithet caused a last-minute reversal in attitudes among resentful Irish Americans, helped along by the many Catholic clergymen who denounced Blaine from their pulpits the Sunday before Election Day. In the end, Blaine lost New York State to Cleveland by a mere 1,077 popular votes, and consequently Cleveland prevailed in the Electoral College, 219-182.¹⁹⁶ Although NY Irish-American leaders did their best to remain silent on the Burchard matter and to remind Irish-American voters that nothing should ever persuade them to vote for Cleveland, the Irish populace in New York City had spoken wrathfully: they used their votes to punish a candidate who had allowed a slight against them to pass unanswered at his own rally.¹⁹⁷ Ironically, the beneficiary of their vengeance was perhaps the Democratic politician that Irish Americans most disliked, Grover Cleveland. The *Irish World* later would write of the election, “In 1884 it was forced into a campaign of personalities by the venomous onslaught upon Mr. Blaine which served as a cover for the Free Traders to withdraw from the [Republican] Party.”¹⁹⁸

The next presidential election would prove to be almost as dramatic as its predecessor’s. The Democrats renominated Cleveland, who in his nearly four-year tenure had done little to win over Irish Americans. Indeed, during the Democratic

¹⁹⁵ Alan Nevins, ed. *Letters of Grover Cleveland* (NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933), 34.

¹⁹⁶ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, p. 518.

¹⁹⁷ See for example *Irish World*, November 1, 1884.

¹⁹⁸ *Irish World*, November 10, 1888.

National Convention, the New York Representative and Tammany's "silver-tongued orator," William Bourke Cockran, expressed the Irish-American disgust with the President when he begged the delegates to nominate anyone but Cleveland. "Give us any citizen in this United States who is a Democrat," Cockran implored. "Give us some man who will not raise up against us any active hostile force within our own ranks."¹⁹⁹ But most of the delegates ignored Cockran's plea, and Cleveland won renomination.²⁰⁰ This time the Republicans nominated Benjamin Harrison of Indiana, who in his years in politics had neither conspicuously attracted nor repelled the Irish-American voting bloc. Once again, however, it would be that vote that would do much to decide the contest.²⁰¹

As it happened, the tariff proved to be the main issue in the 1888 presidential contest.²⁰² Cleveland's continued advocacy of a low tariff, which he failed to persuade Congress to enact, reinforced Irish-American opinion that he served as a promoter of "the evil effects of British free trade" on American labor.²⁰³ Blaine, still a great favorite among his Party's faithful, made a number of speeches on Harrison's behalf, always pressing the Republicans' campaign slogan, "America for Americans—No Free Trade."²⁰⁴ At a "monster Irish Protectionist" rally in New York City's Madison Square Garden on October 25, more than 10,000 "Irish Protectionists"--obviously having forgiven if not forgotten 1884--came out to hear Blaine stump for Harrison.²⁰⁵ "No pen

¹⁹⁹ Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 420.

²⁰⁰ Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 420.

²⁰¹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 525-527.

²⁰² Charles C. Campbell, "The Dismissal of Lord Sackville" *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 44:4 (March 1958), 636

²⁰³ *Irish World*, November 3, 1888.

²⁰⁴ Edward Crapol, *James G. Blaine: Architect of Empire* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), 108.

²⁰⁵ *Irish World*, November 3, 1888.

can describe,” one reporter in attendance admitted, “the madness with which the uncrowned king was greeted.”²⁰⁶ At this rally, the “[u]n-American course of the Administration [was] unmasked” and Harrison became the candidate supportive of the “Irish effort.”²⁰⁷

But Cleveland found a means of at least temporarily winning back Irish support, however grudgingly extended. For many years there had been unresolved disputes over fishing-rights in waters shared by the United States and neighboring Canada, now a dominion of Britain. The Bayard-Chamberlain Treaty, signed in February 1888, attempted to finally resolve these points of contention. The treaty, which Cleveland signed and sent to the U.S. Senate for ratification, included some not-unreasonable concessions, such as lower taxes on Canadian imports.²⁰⁸ This sufficed for the Republican-controlled Senate to reject the treaty some two-and-a-half months before the election. In so doing, Republicans hoped to put Cleveland in the precarious position of defending the treaty’s proposed American concessions to Canada, something bound to further antagonize Irish-American voters against the president.²⁰⁹

But Cleveland did not fall into the Republican trap. He and his advisors had realized, of course, that the Republicans might turn down the treaty, and so even before this happened Navy Secretary William C. Whitney began devising a counter-strategy. “I want him,” Whitney wrote of the President, “to take the aggressive on the fishing

²⁰⁶ Charles Calhoun, *Minority Victory: Gilded Age Politics and the Front Porch Campaign of 1888* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 136.

²⁰⁷ *Irish World*, November 3, 1888.

²⁰⁸ Calhoun, *Minority Victory*, 142.

²⁰⁹ Calhoun, *Minority Victory*, 142.

question and after they [Republican Senators] reject the treaty, retaliate. I am sick of all this talk about an ‘*English*’ party.”²¹⁰

Cleveland took Whitney’s sound advice. Two days after the Senate vote of rejection, he sent a strongly worded note to Congress in which he angrily denounced Canada for having treated American fishermen “in a manner inexcusably harsh and oppressive.”²¹¹ He followed this up with a request that Congress grant him broad executive powers that would enable him to uphold “the honor and dignity of our country and the protection and preservation of the rights and interests of all our people” as they related to the ongoing fishing-rights disputes with Canada.²¹²

Naturally Cleveland knew that, while the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives would comply with his request, the Republican Senate would refuse to do so. This of course was exactly what he wanted. Once the Senate declined to give him the authority he sought, Cleveland would appear aggressively anti-British to Irish voters while Senate Republicans would seem passive and weak when it came to dealing with Britain.

The Senate acted just as Cleveland and Whitney had hoped; the Irish-American community also reacted as expected, and consequently some in that camp who had criticized Cleveland for years now looked upon the President with new favor. James Mooney, former president of the Irish National League, predicted that Cleveland’s assertive stance would “have a good effect among all friends of Ireland and haters of

²¹⁰ Calhoun, *Minority Victory*, 142.

²¹¹ Calhoun, *Minority Victory*, 143.

²¹² Calhoun, *Minority Victory*, 143.

England.”²¹³ Many Americans “bear[ing] Irish names” sent congratulatory letters to Cleveland, thanking him for showing laudable moxie in his dealings with Britain.²¹⁴ Even many members of Tammany Hall, long a bastion of anti-Cleveland sentiment, sent congratulatory telegraph messages to the President.²¹⁵ Charles A. Dana of the *New York Sun*, well-known for his past attacks on Cleveland, now praised him for his “good patriotism and good politics.”²¹⁶ One Democrat from Cleveland’s home town of Buffalo echoed the thoughts of many Democrats when he stated that the President’s response had been “vigorously American,” as it “repudiates the calumnies that your administration is in sympathy with England.”²¹⁷ To many, it seemed as though Cleveland had overcome his difficulty with the important Irish vote, which boded very well for his reelection chances.

But then, a nefarious but brilliant political trick by an obscure Republican intriguer re-inflamed Irish-American opinion against Cleveland. It came about when a California Republican by the name of George Osgoodby devised a plan to persuade the American public, particularly Irish Americans, that Cleveland, for all his post-treaty bombast, remained as pro-British as ever.²¹⁸ On September 4, 1888, Osgoodby, posing as a recently naturalized American of British birth named Pomonan Charles Murchison, wrote a letter to the British Minister to America, Sir Lionel Sackville-West, asking if he

²¹³ Calhoun, *Minority Victory*, 143.

²¹⁴ Nevins, *Cleveland*, 428.

²¹⁵ Nevins, *Cleveland*, 428.

²¹⁶ Calhoun, *Minority Victory*, 143.

²¹⁷ Calhoun, *Minority Victory*, 143.

²¹⁸ *New York Times*, January 8, 1889.

should vote for Cleveland given the President's recent hostility toward Canada.²¹⁹

"Murchison" queried:

With the right to vote for President in November, I am unable to understand for whom I shall cast my ballot, when but one month ago I was sure Mr. Cleveland was the man. If Mr. Cleveland is pursuing a new policy toward Canada, temporarily only, and for the sake of obtaining popularity and a continuation of his office four years more, but intends to cease his policy when his reelection is secured in November, and again favor England's interest, then I should have no further doubts, but go forward and vote for him . . . Mr. Harrison is a high-tariff man, a believer on the American side of all questions, and undoubtedly an enemy to British interests generally . . . As you are the fountainhead of knowledge on the question, and know whether Mr. Cleveland's present policy is temporary only, whether he will, as he secures another term of four years in the Presidency, suspend it for one of friendship and free trade, I apply to you privately and confidentially for information which shall in turn be treated as entirely secret . . . As I before observed, we know not what to do, but look for more light on a mysterious subject, which the sooner it come will better serve true Englishmen in casting their votes.²²⁰

Displaying incredible naiveté, Sackville-West never questioned the source of the letter, and on September 13 candidly replied:

You are probably aware that any political party which openly favored the Mother Country at the present moment would lose popularity, and that the party in power is fully aware of this fact. That party, however, is, I believe, still desirous of maintaining friendly relations with Great Britain, and is still as desirous of settling all the questions with Canada which have been unfortunately reopened since the retraction of the treaty by the Republican majority in the Senate and the President's message to which you allude. All allowance must therefore be made for the political situation as regards the Presidential election thus created. It is, however, plainly impossible to predict the course which President Cleveland may pursue in the matter of retaliation should he be elected, but there is every reason to believe that while upholding the position he has taken, he will manifest a spirit of conciliation in dealing with the question involved in this message.²²¹

²¹⁹ See T.C. Hinkley, "George Osgoodby and the Murchison Letter" *Pacific Historical Review*, 27:4 (Nov., 1958), 359-370.

²²⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1888. Also, Hinkley, "George Osgoodby," 360.

²²¹ *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1888. Also, Hinkley, "George Osgoodby," 361.

In other words, Murchison-Osgoodby should overlook Cleveland's tactically necessary political posturing, and go ahead and vote for him anyway. Historians never have found proof that Murchison-Osgoodby was employed by the Republican Party, but nonetheless, he had aided the Party's cause, through means of deceit, by re-arousing Irish-American ire against Cleveland.²²² Osgoodby gave Sackville-West's letter to the press, and in its October 23 edition the pro-Republican *Los Angeles Times* published both Osgoodby's and Sackville-West's letters under the headline, "The Anglo-Democratic Alliance."²²³ Within 24 hours newspapers across the country ran the story, a mere two weeks before the election. The *Irish World* asked its readers, "Shall we vote as Grover Cleveland and Lord Sackville request, or shall we vote for the American system, the American flag, and the principle of protection which has brought unrivalled prosperity to the American people?"²²⁴ In a later issue, the *Irish World* surmised that Cleveland and the British government must have been in cahoots all along, considering how quickly and unsuspectingly Sackville had received and responded to Murchison's query.²²⁵ Ecstatic, re-energized Republicans distributed thousands of copies of Sackville-West's indiscreet letter, particularly targeting Irish Americans in New York City. Republicans had no cause to be disappointed in the reaction to the letter in those quarters. Blaine reported to Harrison that Sackville-West's remarks were "having a wonderful effect on the Irish here and proves more at the dash of a sentence than we could by argument during the whole campaign."²²⁶

²²² Hinckley, "George Osgoodby," 363.

²²³ Campbell, "The Dismissal of Lord Sackville," 636.

²²⁴ *Irish World*, November 3, 1888.

²²⁵ *Irish World*, November 10, 1888.

²²⁶ Calhoun, *Minority Victory*, 161.

Desperate to defuse the controversy, President Cleveland swiftly disavowed Sackville-West's comments. Then, on October 26 Secretary of State Thomas Bayard, at Cleveland's directive, cabled Sackville-West that his services in America were no longer needed. Through these measures, Cleveland could only hope that the Irish-American leaders supporting him would continue "doing good work" on his behalf, and that Irish-American voters would not be moved by this uproar to switch to Harrison.²²⁷

But the damage to the President's campaign had been done. Harrison won the election with 233 electoral votes to Cleveland's 168, even though the President carried the popular vote nationally. Harrison prevailed in all-important New York State, with 650,338 votes to Cleveland's 635,965.²²⁸ Undoubtedly, various factors contributed to Cleveland's narrow defeat; that said, no one can deny that the infamous "Murchison Letter" ranks among those causative factors Sackville-West's foolish letter greatly angered Irish Americans, as it seemingly confirmed their worst suspicions about Cleveland. Just as in 1884, there had been a last-minute reversal of Irish-American opinion, only this time in a manner hurtful to the Democrats.

The 1892 Election and the Venezuelan Crisis:

The 1892 presidential campaign was a rematch between Harrison and Cleveland. Once more, the election centered on the tariff issue. Republicans reminded the Irish and other ethnic voters that under Harrison the McKinley Tariff, the highest-ever in U.S. history, had been enacted. In his September 3 letter accepting renomination, Harrison lauded the McKinley Tariff as a measure disliked by European leaders--especially the

²²⁷ Calhoun, *Minority Victory*, 161.

²²⁸ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 536.

British, because they regarded it as a “serious threat to a trade supremacy they have long enjoyed.”²²⁹ For his part Cleveland once again advocated tariff reduction, which in his acceptance letter he described as demonstrating “a steady championship” of ordinary people’s “rights.”²³⁰

Both sides again sought Irish-American backing. At their respective national conventions, each party supported the fight for Home Rule being waged in Ireland by ardent nationalists who wanted to dissolve the Act of Union and establish Irish self-governance over domestic issues. Beyond that, Republicans organized two large Irish-American Republican groups, The Irish-American Protective Tariff League and the Irish-American Republican League.²³¹ Meanwhile, the Democrats organized their own Irish-American groups, most notably the Irish-American Democratic Union in New York City.²³²

Blaine, the old warhorse and once more the Irish Americans’ favorite Republican, delivered only one campaign speech, in which he astutely linked the tariff question to the issue of Irish Independence. By keeping the tariff high, Blaine argued, America effectively weakened Britain, thus making Ireland’s achievement of independence correspondingly more likely. Republican managers viewed Blaine’s contribution as the “greatest thing in the campaign.”²³³ To further help with this important constituency, Patrick Egan, a prominent Irish-American figure whom President Harrison had appointed Minister to Chile, came home during the last weeks of the campaign to stump for the

²²⁹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 554.

²³⁰ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 556.

²³¹ George Harmon Knoles, *The Presidential Campaign and Election of 1892* (NY: AMS Press, 1971), 127.

²³² *New York Times*, October 3, 1892.

²³³ Harmon, *Election of 1892*, 146.

President.²³⁴ But this time Cleveland won, getting 277 Electoral College votes to Harrison's 145. Thus Cleveland became the only president to serve two non-consecutive terms.

Cleveland's second term soon got engulfed by the Panic of 1893, the worst economic downturn the country had suffered to date. One incident, however, gave Irish Americans reason to cheer for Cleveland, and again it happened when he acted with belligerence toward Britain. This came during the Venezuela Crisis of 1895, which involved a border dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana.²³⁵ Prompted by Cleveland, Secretary of State Richard Olney sent a harshly worded letter to Lord Salisbury of the Foreign Office in Great Britain, in which Olney accused Britain of violating the 1820 Monroe Doctrine, which prohibited Europe from acquiring new colonial territory in the Americas.²³⁶ When Lord Salisbury predictably scoffed at Olney's assertion, Cleveland asked Congress to create a special commission to determine whether war was necessary to settle this dispute.²³⁷ Irish Americans hailed Cleveland's bravado against imperialist Britain, and Irish-American newspapers celebrated that finally through Cleveland, "America [was] working God's righteousness in crying halt to England."²³⁸ The Irish in Ireland also commended Cleveland's aggressiveness. As reprinted in the *New York Times*, the *Dublin Freeman's Journal* said of Cleveland, "there is no going behind the unequivocal pronouncement in which he contemptuously brushes

²³⁴ *New York Times*, October 5, 1892.

²³⁵ Charles Tansill, *America and the Fight for Irish Freedom: 1866-1922* (NY: The Devin-Adair Co., 1957), 111.

²³⁶ Grover Cleveland to E.C. Benedict, February 3, 1895. Nevins, ed., *Letters of Grover Cleveland*, 376. Also, *New York Times*, December 4, 1895.

²³⁷ Nevins, ed., *Letters of Grover Cleveland*, 376.

²³⁸ *Irish World*, December 28, 1895.

aside Lord Salisbury's quibbles."²³⁹ Less than a month later, the *Irish World* reported that there of course existed "Irish sympathy in the Venezuelan Matter," and the "one reason is obvious—England has been always against Ireland."²⁴⁰ Some Irish-American leaders even urged Cleveland to go to war against Britain, although most assumed that he would decline to take so drastic a step. The editors of the *Irish World*, for example, lamented, "Grover Cleveland means to do all his fighting with his mouth."²⁴¹ But this was a rather extreme reaction; like the rest of the country, most Irish Americans wanted Britain to be humbled without America's resorting to war. As it happened, Britain, alarmed by all the American clamor, backed down and agreed to arbitration of the boundary dispute with Venezuela.²⁴² A crisis had been averted, and the American people, especially Irish Americans, celebrated Britain's diplomatic defeat.²⁴³

Conclusion:

Irish-American influence in American presidential politics grew significantly during the Third Party System. This came about despite the dominance during that time of the Republican Party, which had a pronounced nativist streak within its ranks. Many Irish Americans fought for the Republican Commander-in-Chief Lincoln during the Civil War, even though as a voting group Irish Americans, soldiers not included, did not support Lincoln in either 1860 or 1864. When the war ended, nationalist-minded Irish Americans known as the Fenians looked to liberate Ireland via a Canadian invasion

²³⁹ *New York Times*, December 19, 1895.

²⁴⁰ *Irish World*, January 11, 1896.

²⁴¹ David Noel Doyle, *Irish Americans, Native Rights, and National Empires: The Structures, Divisions, and Attitudes of the Catholic Minority in the Decade of Expansion, 1890-1907* (NY: Arno Press, 1976), 111.

²⁴² Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 308.

²⁴³ Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 481.

launched from U.S. territory. Both Presidents Johnson and Grant criticized the Fenians, but their measured responses reflected their irritation with Britain as well as their desire not to unduly provoke the wrath of the Irish-American electorate. Hayes, Garfield, and Arthur all made campaign appeals to Irish voters, a sure sign that the Republican Party had come to recognize the political potency of that growing constituency. Indeed, the potential of that bloc to decide elections became quite clear in 1884 and 1888, as Irish Americans proved that they were not monolithically Democratic, but would consider voting Republican if that Party offered a compelling candidate or if the Democrats somehow offended Irish Americans. Above all else, the Third Party System demonstrated the lasting and growing strength of Irish Americans in presidential politics. Irish Americans still may have been a somewhat marginalized group in American society, but they had strength in numbers and, as such, could determine presidential elections and policies.

The politics of the Third Party System had been dominated by domestic issues. The decades to come, however, would thrust America onto the global sphere. Irish American opinion about America's role in world affairs often turned on how Britain was involved in these events—and on how closely U.S. policies and actions seemed to emulate the behavior of the deeply despised British.

Chapter 5: Imperialism, World War I, and the 1920s (1896-1928)

The years leading up to the turn of the century were times of great change for both the United States and Irish Americans. During the 1896 election, in unprecedented fashion the Republican and Democratic parties swapped their base constituencies. Only Southerners and Irish Americans remained resolutely loyal to the Democratic Party.¹ In 1898 the United States emerged from the Spanish-American War as an imperialist world power. Many Irish Americans looked askance at that development, as it appeared that the United States was beginning to emulate the empire-building ways of their old oppressor Britain. In 1914 Americans turned their attention to the Great War that suddenly engulfed Europe in the summer of that year; many Irish Americans could not bring themselves to root for an English victory, or support a U.S. alliance with the British. Yet, in 1917 the United States entered the conflict in league with Britain, but also as a champion, President Woodrow Wilson pledged, of self-determination for all peoples. On both sides of the Atlantic, Irish men and women hoped that this presidential guarantee would at long last bring independence to Eire. Victory came, but great disappointment and frustration for the Irish followed, when Wilson at the Paris peace talks agreed to the preservation of the British Empire. For this, Irish Americans punished the Democratic Party in the 1920 election. Eight years later, however, Catholic Irish Americans would finally see one of their own, Democrat Al Smith of New York, nominated by a major party. But to the great chagrin of Irish America Smith suffered a crushing defeat in what would prove to be the last presidential election of the Fourth Party System.

¹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 565.

The 1896 Election:

Of all the “critical elections” in U.S. Presidential history, the 1896 contest is the least well-known.² During the Third Party System, Republicans garnered much support in the small towns and farm regions outside the South, while Democrats enjoyed a monopoly in Dixie and did well in the cities, particularly among immigrant groups like the Irish and Germans. In 1896 this pattern to a large extent reversed itself, except for the continuing Democratic hold on the solid South and the Irish vote.³ Otherwise, the two parties’ switched their base-regions of support, with Democrats becoming stronger in the rural areas, while Republicans made big gains in the growing cities.⁴ This created the Fourth Party System, whose initial election pitted Republican William McKinley of Ohio against Democrat William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska--both of whom parenthetically were of Scots-Irish descent.⁵ Bryan’s rural roots and endorsement of the “free coinage of silver,” a stratagem for currency inflation proposed as a means of easing the financial woes of debtors, won him a passionate following among farm folk.⁶ His opponent McKinley enjoyed the advantage of widespread voter disillusionment with the Democrats, owing to the ongoing “Panic of 1893” that many blamed on Democratic President Grover Cleveland.⁷ Beyond that, McKinley’s call for “sound money” and a high tariff, along with his sincere attempt to downplay the Republican’s nativist leanings,

² Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 521.

³ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 565.

⁴ Paul Glad, *McKinley, Bryan, and the People* (NY: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1964), 172.

⁵ Whitney, *The American Presidents*, 213.

⁶ Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 496.

⁷ Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 489.

appealed both to the business community and to huge numbers of conservative urban ethnic voters.⁸

Nonetheless most Irish Americans remained with the Democratic Party in 1896 despite McKinley's well-run campaign and welcoming platform.⁹ For the most part, the historic ties binding the Irish Americans to the Democratic Party held firm. To help ensure as much, Democratic operatives assiduously courted the Irish vote in 1896. Political scientists John Wanat and Karek Burke point out in their article, "Estimating the Degree of Mobilization and Conversion in the 1890s," that the Democratic Party focused its 1896 mobilization efforts on the "Irish-dominated cities."¹⁰ Beyond that, McKinley presented himself as a conventionally Republican pro-business candidate, which made it all the easier for the unskilled-Irish-American laboring class to remain in the Democratic camp and back Bryan.¹¹

There were exceptions, of course. Patrick Ford, editor of the *Irish World*, the preeminent Irish-American newspaper at the time, feared that Bryan's "silverite" crusade was arousing "charges of radicalism in business circles."¹² Ford refused to align his paper with radicals and instead lauded McKinley as a man who stood by "the supremacy of law" and, better still, was "opposed to anarchy."¹³ William Bourke Cockran, an Irish-

⁸ Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 514, 519. Also, Glad, *McKinley, Bryan, and the People*, 204. Also, William Harpine, *From the Front Porch to the Front Page: McKinley and Bryan in the 1896 Campaign* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2005,) 99.

⁹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 565. Also, Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 519.

¹⁰ John Wanat and Karen Burke, "Estimating the Degree of Mobilization and Conversion in the 1890s: An Inquiry into the Nature of Electoral Change, *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 76, No. 2 (June 1982), 369.

¹¹ Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 519.

¹² James Rodechko, *Patrick Ford and his Search for America: A Case Study of Irish-American Journalism, 1870-1913* (NY: Arno Press, 1979) 50, 150.

¹³ *Irish World*, November 7, 1896.

American U.S. Representative from New York and a noted Tammany orator, also left the Democratic Party in 1896 because of Bryan's inflationary silver policy which Cochran believed would destroy the American economy.¹⁴

But it was Bryan's stance on the tariff that turned the *Irish World* and possibly some of its readers away from him. Bryan abhorred protectionism and promised a free trade policy if elected.¹⁵ McKinley, by contrast, advocated high tariffs in order to protect domestic manufacturing.¹⁶ Irish-American opinion of tariffs had not wavered since the 1880s. They still supported a high tariff as a means of limiting American trade with Britain, while preventing the establishment of a global free-trade environment that would enable the British Empire to prosper all the more. Consequently, in 1896 the *Irish World* attacked Bryan for his anti-protectionism. The October 17 edition of the *Irish World* ran the headline, "McKinley Will Be Elected Simply Because He Stands for Protection."¹⁷ In another edition, the *Irish World* printed a cartoon that depicted a laborer strangled by the "snake" of free trade.¹⁸

Ford predicted that McKinley would win by a sizeable margin.¹⁹ Ford was correct, but his determined efforts to sway the Irish-American vote to McKinley did not succeed. McKinley's victory, 271-176 in the Electoral College, came about because he had the backing of non-Irish, urban and conservative immigrant voters which

¹⁴ Alan Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations, 1899-1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 39.

¹⁵ *Irish World*, October 8, 1896.

¹⁶ *Irish World*, October 17, 1896.

¹⁷ *Irish World*, October 17, 1896.

¹⁸ *Irish World*, October 10, 1896.

¹⁹ *Irish World*, November 7, 1896.

overwhelmed the Irish-American and Southern support for Bryan.²⁰ Luckily for McKinley, prosperity returned almost immediately upon his taking office. He is best-remembered, however, for his role in the Spanish-American War, which in many respects signaled the start of the country's imperialist era.

The Causes of American Expansionism, the Spanish-American War, and America's Emergence as a World Power:

In 1898 the United States fought a war against Spain, and as a result of that conflict at last “stepped upon the stage of empire.”²¹ This was the culmination, of sorts, of various factors that emerged in the 1890s to produce a U.S. foreign-policy outlook that came to be called the “New Manifest Destiny.” The huge expansion of industrialization production and the subsequent need to secure outside markets to absorb surplus goods, strongly pushed America into the kind of global competition that bred imperialistic ambitions—exactly like those of Britain, appalled Irish Americans recognized.²² Additionally, the more emotional Manifest Destiny advocates of the 1840s, “the expansionists of the 1890's were able to cite [at least in their opinion] the lessons of science and of history in support of their doctrine.”²³ They invoked the great Charles Darwin's famous study, *The Origin of the Species* (1859), and his theory of natural selection, to justify American exploitation of weaker countries' territories and economies. “If the survival of the fittest was the law of nature and the path of progress,” their

²⁰ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 568.

²¹ Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 170.

²² See William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1959).

²³ Julius Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and The Spanish Islands* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1936), 2, 3.

argument went, “surely the more gifted [human] races need offer neither apologies nor regrets when they suppressed, supplanted, or destroyed their less talented competitors.”²⁴ Not surprisingly, American expansionists of the 1890s concluded that Anglo-Saxons, or more specifically American Anglo-Saxons, were the most gifted among all the races. After all, Darwin also had written, in his 1871 study *The Descent of Man*, that “There is apparently much truth in the belief that the wonderful progress of the United States, as well as the character of the people, are the results of natural selection; the more energetic, restless, and courageous men from all parts of Europe having emigrated during the last ten or twelve generations to that great country, and having there succeeded best.”²⁵ Such writings, by Darwin and others, helped expansionists build an Anglo-Saxon cult, and with that, a biological justification for imperialism.

This assertion of Anglo-Saxonist superiority may have impressed many Americans, but not the ethnic masses, including the Irish Americans. They viewed American Anglo-Saxonism as the country’s first step in becoming a stooge of the hated British Government. The popular newspaper *Irish World* eloquently expressed its Irish-American readers’ distaste over the venture in an article titled, “Shall we have a British Alliance?”²⁶ The article predicted that joining forces with the British for “the supposed common interests of the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ or ‘English-speaking’ part of mankind” would equate America to “the level of Canada as the backyard of a European Nation.”²⁷

²⁴ Pratt, *Expansionists*, 3.

²⁵ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, (London: Penguin Classics, 1871), 179.

²⁶ Rodechko, *Patrick Ford and his Search for America*, 50. Also, *Irish World*, April 2, 1898.

²⁷ *Irish World*, April 2, 1898.

Naturally, those who proclaimed an inherent Anglo-Saxon superiority resented this Irish opposition, and blamed it on their deep-rooted animosity toward Britain. For example Secretary of State John Hay, who served both McKinley and later Theodore Roosevelt, complained that American ethnic groups, particularly the Irish, could not see past their “mad-dog hatred of Britain” enough to perceive reality.²⁸ But Irish Americans, with their own heritage as an oppressed people, looked at the world quite differently than did Hay and those like him. They disapproved of American expansionism and that guaranteed their opposition to the Spanish-American War.

This conflict, which began on April 25, 1898, had its roots in Cuba’s revolutionary effort to break free of Spanish colonial rule.²⁹ The American public instinctively supported the underdog Cubans and then turned entirely against the Spanish after the American battleship *Maine* exploded in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898.³⁰ A faulty boiler may have caused this tragedy, but at the time Americans believed that Spain had been responsible.³¹ A declaration of war soon followed.

Although “Irish American soldiers will serve in great numbers and with distinction” in the Spanish-American War, “Irish Americans will generally reject [the war which] . . . they perceive as American imperialism.”³² Irish leaders denounced the war fervor that gripped the nation in 1898. For one thing, Spain was a Catholic country, and that alone gave many Irish-Catholics pause. Indeed, Irish leaders like *Irish World* editor Ford believed that

²⁸ Holfstader, *Social Darwinism*, 183.

²⁹ *New York Times*, April 26, 1898.

³⁰ *New York Times*, February 16, 1898.

³¹ David Kennedy, Elizabeth Cohen, Thomas Bailey, *The American Pageant* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), 630.

³² Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 206.

“pulpit politicians” in the United States were “doing their best to make this war a Protestant Crusade” to root out Catholics in the Americas.³³ To counter the anti-Spanish rhetoric published in many American newspapers, Patrick Ford used his paper to characterize Spanish citizens as “high-spirited” and “brave.”³⁴ He described Spain as a land of saints, churchmen, and heroes.³⁵ If we must go to war, he wrote, “let us fight them, yet respect them.”³⁶

Irish Americans also were wary of the Spanish-American War because Britain supported America in the conflict. Although the United States and Britain frequently had been at odds with one another, most recently during the 1895 Venezuelan Crisis, the growing power of Germany and Japan had brought a change in Britain’s diplomatic attitude toward America.³⁷ Faced with other potential threats, Britain began to cultivate better relations with the United States. This improving relationship and the motivation behind it did not go unnoticed by Irish Americans. In April 1898 the *Irish World*, for example, ran an article with the headline “That Anglo-American ‘Alliance!’” and characterized Britain as “desperately striving to inveigle this republic into an alliance that would strengthen her [Britain’s] hands in China.”³⁸ The *Irish World* accused Britain of spewing “in the English papers that we read of the ‘Holy Alliance’ of the European governments against America” in an attempt to deceive Americans into thinking that “England alone stands forth as the defender of the United States and so prevents the ‘concert’ being formed against us.”³⁹ But

³³ *Irish World*, June 18, 1898.

³⁴ *Irish World*, April 30, 1898.

³⁵ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 178.

³⁶ *Irish World*, April 30, 1898.

³⁷ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 179.

³⁸ *Irish World*, April 23, 1898.

³⁹ *Irish World*, April 23, 1898.

the Irish-American exposé of the “London Fake” did little to stop Britain’s support of America and America’s reciprocal appreciation of that good favor.⁴⁰

Backing the United States in its fight with Spain--another traditional enemy of England’s--only made good sense to the British, concerned as they were with their own long-term security concerns. When the *Maine* exploded in 1898, the London *Daily News* wrote that “the calamity will send a pang through every British heart,” especially inasmuch as the British and American people shared a “community of race.”⁴¹ Historian Robert Neale states in *Great Britain and United States Expansion, 1898-1900*, “public opinion in Great Britain outside court circles was almost unanimous in its support for the United States action against Spain in both the Caribbean and the Pacific. That this was the case has been proven conclusively and repetitively on many occasions.”⁴² After war between Spain and America broke out, many Britons even publicly celebrated the Fourth of July.⁴³

Americans gratefully reciprocated. Among other gestures, they celebrated Queen Victoria’s 80th birthday in 1898.⁴⁴ Secretary of State Hay observed that Britain was the “only European country whose sympathies are not against us.”⁴⁵ President McKinley even wrote a letter to British Prime Minister Robert Salisbury gratefully stating that America “feels most deeply the good will sent across the seas . . .” and thanked “not the [British]

⁴⁰ *Irish World*, April 23, 1898.

⁴¹ Charles Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900* (NY: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), 191.

⁴² Robert Neale, *Great Britain and U.S. Expansion, 1898-1900* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1966), 134.

⁴³ Neale, *Great Britain and U.S. Expansion*, 134.

⁴⁴ Neale, *Great Britain and U.S. Expansion*, 135.

⁴⁵ Howard K. Beales, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), 92.

Government alone, but the whole nation.”⁴⁶ Taking note of this changed American attitude, Julian Pauncefoot, Britain’s Minister to the United States, informed Prime Minister Salisbury that “The most astonishing feature of the present time is the sudden transition of this country from Anglophobia to the most exuberant affection for England and ‘Britishers’ in general.”⁴⁷ The *London Times* concluded that a “revolution in American sentiment [toward Britain] had occurred.”⁴⁸

Of course, none of this at all pleased Irish Americans. In June 1898 the *Irish World* published an editorial by the Bishop of Kansas City, the Right Reverend John Glennon, who summed up Irish-American resentments at British hypocrisy and hopes for a more consistent American foreign policy:

Before England offers us the hand of alliance she should prepare by washing her hands of the innocent blood that stains them. Let her give her oppressed colonies what Spain has given Cuba—autonomy. Let her grant to Ireland what America seeks to establish in Cuba—home rule . . . America’s mission is to right wrongs, to liberate the oppressed and enslaved, whether under the southern cross or beneath the northern lights⁴⁹

The Irish-American Nationalist Patrick Egan also spoke out against Britain. He wrote an editorial to the *Irish World* reminding Irish Americans of an earlier statement Salisbury had made a few years back concerning the United States: “The plain matter of fact is, as everyone who watches the current of history must know,” Salisbury had said, “that the Northern States of America never can be our true friends . . . because we are rivals.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Irish World*, April 30, 1898.

⁴⁷ Neale, *Great Britain and U.S. Expansion*, 135.

⁴⁸ Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement*, 192.

⁴⁹ David Noel Doyle, *Irish Americans, Native Rights, and National Empire: The Structures, Divisions, and Loyalties of the Catholic Minority in the Decade of Expansion, 1890-1901* (NY: Arnold Press, 1976), 197.

⁵⁰ *Irish World*, April 30, 1898.

But as Irish Americans would realize, some of those who helped shape U.S. foreign affairs adhered firmly to Anglophile views. An example was Albert Beveridge, a Republican U.S. Senator from Indiana who took a keen interest in foreign policy. He claimed to favor “justice to Ireland,” but he also believed that Anglo-American harmony, or as he termed it, “an English-speaking people’s league of God,” would bring about “permanent peace” for “this war worn world;” a circumstance that would generate global applause that would continue for “countless centuries.”⁵¹ In a speech defending the U.S. annexation of the Philippines, previously a long-time colony of Spain, Beveridge claimed that “God has been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic people for a thousand years” to serve as “the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns”⁵²

The Spanish-American War lasted less than four months and resulted in total American victory.⁵³ By acquiring Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and effective control over Cuba, the United States emerged from the conflict a global imperialist power. This alarmed Irish-American leaders, some of whom, feared that the annexation of the Philippines “would give our government a push toward monarchy.”⁵⁴ If America needed more territory, Irish-American leaders tartly suggested, why not annex the British Dominion of Canada? Most of all, Irish Americans worried that the United States and Britain were becoming allies in “a policy of plunder in the name of civilization and humanity.”⁵⁵

⁵¹ Thomas Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (NY: Schoken Books, 1963), 326.

⁵² Albert Beveridge, “Senator Albert J. Beveridge Defends American Actions in the Philippines.” (January 9, 1900) *U.S. Congress, Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 33, 704-712.

⁵³ *New York Times*, July 15, 1898.

⁵⁴ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 179.

⁵⁵ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 179.

Irish-American anger over America's new expansionism and friendship with Britain erupted in late 1898. Anti-alliance, anti-expansion protests emerged in such major cities as New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Washington, D.C.⁵⁶ The Irish-American journalist James Jeffrey Roche delivered a speech before the American Irish Historical Society in New York, during which he damned Irish Americans who favored an Anglo-American alliance as "unworthy of heaven, unwelcome in Purgatory, and lonesome in Perdition."⁵⁷ Prominent Irish-American leaders--among them the President of the Ancient Order of Hibernians P.J. O'Connor, Patrick Ford, Patrick Egan of the Irish National League in America, Knights of Labor Treasurer John W. Hayes, and Secretary of the Irish Federation of New York Joseph P. Ryan, signed anti-British petitions and sent them to the U.S. Senate.⁵⁸ However grounded these expressed concerns were in traditional Irish hatred for Britain, they nonetheless had a certain basis in fact. For its own security reasons, Britain now desired an internationally strong America, and that is why Prime Minister Salisbury proclaimed in late 1898 that he would "have nothing to do with any scheme that might make Britain seem to oppose American annexation of Spain's Philippine colony."⁵⁹

America also intervened in China's affairs during the McKinley Administration. In 1899 Secretary of State Hay proposed the so-called "Open Door" policy, which called for international free trade in China. Britain quickly accepted the Open Door policy, and while this undoubtedly pleased Hay, even he worried that McKinley's approaching reelection campaign could be injured by this favorable British reaction. "[I]t might be interpreted," he

⁵⁶ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 179.

⁵⁷ James J. Roche, "The 'Scotch-Irish' and 'Anglo-Saxon' Fallacies," *Journal of the American Irish Historical Society*, II (1899), 91.

⁵⁸ *Irish World*, February 5, 1898.

⁵⁹ May, *Imperial Democracy*, 223.

observed, “by a large part of the voting population of the United States, especially the Irish and Germans, as an adoption of the policy advocated by England and any leaning toward England on the part of the administration would, at this time and for some time to come, be dangerous, and might lose the President his nomination.”⁶⁰ Hay had good reason to fear the Irish-American reaction. Years earlier the *Irish World* rallied its readers to reject any American foreign policy that Britain supported. “If England Wants You To Do Anything Very Much,” a headline read, “That Is A Good Thing Not To Do.”⁶¹

The Boer War:

Prior to the 1900 election, McKinley faced yet another foreign-affairs tangle that would hurt him among Irish Americans. This time, the issue concerned inaction rather than overexertion of U.S. power. Since the 1860s, British colonials had been rivals with the “Boers,” Dutch-descendent settlers in South Africa, for control of that strategically important sector of the continent.⁶² The First Boer War had been fought in 1880-81, and the Second Boer War, pitting the British against the Dutch inhabitants of the Transvaal Republic and Orange Free State, two sovereign South African provinces, erupted in 1899.⁶³ Some Republicans, McKinley included, tended to sympathize with the Boers, but Britain’s neutrality in the recent Spanish-American War more-or-less obligated the United States to adopt a reciprocal policy regarding Britain’s conflict with the Dutch in South Africa.⁶⁴ McKinley and others close to him also continued to believe that a powerful Britain meant a stable world environment, highly beneficial to the United

⁶⁰ Taliaferro, *The Life of John Hay*, 358.

⁶¹ *Irish World*, April 23, 1898.

⁶² See Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, (Cape Town, South Africa: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1979).

⁶³ See Pakenham, *The Boer War*.

⁶⁴ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 38.

States. Henry Cabot Lodge, a Republican U.S. Senator from Massachusetts and a leading foreign-policy figure (he held a PhD in “Anglo-Saxon history” from Harvard), stated the Administration’s sentiments best in a February 1900 letter to Theodore Roosevelt, then New York’s Governor.⁶⁵ Lodge wrote:

There is a very general and solid sense of the fact that however much we sympathize with the Boers the downfall of the British Empire is something which no rational American could regard as anything but a misfortune.⁶⁶

Roosevelt himself empathized with the Boers, but he also felt that “The development of South African civilization can best go on under the British Flag.”⁶⁷

Irish Americans disagreed with America’s neutral policy regarding the Boer War.⁶⁸

As they saw matters, the Boers reminded them of the Irish nationalists who were struggling for self-government against Britain and the “Anglo-Saxon race.”⁶⁹ The *Irish World* ran articles highlighting the courage of the Boers and the brutality of the British Army in Africa. One headline read “Boers Present an Unbroken Front.”⁷⁰ Another claimed, “British Burning Homes: Making Boer Women and Children Homeless Where There Are No Men Around to Protect Them.”⁷¹ The *Irish World* also published a letter from a South African priest that directly correlated the British killings in South Africa with the Empire’s misdeeds in Ireland. The priest’s letter read, “I view the war as a plundering, butchering expedition of

⁶⁵ Evan Thomas, *The War Lovers: Roosevelt, Lodge, Hearst, and the Rush to Empire* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2010), 31.

⁶⁶ “Henry Cabot Lodge to Theodore Roosevelt,” (February 2, 1900). Henry Cabot Lodge, ed. *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918* (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1924), 444.

⁶⁷ Ferguson, *Boer War*, 208.

⁶⁸ *Irish World*, February 17, 1900.

⁶⁹ *Irish World*, February 10, 1900.

⁷⁰ *Irish World*, January 20, 1900.

⁷¹ *Irish World*, January 20, 1900.

John Bull, whose hands are still red with the blood of Ireland.”⁷² Moreover, Irish Americans hoped that a British defeat in South Africa would weaken the Empire and thereby improve Ireland’s prospects in its own struggle against Britain. The *Irish World* hopefully suggested that the German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck’s prediction that South Africa would be the destruction of the British Empire was at last coming true.”⁷³ Beyond that, Irish Americans attended pro-Boer meetings in Washington and Baltimore, and the Clan na Gael organized one in Philadelphia.⁷⁴ There, attendees applauded speakers such as U.S. Senator William Mason of Illinois, who criticized McKinley’s unwillingness to defy the British and help the Boers. The South African Republic, “has the same right to national life that we had,” Mason stated.⁷⁵ “We are busy dickering,” Mason continued, “with the monarchy that is destroying the Republic.”⁷⁶

Some Irish Americans decided to get directly involved in the conflict.⁷⁷ Early in 1900, Irish nationalists initiated plans to send recruits to Transvaal and, for good measure, to Canada--the latter force an attempt to revive the old Fenian dream of weakening Britain by taking over Canada.⁷⁸ In late January 1900, some of these “belated Fenians” asked New York Governor Roosevelt what punishment he would impose on Irishmen who launched an invasion of Canada from the Empire State; he replied that he would call out the militia “and clap them all in jail.”⁷⁹ This seemed plain enough, and so most Irish Americans intent on

⁷² *Irish World*, February 10, 1900.

⁷³ *Irish World*, December 8, 1900.

⁷⁴ *Irish World*, February 7, April 14, March 17, 1900

⁷⁵ *Irish World*, March 17, 1900.

⁷⁶ *Irish World*, March 17, 1900.

⁷⁷ *Irish World*, March 17, 1900.

⁷⁸ John Ferguson, *American Diplomacy and the Boer War*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939, 65.

⁷⁹ Ferguson, *American Diplomacy and the Boer War*, 66.

getting into a scrap with Britain turned their attention away from Canada and toward South Africa. Many Irish-American recruits to Transvaal joined the so-called Irish Brigade led by Irish-American Colonel John Blake and founded by Irish nationalist John MacBride from County Mayo.⁸⁰ To assist the Irish Brigade's efforts, some resourceful Irish Americans organized a Red Cross Corps that enabled other men supportive of their cause to infiltrate, under the guise of medical personnel, the Transvaal battlefields in early April 1900.⁸¹ However, both the Brigade and the Red Cross Corps proved ill-equipped to challenge British forces, and soon most of these Irish-American volunteers were imploring the U.S. government to provide the funds needed for their safe passage home.⁸² Eventually, Irish and Irish Americans fighting for the Boer cause got repatriated back to Europe and America.⁸³ As for the Boers, ultimately they lost the fight, and both Transvaal and the Orange Free State were absorbed into British South Africa.⁸⁴

The 1900 Election:

President McKinley, with his new running mate Theodore Roosevelt, stood for reelection on a pro-imperialism platform. The Democrats again nominated Bryan, who in his acceptance speech embraced the cause of anti-imperialism when he decried the possibility that "the flag of this republic should become the flag of an empire."⁸⁵ In this

⁸⁰ Anthony Jordan, ed., *Boer War to Easter Rising: Writings of John MacBride* (Westport, CT: Westport Books, 2006), Location 603 (Kindle Edition).

⁸¹ Ferguson, *American Diplomacy and the Boer War*, 66.

⁸² Ferguson, *American Diplomacy and the Boer War*, 67.

⁸³ Pakenham, *Boer War*, 458.

⁸⁴ Pakenham, *Boer War*, 576.

⁸⁵ William Jennings Bryan, "Democratic Nomination Acceptance Speech" (Indianapolis, IN, Aug. 8, 1900) in William Jennings Bryan and Mary Bryan, eds., *Speeches of William Jennings Bryan Revised and Arranged by himself. With a Biological Introduction by Mary Baird Bryan*, vol. II (NY: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1909), 46.

same address Bryan also mentioned the Boer War, which he said, “must result in the extension of the monarchical idea, or in the triumph of a republic,” yet even with that stark choice at stake “the advocates of imperialism in this country dare not say a word in behalf of the Boers.”⁸⁶

Bryan’s anti-imperialist defense of self-government naturally had great appeal to Irish Americans, given their desire to see their own homeland free of British authority. Important Irish-American leaders who had rejected Bryan in 1896, like Patrick Ford and William Cockran, supported him in 1900 because of McKinley’s embrace of imperialism.⁸⁷ The *Irish World* viewed the 1900 election as a choice between: “Anglicanism or Americanism,” and characterized a vote for McKinley as one for “Britishers . . . to rule this country.”⁸⁸ The *Irish World* took this argument even further when it pointedly asked, “Shall Porto Rico become America’s Ireland?” in its November 3 edition.⁸⁹ “Imperialism is a plant of English growth,” the paper claimed in the same edition; McKinley and his Republican Party must be ousted in order to halt the “murdering” of Filipinos and to stop Cuba and Porto Rico from being “Protestantized.”⁹⁰ Beyond that, the *Irish World* spoke for many of its readers when it predicted that “if Bryan is elected the principles of the Declaration of Independence will be the political gospel for us and for those who are to come after us”⁹¹ For his part, Cockran gave a speech to the Civic Federation of Chicago in 1900 during which he hailed Bryan’s labor policies, “I agree with Mr. Bryan that if there be an

⁸⁷ Rodecko, *Patrick Ford and His Search for America*, 151. Also Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 39.

⁸⁸ *Irish World*, February 10, 1900.

⁸⁹ *Irish World*, November 3, 1900.

⁹⁰ *Irish World*, November 3, 1900.

⁹¹ *Irish World*, November 3, 1900.

oppressive monopoly in existence, it should be suppressed, whatever may be the measure necessary to overthrow it.”⁹²

Other Irish-American leaders also supported Bryan’s 1900 candidacy. Patrick Egan spoke on his behalf at a rally at Cooper Union in New York City.⁹³ Patrick Collins of Boston and John Finerty of Chicago, two prominent Irish-American nationalists, also delivered pro-Bryan speeches. Beyond that, Irish-American journalist and Clan na Gael member, John Devoy, along with Egan, Ford, and other Irish-American nationalists formed a new, non-party organization, the Irish-American Union, for the sole purpose of opposing McKinley’s “pro-British” imperialism and militarism.⁹⁴ Combined such efforts created a “solid, anti-imperialist Irish front” supportive of Bryan.⁹⁵

However, these spirited efforts by Irish Americans and other Bryan backers could not overcome McKinley’s formidable advantages. Prosperity had returned, and imperialism seemingly had strengthened America’s standing in the world. The President defeated Bryan a second time, this time by a count of 292-155 in the Electoral College.⁹⁶

Theodore Roosevelt:

McKinley died on September 14, 1901, from wounds suffered by an assassin’s bullet.⁹⁷ This elevated Theodore Roosevelt to the Presidency, and he would profoundly

⁹² William Bourne Cockran, “Speeches of Bourke Cockran and William Jennings Bryan Delivered at the Chicago Conference on Trusts: The Civic Federation of Chicago,” 1900. Box III, Folder #6, William Bourke Cockran Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

⁹³ *Irish World*, June 2, 1900.

⁹⁴ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 39.

⁹⁵ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 39.

⁹⁶ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 585.

⁹⁷ Henretta, Brody, and Dumenil, *America*, 600.

change the United States both at home and abroad. He also would establish a notable relationship with the Irish in America.

To Irish Americans, Teddy Roosevelt was something of an enigma. He had sympathized with the Boers, yet ultimately he had supported the British in that conflict.⁹⁸ He belonged to the American Irish Historical Society and counted the famous Irish-American humorist Finley Peter Dunne among his friends, yet he subscribed stridently to the Anglo-Saxonist world view that it had a rightful destiny to dominate the globe.⁹⁹ Indeed, in his book *The Winning of the West*, a young Roosevelt had written that “the spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world’s waste spaces has been not only the most striking feature in the world’s history, but also the event of all others most far-reaching in its effects and its importance.”¹⁰⁰ Later, however, Roosevelt had told Dunne that he had “always insisted that we are not Anglo-Saxons at all . . . but a new and mixed race—a race drawing its blood from many different sources.”¹⁰¹ These sentiments would fuel his March 1905 presidential speech to the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick in New York City when he stated, “Americanism is not a matter of creed or birthplace or descent. That man is the best American who has in him the American spirit, the American soul.”¹⁰² The contradictions continued. In 1899 Roosevelt had claimed to be a “Home Ruler,” meaning that he agreed with Irish nationalists that Home Rule in Ireland required that the Act of Union giving Britain formal power over Ireland be dissolved; this

⁹⁸ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 40.

⁹⁹ William Hurley (American Irish Historical Society Library and Archives Curator), Phone conversation, November 17, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, Location 186 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁰¹ “Theodore Roosevelt to Finley Peter Dunne,” November 23, 1904. Louis Auchincloss, ed., *Theodore Roosevelt, Letters and Speeches* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 364.

¹⁰² Theodore Roosevelt, “Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Dinner,” March 17, 1905. Box 2, Folder 7, William Cockran Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York, 22.

Roosevelt felt “would be a good thing for Ireland.”¹⁰³ Later, as president, Roosevelt met with Irish parliamentary leaders abroad and members of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick at home to discuss Home Rule’s prospects.¹⁰⁴ Yet, Roosevelt often made other comments that no unqualified advocate of Home Rule ever would, such as during the Boer War when he stated: “[The] downfall of the British Empire, I should regard as a calamity to the race, and especially to this country.”¹⁰⁵

What probably accounts for Roosevelt’s ambiguity about the Irish is that, while his sympathy for Ireland’s fight for freedom was genuine enough, he also believed that world stability and the advancement of America’s interests required a positive Anglo-American relationship.¹⁰⁶ To be sure, as a shrewd politician he shunned any “evident” friendship with Britain, “so as to avoid exciting alarm and criticism”--no doubt especially among Irish Americans.¹⁰⁷

As he looked to the 1904 election, Roosevelt worried about his standing with those voters. Secretary of State Hay shared that concern, telling the President in an April 1903 letter that “The Irish of New York are thirsting for my gore,” because of the Secretary’s role in America’s recent imperialistic ventures and support of the Anglo-American accord.¹⁰⁸ Well aware of this discontent, the President gave a number of good patronage jobs to prominent Irish Americans. Moreover, the Republican Party in 1904

¹⁰³ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations, 1899-1921*, 41.

¹⁰⁴ See Theodore Roosevelt, “Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Dinner,” March 17, 1905. Box 2, Folder 7, William Cockran Papers.

¹⁰⁵ Elting E. Morrison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, vol. II, *The Years of Preparation, 1898-1900* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 1112.

¹⁰⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 293-294.

¹⁰⁷ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 49.

launched an aggressive outreach campaign targeting the Irish and German-Americans, who, for other reasons, also were becoming increasingly less friendly to Britain.¹⁰⁹

“Republican canvassers were instructed,” the historian Lewis Gould has noted, “to record if voters were ‘of German or Irish birth,’ and campaign documents and organizations were shaped accordingly.”¹¹⁰

Beyond that, Republicans in 1904 pursued a “pro-Catholic” stance which they hoped would attract Irish and other ethnic voters. The President’s supporters reminded Catholic-American voters that during the Filipino resistance to U.S. occupation of those islands after the Spanish-American War, Roosevelt had refused to strip Filipino Catholic friars of their lands.¹¹¹ Instead, as Roosevelt in 1904 liked to point out, in July 1902 he had put in writing that U.S. policy over those lands was “merely endeavoring to carry out the wishes of the entire Catholic population of the islands, and at the same time to do scrupulous justice to the Catholic Church.”¹¹²

The efforts by Roosevelt and the Republicans to woo the Irish vote did not go unnoticed. The *Boston Pilot*, then edited by the Irish American James Jeffrey Roche, backed the President in 1904, as did the Irish-Catholic *San Francisco Monitor*, and Patrick Ford’s *Irish World*.¹¹³ Although the *Irish World* did not support the U.S. occupation of the Catholic Philippines, the paper did acknowledge that “Mr. Roosevelt does not talk in the style of the speeches we used to hear, about ‘never hauling down the

¹⁰⁹ Lewis Gould, *The Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 140.

¹¹⁰ Gould, *Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt*, 140.

¹¹¹ Gould, *Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt*, 141.

¹¹² “Theodore Roosevelt to William Comerford,” (July 2, 1902) in Theodore Roosevelt Center Website, ed., Dickinson State University. Accessed at: <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Blog/2011/June/27-The-Friars-Question.aspx>, Accessed 8/8/14.

¹¹³ *Irish World*, October 1, 1904.

flag' in that quarter."¹¹⁴ Three days before the election, the *Irish World* continued its defense of the incumbent: "Roosevelt gives to the Filipinos what Ireland demands and England denies to the Irish nation—Home Rule"¹¹⁵ Such expressions of support pleasantly surprised Roosevelt, to the point where he even joked about it in an August 1904 letter to Hay:

Oh, John, John, I demand your sympathy! Patrick Ford, James Jeffrey Roche and O'Donovan Rossa [a famous Fenian leader] have come out for me. Answer me frankly—have you tampered with them in any way! If so, I hope you have not promised any personal violence to the British Ambassador¹¹⁶

Of course, not all Irish-American leaders supported Roosevelt in his contest with Judge Alton B. Parker of New York, the Democratic nominee. John Devoy's newspaper, *Gaelic American*, which began publication in 1903, opposed the President and accused Catholics, particularly Irish Catholics, of betraying the Democratic Party.¹¹⁷ Just days before the election, the newspaper printed past quotes by Roosevelt that could only hurt his standing among Irish Americans. One especially telling example concerned Oliver Cromwell, who Roosevelt had said "belonged among those earnest souls who indulged in the very honorable dream of a world where civil government and social life alike should be based upon the commandments set forth in the Bible."¹¹⁸ Cromwell, whom the Irish to this day regard as one of history's foremost villains, was the military dictator of the Commonwealth of England in the 17th century who led a military campaign against Ireland and slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Irish for political and religious reasons.

¹¹⁴ *Irish World*, September 24, 1904.

¹¹⁵ *Irish World*, November 5, 1904.

¹¹⁶ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 42.

¹¹⁷ *Gaelic American*, September 10, 1904.

¹¹⁸ *Gaelic American*, November 5, 1904.

Beyond the press, groups like the United Irish League raised funds not just for Irish Home Rule, but for America's Democratic Party and the defeat of Roosevelt. The Irish-run Tammany Hall also mobilized in opposition to Roosevelt, with the organization's leaders promising a huge turnout in New York City against him.¹¹⁹

Their efforts notwithstanding, Roosevelt prevailed by a landslide, 336-140 in the Electoral College.¹²⁰ Although his popularity was so immense that he would have won anyway, it surely pleased Roosevelt that he got many votes from Irish Americans. As the supportive *Irish World* jubilantly proclaimed in a post-election headline, "The Irish Vote Very Largely Swung To The President."¹²¹ Grateful Republican Senators and Congressman around the country evidently agreed, as a number of them sent letters to the *Irish World* hailing Ford as a "power in the recent election."¹²²

To be sure, the Irish-American support for Roosevelt in 1904 did not translate to blind compliance with his policies. In November and December 1904 and in January 1905 the United States signed arbitration treaties with Britain, Germany, other European powers, and Japan.¹²³ The treaties created a Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague for the signatories to use whenever a minor dispute over a treaty between or among them arose.¹²⁴ Although these agreements had included several countries, Roosevelt's main purpose in signing the treaties was to create closer, if somewhat disguised, bonds with Britain. The ploy fooled neither the *Irish World* nor the *Gaelic*

¹¹⁹ *Irish World*, November 19, 1904.

¹²⁰ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 602.

¹²¹ *Irish World*, November 19, 1904.

¹²² *Irish World*, December 3, 1904.

¹²³ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 54.

¹²⁴ Denna Frank Fleming, *The Treaty Veto of the American Senate* (NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1930), 86.

American, both of which balked at America's agreeing to any treaty with Britain.¹²⁵ In a February 1905 edition of the *Irish World*, the newspaper ran a cartoon of a man begging Uncle Sam to reject the budding Anglo-American alliance. Behind the man in the illustration, the United States Capitol stood with a sign "Burnt by the British"—a reference to the War of 1812—and the cartoon's caption read: "Beware of Entangling Alliances," George Washington."¹²⁶ For its part, the *Gaelic American* reprinted the words of protestors who spoke at anti-alliance meetings around the country, including one in Cooper Union, New York in February 1905. "Peace, peace, peace," the protestor exclaimed, "there is no peace with this robber nation, England."¹²⁷ Both publications applied pressure on U.S. Senators to reject the treaties. "The feeling which has been aroused among the Irish people of Boston [and other big cities]," the *Irish World* warned, "in opposition to the ratification of the Anglo-American treaty now before the United States Senate is intense and exceeds anything of the kind known here for many years past."¹²⁸ The *Gaelic American* argued that Senate ratification of the treaties equated to the Senate legislating its own foreign-affairs powers out of existence. "It is they [British alliance men and pro-alliance Americans] who seek to alter the traditional course of public life in America," the *Gaelic American* claimed, "by giving to the President the powers of a king and to the Secretary of States those of Turkish Grand Vizier" over diplomatic agreements.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 54-56.

¹²⁶ *Irish World*, February 11, 1905.

¹²⁷ *Gaelic American*, February 18, 1905.

¹²⁸ *Irish World*, January 21, 1905.

¹²⁹ *Gaelic American*, January 14, 1905.

These protests worked: the Senate voted to amend all the treaties in February 1905. “The Senators held,” the *Irish World* exulted, “. . . [that] the proposed arbitration treaties would virtually leave a President of the United States free to enter into compacts with foreign nations without any action by the Senate.”¹³⁰ Roosevelt, at the time, deemed the Senatorial amendments unacceptable. Consequently, the treaties were not ratified in 1905 and both the *Gaelic American* and *Irish World* claimed victory for themselves and for important Irish republican organizations like the Clan na Gael that had participated in the anti-alliance effort.¹³¹

Members of the British government and Roosevelt Administration agreed that Irish Americans had played a decisive role in the treaties’ failure. Sir Percy Sanderson, the British Consul-General, recognized their impact when he stated years later, “There is no doubt in my mind that the Irish, helped on by Michael Davitt’s [an *Irish World* journalist] presence, exerted a strong influence on Congress at the time that the . . . negotiations for an arbitration treaty were under way.”¹³² Moreover, John Hay wrote in a mid-February 1905 letter to a friend:

I cannot tell you how deeply we are all grieved and disappointed at the failure of the arbitration treaties. I had never heard from any quarter of any possible objection to them, but a drive was made at them, as soon as they were sent to the Senate, from two quarters, one from the Clan na Gael in New York and Philadelphia, who objected to nothing but the English treaty, and the other from certain interests in the South, who feared—utterly without cause—that the question of their repudiated debts might be brought into arbitration. Ignoble as these attacks were we soon found, to our deep amazement, that they were extremely effective and many Senators who had expressed themselves in the

¹³⁰ *Irish World*, February 18, 1905.

¹³¹ *Gaelic American*, February 18, 25, 1914 and *Irish World*, February 18, 1905.

¹³² Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 55.

strongest language in favor of the treaties began to take an active part against them.¹³³

However, this Irish-American triumph did not long endure. In 1908 Roosevelt resubmitted the arbitration treaties, this time conceding to the amendments that had been proposed in 1904. The Senate ratified the treaties, most notably approving of the arbitration treaty with Britain on April 22, 1908.¹³⁴

William Howard Taft:

Roosevelt's popularity remained high during his second term, to the point where he essentially named the Republican nominee for 1908, William Howard Taft. When the Democrats nominated Bryan for a third try at the presidency, Taft's election seemed all but assured.

One controversy of concern to some Irish did briefly surface during the campaign. It involved an Irish nationalist named Luke Dillon, who had emigrated to the United States with his family as a young boy and then in adulthood became an active member of the Clan na Gael.¹³⁵ During the Boer War, Dillon participated with a few other Irish Americans in a foolhardy attempt to blow up the Welland Canal in Canada.¹³⁶ Captured and convicted, Dillon was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1900.¹³⁷ There matters stood until the 1908 campaign, when editor of the *Gaelic American* and good friend to Dillon, John Devoy, called upon the U.S. government to seek Dillon's release.¹³⁸ Devoy

¹³³ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 56.

¹³⁴ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 57.

¹³⁵ *New York Times*, July 24, 1889. Also, Fenian Graves. Accessed at <http://feniangraves.net/Dillon,%20%20Luke/Dillon,%20Luke.htm>. Accessed 12/30/14.

¹³⁶ *New York Times*, January 8, 1930.

¹³⁷ Fenian Graves. Accessed at <http://feniangraves.net/Dillon,%20%20Luke/Dillon,%20Luke.htm>. Accessed 12/30/14.

¹³⁸ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 63.

and Dillon's wife co-wrote an appeal to Theodore Roosevelt, but the President ignored their plea. Seemingly, the Dillon issue ended there as he remained imprisoned, and his case played no further role in 1908. Certainly Taft paid no political price for Roosevelt's refusal to aid Dillon. Taft easily bested Bryan, 321-162 in the Electoral College, but without conspicuous support from Irish-American leaders who generally viewed the victor as a standard big-business Republican who lacked Roosevelt's pro-Irish leanings.¹³⁹

The Dillon situation, as it turned out, resurfaced during Taft's presidency, ironically at the behest of the President's fellow Republicans and in the context of another proposed arbitration agreement with Britain. One of President Taft's goals was to build upon the 1908 treaties by signing even stronger arbitration agreements with Britain and France that committed the countries "to the arbitration of serious and weighty disputes" rather than just minor ones.¹⁴⁰ Republicans remembered the trouble that Irish Americans had given Roosevelt when he proposed his arbitration treaty with Britain, and to forestall that opposition this time around, some party leaders urged Taft to mollify Irish Americans by attempting to free Dillon from prison in Canada.¹⁴¹ As early as 1910, Republican Governor Aram Pothier of the heavily Irish-American populated state of Rhode Island, sent Taft a memorandum reminding the President that "the element of the American population which is especially interested in the liberation of Dillon comprises a very numerous, powerful and progressive factor in our citizenship."¹⁴² In 1911, Pothier

¹³⁹ *Irish World*, February 22, 1919. Also, Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 61-62.

¹⁴⁰ Fleming, *The Treaty Veto of the American Senate*, 90. Also, *New York Times*, December 20, 1911.

¹⁴¹ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 63.

¹⁴² Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 63.

renewed his appeal, arguing that Dillon's release should be given the utmost attention as a means of increasing the likelihood of Senate ratification of the newly proposed arbitration agreement between America and Britain.¹⁴³

After the Senate heavily amended Taft's treaty in March 1912 following several Irish-American, anti-treaty mass meetings; Taft followed Pothier's advice and asked Canadian authorities to pardon Dillon.¹⁴⁴ In doing so, he hoped to gain Irish-American favor, or at least silence, when he resubmitted the treaties to the Senate without the extensive changes they had proposed. In a July 1912 letter to Whitelaw Reid, the U.S. Ambassador to Britain, Taft wrote, "I am very anxious for reasons you will understand but may not realize their far reaching importance to secure the pardon of Dillon of whom the State Department has written you." Taft continued, "It will help me much in a further attempt at peace treaties to remove the serious opposition which manifested itself on the Senate's last vote."¹⁴⁵ However, Taft did not get his arbitration treaty with Britain through the Senate. As for Dillon, Canadian authorities did not agree to release him until July 1914, well after the gesture could have been of political use to Taft.¹⁴⁶

Woodrow Wilson and the Irish:

In the 1912 election, Taft lost his reelection bid to Democrat Woodrow Wilson because Theodore Roosevelt split the Republican vote by entering the race as the nominee of the short-lived Progressive Party. This enabled Wilson, the governor of New

¹⁴³ *New York Times*, December 20, 1911.

¹⁴⁴ *Gaelic American*, October 21 and February 25, 1911, and *New York Times*, March 9, 1912. Also, Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 66, 67.

¹⁴⁵ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 68.

¹⁴⁶ *New York Times*, July 13, 1914.

Jersey, to win by an Electoral College landslide, with 435 votes to Roosevelt's 88 and Taft's 8.¹⁴⁷ Wilson received support from all sectors of his Party, including many "well-organized, urban Irish-American Democrats."¹⁴⁸

This strong turnout came despite reservations about Wilson among some Irish-American leaders.¹⁴⁹ For example, one "Tammany sachem" and prominent Clan na Gael member, New York Judge Daniel P. Cohalan, had publicly opposed Wilson's nomination at the 1912 Democratic National Convention.¹⁵⁰ Cohalan knew that Wilson disliked "political bosses" of his stripe and machines such as Tammany Hall-- notwithstanding the substantial aid they had rendered him during the election.¹⁵¹ Moreover, Devoy of the *Gaelic American* actually hated President Wilson, once calling him the "meanest and most malignant man who ever filled the office of President."¹⁵² Devoy's dislike of the new president extended back at least as far as March 1909, when Wilson, then president of Princeton University, offended Irish-American leaders when he dedicated a Saint Patrick's Day address to his conception of internationalism instead of Irish affairs.¹⁵³ Later, President Wilson ignored suggestions from Irish-American Senator James O'Gorman of New York, another Tammany favorite, regarding Cabinet selections.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 639.

¹⁴⁸ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 80.

¹⁴⁹ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 80.

¹⁵⁰ John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel: A Personal Narrative* (NY: Chase P. Young Company, 1929), 470. Also Wittke, *Irish in America*, 583.

¹⁵¹ John Duff, "The Versailles Treaty and the Irish-Americans," *Journal of American History*, 55 (Dec. 1968), 583.

¹⁵² Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, 470.

¹⁵³ *Gaelic American*, March 27, 1909.

¹⁵⁴ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 80.

Indeed, the president flatly refused to give Tammany-selected Irish Americans patronage jobs in his new Administration.¹⁵⁵

Beyond these slights, Wilson made few outreaches to Irish Americans during his first term. Even on the rare occasions that he did so, Wilson showed that he had little regard for Irish America. For example, in a May 16, 1914, address commemorating an Irish-American navy pioneer of the Revolutionary War era, Wilson said:

John Barry was an Irishman, but his heart crossed the Atlantic with him. He did not leave it in Ireland. And the test of all of us—for all of us had our origins on the other side of the sea—is whether we will assist in enabling America to live her separate and independent life, retaining our ancient affections, indeed, but determining everything that we do by the interests that exist on this side of the sea. Some Americans need hyphens in their names, because only part of them has come over; but when the whole man has come over, heart and thought and all, the hyphen drops of its weight out of his name. This man was not an Irish-American; he was an Irishman who became an American. I venture to say if he voted he voted with regard to the questions as they looked on this side of the water, and not as they affected the other side, and that is my infallible test of a genuine American, that when he votes or when he acts or when he fights his heart and his thoughts are centered nowhere but in the emotions and the purposes and the politics of the United States.¹⁵⁶

Wilson's point: Americans who regarded themselves as any nationality other than American lacked patriotism and honor.

Wilson's hyphen jab at Irish Americans may have been fueled by the Irish-American uproar over the seemingly mundane yet highly emotional issue of Panama Canal tolls.¹⁵⁷ Before leaving office, President Taft signed into law a measure exempting

¹⁵⁵ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 81-82.

¹⁵⁶ Woodrow Wilson, "Address Delivered at the Unveiling of the Statute to the Memory of John Barry," Washington, D.C., May 6, 1914. Ray S. Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. III (NY: Harper and Brothers, 1925-27), 109.

¹⁵⁷ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 82.

the United States from shipping toll costs associated with Panama Canal usage.¹⁵⁸ At this the British balked, claiming that such a law violated the 1901 Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, which prohibited special considerations for any country using the then-envisaged canal.¹⁵⁹ Nonetheless in America, the exemption enjoyed broad political support across party lines, but in March 1914 Wilson defiantly sided with the British, and asked that the exemption be repealed. “We . . . are too big, too powerful, too self-respecting a nation,” he told Congress, “to interpret with too strained or refined a reading the words of our own promises just because we have power enough to give us leave to read them as we please.”¹⁶⁰

Irish Americans were incredulous.¹⁶¹ They could not believe that the president would sell out U.S. interests just because of British demands. Telegrams poured into the Senate from Irish societies demanding that an “American as against a British interpretation of the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty” prevail in Washington, D.C.¹⁶² Angry Irish Americans held mass protest meetings in major cities.¹⁶³ One auxiliary meeting took place in Carnegie Hall on March 1914 during which Judge Cohalan presented a resolution adopted by the attendees which stated the “present Administration at Washington has refused to maintain the American right, and has constituted itself the champion of the British claim”¹⁶⁴ The resolution continued, “. . . we denounce it as

¹⁵⁸ Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914* (NY: Athencum, 1968), 301.

¹⁵⁹ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 82.

¹⁶⁰ *New York Times*, February 6, 1914. Also, Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 82.

¹⁶¹ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 275.

¹⁶² Wittke, *Irish in America*, 275.

¹⁶³ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 82.

¹⁶⁴ Daniel Cohalan, “Resolutions: Adopted at meeting of citizens in Carnegie Hall, New York,” March 20, 1914. Box 23, Folder 4, Daniel Cohalan Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

a breach of the Monroe Doctrine” and “as intolerable to patriotic American citizens”¹⁶⁵ Another meeting, organized by a leading member of the Clan na Gael, Joseph McGarrity, took place at the Philadelphia Academy of Music with three thousand outraged Irish Americans in attendance.¹⁶⁶ Then during Senate hearings about Wilson’s proposed repeal, Cochran and other Irish Americans denounced what they regarded as a capitulation to the British. The most vocal Irish American among them was Senator O’Gorman who called Wilson’s repeal a “national abasement,” a clear submission to the “unwarranted intervention of Great Britain.”¹⁶⁷ But such claims proved useless. Wilson dominated this Democratic-controlled Congress, which in June voted for the repeal he sought.¹⁶⁸

World War I Begins:

The Great War erupted in Europe on July 28, 1914. This unparalleled conflict involved the Allied Powers of France, Britain, Italy, Russia, and Serbia warring against the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire. Although many Irish Home Rulers in Ireland had been at odds with the British government for decades, they took up arms and joined the British on the Western Front after Britain granted Ireland Home Rule in September 1914, with the caveat that implementation would be suspended until the end of the Great War.¹⁶⁹ Home Rule Irish leader John Redmond persuaded his followers to accept Britain’s suspension and support the war

¹⁶⁵ Cohalan, “Resolutions: Adopted at meeting of citizens in Carnegie Hall, New York” March 20, 1914. Daniel Cohalan Papers.

¹⁶⁶ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 82.

¹⁶⁷ *New York Times*, March 8, 1914.

¹⁶⁸ *New York Times*, June 12, 1914.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Hachey, Joseph Hernon, Jr., and Lawrence McCaffrey, *The Irish Experience: A Concise History* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 153.

effort; naturally, Redmond wholly believed that Irish self-governance would follow upon the return of peace.¹⁷⁰ But for now, Redmond specifically called upon members of the Irish Volunteers, a nationalist paramilitary force, to join the British Army. In a speech delivered on September 20, 1914, he pledged full support to the Allied cause:

The interests of Ireland—of the whole of Ireland—are at stake in this war. This war is undertaken in the defense of the highest principles of religion and morality and right, and it would be a disgrace for ever to our country and a reproach to her manhood and a denial of the lessons of her history if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home to defend the shores of Ireland from an unlikely invasion¹⁷¹

Although Redmond in the past had enjoyed their respect, most Irish-American leaders flatly refused to join him in supporting the Allied forces.¹⁷² In late September 1914, Clan na Gael held a convention in New York City from which emerged a public statement disavowing the Home Rule leader:

Representatives from the United States, denounce the Parliamentary Leader's Pledge of Irish military help to England in her unrighteous war on Germany as the worst Betrayal of Ireland . . . and call on the whole race to disavow the arch traitor¹⁷³

Devoy's *Gaelic American* agreed: "The measure for which Redmond has guaranteed Ireland's loyalty, the blood of her sons, in an unjust and unprovoked war . . . is the worst political abortion."¹⁷⁴ The new *Irish World* editor, Robert Ford (the grandson of Patrick Ford who inherited the paper upon his grandfather's 1913 death) soon adopted the same

¹⁷⁰ *New York Times*, September 17, 1914.

¹⁷¹ Multitext Project in Irish History Website, Accessed at: http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/John_Redmond. Accessed 8/13/14.

¹⁷² Wittke, *Irish in America*, 274.

¹⁷³ *Gaelic American*, October 3, 1914.

¹⁷⁴ *Gaelic American*, October 3, 1914.

position.¹⁷⁵ In a November 1914 article, the *Irish World* declared that “Mr. Redmond’s Statements are Irreconcilable.”¹⁷⁶ The *Irish World* pointedly asked, “Can Ireland Spare Out of Her Meagre Population Forty or Fifty Thousand of Her Young Men to be Offered up as a Holocaust on the Battlefields of France to the God of British Greed?”¹⁷⁷

Intent on keeping the United States from joining Britain on the Allied side, Irish-American leaders went so far as to vigorously collaborate with German-American leaders, who also naturally wanted the United States to remain neutral.¹⁷⁸ As Carl Wittke extensively discusses in his book *The Irish in America*, “A comparison of such Irish papers as the *Gaelic American* and the *Irish World* with the German-language press indicates how closely they followed a common propaganda line.”¹⁷⁹ Irish-American newspapers agreed with their German-American counterparts that Germany was fighting for the laudable objectives of sovereignty and freedom of the seas.¹⁸⁰ Devoy used his *Gaelic American* to state publicly that Germany had been given the choice of going to war or being “wiped out of existence.”¹⁸¹ Beyond that, Irish-American newspapers suggested that a German victory would lead to the liberation of British colonial subjects—such as the Irish. The *Gaelic American* asserted in October 1914 that “A German victory over England, would give Ireland the opportunity to win her independence and become a prosperous nation”¹⁸² Another issue of this paper

¹⁷⁵ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 274.

¹⁷⁶ *Irish World*, November 14, 1914.

¹⁷⁷ *Irish World*, November 14, 1914.

¹⁷⁸ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 274. Also, *Irish World*, February 6, 1915.

¹⁷⁹ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 277.

¹⁸⁰ *Gaelic American*, May 15, 1914.

¹⁸¹ *Gaelic American*, August 22, 1914.

¹⁸² *Gaelic American*, October 3, 1914.

included the headline, “Germans And Irish Shoulder to Shoulder.”¹⁸³ Unsurprisingly, the *Irish World* also commended Germany’s actions during the war. On Christmas Day 1914 the paper happily reported, “Germany Cruisers Bombard England: British Thrown into Panic by Sudden Attack of Kaiser’s Ships Upon Their Coast. Get First Taste of War at Home in Centuries.”¹⁸⁴ Moreover, in 1916 the *Irish World* labeled Germany the “Champion of Small Nationalities.”¹⁸⁵ The *Irish World* and *Gaelic American* also recommended that Irish Americans read German publications. On top of such a reading list was George Sylvster Viereck’s *The Fatherland* which supposedly revealed German intellectuals’ respect for the Irish culture.¹⁸⁶

In addition, the Irish-American press challenged President Wilson’s supposed policy of “impartial neutrality.” In his memoir, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, Devoy asserts that Wilson’s policy in reality “put America into the war on the side of England.”¹⁸⁷ Of course, it also greatly disturbed Irish Americans who demanded strict neutrality that America continued its extensive trade with Britain during the war.¹⁸⁸ The *Irish World* asked, “Are we neutral when our factories for the manufacture of munitions of war are working night and day, many of them building extensions to their plants so as to take care of the increased business and all sending shiploads of these deadly implements to aid the Allies in carrying on the warfare?”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ *Gaelic American*, August 22, 1914.

¹⁸⁴ *Irish World*, December 25, 1914.

¹⁸⁵ *Irish World*, November 11, 1916.

¹⁸⁶ Wittke, *The Irish in America*, 277.

¹⁸⁷ Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, 466.

¹⁸⁸ Wittke, *The Irish in America*, 278.

¹⁸⁹ *Irish World*, February 6, 1915.

When German submarines began torpedoing American merchant ships, the Irish-American press still refused to condemn Britain's principal battlefield foe. Instead the papers assigned partial blame to the United States, for its inability to evade these attacks. Even after the Germans in May 1915 sank the luxury British liner *Lusitania*, killing 128 Americans, some Irish-American journalists criticized their own government for permitting U.S. citizens to have boarded such a vessel during wartime. Indeed, eight days after the Germans destroyed the *Lusitania*, the *Gaelic American* defended Germany's aggression, printing the German-American view of the affair. Germans are "Torpedoing English Ships," the *Gaelic American* stated, "Due to England's Attempts to Starve Germany—Ample Warning Given to American Travelers."¹⁹⁰ The papers even accused America of instigating the German attacks. The *Irish World* on October 14, 1916, stated the following, "Armed German Submarine Put Into American Port Last Saturday and Put to Sea Again Outside American Territorial Waters. It Captured Vessels Carrying Contraband of War—Sinking All Legal Say Eminent Authorities."¹⁹¹

Several notable Irish-American leaders outside the pressrooms also advocated that the United States adopt a pro-German stance. Jeremiah O'Leary, the founder of the group American Truth Society, distributed pro-German, anti-war pamphlets. O'Leary also founded a journal he titled *Bull*, which featured satirical caricatures and criticisms of the Wilson administration.¹⁹² In March 1915 James K. McGuire, the former Democratic mayor of Syracuse, New York, wrote a book, *The King, the Kaiser, and Irish Freedom* and dedicated it to German Americans, who McGuire said, "form the bulwarks of

¹⁹⁰ *Gaelic American*, May 15, 1915.

¹⁹¹ *Irish World*, October 14, 1916.

¹⁹² Jeremiah O'Leary, *My Political Trial and Experiences* (NY: Jefferson Publishing, Co., 1919), part I.

American civilization.”¹⁹³ McGuire characterized Germany’s Kaiser William as one “of the few kings in history of the world untainted by scandal or weakened by vice;” for good measure McGuire added that it was Germany and not England that believed in religious freedom.¹⁹⁴ In 1916 McGuire wrote a second book, *What Could Germany do for Ireland?* This volume even more emphatically encouraged Irish Americans to rally behind Germany. Among many loaded quotes included in the book, McGuire wrote, “We know in America that the overwhelming majority of men and women who have ever taken any interest in the Irish National cause strongly sympathize with Germany as against England.”¹⁹⁵ If that were not incentive enough to root for Germany, McGuire continued, “Our friends at Berlin are giving serious consideration to the plan of assisting in the liberation of Ireland”¹⁹⁶

Additionally, Irish and German- American leaders formed various joint organizations, among them the Friends of Peace. Those who worked on behalf of this group included Robert Ford of the *Irish World*, Devoy of the Clan na Gael and the *Gaelic American*, Mary McWhorter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians Ladies Auxiliary, Judge Daniel Cohalan of the Clan na Gael, and Michael J. Ryan of the United Irish League of America.¹⁹⁷ Such Irish-German camaraderie would prompt British Ambassador to America, Spring Rice, to write in March 1916 to Sir Horace Plunkett, an anti-Home Ruler, Irish politician. Rice lamented:

A most active propaganda is going on and all the enemies of England have ben marshalled against us. There are unfortunately a good many and the Irish have

¹⁹³ James K. McGuire, *The King, the Kaiser, and Irish Freedom* (NY: Devin-Adair, 1915), p. 5.

¹⁹⁴ McGuire, *Kaiser and Irish Freedom*, 30.

¹⁹⁵ James McGuire, *What Could Germany do for Ireland?* (NY: Wolfe Tone Company, 1916), 57.

¹⁹⁶ McGuire, *What Could Germany do for Ireland?*, 70.

¹⁹⁷ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 93.

lent their unequalled power of political organization to [German and Russian] Jews, Catholics, and Germans . . . The best politicians in the country are the Irish, and the professional Irish politician is against us.¹⁹⁸

To be sure, early in the war, much of the Irish-American public, including some who were financially well-off, did not go to the extremes that many Irish-American leaders did regarding the war. Irish Americans disliked Wilson's obvious pro-British bias, yet they hesitated to defend Germany.¹⁹⁹ The German invasion of neutral Belgium horrified them, and the fact that the Allied cause included the old Irish friend, Catholic France, made many Irish Americans hesitant to oppose that coalition unconditionally. The *Lusitania* tragedy also disturbed the general Irish-American populace more than it affected Irish leaders in that community.²⁰⁰ As Wittke acknowledges in *The Irish in America*, "a number of prominent Irish Americans refused to accept the pro-German position without reservations; and leaders of the Clan na Gael admitted that the 'moneyed' Irish had little interest in their propaganda."²⁰¹ Events in Ireland, however, would sway many Irish Americans to agree with their more radical anti-British brethren.

The Easter Rising and its Aftermath:

On Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, Irish nationalist groups in Dublin rebelled against British authority, in search of independence. This rebellion, led by the Irish Republican Brotherhood and assisted by the Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army, and, in part, Sinn Féin, came to be known as the Easter Rising.²⁰² The planning for this rebellion

¹⁹⁸ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 94.

¹⁹⁹ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 276.

²⁰⁰ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 276.

²⁰¹ Wittke, *Irish in America*, 279.

²⁰² Hachey, Hernon, and McCaffrey, *The Irish Experience*, 157.

had begun among the Irish nationalist groups as early as 1914. They received assistance from Irish Americans and Clan na Gael leaders such as Devoy, Joseph McGarrity of Philadelphia, and John T. Ryan of Buffalo.²⁰³ In the months prior to the uprising, Devoy arranged for the German government to provide an arms shipment to the Irish revolutionaries in preparation for the attack. Unfortunately for the Irish nationalists, they never received those arms.²⁰⁴ Even so, the revolutionaries seized several government buildings until superior British forces, after getting over their shock about the rebellion, quickly suppressed the protest, apprehended more than 3,000 of those involved, deported a number of presumed undesirables, put Dublin under martial law, and tortured and executed the 15 leaders of the Rising without giving them an adequate trial.²⁰⁵

In the immediate aftermath of the Rising, most of the Irish and Irish-American population did not support or even understand the revolt.²⁰⁶ It seemed a dangerously irresponsible venture to attempt during a time of war. Ironically, not until the British rashly and brutally punished the Rising leaders, did the revolutionaries acquire the favor and renown they had hoped to attain. The “back-stabbers” and “hooligans” of the insurrection now came to be regarded by Irish at home and abroad as “martyred heroes” whose poems and pictures deserved to be read and hung in Irish homes.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ William Leary, Jr. “Woodrow Wilson, Irish Americans, and the Election of 1916,” *The Journal of American History*, 54:1 (June 1967), 58.

²⁰⁴ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 58.

²⁰⁵ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 108. Also, Hachey, Hernon, McCaffrey, *The Irish Experience*, 157.

²⁰⁶ Hachey, Hernon, McCaffrey, *The Irish Experience*, 158.

²⁰⁷ Alan Ward, *The Easter Rising: Revolution and Irish Nationalism* (Arlington Heights: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1980), 110.

The “massacres,” as Daniel Cohalan called them, prompted mass protest meetings throughout the United States.²⁰⁸ In San Francisco, Boston, Providence, Buffalo, Wilmington, and other cities, outraged Irish Americans joined with the Friends of Irish Freedom, a group formed by the Clan na Gael, to condemn Britain’s excessively violent actions.²⁰⁹ The Friends of Irish Freedom described “The Irish Rebellion [a]s not the mad act of a hare-brained few. It is the heroic outburst of thousands of organized, well-armed patriots who love Ireland and hate England more than anything else in the world and are ready to die to prove it.”²¹⁰ In a May 14 meeting of the Friends of Irish Freedom at Carnegie Hall, more than 25,000 Irish Americans coalesced in solidarity against Britain.²¹¹ Speakers at the meeting included Clan na Gael members and other prominent figures in the Irish-American community, among them Father Francis P. Duffy, chaplain of the New York’s 69th Regiment.²¹² The Dublin “massacre” also pulled a number of moderate Irish-American leaders into the radical camp. They included Michael J. Ryan, the national president of the United Irish League and an adamant supporter of Redmond’s Home Rule proposal; he now fully threw his support behind the Friends of Irish Freedom.²¹³ As William Leary, Jr., writes in his article “Woodrow Wilson, Irish Americans, and the Election of 1916,” “a newfound unity among Irish Americans under Clan leadership” was a major legacy of the otherwise unsuccessful Rising.²¹⁴

²⁰⁸ Daniel Cohalan, “Easter Rising,” 1916. Box 23, Folder 4, Daniel Cohalan Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

²⁰⁹ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 59.

²¹⁰ *Irish World*, May 6, 1916.

²¹¹ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 59.

²¹² Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 60.

²¹³ *Gaelic American*, May 20, 1916.

²¹⁴ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 60.

The Election of 1916:

The Irish-American solidarity forged by the Easter Rising seemed likely to have an important effect on the 1916 presidential election. The Democratic Party renominated Wilson, despite early warnings by Irish-American newspapers, such as the San Francisco *Leader*, that the Party should select “Anyone but Wilson.”²¹⁵ The Republican Party nominated Supreme Court Justice and former New York Governor Charles Evans Hughes.²¹⁶ Robert Ford of the *Irish World* predicted that “The election of the next president will, in all probability, depend on our vote. There is not a Congressional district in which we are without influence. To win we must, however, organize and get to work at once. There is not a moment to lose.”²¹⁷ The *Irish World* did not endorse Wilson. The paper explained:

For four years past the country has had an opportunity to study Mr. Wilson. It must have learned esteem for his personal virtues and his patriotic purpose as President. But it also must have learned to fear his irresolution, and the uncertainty of his mental processes. Beginning with his attack upon the exemption of American ships from the canal tolls, he has shown a lack of loyalty to his own decision, which far outruns the inconsistency which any statesman may exhibit after a radical change of circumstances.²¹⁸

In contrast to its description of Wilson, the *Irish World* characterized Hughes as a man capable of “inexhaustible flow of vigorous utterance upon current politics [that] everywhere seems to awaken fresh interest. He impresses the people with a frank and manly directness in what he says and by his personality.”²¹⁹ The *Gaelic American* also endorsed Hughes, on the grounds that “He surely cannot be as bad as Wilson, for he is at

²¹⁵ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 60.

²¹⁶ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 646-647.

²¹⁷ *Irish World*, March 18, 1916.

²¹⁸ *Irish World*, October 24, 1916.

²¹⁹ *Irish World*, October 24, 1916.

least a man of honor.”²²⁰ The *Gaelic American* further charged that the Democratic Party was now “ruled by an autocrat, whose every whim it obeys.”²²¹

Irish Americans already disapproved of Wilson’s partiality to Britain during the Great War, and by late summer 1916, many felt Wilson had contributed in part to the tragedy. To be sure, no Irish American blamed the President for the hasty trials and executions of the Rising leaders, however, many believed that Wilson did have blood on his hands concerning the fate of one revolutionary, Roger Casement.²²² He was an Irish revolutionary who had traveled to Germany in 1914 to form an Irish Brigade of Irish-German citizens to overthrow British rule in Ireland.²²³ During the Rising, he returned to Ireland with two members of his brigade, and British authorities apprehended and tried him because of his refusal to condemn the revolutionaries.²²⁴ Casement’s American lawyer, Michael F. Doyle, twice appealed to Wilson to intervene on his client’s behalf, “on the grounds of humanity.”²²⁵ Wilson responded through his Irish-American personal secretary, Joseph Tumulty, that he could take “no action of any kind” regarding Casement.²²⁶ In July 1916 the U.S. Senate also sought to sway Wilson by passing a resolution asking the British government for “clemency in the treatment of Irish political prisoners and that the President be requested to transmit this resolution to that

²²⁰ *Gaelic American*, June 24, 1916.

²²¹ *Gaelic American*, June 24, 1916.

²²² Edward Cuddy, “Irish Americans and the 1916 Election: An Episode in Immigrant Adjustment,” *American Quarterly* vol. 21, no. 2, part 1 (Summer 1969), 230.

²²³ Terry Golway, *Irish Rebel: John Devoy and America’s Fight for Ireland’s Freedom* (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 218.

²²⁴ Golway, *Irish Rebel: John Devoy*, 227.

²²⁵ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, and the Election of 1916,” 61.

²²⁶ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 61.

Government.”²²⁷ Although the resolution did not specifically mention Casement, it clearly referred to him.

The Senate forwarded its resolution to the White House so that the President could cable it to London, which would signify his approval. But the cable got delayed in both the White House and State Department, and did not arrive in London until after Casement’s execution on August 3.²²⁸ Learning of this, Doyle notified Tumulty that the “great bulk of Catholics and those of Irish descent, are opposing the President. Careful and sympathetic handling [of the Casement matter] would have avoided this unfortunate situation.”²²⁹

During his first term, Wilson antagonized Irish Catholics in other ways. Many Catholics became particularly disenchanted with him after he backed the anti-clerical administration of Venustiano Carranza, the leader of a Mexican government that maintained a tenuous hold on power during that country’s ongoing revolution.²³⁰ For some, Wilson’s Mexican policy and suspected anti-Catholic sentiments gave an additional reason, beyond Europe, why “an Irishman should not support the head of the Democratic ticket” in the upcoming 1916 presidential election.²³¹ This of course was what most worried the ever-loyal, politically astute, presidential aide Joe Tumulty. Predictably, he branded all the attacks from Catholic quarters as a cynical ploy to “alienate [the Irish] Catholic and German vote from the President.”²³²

²²⁷ “Debate over Casement and Clemency for Irish Political prisoners,” (July 28, 1916) *U.S. Congress, Congressional Record*, 64th Cong., 1st sess., 1916, vol. 53, pt. 11, pp., 11429ff, and pt. 12, --11773 ff.

²²⁸ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 61.

²²⁹ Cuddy, “Irish Americans and the 1916 Election,” 230-231.

²³⁰ Cuddy, “Irish Americans and the 1916 Election,” 231.

²³¹ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 62.

²³² Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 62.

Recognizing that they had political liabilities, Democratic operatives, acting on Tumulty's advice, devised two messages they would take to the voters. One was exceedingly simple: "He Kept Us Out Of War"—a slogan many of those closest to Wilson, including Tumulty, believed was the President's most compelling attribute.²³³ The second message had a more negative quality: the Democrats decided to emphasize what came to be called "anti-hyphenism."²³⁴ The first message about Wilson's having kept America out of the war would appeal to all voters; the latter point sought to make scapegoats out of ethnic-Americans, particularly the Irish. Heeding Tumulty's advice, the Democratic Party emphasized the need for national unity, in the process slyly insinuating that anyone who identified with his ethnic group to any significant degree was engaging in treasonous behavior.²³⁵ This was a backhanded way of encouraging mistrust and contempt for Irish Americans, German Americans, as well as other ethnic groups. The Party's convention platform stated:

The Democratic Party . . . summons all men of whatever origin or creed who would count themselves Americans, to join in making clear to all the world the unity and consequent power of America. This is an issue of patriotism . . . Whoever, actuated by the purpose to promote the interest of a foreign power, in disregard of our own country's welfare or to injure this Government in its foreign relations or cripple or destroy its industries at home, and whoever by arousing prejudices of a racial, religious or other nature creates discord and strife among our people so as to obstruct the wholesome process of unification, is faithless to the trust which the privileges of citizenship repose in him and is disloyal to his country . . . We charge that such for the purpose of advancing the interests of foreign countries and to the prejudice and detriment of our own country.²³⁶

²³³ Joseph Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson as I Know Him* (NY: Doubleday Page & Company, 1921), 256.

²³⁴ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 133.

²³⁵ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 133.

²³⁶ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 133.

In other words, those Irish Americans who constantly spoke of the Easter Rising and their hatred of Britain were putting the interests of their ethnic homeland above those of the United States.

But even as the Democrats touted this cynical line, Tumulty in mid-October also tried to repair relations with Irish-American voters. He did so by making public a letter he had written to Casement's attorney Doyle. The letter denied Wilson's culpability in Casement's death. Published in the *New York Times*, Tumulty's letter concluded on an emphatic note: "So I make the point that the action of the American Senate, whatever it was worth, was not lost by reason of a failure of transmission of the resolution through the channels of our State Department" ²³⁷

Wilson himself demonstrated little tact when it came to pacifying ethnic Irish- and German-Americans. In September 1916, Jeremiah O'Leary, president of the German-financed American Truth Society, sent an insulting telegram to Wilson. This telegram concerned New Jersey U.S. Senate Democrat James E. Martine and his September primary victory over Wilson's friend and New Jersey Attorney General John Wescott. ²³⁸ Martine was a pro-Irish, pro-immigrant politician who did not get along with the President and had cosponsored the clemency resolution for Casement. ²³⁹ In his telegram, O'Leary told Wilson that "Senator Martine won because the voters of New Jersey do not want any truckling to the British Empire nor do they approve of dictatorship over Congress . . ."—the latter point an obvious slur against Wilson. ²⁴⁰ "Your telegram

²³⁷ *New York Times*, October 17, 1916.

²³⁸ *New York Times*, September 28, 30, 1916. Also, Leary, "Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916," 63.

²³⁹ Leary, "Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916," 63.

²⁴⁰ Leary, "Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916," 64.

received,” Wilson caustically replied to O’Leary, “I would feel deeply mortified to have you or anybody like you vote for me.”²⁴¹

O’Leary gave copies of Wilson’s unguarded reply to the Irish-American press which gleefully reprinted it. Editors assumed that Wilson’s comment would mobilize Irish Americans against the President so decisively that he could not possibly win. The *Gaelic American* called the telegram “an expression of hatred for the Irish” and contended that the President had made the “worst mistake of his whole career.”²⁴² The *Irish World* criticized Wilson for lashing out at hyphenated Americans “in a fit of anger.”²⁴³

In fact however, Wilson’s reply to O’Leary rallied many Americans to his banner. They liked that the president had forcefully responded to someone who seemed to be more interested in fomenting disunity than in working on behalf of American interests at a time of potential serious crisis. “The Democratic Campaign, within twenty-four hours after the publication of the O’Leary telegram,” Tumulty would exult in his memoirs, “was on again in full swing.”²⁴⁴ Of course, many ethnic voters continued to back Republican Hughes. The National German-American Alliance supported him and so did the Friends of Irish Freedom. Irish-American leaders like Ford and Devoy used their publications to lambast the President for the duration of the campaign.

²⁴¹ *New York Times*, September 30, 1916.

²⁴² *Gaelic American*, October 7, 1916.

²⁴³ *Irish World*, October 7, 1916.

²⁴⁴ Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson as I Know Him*, 214.

But Hughes was a poor campaigner.²⁴⁵ With so many ethnic voters, most of them Democrats, ready to jump to his side, Hughes gave them no reason to do so. Indeed he gave little indication that he particularly respected ethnic Americans any more than Wilson did. Even worse, Hughes inexplicably failed to assure that he would keep the United States out of the Great War. For all these reasons, Irish-American leaders like Ford and Devoy who so hated Wilson simply could not fully persuade the Irish-American voting masses, or even some of their fellow elites to back Hughes.²⁴⁶ Indeed, some members of the Friends of Irish Freedom like labor lawyer Francis Patrick Walsh, Governor Edward Dunne of Illinois, and Justice Victor Dowling of the New York Supreme Court publicly supported Wilson in 1916.²⁴⁷ As John J. Splain, the National Vice President of the Friends of Irish Freedom recognized, “There was no general Irish American campaign to defeat Wilson.”²⁴⁸

When the final tallies in November came in, Wilson narrowly defeated Hughes, 277-254 in the Electoral College.²⁴⁹ In his losing effort Hughes carried six of the eight states with the highest concentration of Irish-American voters: New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Illinois, New Jersey, and Connecticut.²⁵⁰ These results prompted the *Irish World* to take some solace in “The political independence shown by Irish Americans in the presidential election of this year.”²⁵¹

²⁴⁵ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 71.

²⁴⁶ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 71.

²⁴⁷ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 136.

²⁴⁸ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 135.

²⁴⁹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 657.

²⁵⁰ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 66.

²⁵¹ *Irish World*, November 18, 1916.

Undoubtedly this was so, however, the *Irish World*, ignored the simple fact that those six states previously mentioned generally went Republican in spite of their sizeable Irish-American populations.²⁵² In his article, “Wilson, Irish Americans, and the Election of 1916,” William Leary persuasively concludes, “The weight of evidence indicates that Irish Americans, despite the exhortations of their leaders, voted for Wilson in as great or greater numbers than they had ever voted for a Democratic presidential candidate in the immediate past.”²⁵³

But why did Irish Americans ignore the pleas and arguments of their leaders? For one thing, most Irish Americans belonged to the laboring class, and as such generally appreciated Wilson’s support of such measures as the Child Labor Law and the Adamson Eight-Hour Law, both of which became law in 1916.²⁵⁴ Also Wilson, at least so far, had upheld his promise to keep the United States out of war, a truth both the *Gaelic American* and the *Irish World* conceded had been a powerful factor in his reelection.²⁵⁵ As for the president’s opponent, even the *Irish World* had admitted during the campaign that “Mr. Hughes has been even less frank than Mr. Wilson . . . on the great questions of the day.”²⁵⁶ Finally and most importantly, as Alan Ward observes in his book *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, “The *bulk* of the Irish were traditionally Democratic and they preferred to remain so.”²⁵⁷ Wilson, as of yet, had done nothing so egregious that this

²⁵² Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 66.

²⁵³ Leary, “Wilson, Irish Americans, Election of 1916,” 71.

²⁵⁴ Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 138.

²⁵⁵ *Gaelic American*, November 18, 1916.

²⁵⁶ *Irish World*, September 23, 1916.

²⁵⁷ Ward, *Anglo-American Relations*, 135.

loyal block of voters would abandon him. He would, however, accomplish that improbable feat in his second term.

The Arousal of Irish Hopes for Independence:

Wilson's "He Kept Us Out of War" pledge did not last long into his second term. America declared war on Germany in April 1917.²⁵⁸ The American public entered the conflict with an outburst of patriotic enthusiasm, and most Irish Americans joined in this nationalistic fervor.²⁵⁹ Given these new circumstances, Irish-American leaders sensibly curbed much of their criticism of the president, lest they suffer a backlash from the public-at-large. Devoy distributed a Clan na Gael circular pledging that "we will remain loyal and will yield to none in devotion to the [American] flag," while Judge Cohalan, a fellow Clan member and Wilson enemy, publicly repeated the sentiments in Devoy's circular.²⁶⁰ At a speech in Carnegie Hall in April 1917, Cohalan urged Irish Americans to take up arms and defend the American cause: "... every Irishman, from one end of the country to the other will stand loyally to the Flag and to the Constitution and to the country, as men of Irish blood have done in every generation."²⁶¹

None of this meant, however, that Irish Americans intended to abandon efforts to secure greater freedom for Ireland. A little more than a week after Congress declared war, Devoy convened a large Irish gathering at Carnegie Hall.²⁶² Speechmakers at this meeting called for Irish freedom, and afterward Devoy drafted and sent House Speaker

²⁵⁸ Woodrow Wilson, "Fourteen Points," (Washington, D.C. January 8, 1918) Accessed at: http://www.emersonkent.com/speeches/the_fourteen_points.htm. Accessed 8/26/14.

²⁵⁹ *Gaelic American*, November 2, 1918.

²⁶⁰ Golway, *Irish Rebel: John Devoy*, 241.

²⁶¹ Daniel Cohalan, "Speech of Honorable Daniel Cohalan at Carnegie Hall, NY," April 9, 1917. Box 23, Folder 5, Daniel Cohalan Papers," American Irish Historical Society, New York.

²⁶² Golway, *Irish Rebel: John Devoy*, 241.

Champ Clark--but not his long-time enemy Wilson--a telegram, which read in part, “[We] earnestly hope that in pursuance of your noble declaration for justice to small nationalities, you will raise your voice—powerful as the voice of America—in demand for justice to Ireland”²⁶³

Wilson’s wartime rhetoric about the need for national self-determination seemingly put him in agreement with the core objective of the Irish. In January 1918 Wilson issued his famous Fourteen Points, which he hoped would serve as the basis for an eventual peace agreement. One of these Points called for the “sovereignty of interests of populations,” and another called for the creation of an “association of nations” (eventually the League of Nations) that would provide “mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity”²⁶⁴ In February Wilson gave a speech reemphasizing his support for self-determination. He declared that “National aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. ‘Self-determination’ is not a mere phrase.”²⁶⁵ Irish-American leaders took the President at his word, and intended to make him keep it. Thus some ten months later, the *Irish World* reminded Wilson that in that same February speech he had also stated, “This war had its roots in the disregard of the rights of small nations and of nationalities which lacked the union and the force to make good their claim to determine their own allegiance and their own forms of political life.”²⁶⁶

²⁶³ *Gaelic American*, April 14, 1917.

²⁶⁴ Woodrow Wilson, “Fourteen Points,” (Washington, D.C. January 8, 1918). Accessed at http://www.emersonkent.com/speeches/the_fourteen_points.htm. Accessed: 8/26/14.

²⁶⁵ John Duff, “The Versailles Treaty and the Irish-Americans,” *Journal of American History*, vol. 55 (Dec., 1968, 582.

²⁶⁶ *Irish World*, December 7, 1918.

Given such emphatic statements, Irish-American leaders could only be hopeful. According to historian John B. Duff in his article, “The Versailles Treaty and the Irish American,” many Irish-Americans voters grew steadily more “[c]onfident that the President included the Irish among the peoples whose national aspirations were to be respected.”²⁶⁷ Accordingly, Duff continues, “most Irish Americans were quite willing to leave the settlement of the Irish question to Wilson.”²⁶⁸ Even longtime Wilson critics like Cohalan and Devoy endorsed Wilson’s post-war peace program, or at least their perception of it.²⁶⁹ In May 1918 Cohalan voiced confidence in Wilson at a Friends of Irish Freedom meeting when he declared, “The President and the Congress of the United States are determined to see that Ireland shall be included with other countries among those to whom the right of self-determination shall be given.”²⁷⁰ The 1,000 Irish Americans in attendance agreed with Cohalan and adopted a petition calling on the president to make a calculated effort to free Ireland—“held in bondage”—from Britain.²⁷¹

Still more Irish Americans came out in support of Wilson during World War I. William J. Maloney, an Irish scholar who had moved to America after the Easter Rising executions, wrote a series of articles in late 1918 for the *Catholic Review of the Week*, all supportive of Irish independence and Wilson’s war effort. A passage in an article he wrote just after the Armistice that ended the War best describes why he and others like him trusted in Wilson and looked forward to the ensuing peace negotiations:

The plain peoples of today in the Allied no less than in the American ranks were led to battle, in order that the supremacy of right over might should be finally

²⁶⁷ Duff, “Versailles Treaty,” 583.

²⁶⁸ Duff, “Versailles Treaty,” 583.

²⁶⁹ Duff, “Versailles Treaty,” 584.

²⁷⁰ *Gaelic American*, June 1, 1918.

²⁷¹ *New York Times*, May 19, 1918.

vindicated, that small nationalities might thereby be freed from the oppression of usurping Powers, and that henceforth the free peoples of the world might unite in equality as members of a League of Nations, a League which would exercise common political sovereignty solely to the end that war should forever cease . . . Dominating the Peace Conference are the Government of America and the Government of the British Empire. America's President before the war, at the acceptance of the war, during the war, and since the cessation of hostilities has unequivocally stated his purpose to seek the final elimination of war. Plain peoples of the world believe in him, trust in him, but fear for him lest, like Alexander I of Russia, his purpose be defeated, so that millions of lives must be squandered again to reach this same stage on the road to universal peace. And the basis of their fear is the symbol, Ireland.²⁷²

Petitions to Wilson about Irish independence intensified with the end of the War.

Irish Americans organized mass meetings in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, Jacksonville, and other cities in pursuit of their cause.²⁷³ On December 7, 1918, bishops and other clergymen from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and elsewhere sent a petition to Wilson asking him to "champion the cause of Ireland" at the peace talks.²⁷⁴ On December 10, 1918, less than a month after the Armistice, 25,000 Irish Americans met at Madison Square Garden.²⁷⁵ Attendees at this event included Cardinal O'Connell of Boston, Cohalan, Devoy, and Governor Whitman of New York, all calling for Irish sovereignty.²⁷⁶ Cardinal O'Connell reminded the crowd that "this war we were told again and again . . . was for justice for all, for the inviolable rights of small nations, for the inalienable right, inherent in every nation, of self-determination . . . Let the application begin with Ireland."²⁷⁷ In a dramatic gesture,

²⁷² William Maloney, *The Irish Issue*. (NY: The American Press, 1919), 49.

²⁷³ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 167. Also, *Irish World*, December 7, 1918.

²⁷⁴ *Irish World*, December 7, 1918.

²⁷⁵ Golway, *Irish Rebel: John Devoy*, 250.

²⁷⁶ *New York Times*, December 11, 1918.

²⁷⁷ Golway, *Irish Rebel: John Devoy*, 249-250.

the group later radioed a resolution to Wilson, then en route to Europe for the peace talks, asking the President to secure Ireland a place in the talks.

Several other Irish-American organizations conveyed the same message. The Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Ladies Auxiliary (both Irish-American groups) boasted a half-million members dedicated to Irish freedom. Additionally, Friends of Irish Freedom groups sprang up in all major American cities.²⁷⁸ By the end of 1918, thousands of Irish Americans who previously had been inactive in Irish politics now intently devoted themselves to independence for the homeland.

Naturally, nationalists back in Ireland were also thrilled by the President's rhetoric. He was enabling them to "internationalize" their cause. Seizing what they regarded as a grand opportunity, nationalists in January 1919 created the Dáil Eireann, a unicameral Irish Parliament, and elected Sinn Féin leader Eamon De Valera as this body's President.²⁷⁹ The Dáil swiftly issued a Declaration of Independence, reaffirming Ireland's right to sovereignty and echoing Wilson's warning that a failure by the world to grant such legitimate claims would lead to renewed war:

We claim for our national independence the recognition and support of every free nation in the world, and we proclaim that independence to be a condition precedent to international peace thereafter.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ John Duff, "The Politics of Revenge: The Ethnic Opposition to the Peace Policies of Woodrow Wilson" (PhD diss., Columbia University, NY, 1964), 70.

²⁷⁹ *New York Times*, January 22, 1919.

²⁸⁰ Maurice Walsh, *The News from Ireland: Foreign Correspondents and the Irish Revolution* (NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 60.

Shortly thereafter, De Valera issued a follow-up statement “challeng[ing] England to allow Ireland the principle of Self-Determination” that Wilson so eloquently had proclaimed.²⁸¹

Not everyone in the broad Irish community was altogether confident that all would work out well for Ireland. The possibility existed that Wilson would fail to fulfill the high expectations he had aroused. Devoy, one of Wilson’s bitterest critics, could not shake that suspicion from his mind. “If [Wilson] leaves Ireland out,” Devoy darkly predicted in December 1918, “I am afraid he will never live long enough to live it down.”²⁸²

The Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles:

Before leaving for the Paris Peace Conference, President Wilson ostensibly committed himself to the Irish cause.²⁸³ In response to Montana Senator Thomas J. Walsh’s entreaty that he present Ireland’s case at the peace talks, Wilson in early December 1918 said, “You may be sure that I shall keep this important interest in mind and shall use my influence at every opportunity to bring about a just and satisfactory solution.”²⁸⁴ The next day, Wilson responded to a similarly-phrased petition from the Rector of Catholic University, Thomas J. Shahan. “It will be my endeavor,” Wilson assured Shahan, “in regard to every question which arises before the Peace Conference to do my utmost to bring about the realization of the principles to which your letter

²⁸¹ Tansill, *America and the Fight for Irish Freedom*, 301.

²⁸² *Gaelic American*, December 21, 1918.

²⁸³ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 171.

²⁸⁴ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 168.

refers.”²⁸⁵ Additionally, Wilson told the Reverend James Fielding of Chicago and the 1,500 Illinois bishops and priests who signed and sent him a petition for Irish independence that he would give “my most earnest attention to the fullest extent of my power” to their concerns. In its story about this exchange, the *Chicago Examiner* printed the headline, “WILSON AGREES TO HELP IRELAND.”²⁸⁶

Wilson appeared unfazed by the lofty expectations he had created about what he could accomplish at the Paris Peace Talks. Secretary of State Robert Lansing, however, worried that the President had overused the term “self-determination” in his rhetoric, something that eventually would create trouble. In his contemporaneous reflections about developments in Paris, published a few years later in a volume titled *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative*, Lansing wrote, “The more I think about the President’s declaration as to the right of ‘self-determination,’ the more convinced I am of the danger of putting such ideas into the minds of certain races.” That was because, Lansing continued, “It is bound to be the basis of impossible demands on the Peace Congress and create trouble in many lands. What effect will it have on the Irish, the Indians, the Egyptians, and the nationalists among the Boers? Will it not breed discontent, disorder, and rebellion?”²⁸⁷

Lansing’s apprehensions turned out to be well-founded. At the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson quickly learned that the British, French, and Italian governments held his Fourteen Points in disdain and instead were seeking to acquire reparations,

²⁸⁵ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 168.

²⁸⁶ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 168.

²⁸⁷ Robert Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative* (NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), 97.

indemnities, and new territory.²⁸⁸ Britain of course regarded the Irish question as insulting, while the French viewed this issue as inconsequential.²⁸⁹ Wilson thus found himself in a predicament: if he pushed for Irish sovereignty he risked angering his fellow victors and losing support for his cherished League of Nations proposal; yet if he declined to argue on behalf of the Irish, he could lose much support within his own Democratic Party.

Meanwhile, in an effort to ensure that their cause would be heard, the Dáil appointed three representatives--Eamon de Valera, Arthur Griffith, and Count Plunkett--to the Paris peace talks.²⁹⁰ These delegates hoped "to join Ireland's case to President Wilson's espousal of self-determination as an end in itself."²⁹¹ But Wilson and the other Allied leaders rejected the credentials of Sean T. O'Kelly, an envoy sent to secure the admission of the three Dáil delegates to the Conference.²⁹² Following this, the once-high hopes among the Irish delegates that they would be permitted to participate in the Paris talks began to fade.²⁹³ Moreover, Wilson asked Joseph C. Grew, the advisor to the U.S. delegation at the Conference, to discourage any more Irish delegations coming to Paris. Wilson's opposition to O'Kelly showed that he intended to keep Irish issues out of the peace talks.²⁹⁴ Irish Americans, back home, however, did not know this, and so they

²⁸⁸ Duff, "The Versailles Treaty and Irish Americans," 586.

²⁸⁹ Duff, "The Versailles Treaty and Irish Americans," 586.

²⁹⁰ Francis Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 399.

²⁹¹ Walsh, *The News from Ireland*, 60.

²⁹² Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, 401.

²⁹³ Walsh, *The News from Ireland*, 108.

²⁹⁴ Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 74.

continued, to a greater degree than their counterparts in Ireland, to believe they still could influence the President even if he had “ignore[d] the Dublin Irish.”²⁹⁵

Accordingly, by February 1919 Wilson was getting intensified pressure from both Irish-American groups and Congress to address the Irish issue while in Paris. “Bending” to the political pressures to which they were being subjected, both the Senate and House began constructing resolutions calling on the Peace Conference to consider favorably Ireland’s desire for self-determination.²⁹⁶ Republican Senator William Borah of Idaho led the “Irreconcilables”—Congressmen who wanted no Treaty and no League—and encouraged such resolutions while denouncing Wilson’s plan that not only subjected America to European intervention but also “made no provision for the freedom of Ireland.”²⁹⁷ From Washington, Acting Secretary of State Frank L. Polk cabled Secretary Lansing in Paris that “both parties were ‘playing politics’ with the Irish resolution in the Senate to get the Irish vote.”²⁹⁸ Charged with the task of stopping these resolutions, Tumulty, who had remained in Washington, succeeded only in persuading the House and Senate to pass concurrent rather than joint resolutions--the difference being that a concurrent resolution did not require either an approval or a veto from the President.²⁹⁹

By February, several Irish-American leaders began losing patience with Wilson. To be sure, moderates like Maloney maintained a “wait and see” approach.³⁰⁰ But others, following the more radical lead of Cohalan and Devoy, believed that the time had come

²⁹⁵ Duff, “The Versailles Treaty and Irish Americans,” 587.

²⁹⁶ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 75.

²⁹⁷ Marian McKenna, *Borah* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 155.

²⁹⁸ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 75.

²⁹⁹ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 76.

³⁰⁰ Duff, “The Versailles Treaty and Irish Americans,” 584, 588.

to publicly criticize the Paris proceedings: in furtherance of that objective they worked together to create the third Irish Race Convention in Philadelphia on February 22-23, 1919.³⁰¹ At this gathering an impressive group of speakers—Cohalan; the Reverend Francis McCabe, president of DePauw University; Michael J. Ryan, attorney and member of the United Irish League; Cardinal James Gibbons, the Archbishop of Baltimore; and others addressed a crowd of 6,000 Irish Americans.³⁰² “When our great President laid down the Fourteen Points upon which peace was to be made,” Cohalan said, “. . . he made no restrictions upon the application of those doctrines.” Cohalan continued, “He said that self-determination was to be given to all peoples without condition or qualification.”³⁰³ McCabe in his remarks also reminded Wilson of his promises to all oppressed people, including the Irish. “The time to plead is gone forever,” McCabe declared. “We want promises of Irish freedom fulfilled . . . We must not ask for the fulfillment of this promise. We must demand it.”³⁰⁴ Ryan added, “Self-determination means specifically the right of a people to decide their own status in the world and the form and character of their government. Ireland is clearly entitled to self-determination.”³⁰⁵ The Race Convention successfully rallied the Irish people both at home and in Ireland. On March 5, 1919, De Valera wrote to Cohalan expressing the Dáil’s delight over the meeting: “The Executive Dáil Eireann warmly appreciates the

³⁰¹ Golway, *Irish Rebel: John Devoy*, 251.

³⁰² *Irish World*, March 1, 1919. Also, Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 172.

³⁰³ *New York Times*, February 23, 1919.

³⁰⁴ *New York Times*, February 23, 1919.

³⁰⁵ *Irish World*, March 1, 1919.

magnificent work for Ireland of the Irish Race in the United States of America and places the highest value on the act of cooperation of the Irish Race Convention”³⁰⁶

After the Convention, several states passed resolutions endorsing self-determination for Ireland, underscoring the growing support for this cause.³⁰⁷ Democratic Montana Senator Thomas Walsh, an Irish-American Wilson supporter, sensed the declining popularity of the president. To counteract this trend, he helped arrange for a committee put together by the Race Convention to meet with the President. Wilson had returned home from Paris for a couple of weeks in February and March, in order to promote the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations provision in that document.³⁰⁸ This committee, led by Judge Cohalan, waited several days in Washington, but Wilson refused to see them. More conscious of the political ramifications should Wilson remain so adamant, Tumulty wrote to the President on February 24, 1919, imploring him to change his mind:

I am sure your refusal to see this delegation will give aid and comfort to the enemy. Further, from your letters to Senator Walsh and Bishop Shahan, you would, as you said in Senator Walsh’s letter ‘appreciate the importance of a proper solution of the Irish question’ and that you would ‘use your influence at every opportunity to bring about a just and satisfactory solution.’

Regardless of what we may think of Cohalan and his crowd, there is a deep desire on the part of the American people to see the Irish question settled in the only way it can be settled—by the establishment of a Home Rule Parliament in Dublin. It would help England as much as America to get this perplexing question out of the way.³⁰⁹

On March 1, 1919, Tumulty made a second appeal to Wilson:

³⁰⁶ Eamon De Valera to Daniel Cohalan, March 5, 1919. Box 4, Folder 1, Daniel Cohalan Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

³⁰⁷ Daniel Cohalan comments on Versailles Treaty and America’s Reaction, 1919. Box 23, Folder 4, Daniel Cohalan Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York. Also, *Irish World*, March 15, 1919.

³⁰⁸ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 173.

³⁰⁹ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 173-174.

Your attitude on the matter is fraught with a great deal of danger both to the Democratic Party and to the cause you represent . . . Republicans are taking full advantage of this . . . You know that I am not a professional Irishman but your refusal to see this delegation will simply strengthen the Sinn Féin movement in this country.³¹⁰

Finally, Wilson agreed to meet the committee on the evening of March 4. On that day Wilson had been in a foul mood, inasmuch as the House of Representatives “by a very large majority” passed a resolution requesting that the American delegates to the Peace Conference secure Irish freedom.³¹¹ Moreover, thirty-nine senators (enough to defeat the treaty) published a letter stating that they would not approve the League of Nations in its existing form.³¹² Sensing serious potential trouble for his grand vision, Wilson delivered a speech to the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City on March 4, during which he told a pro-League audience that “so many threads of the treaty [are] tied to the covenant [i.e., the League] that you cannot dissect the covenant from the treaty without destroying the whole vital structure.”³¹³

Later in the evening, when Wilson met with the Irish committee, he refused to speak to them upon realizing that his longtime enemy, Judge Cohalan, was present.³¹⁴ As Wilson’s second wife, Edith Bolling Wilson, wrote in her memoir about the incident, “We found my husband facing Mr. Tumulty and looking very grim . . . ‘No,’ he was saying. ‘You can tell them I will wait five minutes. If in that time the rest of them want to come I will receive them; if not, I will go to the dock.’”³¹⁵ Tumulty begged the

³¹⁰ John Morton Blum, *Joe Tumulty and the Wilson Era* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Comp., 1951), 176.

³¹¹ Daniel Cohalan comments on Versailles Treaty and America’s Reaction, 1919. Box 23, Folder 4, Daniel Cohalan Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

³¹² Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 81.

³¹³ *New York Times*, March 5, 1919.

³¹⁴ *New York Times*, March 5, 1919.

³¹⁵ Edith Bolling Wilson, *My Memoir* (NY: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1938), 242-243.

President to reconsider. “Oh, Governor [In private conversations Tumulty always referred to Wilson as ‘Governor’], this will make a terrible impression on his followers.”³¹⁶

Ultimately, Cohalan opted to step aside, stating that “The cause is bigger than any one man”³¹⁷ Nevertheless the meeting came to nothing, as Wilson made no promises to the committee. When Frank P. Walsh, who was also in attendance, asked the President to “use his powerful influence to see that the delegates selected by the people of Ireland” could engage the Peace Conference, Wilson balked. “You do not expect me,” he asked in exasperation, “to give an answer to this request now?”³¹⁸

Though he did not inform the committee members, Wilson already had decided not to push the Irish issue during the remainder of the Peace Conference. Instead Wilson planned to wait until his beloved League won approval before he would take on the problem of Ireland.³¹⁹ He saw no point in angering the British Prime Minister Lloyd George prior to the peace treaty’s ratification. In defense of Wilson’s position, Tumulty in his book, *Woodrow Wilson as I Know Him*, later would write:

The President did not agree with the friends of Irish freedom in America that coercive methods put upon England through the instrumentality of the United States could accomplish anything. When he [Wilson] left for the other side to take part in the Peace Conference, the future of Ireland was much in his thoughts, but his solution of the problem lay in the establishment of a forum under the League of Nations before which not only the cause of Ireland but the cause of any oppressed people might be brought to the judgment of mankind.³²⁰

Preoccupied with the influential presence of Lloyd George in Paris, Wilson ignored the power of Cohalan at home. Just as Tumulty had predicted, the rudeness with

³¹⁶ Edith Wilson, *My Memoir*, 243.

³¹⁷ Tansill, *America and the Fight for Irish Freedom*, 302.

³¹⁸ Tansill, *America and the Fight for Irish Freedom*, 303.

³¹⁹ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 83.

³²⁰ Joseph Tumulty. *Woodrow Wilson as I Know Him* (NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1921, 397.

which Wilson had treated Cohalan on March 4 had been a serious, political misstep.³²¹ Even moderate Irish leaders, such as Dr. Maloney were embarrassed by Wilson's reaction to Cohalan.³²² More broadly, the Irish-American voters of 1919 were not of the same mindset as they had been in 1916. They sided with the Irish-American leaders who were working tirelessly to make positive change in Ireland. Thanks to Wilson's rebuff, "overnight, Cohalan became the champion of many Irish Americans; [and] they besieged Wilson with their protests."³²³

After the disastrous March 4 meeting with Wilson, leading members of the Race Convention commissioned three members to travel as a delegation to the Peace Talks in the spring of 1919.³²⁴ This group included Frank Patrick Walsh, former Governor of Illinois Edward F. Dunne, and Michael J. Ryan.³²⁵ Of the three commissioners, only Ryan supported Cohalan and none of them had expressed any opposition to Wilson during the 1916 campaign.³²⁶ In every sense they qualified as moderate Irish Americans. Realizing the mounting antagonism of Irish-American leaders, both Senator Walsh and Tumulty begged the President to ensure the delegation's entrance into the Peace Talks. Wilson granted the three men passports to France because he believed that not doing so would "cause more irritation here among the Irish," but he did not guarantee them a hearing at the talks.³²⁷ Wilson agreed with Lloyd George when the Prime Minister sent

³²¹ Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 84.

³²² Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 85.

³²³ Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 84.

³²⁴ Philip Henry Kerr to Woodrow Wilson, May 12, 1919. Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 59, 1919 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 105.

³²⁵ Kerr to Wilson, May 12, 1919. Arthur S. Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 59, 1919, 105.

³²⁶ Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 87.

³²⁷ Gordon Auchincloss, "A Memorandum by Gordon Auchincloss," May 15, 1919. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 172.

the delegation to Ireland rather than sanction its appearance at the talks.³²⁸ Wilson also seconded Lloyd George's feigned anger over the delegation's supposedly "scandalous speeches" in Ireland, and wrote to Lansing in May 1919 "that the whole failure of their [the Irish-American delegation members] errand lies at their door and not ours."³²⁹

Beyond that, Wilson told the journalist Ray Stannard Baker that the Irish-American delegation members were "mischief makers," and that if he had to do so he would "go home and tell the public how they destroyed their usefulness through their own indiscretion and unwisdom."³³⁰ According to the President, the behavior of the Irish Americans "who could see nothing but their own interest" was why the Peace Conference would not even consider further attempts by Ireland to send a delegation to the talks.³³¹

But by mid-May 1919 Wilson's political stock in America had sunk to drastic lows. The most damaging blow to the President's hope of getting the Treaty ratified was the U.S. Senate's growing concern about the Irish issue. In May, Republican Irreconcilable Senator Borah gladly joined forces with Cohalan and introduced a resolution asking the Peace Commission "to secure a hearing for the representatives of the Irish Republic."³³² Borah hoped that by using the Irish issue as a wedge, he could create division within the Wilsonian camp. Indeed, "Few other senators had such wide hyphenate connections as Borah," who had a history of championing nationalism and

³²⁸ Frank Patrick Walsh, E.F. Dunne, and Michal J. Ryan to Robert Lansing, May 16, 1919. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 251.

³²⁹ Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 91.

³³⁰ Ray Stannard Baker, "From the Diary of Ray Stannard Baker," May 31, 1919. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 59, 646.

³³¹ Baker, "From the Diary of Ray Stannard Baker," May 31, 1919. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 59, 646.

³³² "Borah Resolution," (June 6, 1919) *U.S. Congress, Congressional Record*, 66th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 58, p. 733.

self-determination.³³³ That enabled him to serve “as a linchpin between this hyphenate group and the Irreconcilables.”³³⁴ Borah’s collaboration with Irish-American leaders worked: his resolution passed, with only one dissenting vote.³³⁵ Clearly the fear of Irish-American reprisal resonated with Senators in 1919.

In response to Borah’s resolution, Tumulty cabled Wilson on June 9, 1919, and urged him to think about his Party’s political future rather than Lloyd George’s. Tumulty wrote, “Lloyd George’s mistakes in handling this will be his undoing . . . In this country the Irish are united in this matter and in every large city and town are carrying on a propaganda, asking that Ireland be given the right of self-determination.” Tumulty continued, “I trust you can say a word. Could you not ask that Irish delegates be given a chance to present their case to the Conference?”³³⁶ But Wilson still refused to budge, insisting that he had done all he could for Ireland and would do no more.³³⁷ In his memoir, Tumulty expressed agreement on this point with the President: “Ireland has never had,” Tumulty wrote, “a truer friend than Woodrow Wilson.”³³⁸ Only a man as loyal to him as Tumulty was could believe that in 1919. “The vast majority of politically active Irish leaders,” notes the historian John Duff, “were united in their opposition to the President, regardless of their internal disagreements. No group would contribute more to the defeat of the Treaty of Versailles.”³³⁹

³³³ McKenna, *Borah*, 158.

³³⁴ McKenna, *Borah*, 158.

³³⁵ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 95.

³³⁶ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 97.

³³⁷ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 98.

³³⁸ Tumulty. *Woodrow Wilson as I Know Him*, 407.

³³⁹ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 104.

The Irish-American opposition to the League of Nations, Wilson's most cherished provision in the Treaty, gained extra momentum in June 1919 when the President of the Dáil, Eamon De Valera, visited New York City.³⁴⁰ De Valera astutely recognized the importance of turning American opinion in favor of the Irish cause. To that end, he made his first public appearance in America at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on June 23, only days before the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and Wilson's return to the United States.³⁴¹ In his speech De Valera called upon the American people to recognize Ireland and reject any international organizations or treaties that did not do the same. Revealing his prowess in employing Wilsonian rhetoric for his own cause, De Valera drew parallels between the American colonies and Ireland, noting that both had been "exploited by England in the interest of her imperialism."³⁴² Recalling the American Revolution, De Valera cried, "You had your 'tories' and your 'loyalists' to whom Washington very properly sent the ultimatum that if they preferred the interest and protection of Britain to the freedom and happiness of their own country, they might forthwith withdraw themselves and their families with the enemy lines."³⁴³ Tapping into what he hoped was a heightened respect for universal freedom among post-World War I Americans, De Valera reminded his audience:

Latin nations as well as Poland, Hungary, Greece are now free states. Ireland, the one remaining white nation in the slavery of alien rule, will similarly be free unless Americans make scraps of paper of their principles and prove false to the tradition their fathers have handed down to them."³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ *Irish World*, June 28, 1919.

³⁴¹ *Irish World*, June 28, 1919.

³⁴² Maurice Moynihan, ed., *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera*, (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1980), 29.

³⁴³ Moynihan, ed., *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera*, 29.

³⁴⁴ Moynihan, ed., *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera*, 31.

The Treaty of Versailles, including the proposed League of Nations, was formally signed at Versailles on June 28, 1919.³⁴⁵ Wilson returned to the United States on July 9th and sent the Treaty to the Senate the next day.³⁴⁶ By early July, however, a number of opposition groups had formed, both inside and outside the Senate, to prevent the Treaty's ratification. Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, led one faction known as the Reservationists.³⁴⁷ This group did not outright object to the League, but refused to approve the Treaty unless its text was amended to ensure that Congress, not the League, maintained full power to involve the United States in war.³⁴⁸ Senator Borah's group of Senate Irreconcilables refused to ratify any version of the League.³⁴⁹ However, the fight over the League's ratification extended far beyond Capitol Hill. Many groups of "hyphenated Americans," that class of citizens that Wilson and the Democrats had demonized in 1916, worked with Senators of both parties who opposed the Treaty. Of all the groups that sought the Treaty's demise, none worked more resolutely on behalf of that goal than Irish Americans.³⁵⁰

Naturally, Senate leaders opposed to the League gladly forged strategic alliances with Irish-American leaders. In the past, Senator Lodge, a Massachusetts Yankee, had had limited contact with Irish Americans, and so he relied on Senator Borah to serve as

³⁴⁵ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 197.

³⁴⁶ Fleming, *The Treaty Veto of the American Senate*, 143.

³⁴⁷ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (NY: Random House, 2007), Location 9727 (Kindle Edition).

³⁴⁸ McKenna, *Borah*, 152.

³⁴⁹ McKenna, *Borah*, 152.

³⁵⁰ Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 152.

his liaison with that constituency during the Treaty controversy.³⁵¹ Irish Americans fully embraced Borah's efforts. He had maintained a steady correspondence with Cohalan ever since the Irish Race Convention in February 1919, and he had spoken at numerous Irish freedom functions and rallies.³⁵² Lodge and Borah also worked with Republican Senator Medill McCormick of Illinois, the "foremost money-raiser" in the United States for Irish Home Rule.³⁵³ Republican Senators looked to McCormick to help plan an overall strategy, one that included Irish-American efforts, to block ratification of the League. Meanwhile under Borah's guidance, groups of Senators set about publicly exposing the Treaty's flaws, an undertaking in which prominent Irish-American speakers eagerly collaborated.³⁵⁴ Senators who worked with Irish Americans on defeating the Treaty did not go unnoticed by their new allies. Cohalan maintained a list of all the Senators who spoke up for the cause of Ireland during the Treaty-ratification debates.³⁵⁵

Irish-American groups certainly exerted themselves in the anti-ratification effort. The Friends of Irish Freedom established the Irish National Bureau in Washington, D.C., in order to raise money and to produce and distribute anti-League propaganda literature. The Friends of Irish Freedom group grew to include 250,000 members, whose anti-treaty voices joined in unison with like-minded members of the American Commission for Irish Independence, the Women's Irish League, the National Irish League, and the Protestant Friends of Ireland.³⁵⁶ Moreover, throughout the country, the Friends of Irish Freedom

³⁵¹ McKenna, *Borah*, 158-159.

³⁵² Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 154.

³⁵³ Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 154.

³⁵⁴ McKenna, *Borah*, 157.

³⁵⁵ Daniel Cohalan, "Senators for Irish Freedom," Box 23, Folder 6, Daniel Cohalan Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

³⁵⁶ Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 157.

held rallies at which the League was denounced, “the evil thing with the holy name.”³⁵⁷ Even moderate leaders like Maloney came out against Wilson and the League. Maloney notably had supported Wilson throughout the Peace Talks, confident that the President would fight for Ireland’s self-determination. When the Treaty contained no such clause, he lost faith in the President and accepted Devoy’s argument that opposing the League had now become a necessary step in the effort to achieve true independence in Ireland.³⁵⁸

The main objection to the proposed League Covenant was its infamous Article X clause that “guaranteed the territorial integrity of the member states” and obligated each member to protect fellow members from “external aggression.” Article XI also was a point of concern, as it obligated members to “safeguard the peace of nations” if any “threat of war” affected a member state.³⁵⁹ Republicans like Lodge feared that these clauses might one day embroil the United States in another European war, but Lodge cleverly took the analysis even further. He let it be known in Irish-American circles that Article X would prevent America, at any point in the future, from assisting Ireland in the manner that France had helped the United States during the Revolutionary War. Irreconcilable Republican Senator Hiram Johnson of California, another Treaty opponent, flatly claimed that the Articles’ language would enable “the British Empire [to] demand American blood to subdue Ireland” if it should revolt.³⁶⁰ Borah agreed, asserting that “we could not even aid an Irish or Canadian rebellion,” if the Articles went into effect,

³⁵⁷ *Gaelic American*, August 16, 1919.

³⁵⁸ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-Irish Relations*, 189.

³⁵⁹ “Covenant of the League of Nations,” At http://avalon.law.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art11. Accessed 8/31/14.

³⁶⁰ Moynihan, eds. *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera*, 26. Also, Alan Cranston, *The Killing of the Peace* (NY: Viking Press, 1945), 26.

“and we should have to fight anyone that did.”³⁶¹ Whether this last claim was true is open to debate, but nonetheless, such arguments, articulated by U.S. Senators, bolstered Irish-American opposition to the Treaty of Versailles. So did the fact, also pointed out by Treaty opponents, that the British Empire would get six votes in the League as compared to America’s one.³⁶²

Lodge adroitly utilized these Irish-American apprehensions in the summer of 1919 to stall the Senate vote on the League. Lodge also began Foreign Relations Committee hearings on the Treaty on August 21, 1919, as a further means of delaying the vote, so that opposition efforts would have time to grow even stronger. Lodge announced that every ethnic group that had been “denied a hearing in Paris” would get one before his Committee.³⁶³ It was Cohalan who came up with the idea of providing a forum for the various ethnic groups that had been ignored by Wilson.³⁶⁴ Cohalan first suggested the plan to Borah, who initially thought it was impossible. But when Lodge heard of the idea, he quickly realized how politically beneficial to the anti-Treaty cause it could be. At the hearings, Judge Cohalan, William Bourke Cockran, and Frank Walsh spoke for the Irish.³⁶⁵ In a moving statement he made to the Committee on August 30, Cohalan dramatically asked, “Is there in that Treaty, one single word of which any American should be proud? Does it liberate a single people who seek emancipation except as an act

³⁶¹ Fleming, *Treaty Veto of the American Senate*, 133.

³⁶² *New York Times*, September 8, 1919.

³⁶³ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 166.

³⁶⁴ Tansill, *America and the Fight for Irish Freedom*, 332.

³⁶⁵ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 166, 167, 168.

of vengeance against the countries that were overthrown?”³⁶⁶ Cockran in his remarks to the Committee echoed Cohalan’s sentiments:

Peace must be established in Ireland before it can be made permanent throughout the world. Peace cannot be established in Ireland by England.

. . . The league of nations [sic] here proposed is an abomination, an attempt to use the conscience of Christendom to sanction and perpetuate wrongs which morality and justice condemn.³⁶⁷

In the Wilson camp, Tumulty recognized, as he always did, that the opposition forces were gaining momentum in their drive to defeat the Treaty. Tumulty urged the President to embark on a nationwide speaking tour to take his case on behalf of the Treaty directly to the people. Despite suffering from declining health, Wilson ignored his doctors’ warnings and agreed to Tumulty’s suggestions.³⁶⁸ He began a 27-day tour of the country in September 1919.³⁶⁹ Tumulty had planned the president’s speaking schedule meticulously, avoiding the Democratic South and Republican East where opposition to the Treaty seemed strongest, and instead focusing on the Midwest and Far West, where it was believed Wilson would encounter friendlier audiences more susceptible to persuasion on the Treaty issue.³⁷⁰

In fact, the President met with opposition wherever he spoke. The Friends of Irish Freedom and the Irreconcilables made sure of this, and thanks to their efforts, Wilson had to contend with hecklers at every stop he made.³⁷¹ The Friends of Irish Freedom made

³⁶⁶ Daniel Cohalan, “The Cause of Ireland and Its Relation to the League of Nations, Speech Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, August 30, 1919. Box III, Folder 20, William Cockran Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

³⁶⁷ William Bourne Cockran, “The Cause of Ireland and its Relation to the League of Nations,” (Washington, D.C., August 30, 1919) reprinted by Bibliobazar (Charleston, SC: Bibliolife, LLC, 2015), 21.

³⁶⁸ Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson as I Know Him*, 434.

³⁶⁹ Blum, *Tumulty and the Wilson Era*, 208, 209.

³⁷⁰ Blum, *Tumulty and the Wilson Era*, 209.

³⁷¹ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 171.

certain that the hyphenates came out in full force wherever Wilson appeared in the Midwest.³⁷² Those among the hyphenates who were of Irish extraction remained angry that Wilson had lied to Ireland in refusing to fight for Irish independence during the Peace Talks, as he had said was his intention.

Wilson never adequately answered these critics. Indeed, only once did he even try to do so. In mid-September the San Francisco Labor Council directly petitioned him about Ireland, the League, and the failed promises of self-determination.³⁷³ Responding to this inquiry, Wilson explained that Ireland had been left out of the Peace Talks because the only territories discussed had been those belonging to the defeated Central Powers. Also, Wilson denied that any article of the Covenant would force the United States to fight against the Irish. But De Valera balked at this claim and turned the argument back to where Wilson stood on much weaker ground. “The point,” De Valera insisted, “is that the right of national self-determination is in no way recognized in the proposed foundation for the League”³⁷⁴

Matters got even worse for Wilson. On September 25, he abruptly had to cut his speaking tour short and return to Washington upon falling gravely ill in Pueblo, Colorado.³⁷⁵ Meanwhile from his standpoint, attitudes in the Senate had scarcely improved during his absence. Then, on October 2 Wilson suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed. He would survive, but from that day forward Wilson was a very sick man,

³⁷² *Chicago Tribune*, September 11, 1919.

³⁷³ *New York Times*, September 18, 1919.

³⁷⁴ *New York Times*, September 18, 1919.

³⁷⁵ Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson as I Know Him*, 446-447.

both mentally and physically. No longer was he in any condition to wage a vigorous fight for ratification of the Treaty of Versailles.³⁷⁶

The Senate debate over the Treaty lasted for five months after Wilson's stroke. During that time, Senator Lodge attempted to pass the Treaty with reservations twice: once in November and then again on March 19. Both times, Wilson sent word to Senate Democrats demanding they vote down the Treaty with its "obnoxious reservations."³⁷⁷ When the Treaty did not get the necessary two-thirds majority in March thanks to a combination of Wilson-compliant Democrats and the Irreconcilables, the battle for ratification ceased.³⁷⁸

Cohalan and other Irish-American leaders exulted in victory. In a March press release shortly after the final demise of the Treaty, Cohalan stated, "The outcome of the fight against the British proposed League of Nations is a great victory for American ideals and interests. It is the greatest body blow that the British Empire has received since the days of the Revolution"³⁷⁹ Irish Americans had made their point and they had done so in alliance with the Republicans. The political ramifications of this Irish-American alienation from the Democrats would be felt in the upcoming presidential election.

³⁷⁶ Blum, *Tumulty and the Wilson Era*, 213-214.

³⁷⁷ Kennedy, Cohen, and Bailey, *American Pageant*, 724. Also, Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, 210-212.

³⁷⁸ Kennedy, Cohen, and Bailey, *American Pageant*, 724.

³⁷⁹ Daniel Cohalan, Press Release, March 1919. Box 23, Folder 3, Daniel Cohalan Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

The 1920 Election:

Although Wilson did not run again in 1920, he successfully framed the election as a “solemn referendum” on the League of Nations. However, as the *New York Evening Post* accurately predicted, this turned the 1920 campaign into “a great and solemn muddle.”³⁸⁰ Making the failed Treaty of Versailles the centerpiece of that year’s presidential contest put Democratic nominee James Cox, the former governor of Ohio, at an early and substantial disadvantage against Republican nominee Senator Warren G. Harding, also of Ohio. Had Cox distanced himself from the League, Irish Americans likely would have remained loyally Democratic.³⁸¹ Instead, Cox campaigned in favor of Wilson’s League and defended the President’s refusal to involve America into Britain’s relationship with Ireland.³⁸² Naturally, Irish Americans responded by dismissing Cox as a second Wilson. “Cox wears Wilson’s collar on the League of Nations,” Devoy disgustedly wrote in August 1920 in the *Gaelic American*.³⁸³

To be sure, Irish Americans found little appeal in Harding. While in the Senate, he had not even bothered to vote on many pro-Irish resolutions, most notably Borah’s 1919 formal statement expressing sympathy for the Irish.³⁸⁴ Indeed, Harding’s scant interest in Ireland, as one editorial in the *Irish World* simply put it, was “[n]ot [s]atisfactory.”³⁸⁵ Moreover, candidate Harding seemed somewhat ambiguous about the

³⁸⁰ *New York Evening Post*, March 20, 1920.

³⁸¹ Thomas Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory: American in World War I* (NY: Basic Books, 2003), 462.

³⁸² Wesley Bagby, *Road to Normalcy: The Presidential Campaign and Election of 1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1962), 154.

³⁸³ *Gaelic American*, August 24, 1920.

³⁸⁴ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 264.

³⁸⁵ *Irish World*, October 9, 1920.

merits of America joining some international alliance in the future.³⁸⁶ Nonetheless, Harding never wobbled on his belief that “Wilson’s League” should be forever avoided.³⁸⁷ That stance coupled with Cox’s support for the League and the fact that “[t]he un-Democratic Party ha[d] made that infamous covenant an issue in the presidential campaign,” ensured that the Republican nominee would win the grudging acceptance of most Irish American leaders and voters.³⁸⁸

Events in Ireland made it all the harder for Cox and the Democrats to somehow win back Irish-American support. The War for Independence against Britain that had begun in 1919 produced its first world-known martyr. In August 1920 Terence MacSwiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork whom the British had imprisoned, began a hunger strike to protest Britain’s oppression of Ireland.³⁸⁹ Throughout the 74 days of MacSwiney’s fast, news of his steadily weakening condition reached the United States, and many Americans begged their government to intervene on the Lord Mayor’s behalf.³⁹⁰ “I implore you in the name of humanity,” Cardinal William O’Connell wired Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, “that our government do everything it can to prevent the death of the Mayor of Cork now dying in a British prison.”³⁹¹ Wilson however regarded American intervention in this matter as “grossly impertinent” and “a piece of confounded impudence.”³⁹² Wilson’s refusal to interject American influence on MacSwiney’s behalf epitomized to many an Irish American the current Democratic

³⁸⁶ Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory*, 465.

³⁸⁷ Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory*, 465.

³⁸⁸ *Irish World*, September 18, 1920.

³⁸⁹ *New York Times*, October 26, 1920.

³⁹⁰ See September and October 1920 issues of *Irish World* and *Gaelic American* for coverage of MacSwiney’s worsening condition. Also, *New York Times*, October 26, 1920.

³⁹¹ Tansill, *America and the Fight for Irish Freedom*, 406.

³⁹² Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 266.

Party's blatant disregard for Irish concerns. Of course, such a sentiment could only damage Cox as he sought to succeed Wilson.

The Democrats' Vice-Presidential nominee, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) of New York, also aroused Irish-American anger during the campaign. In the course of defending Wilson's League and the President's acquiescence to Britain's having six votes in the organization, Roosevelt told a crowd in Butte, Montana, that the United States would have commanded a dozen votes had it joined the League. By way of explanation, Roosevelt listed all of the Central American countries that he claimed never would have voted against America because of its commanding influence over them.³⁹³ Roosevelt compounded this approving nod to U.S. imperialism by claiming that as Assistant Secretary of the Navy he had governed some of these "little republics" himself, and in fact had written Haiti's constitution--"a pretty good constitution," he added for good measure.³⁹⁴ Knowing that Irish Americans and other ethnic groups despised America's newly imperialistic ways, Harding pounced, calling Roosevelt's words "the most shocking assertion that ever emanated from a responsible member of the government of the United States."³⁹⁵

During the campaign's early phase, Cox tried to avoid taking a position on what was transpiring in Ireland. However, constant questions and heckling from Irish-American attendees at his rallies made that strategy unworkable, and so Cox tried the opposite tactic and frequently commenting on the situation in Ireland.³⁹⁶ Attempting to

³⁹³ Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory*, 463.

³⁹⁴ Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory*, 463.

³⁹⁵ Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory*, 464.

³⁹⁶ Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 275.

turn a liability into an asset, Cox sought to persuade Irish-American voters that the League would expedite Ireland's independence. In an early October speech, Cox asserted before a group of U.S. Senators:

. . . If Ireland achieves self-determination and if she becomes free and independent, as I believe she will and that before very long, then the United States, along with the other members of the League, will be obligated by the terms of the covenant to mutually guarantee the sovereignty of the new Irish Republic.

For this reason, every Irish sympathizer should not only vote for the League of Nations but should be its most earnest and enthusiastic supporter so that if victory shall come to Ireland after its many centuries of struggle, then that victory will be permanent and its independent nationality will be forever ensured.³⁹⁷

But Cox's logic largely fell on disbelieving ears. The *Irish World* claimed that the Irish should not be gulled by Cox's claim because the League could not be trusted.³⁹⁸ The ever-caustic *Gaelic American* reacted with even greater ferocity: "Cox cannot fool the Irish."³⁹⁹

In the last weeks of the campaign, a desperate duo of Cox and Roosevelt abandoned their defense of the League and instead adopted a divisive strategy of heaping vicious verbal attacks on various ethnic groups. Hoping to stir up enough nativist votes to compensate for the "hyphenated" votes they knew they would lose, Cox and Roosevelt spoke of the "enemies of America during the war" who now opposed the League of Nations and placed old-country, "nationalistic ambitions" above American and world interests.⁴⁰⁰ Both Democratic candidates suggested that German and Italian Americans were being disloyal in criticizing the President and his vision of peace. For obvious

³⁹⁷ *New York Times*, October 3, 1920.

³⁹⁸ *Irish World*, September 25, 1920.

³⁹⁹ *Gaelic American*, September 10, 1920.

⁴⁰⁰ Fleming, *Illusion of Victory*, 465.

tactical reasons, Cox and Roosevelt exempted Irish Americans from their attacks, hoping to appeal to their patriotism and dislike of other ethnics to entice them back into the Democratic fold.⁴⁰¹

The Cox-Roosevelt plan did not work. On October 25, MacSwiney of Cork died, providing a fresh reminder to Irish Americans of the Irish Freedom movement and the Democratic Party's lack of support for that cause.⁴⁰² The Sunday before Election Day, a crowd of 50,000 attended MacSwiney Observance Day in New York City's Polo Grounds.⁴⁰³ At that event, various speakers denounced Wilson and eviscerated the League as anathema to Irish freedom. Similar events took place in other cities, including Chicago, and speakers pointedly told crowds of Irish Americans that they had a duty to vote against the Democratic ticket.⁴⁰⁴ That same pre-election weekend, the *Gaelic American* added to the anti-Democratic rhetoric and told their readers to "remember . . . Wilson" when they went to the polls on Tuesday.⁴⁰⁵

Irish Americans took that cue. Harding won by a landslide, 404-127 in the Electoral College, and 16,141,536 popular votes to Cox's 9,139,661.⁴⁰⁶ Republicans also made big gains in both the House and Senate. On the state level, politicians who had sided with the League, such as the popular Irish-American Governor of New York and former Speaker of the House, Alfred Smith, lost; in Smith's case his defeat came after fourteen prior winning campaigns.⁴⁰⁷ It had not helped Smith's cause any when the

⁴⁰¹ Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory*, 466.

⁴⁰² *Gaelic American*, October 30, 1920. Also, *New York Times*, October 26, 1920.

⁴⁰³ Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory*, 466.

⁴⁰⁴ Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory*, 466.

⁴⁰⁵ *Gaelic American*, October 30, 1920.

⁴⁰⁶ Duff, "The Politics of Revenge," 286.

⁴⁰⁷ Wittke, *The Irish in America*, 290.

Gaelic American urged its readers to vote against him, as punishment for his having supported the League.⁴⁰⁸

A jubilant *Irish World* said of the humiliated Wilson, “The chief bugle man for the conspiracy to make the Republic stand sponsor for the preservation of the British Empire received his answer on the second day of November.”⁴⁰⁹ Devoy in the *Gaelic American* proudly credited Irish Americans for having punished “all the Anglo maniacs, international financiers, peace cranks and British agents.”⁴¹⁰

It appears highly probable that “hyphenates” did much to decide the 1920 election. Cox lost Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Nebraska, all with heavy ethnic (much of it Irish) populations.⁴¹¹ The *Literary Digest*, an influential New York weekly magazine, surmised that the stunning victories for Republicans in New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts proved that Republicans had “succeeded admirably in rounding up the hyphenates.”⁴¹² Indeed, the city of Boston, which had a large Irish population, went Republican by a margin of 33,000 votes.⁴¹³ Moreover, historically Democratic Jersey City, New Jersey, went Republican, with the most significant decline in the Democratic vote occurring in the Irish and Italian wards.⁴¹⁴ Chicago and New York City followed the same pattern.⁴¹⁵

⁴⁰⁸ O’Grady, *How the Irish became Americans*, 136.

⁴⁰⁹ *Irish World*, November 13, 1920.

⁴¹⁰ *Gaelic American*, November 13, 1920.

⁴¹¹ James Cox, *Journey Through My Years* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1946), 272-273.

⁴¹² *Literary Digest*, November 13, 1920.

⁴¹³ Joseph Huthmacher, *Massachusetts People and Politics, 1919-1933* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 42-43.

⁴¹⁴ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 293.

⁴¹⁵ Duff, “The Politics of Revenge,” 295.

Clearly, the Irish-American backlash against Wilson hurt the Democrats badly in 1920, thereby ensuring the election of Harding.

During the Harding Administration, political changes in Ireland would redirect Irish-American attention away from Irish-British affairs. The Irish and British agreed to a ceasefire ending the War of Independence, but the final settlement, as provided by the Anglo-Irish Treaty, did not create a fully independent Ireland, but an Irish Free State with Dominion status for the Southern part of Ireland and partition from the six Protestant Ulster counties that remained under British rule.⁴¹⁶ The Anglo-Irish Treaty initially failed either to pacify or unify the Irish. Instead in 1922 the agreement instigated a year-long civil war between pro- and anti-treaty republicans. Many Irish Americans distanced themselves from this civil conflict, inasmuch as some thought the Free State status of Ireland an acceptable outcome, while others were too sickened that the Irish had turned on themselves to support the strife.

Calvin Coolidge:

Harding's administration, best known for its many scandals, abruptly ended on August 2, 1923, when the President died of congestive heart failure and Vice President Calvin Coolidge of Massachusetts became the thirtieth President of the United States.⁴¹⁷ On paper, Irish Americans seemed unlikely to admire the new Chief Executive. A taciturn Yankee New Englander, Coolidge wholly supported the big-business Republican credo of the 1920s. He had no record of supporting the cause of Irish freedom.

⁴¹⁶ Timothy Pat Coogan, *The IRA*, (NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 1970), 27-28.

⁴¹⁷ Whitney, *The American Presidents*, 265.

However, Coolidge had treated Irish Catholics kindly during his pre-presidential political career, and had thereby won their respect, if not their affection.

Early in his public career, Coolidge had forged good relations with the Irish-American constituency. While serving as a city councilman in Northampton, Massachusetts, from 1898-1899, he issued a resolution designed to help a deceased Irish-American Democrat.⁴¹⁸ A lawyer, Coolidge in 1909 served as general counsel for the Springfield Brewing Company, whose president at the time was the soon-to-be famous (and infamous) Irish-American political hero, Democrat James Curley.⁴¹⁹ While campaigning to become Mayor of Northampton that same year, Coolidge assisted Father Joseph Gordian Daley, an Irish-Catholic priest who lived nearby, in the building of a local mission.⁴²⁰ Coolidge's assistance to Daley earned him not only a lifelong friend but also the support in 1909 of the large Irish-American population in Northampton.⁴²¹ Coolidge was astutely aware of this, and upon winning the election wrote his father about the four hundred (many undoubtedly Irish) Democrats who had voted for him.⁴²² "They knew," Coolidge explained, "that I had done things for them, bless their honest Irish hearts."⁴²³

Even as Coolidge continued to rise in Massachusetts politics, he remained sympathetic to the Irish. As Mayor, he made overtures to all the immigrant groups, the

⁴¹⁸ Charles C. Johnson, "Bless their Honest Irish Hearts:' Calvin Coolidge, unsung hero of Irish Americans" at <http://www.city-journal.org/2012/bc0316cj.html> Accessed 9/1/14.

⁴¹⁹ Amity Shlaes, *Coolidge* (NY: Harper Collins, 2003), 106.

⁴²⁰ Shlaes, *Coolidge*, 107.

⁴²¹ Charles C. Johnson, *Why Coolidge Matters: Leadership Lessons from America's Most Underrated President* (NY: Encounter Books, 2013), Location 3610 (Kindle Edition).

⁴²² According to the 1910 Census, 41% of adult males in Massachusetts were foreign-born, Irish immigrants being the largest group. For more information see Shales, *Coolidge*.

⁴²³ Shales, *Coolidge*, 108.

Irish included. In November 1911, the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* wrote of Coolidge's views and leadership:

He said he never made any distinction between American citizens of different nationality. He had always found the Irish people good Americans and good citizens. He had appointed about 75 of them to responsible positions because he found them good Americans and well-qualified for public service.⁴²⁴

On a personal level, Coolidge conversed easily with the city's workingmen of the city--cobblers, barbers, deliverymen, plumbers, many of whom were of Irish extraction.

Indeed, Coolidge appeared to be more comfortable and gregarious with the laborers of the city than he did while in the company of fellow politicians.⁴²⁵ Unsurprisingly, a group of "Coolidge Democrats" organized to support his attempts at winning higher office.⁴²⁶

Coolidge became Lieutenant Governor (1916-1919) and then narrowly won a term as governor of Massachusetts (1919-1921). As before, he remained supportive of the Irish.⁴²⁷ Indeed, he promoted people of various creeds and religions to multiple state positions, including fifty-five Catholics, seven Jews, two Swedes, three Italians, eight Frenchmen, and one Pole.⁴²⁸ But it was his good standing with the Irish that particularly pleased Coolidge. He liked to brag to family members about the number of Irish-American votes he had won in his races for lieutenant governor and governor.⁴²⁹ As Governor, Coolidge proved to be exceedingly tolerant, for that time, of Catholics, and he often spoke before Catholic groups.⁴³⁰ On another issue about which the Irish were

⁴²⁴ Johnson, *Why Coolidge Matters*, Location 3612.

⁴²⁵ Francis Russell, *A City in Terror: 1919—The Boston Police Strike* (NY: The Viking Press, 1975), 61.

⁴²⁶ Johnson, *Why Coolidge Matters*, Location 3614.

⁴²⁷ Shales, *Coolidge*, 146.

⁴²⁸ Johnson, *Why Coolidge Matters*, Location 3622.

⁴²⁹ Johnson, *Why Coolidge Matters*, Location 3623.

⁴³⁰ Johnson, *Why Coolidge Matters*, Location 3635.

sensitive, Coolidge at the time believed that immigration laws “[are] not adopted in criticism of others in the slightest degree, but solely for the purpose of protecting ourselves.”⁴³¹ He felt that immigrants were just as American and patriotic as any unhyphenated Americans.⁴³²

Coolidge’s relationship with Irish Americans, however, faced its greatest test in the fall of 1919, when three quarters of Boston’s police force went on strike seeking recognition of their trade union.⁴³³ The majority of the officers were Irish-American, for in that era a police career was the third-most desirable occupation (the others being a priest and a politician) to which a man of that ethnic extraction could reasonably aspire.⁴³⁴ Edwin Upton Curtiss, Boston’s new police commissioner, deserves much of the blame for the strike, inasmuch as he refused to negotiate with the men about better working conditions, primarily because he was prejudiced against ethnic Irishmen.⁴³⁵ Curtis further believed that Irish Americans had voted against him in his mayoral bid in Boston back in 1895, and even years later he continued to believe that “Boston would never again be a decent city until the ephemeral Honey Fitzes and Jim Curleys and Dan Coakleys [all Irish-American Boston politicians] had been replaced by Curtises.”⁴³⁶

The strike began on Tuesday, September 9, 1919.⁴³⁷ Of course, brazen lawlessness, looting, and violence soon erupted in the city.⁴³⁸ Elsewhere, public officials

⁴³¹ Johnson, *Why Coolidge Matters*, Location 3565.

⁴³² Shales, *Coolidge*, 107.

⁴³³ Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States: Postwar Struggles, 1918-1920* (NY: International Publishers, 1988), 95.

⁴³⁴ Russell, *A City in Terror*, 35.

⁴³⁵ Russell, *A City in Terror*, 45.

⁴³⁶ Russell, *A City in Terror*, 45.

⁴³⁷ *New York Times*, September 19, 1919.

⁴³⁸ Shales, *Coolidge*, 157-158.

feared that a successful strike in Boston would inspire other under-paid, over-worked police offices in cities like New York and Chicago to walk off the job as well. At first, Governor Coolidge relied on Boston Mayor Andrew Peters to maintain order in the city. By Tuesday night, however, Coolidge became worried. Andrews had done little more than suspend Curtis, an action that was not even within the mayor's jurisdiction. On Wednesday, Coolidge took control of the situation.⁴³⁹ He reinstated Curtis and called out the Massachusetts State Guard to patrol the streets, an action that, as he later would admit in his autobiography, he should have done "as soon as the police left their posts."⁴⁴⁰ At the time, though, Coolidge was reluctant to have Curtis restored to his job, because Coolidge knew that "[t]o some of the Irish-American police, Curtis was the equivalent of a British general."⁴⁴¹ But even so, restoring Curtis seemed the right thing to do in this moment of crisis. Still, Coolidge would recall in his autobiography, "I fully expected it would result in my defeat in the coming campaign for reelection as Governor."⁴⁴²

Coolidge was right to be concerned. In an October letter to John Devoy, Daniel Cohalan wrote of the strike and stated, "You many rest assured that my vote [of confidence] will not be cast for Calvin Coolidge."⁴⁴³ But during the strike, with Boston's security in growing jeopardy, Coolidge could not worry about future elections, and he drew a hard line against the striking officers, taking the Commissioner's side.

⁴³⁹ Calvin Coolidge, *The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge* (NY: Cosmopolitan Book Corp., 1929), 132.

⁴⁴⁰ Coolidge, *Autobiography*, 130.

⁴⁴¹ Shales, *Coolidge*, 159.

⁴⁴² Coolidge, *Autobiography*, 128.

⁴⁴³ Daniel Cohalan to John Devoy, October 31, 1919. Box 4, Folder 4, Daniel Cohalan Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

Coolidge was not the only politician paying attention to the strike in Boston. While touring the country to rally support for his League of Nations, President Wilson realized that the traveling reporters wanted to talk more about labor strife than the League debate.⁴⁴⁴ Accordingly, during a September 11 stop in Montana, Wilson said “that a strike of the policemen of a great city, leaving that city at the mercy of an army of thugs, is a crime against civilization.”⁴⁴⁵ Yet Wilson offered no help to Boston, and instead expressed a desire for the contending sides to find grounds for reconciliation.⁴⁴⁶

With the help of the state guardsmen and replacement officers, the strike-induced violence ended by the weekend. Eight people died during the strike, twenty-one were wounded, and at least fifty were injured.⁴⁴⁷ Samuel Gompers, the president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) had expressed support for the striking policemen, whereupon Governor Coolidge on Sunday, September 14, sent Gompers a telegram of reply: “There is no right to strike against the public safety, by anybody, anywhere, anytime.”⁴⁴⁸

This bold assertion, published in newspapers all over the country, catapulted Coolidge into the national spotlight, and in an overwhelmingly positive way. The *New York Sun* depicted Coolidge as “a plain New England gentleman, whose calm determination to uphold the law and maintain order in the situation caused by the Boston police walkout has made him a national figure.”⁴⁴⁹ Wilson sent him a telegram of

⁴⁴⁴ Shales, *Coolidge*, 163.

⁴⁴⁵ Shales, *Coolidge*, 170.

⁴⁴⁶ Shales, *Coolidge*, 164.

⁴⁴⁷ Russell, *A City in Terror*, 170.

⁴⁴⁸ Shales, *Coolidge*, 171.

⁴⁴⁹ Shales, *Coolidge*, 174.

congratulations. Even Catholic priests and some family members of the Irish policemen celebrated Coolidge's calm and strength during the riots.⁴⁵⁰ As for the striking officers, Coolidge refused to allow them to return to their jobs, but later he helped these unemployed men find other employment in Massachusetts.⁴⁵¹

The labor historian Philip Foner author of the book *History of the Labor Movement in the United States: Postwar Struggles*, contends that had the strike not taken place, Coolidge might well have lost his reelection bid for governor. But as it was, he won a smashing second-term victory, and a year later was nominated and elected Vice President of the United States.⁴⁵² "No doubt it was the police strike of Boston that brought me into national prominence," Coolidge recounted in his memoirs. "That furnished the occasion and I took advantage of the opportunity."⁴⁵³

When Coolidge assumed the presidency amidst the Teapot Dome controversy and other political scandals, his obvious integrity reassured outraged voters. The beginnings of a strong economic resurgence also strengthened his political standing. In 1924 Coolidge ran for a term in his own right. Opposing him were Democrat John Davis of West Virginia and the independent Progressive Party nominee, Senator Robert La Follette of Wisconsin. Coolidge won easily, taking 382 Electoral votes to Davis' 136 and La Follette's 13.⁴⁵⁴ Coolidge's triumph this time, however, did not come with much

⁴⁵⁰ Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, 100. Also, Shales, *Coolidge*, 174, 172.

⁴⁵¹ Coolidge, *Autobiography*, 133.

⁴⁵² Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, 101.

⁴⁵³ Coolidge, *Autobiography*, 118.

⁴⁵⁴ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 695.

Irish-American backing, yet Irish Americans did help him by splitting their votes between Davis and La Follette.⁴⁵⁵

After Irish Catholic Al Smith failed to win the 1924 Democratic nomination, several Irish-American leaders backed La Follette--inasmuch as they did not trust Davis to defend their causes. Daniel Cohalan expressed great concern with Davis who Cohalan depicted as “beating of the League of Nations tom-tom” because of Davis’s stint as Ambassador to the United Kingdom during Wilson’s second term.⁴⁵⁶ By contrast, Cohalan described La Follette as a man who “represents the ordinary citizens.”⁴⁵⁷ The *Irish World* also had no use for Davis, calling him nothing more than a “thorough reactionary” who had made a career of “fighting labor” while serving as a lawyer and later a U.S. Congressman.⁴⁵⁸ On the other hand, the *Irish World* celebrated La Follette’s denunciation of the Treaty of Versailles as “a Treaty of Shame.” The *Irish World* also dubbed the Progressive candidate as “Ireland’s Champion” owing to La Follette’s impassioned 1921 speech before the Foreign Relations Committee, during which he demanded U.S. recognition of the Republic of Ireland.⁴⁵⁹ The *Gaelic American* also endorsed La Follette.⁴⁶⁰

Yet on Election Day, many Irish Americans ignored the editorial advice of their newspapers and returned to the Democratic fold, voting for Davis. For example Davis

⁴⁵⁵ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 260.

⁴⁵⁶ Daniel Cohalan, Press Release, 1924. Box 23, Folder 6, Daniel Cohalan Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

⁴⁵⁷ Cohalan, Press Release, 1924. Daniel Cohalan Papers.

⁴⁵⁸ *Irish World*, October 25, 1924.

⁴⁵⁹ *Irish World*, October 25, 1924.

⁴⁶⁰ *Gaelic American*, October 25, 1924.

took 63 percent of the vote in highly Irish-populated districts in New York.⁴⁶¹ But other Irish Americans did back La Follette, and so their votes were divided, allowing Coolidge to coast to victory--all made possible by some Irish-American Boston police officers who unwisely decided to go out on strike in the late summer of 1919.⁴⁶²

An Irish Catholic Runs for President--The Election of 1928:

Chroniclers of the Irish-American experience have given significant attention to Al Smith's ethnicity in the election of 1928.⁴⁶³ Ironically, however, 1928 can be regarded as one of the few elections in which the Irish dimension actually had less of a role than a host of other factors that affected the outcome of that famous contest.

In 1928, four-term New York Democratic governor Alfred E. Smith, the first Irish-Catholic nominee of a major party, opposed Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover.⁴⁶⁴ Smith's Irishness undoubtedly hurt him among voters outside his own ethnic group, but he lost in a landslide for other reasons, among them his inability to appeal to rural and small-town voters, his rejection of Prohibition, and above all his Catholic faith. Even at that, as the historian Richard Hofstadter observed, "There was not a Democrat alive, Protestant or Catholic, who could have beat Herbert Hoover in 1928."⁴⁶⁵ The Republican candidate benefited from the current Coolidge prosperity, his reputation as perhaps the world's foremost mining engineer, and his own world-wide renown as the

⁴⁶¹ David Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism The Democratic Party in Transition, 1918-1932* (NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967), 235.

⁴⁶² Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 260.

⁴⁶³ See: Joseph O'Grady, *How the Irish Became Americans*, for example.

⁴⁶⁴ Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism*, 193.

⁴⁶⁵ David Burner, "The Brown Derby Campaign," in Walsh, ed., *Irish: America's Political Class*, 388.

Great Humanitarian who had prevented mass starvation during both World War I and the aftermath of the Russian Revolution.⁴⁶⁶

Smith, on the other hand, had little national appeal. A “wet” politician from New York, he enjoyed considerable popularity in the urban regions, especially those with large Irish-American populations.⁴⁶⁷ But his so-called “Brown Derby” campaign (Smith often wore this style of hat) failed to arouse much enthusiasm in the Midwest and South, even among Democrats.⁴⁶⁸ These voters harbored deep reservations about whether Smith’s unpolished, highly informal personal style projected sufficient gravitas for him to serve effectively as President.⁴⁶⁹ Worse yet, at times, Smith hurt himself with impolitic remarks that made it easy for critics to attack him. Once reporters asked him how he would address the needs of states west of the Mississippi River to which he replied, “What states are west of the Mississippi River?”⁴⁷⁰ The writer H.L. Mencken, a supporter of Smith, once candidly wrote of the Democratic candidate, “Not only is he uninterested in the great problems facing the nation, but he has never heard of them.”⁴⁷¹ The widespread use of a new communication medium—the radio—also helped arouse concerns that Smith was too provincial. Although Hoover spoke in a dull monotone voice to radio audiences, he at least sounded serious and presidential. Smith by contrast insisted on pronouncing words with his heavy, New York accent, saying for example

⁴⁶⁶ Burner, “The Brown Derby Campaign,” 388.

⁴⁶⁷ *Irish World*, July 7, 1928.

⁴⁶⁸ Edmund Moore, *A Catholic Runs for President: The Campaign of 1928* (NY: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), 113. Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 54, 705.

⁴⁶⁹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 705.

⁴⁷⁰ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 708.

⁴⁷¹ Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism*, 182.

“woik” for “work;” as a consequence, many Americans outside of New York could not even understand what he was saying.⁴⁷²

Regarding Smith’s Catholicism, Hoover took the high ground during the campaign and never raised the issue, saying instead that he stood “for religious tolerance both in act and spirit.”⁴⁷³ Nonetheless, some in Hoover’s Republican Party showed no such restraint. The *Irish World* traced back a number of bigoted attacks on Smith to the Republican National Committee Chairman John J. Raskob, as well as, a Republican Senator from New Hampshire and Hoover’s eastern advisor, George Moses.⁴⁷⁴ Allegedly, Moses once wrote dismissively about the Catholic Church and Smith, stating, “Governor Smith belongs to a church which holds adulterous every wedlock not favored by its Pope; which brands as bastardy every birth not blessed by its book.”⁴⁷⁵ The implication of Moses’ words, of course, was that the country could not trust any politician associated with such a radical religion.

One of the more memorable attacks on Smith’s Catholic religion occurred in April 1927, well before the campaign had ever begun. Charles C. Marshall, a Republican lawyer from New York, wrote an open letter to Smith asking him if he could run the country, inasmuch as many citizens believed that Catholicism was “irreconcilable with that Constitution which as President you must support and defend, and with the principles of civil and religious liberty on which American institutions are based.”⁴⁷⁶ Smith

⁴⁷² Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 708.

⁴⁷³ Burner, *The Brown Derby Campaign*, 394.

⁴⁷⁴ *Irish World*, November 10, 1928.

⁴⁷⁵ *Irish World*, November 10, 1928.

⁴⁷⁶ Charles Marshall, “An Open Letter to the Honorable Alfred E. Smith” *Atlantic Monthly* 139 (April 1927): 540.

responded to Marshall in the pages of *Atlantic Monthly*, stating “I have never known any conflict between my official duties and my religious belief.”⁴⁷⁷

However, Smith’s response predictably failed to silence his critics. The famous Protestant evangelist Billy Sunday asked voters to “defy the forces of hell--Al Smith and the rest of them.”⁴⁷⁸ Moreover, John Roach Straton, the pastor at New York City’s Calvary Baptist Church, told his congregation that Smith in his public capacity was “the deadliest foe in America today of the forces of moral progress and true political wisdom.”⁴⁷⁹ Smith challenged Straton to a debate, but Straton refused. One might conclude that Smith had prevailed in that run-in, at least. However a number of commentators, instead of praising Smith for his show of courage, criticized the governor as immature and thin-skinned.⁴⁸⁰

Smith’s so-called “Oklahoma Speech” in September 1928 also raised questions about his fitness for the presidency. In his remarks Smith sought to respond to some anti-Catholic comments made by the Hoover campaign spokesperson, Mabel Walker Willebrandt. Also, Smith wanted to repair any damage done to his candidacy by the defection of former Oklahoma Democratic Senator Robert Latham, who said he could not abide by Smith’s nomination and was thus supporting Hoover. In his speech, Smith vilified those who seek “to inject bigotry, hatred, intolerance, and un-American sectarian division into a campaign which should be an intelligent debate for the important issues

⁴⁷⁷ Alfred Smith, “Catholic and Patriot: Governor Smith Replies” *Atlantic Monthly* 139 (April 1927): 722.

⁴⁷⁸ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 708.

⁴⁷⁹ Hillyer Straton and Ferenc Szasz, “The Reverend John Roach Straton and the Presidential Campaign of 1928 in Walsh, *Irish: America’s Political Class*, 201.

⁴⁸⁰ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 708.

which confront the American people.”⁴⁸¹ But again, Smith’s spirited response to his critics came across as pettily defensive and unduly argumentative.⁴⁸² Smith however never regretted his Oklahoma speech. In his memoirs years later he justified those remarks by claiming, “. . . I personally had knowledge of the scurrilous, blasphemous literature being circulated throughout the country against me and my people, I felt deep in my heart that I would be a coward and probably unfit to be president if I were to permit it to go further unchallenged.”⁴⁸³

Of course, many Americans, especially Southerners, abhorred Smith’s staunch opposition to Prohibition. He made his stance on that issue plain enough, even to the point of openly drinking in blatant defiance of the law.⁴⁸⁴ Garrison Villard, editor of *The Nation*, wrote in 1927, “Does ‘Al’ drink and does he drink too much? I am reliably informed that he drinks every day, and the number of his cocktails and highballs is variously estimated at from four to eight.”⁴⁸⁵ For his part, Smith viewed such alcohol-based criticisms as veiled attacks on his Irish ethnicity and religion. In his autobiography Smith stated that such stories about him were grossly exaggerated: “my supposed degree of intoxication,” he wrote, “was so great that it required two men to hold me up.”⁴⁸⁶ Undoubtedly Smith spoke accurately about some of his critics, but that rationalization only goes so far. Regarding Prohibition, Smith’s candidacy came just a bit too early, a

⁴⁸¹ *New York Times*, September 21, 1928.

⁴⁸² Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 708.

⁴⁸³ Alfred Smith, *Up to Now: An Autobiography* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing Company, Inc., 1929), 396.

⁴⁸⁴ Burner, “The Brown Derby Campaign,” 389.

⁴⁸⁵ Burner, “The Brown Derby Campaign,” 389.

⁴⁸⁶ Smith, *Up to Now*, 411.

few years before disgust with that social experiment fully set in among a majority of voters. As the *Salt Lake City Tribune* noted after the election:

The chief cause of the tremendous Democratic disaster was the prohibition issue. The Democratic candidate championed the cause of those who do not believe that prohibition prohibits and who are bent on either repealing or amending both the 18th Amendment and the Volstead Act.⁴⁸⁷

Of course, Smith's "Irishness" often surfaced in 1928, but generally in indirect ways, as with the liquor issue. Very often these attacks concerned Smith's open affiliation with the odious Tammany Hall political machine in New York City. Smith had gotten his start as the "favorite" of Tammany's Charles Murphy, but as governor, Smith sometimes stood against the machine. For example, he instituted a welfare program that undermined Tammany's influence among the masses.⁴⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Smith remained in Tammany's good graces, so much so that he visited the Hall before the 1928 Democratic Convention and, after a two-years absence from the annual ceremonies, the members reinstated him as an honorary sachem.⁴⁸⁹ Naturally this gesture did not go over well with the rest of the country. One correspondent wrote to Franklin Delano Roosevelt who was running in 1928 for the New York governorship:

Birds of a feather flock together, and if you uphold Smith and help him get in it is obvious you are in Tammany's pay . . . God knows what they will do when he gets to be President.⁴⁹⁰

Despite having considerable personal integrity, Smith was, as David Burner puts it in his book *The Politics of Provincialism*, "never able to shake the stigma of Tammany; it

⁴⁸⁷ *Salt Lake City Tribune* in *New York Times*, November 8, 1928.

⁴⁸⁸ Burner, "The Brown Derby Campaign," 389.

⁴⁸⁹ Burner, "The Brown Derby Campaign," 401.

⁴⁹⁰ Burner, "The Brown Derby Campaign," 402.

remained a nettle to his rural and small-town opponents.”⁴⁹¹ After Smith met defeat in 1928, the *Register*, a newspaper in Mobile, Alabama, exulted that a “hurtful sectionalism . . . between urban and rural civilization,” something that had been “utterly foreign to [the] political philosophy of the founders of the Democratic Party,” had been repulsed; as a safeguard against the return of such efforts, the paper argued, “the Party must be freed of all suspicion of control by Tammany Hall.”⁴⁹²

Some of Smith’s backers clumsily tried to raise an ethnic issue against Hoover. The *Gaelic American*, for example, portrayed Hoover as an anglophile because of investments he had in London.⁴⁹³ This stratagem, as well as everything else that Smith tried, did not work. Hoover won in the Electoral College by the landslide count of 444-87. Smith even lost his home state of New York, despite receiving the backing of 82 percent of the Irish-American vote in heavily Irish-populated districts in the Empire State.⁴⁹⁴ Yet, Smith’s nomination had done much to re-secure Irish loyalty to the Democratic Party. That devotion had been frayed by the recent disappointments with Wilson, but Smith’s 1928 run confirmed to Irish Americans that the Democratic Party was once more firmly on Erin’s side.⁴⁹⁵ For both the Party and its reinvigorated Irish-American constituency, happy days would soon be here again.

⁴⁹¹ Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism*, 182.

⁴⁹² *Registrar* in *New York Times*, November 8, 1928.

⁴⁹³ *Gaelic American*, November 6, 1928.

⁴⁹⁴ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 713.

⁴⁹⁵ T. Ryle Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality and the U.S.A.: 1939-47* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1977), 25.

Conclusion:

The Fourth Party System was a tumultuous but also an empowering time with respect to U.S. politics for both the Irish and Irish Americans. They witnessed the United States wage an imperialistic war against Spain, thus following in the expansionist footsteps of every Irish Catholic's foe: Britain. That war occurred amidst outcries of disgusted Irish Americans who emphatically vocalized their displeasure over America's sudden evolution into a world power. While forming closer alliances with the British government in pursuit of joint international interests, the McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft Administrations often worried about the effect their policies had on Irish-American sentiments, and accordingly they tried in various ways to mollify members of this group in hopes of winning their votes. Then came the Wilson Administration, which inadvertently gave Irish on both sides of the Atlantic the opportunity to influence American international policy. When Wilson failed to live up to his World War I rhetoric and secure self-government for weaker nations (e.g. Ireland) during the Paris Peace Talks, Irish and Irish-American leaders berated the President and joined forces with each other and with U.S. Senators hostile to Wilson. The end result: the Senate never ratified the Treaty of Versailles, and thus the United States never joined the League of Nations. Irish Americans later played significant roles in the 1920, 1924, and of course, 1928 presidential election. In 1928 the first Irish-Catholic presidential nominee, Al Smith, failed to beat Republican candidate Herbert Hoover; however his nomination alone did much to restore Irish-American allegiance to the Democratic Party.

The Fourth Party System witnessed the evolution of Irish Americans from a mass of uneducated, lowly, albeit politically potent, immigrants, to a very well-organized,

strategically intelligent interest group, capable of affecting world affairs. Several major events of the Fourth Party System that advanced the United States as an international or economic power, involved either the Irish and/or Irish Americans in some notable way. Even when American presidents who served during the Fourth Party System defied Irish interests, most had enough sense not to entirely ignore that voting bloc entirely. Irish and Irish-American leaders of the Fourth Party System were formidable figures, who effectively articulated their positions and worked within the American system to bring their goals to fruition. By the Fifth Party System, Irish Americans were ready to expand their influence in U.S. politics, even to the point of winning the presidency itself.

Chapter 6: World War II, the Cold War, and Irish-American Camelot (1932-1968)

Despite their hero Al Smith's defeat in 1928, Irish Americans that year had to be comparatively content with the overall state of affairs in America and in their ancestral homeland. The Great War was a fading memory, most of Ireland had become a free state, and Irish Americans were enjoying the Jazz Age prosperity boom. But then came the stock market crash in October 1929, ushering in the horrors of the Great Depression that would last more than a decade. And yet, as historian William Shannon notes in *The American Irish: A Political and Social Portrait*, "hidden within the unexpected dilemma of the economic depression was an opportunity for the American Irish."¹ That was particularly true in the realm of politics--during this Fifth Party System, one characterized primarily by the dominance of the Democratic Party and the massive expansion in the size and scope of the federal government. In this party system, Irish Americans would play decisive roles in the election of Franklin Roosevelt, the lead-up to America's entrance into World War II, the subsequent Cold War, and the election of the first and thus far only Irish-Catholic president, John F. Kennedy.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Presidency and World War II:

In 1932 universal agreement prevailed that President Hoover, who unluckily served during the onset of the Depression and therefore got the blame for the economic catastrophe, would be defeated for reelection. "Anyone but Hoover" was the rallying cry heard around the nation, and Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt of New York and

¹ William Shannon, *The American Irish: A Political and Social Portrait* (Amherst, Mass.: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1963), 327.

distant cousin of Theodore Roosevelt, became that “anyone.” In 1932 many Irish Americans wanted to see their long-time favorite Smith get another chance at the big prize. But most Democratic leaders refused to consider him, out of fear that he might be the one man who might lose to Hoover, so virulent was the anti-Catholicism of the time.²

The irony is that the eventual winner Roosevelt never would have been considered for the presidency had he not been New York’s governor, an office he reluctantly ran for in 1928 after Smith, hoping to strengthen his own campaign in the Empire State, beseeched him to do so.³ To the surprise of many, FDR narrowly won his race. Later, when the full impact of that victory became clear, the prominent Irish-American New Yorker Daniel Cohalan, with a hint of bitterness noted, “First, we had Roosevelt brought out of retirement and imposed on us to help carry the State for Smith. The result was the election of Roosevelt and the defeat of Smith.”⁴ That of course was just the beginning. FDR proved to be an effective governor and thereby became the favorite for the 1932 Democratic nomination.⁵

With everything stacked against him, Smith rather pathetically went ahead and tried for the Democratic nomination in 1932. “More than one Irishman lowered his head and wept when that dream [Smith’s presidency] died at the Chicago convention in July 1932.”⁶ But practical, cold-eyed Irish-American politicians like James Farley and

² Jonathan Alter, *The Defining Moment: FDR’s Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 34.

³ Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism*, 246.

⁴ Daniel Cohalan to James Farley, May 16, 1936. Box 23, Folder 3, Daniel Cohalan Papers, American Irish Historical Society, New York.

⁵ Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism*, 246.

⁶ Shannon, *American Irish*, 330-331.

Edward Flynn, both New Yorkers, saw a winner in Roosevelt, and they did everything they could to secure the nomination for him.

During the months preceding the Democratic national convention, Farley and Flynn lined up crucial Empire State delegate votes for Roosevelt, then sought critical support for him in other states. At the Chicago convention Farley and Flynn persuaded House Speaker John Nance Garner of Texas to release his state's votes to FDR after Farley "promised to do everything in his power to secure the vice presidential nomination for Mr. Garner"⁷ That gave Roosevelt the nomination. Shortly after this, James Cox of Ohio gratefully wrote to Farley, "You have made a magnificent leader. You brought a party that was pretty badly torn at Chicago into a harmonious unit."⁸ An emotionally devastated Smith grew so jealous and resentful that he would become a political adversary of Roosevelt, though without in any way denting FDR's popularity.⁹ Smith had been the great champion of Irish America, but his time had passed.

The general-election campaign of 1932 was a foregone conclusion, but as Flynn would happily recall, "If mistakes were made" by Roosevelt and his political team "they were minor."¹⁰ Flynn credited Roosevelt's "sixth sense" about politics and Jim Farley's "fine management" for the successful outcome.¹¹ Of course, strong backing from Irish Americans helped, too: FDR won more than 70 percent of their votes in New York, and

⁷ James A. Farley, *Behind the Ballots: A Personal History of a Politician* (NY: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), 138.

⁸ Farley, *Behind the Ballots*, 188-189.

⁹ Burner, *Politics of Provincialism*, 246. Also Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 266.

¹⁰ Edward Flynn, *You're the Boss* (NY: The Viking Press, 1997), 122.

¹¹ Flynn, *You're the Boss*, 122.

an even higher percentage in Massachusetts.¹² Nationwide, FDR beat the hapless Hoover 472-59 in the Electoral College.¹³

As a wealthy upstate New York patrician-aristocrat, Roosevelt had had very limited contact with working-class Irish. Moreover at least one contemporary historian, Jonathan Alter, suggests that FDR “always remained slightly patronizing toward the Irish.”¹⁴ Regardless, President Roosevelt consistently enjoyed massive support from this voting bloc. Among his most important early adherents was Father Charles Coughlin, the famous, and eventually infamous, “radio priest” of that era.

Coughlin was born to Irish-Catholic parents in Ontario, Canada.¹⁵ As a young man, he became a Catholic priest and moved to the United States to lead a church--called the Shrine of the Little Flower--in the small suburban community of Royal Oak, Michigan. In October 1926 Coughlin took his sermons to the local airwaves, and very quickly he attracted a wide listening audience, which led the CBS network in 1930 to air his show nationally.¹⁶ Before long his sermons spoken with a slight Irish brogue (which Coughlin exaggerated for effect), reached an audience of 40 million people, many of them working-class Irish Americans.¹⁷

At first Coughlin’s sermons were religious in nature, but by 1930 he increasingly was commenting on political issues.¹⁸ In 1932 Coughlin unofficially (it would have been

¹² Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 273.

¹³ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 731.

¹⁴ Alter, *The Defining Moment: FDR’s Hundred Days*, 34.

¹⁵ Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 84.

¹⁶ Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 92.

¹⁷ James Shenton, “The Coughlin Movement and the New Deal,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 73:3 (Sep., 1958), 354. Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 92.

¹⁸ Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 83.

imprudent for a priest to have explicitly endorsed a candidate) but quite openly backed Roosevelt for the Democratic nomination, then vociferously supported him against Hoover in the general election. “Roosevelt or Ruin” became Coughlin’s radio mantra.¹⁹ FDR would have won anyway, of course, but Coughlin’s backing helped solidify Roosevelt’s standing among Irish-American Catholics.²⁰ After Roosevelt took office, Father Coughlin initially used his radio sermons to laud the New Deal, the umbrella term given to Roosevelt’s array of federal government programs designed to combat the Depression.²¹ Coughlin referred to these initiatives as “Christ’s Deal.”²²

Before long, however, Coughlin’s wide popularity adversely affected his judgment, and he came to resent President Roosevelt, who commanded an even larger audience of supporters.²³ Coughlin began claiming that the New Deal was a nefarious scheme by monied interests to maintain control over average Americans.²⁴ By 1936 Coughlin had become a full-fledged opponent of the “dictator” Roosevelt’s reelection.²⁵

Fortunately for the President, Coughlin had not been the only prominent Irish American with whom he had forged a positive political relationship. In the House of Representatives, for example, FDR became allies with Massachusetts Congressmen John McCormack and Joseph E. Casey, both of whom served as his “dependable lieutenants”

¹⁹ Father Charles Coughlin, “Roosevelt or Ruin,” November 27, 1933. Radio Broadcast Transcript. Accessed at http://www.speeches-usa.com/Transcripts/042_coughlin.html. Accessed 1/26/15.

²⁰ Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 83.

²¹ Sheldon Marcus, *Father Coughlin: The Tumultuous Life of the Priest of the Little Flower* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1973), 44.

²² Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 108.

²³ Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 83.

²⁴ Shenton, “The Coughlin Movement and the New Deal,” 358.

²⁵ Shenton, “The Coughlin Movement and the New Deal,” 359.

in that body.²⁶ FDR also included talented Irish Americans in his Administration. For example, Thomas “Tommy the Cork” Corcoran of Rhode Island has been described by William Shannon as the “most gifted and versatile” of FDR’s ‘brain trusters,’ and for a few years Corcoran served as the “indefatigable quarterback” of the New Deal.²⁷ But FDR’s most important Irish-American appointees were Farley, Flynn, and Joseph P. Kennedy, the last of whom had his own personal agenda for aligning with Roosevelt.

President Roosevelt appointed Farley to serve as both Postmaster General and Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Farley would help Roosevelt introduce the New Deal programs and later win reelection in 1936.²⁸ Notably, while working in Roosevelt’s administration Farley always wrote in green ink, a nod to his Irish heritage and a means of distinguishing his signature from the hundreds of others that the President and other Democrats regularly saw.²⁹ Farley also represented the Administration at St. Patrick’s Day events, at which he liked to talk about his Irish roots and past trips to Ireland.³⁰ But Farley and FDR had a permanent falling out in 1940; the President repeatedly had told Farley that he would not seek a third term, whereupon Farley began to consider (probably quixotically) running for the job himself. Of course, Roosevelt had every intention of running, and he did so. Farley felt personally wounded and resigned as Party Chairman. “Boss, you’ve lied to me,” he told Roosevelt, “and I’ve lost all faith in you.”³¹

²⁶ Shannon, *American Irish*, 331.

²⁷ Shannon, *American Irish*, 331.

²⁸ Farley, *Behind the Ballots*, Chapter 3 & 5.

²⁹ Farley, *Behind the Ballots*, 193.

³⁰ *Irish World*, March 23, 1940.

³¹ Thomas Fleming, *The New Dealers’ War: F.D.R. and the War within World War II* (NY: Basic Books, 2001), 75.

Roosevelt replaced Farley with the equally talented Flynn as DNC Chairman. Then, in 1942 FDR tried to make Flynn America's Minister to Australia, on the grounds that that country was "nearly fifty per cent Irish Catholic, and [Flynn was] . . . of that faith and people."³² However, Roosevelt later withdrew Flynn's nomination after some members of the U.S. Senate, which needed to confirm the appointment, deemed Flynn unqualified and guilty of corruption in his home region of the Bronx. Ever the loyalist, Flynn made it easy on the President by requesting that his name be withdrawn for the ministerial post, and FDR "[r]eluctantly" complied.³³

But no Irish American in Roosevelt's Administration would prove as important to American politics than Joe Kennedy. He was the son of a Boston ward boss and son-in-law to the legendary Irish-American politician John "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald—a one-time Mayor of Boston and the first Irish immigrant mayor of an important city in the United States.³⁴ Kennedy had amassed a personal fortune, but what he really wanted was power, for himself as much as possible and for one of his sons, in time, the presidency itself. Kennedy's wealth bought him influence within the Democratic Party, and in June 1934 Roosevelt named him to direct the new Securities and Exchange Commission, established to provide federal oversight of the stock market.³⁵ Given multi-millionaire Kennedy's long record of having engaged in shady business practices himself, the selection stunned many. "Mr. Kennedy, former speculator and pool operator," *Newsweek* wrote in disbelief, "will now curb speculation and prohibit pools;" the *New Republic* was even

³² Flynn, *You're the Boss*, 173.

³³ Flynn, *You're the Boss*, 176.

³⁴ Michael R. Beschloss, *Kennedy and Roosevelt: The Uneasy Alliance* (NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980), 25.

³⁵ Beschloss, *Kennedy and Roosevelt*, 85.

harsher, calling Kennedy “the worst of all parasites, a Wall Street operator.”³⁶ But Roosevelt held firm, the Senate approved the appointment, and Kennedy soon became a “Washington insider”—to the point that the *New York Times* reported that FDR called him into his office for advice at least four times a week.³⁷

Roosevelt would turn to Kennedy for help in the 1936 election. Indeed, Kennedy “was to be one of Roosevelt’s biggest reelection campaigners.”³⁸ But the president wanted Kennedy to do more than just speechmaking. FDR sought Kennedy’s aid in trying to persuade Father Coughlin to return to FDR’s camp. Concerned that Coughlin’s defection might cost him Irish-American votes, FDR asked Kennedy to accompany him in a secret meeting at Hyde Park with the radio priest.³⁹ Roosevelt knew that Kennedy and Coughlin had become friendly; moreover, FDR wanted another strong Irish-American figure, this one supportive of him, at the meeting, so that the radio priest would see that FDR retained the backing of other Irish-American elites. At the meeting, Roosevelt spoke frankly to the priest, “Cards on the table, Padre. Cards on the table. Why are you cooling off to me? Why are you criticizing the things I am doing?”⁴⁰ Coughlin had no good answer to that question, but even so he did not return to Roosevelt’s bandwagon; in fact his radio broadsides against Roosevelt would become even more strident during the campaign. It mattered not, for Roosevelt won by another landslide, defeating Alf Landon of Kansas by an Electoral College count of 523-8--the

³⁶ Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *The Kennedys: An American Drama* (NY: Summit Books, 1989), 75.

³⁷ Beschloss, *Kennedy and Roosevelt*, 95.

³⁸ Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 67.

³⁹ Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 66-67.

⁴⁰ Marcus, *Father Coughlin*, 99.

margin swelled by a huge pro-FDR turnout among Irish Americans.⁴¹ Many of these voters listened to and perhaps even admired the radio priest; but their political loyalties remained with Roosevelt.

At the start of Roosevelt's second term, Kennedy requested that he be named Ambassador to Great Britain.⁴² Roosevelt hesitated to do so, as he had begun to doubt the depth of Kennedy's loyalty to the Administration. Still, in December 1937 FDR made the appointment, at least in part, because the President sensed that war might break out in Europe and that Kennedy, as Minister to Britain, could help counteract the anti-British, isolationist sentiments so widespread among Irish-American Catholics in the Northeast.⁴³ Indeed, when war did erupt in September 1939 after Adolf Hitler's Germany invaded Poland, Roosevelt looked to Kennedy to rally Irish Americans behind FDR's plan to aid Britain. Even more important to Roosevelt, he wanted to win a third term in 1940, and he knew he could ill-afford to offend such an important part of his coalition as Irish-American voters.

FDR had good reason to be concerned about Irish-American reaction to the war and his pro-British stance in the conflict. The *Irish World* and the *Gaelic American* printed numerous articles criticizing Britain and warning the President against being taken in by British guile. At the same time, these papers gave scant coverage to ongoing German acts of barbarism. Predictably, the Irish-American press stoutly opposed the President's desire to loosen the restrictions of the Neutrality Acts of the 1930s, which,

⁴¹ *New York Times*, November 4, 1936. Also, Lawrence McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America* (NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 105.

⁴² Beschloss, *Kennedy and Roosevelt*, 153.

⁴³ Beschloss, *Kennedy and Roosevelt*, 154.

taken together imposed an arms/war materials embargo against all belligerents, prohibited Americans from traveling on belligerents' ships, and making loans to belligerents.⁴⁴ Roosevelt had disagreed with these measures, but looking ahead to 1940, he had signed them into law in deference to widespread isolationist sentiment. Now, with Europe engulfed in war, FDR advocated a repeal of the provision in the Neutrality Laws that prohibited the sale of war materials to belligerents. Roosevelt proposed a "cash-and-carry" policy that would enable belligerents to purchase American weapons and other supplies if they paid for and transported these goods home themselves.⁴⁵ Cash-and-carry, everyone realized, would go a very long way toward ending the Neutrality Acts altogether.

Roosevelt encountered massive opposition to repeal from Congressman, isolationists, and Irish-American newspapers like the *Irish World* and *Gaelic American* because they viewed this step as a catalyst to America's entrance into another European war. According to historian T.R. Dwyer in *Behind the Green Curtain: Ireland's Phoney Neutrality During World War II*, "The ethnic Irish-American press unanimously opposed the repeal proposals."⁴⁶ They knew Roosevelt wanted to terminate the embargo so he would be free to help Great Britain. Accordingly, the *Gaelic American* described isolationist Idaho Senator William Borah's October 2, 1939, speech opposing repeal as "a Masterly Effort," in the crusade "Against Sending American Boys into Slaughter Pens of Europe."⁴⁷ The *Irish World*, now widely viewed as one of the more "moderate Irish-

⁴⁴ Kennedy, Cohen, and Bailey, *American Pageant*, 811.

⁴⁵ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality and the U.S.A.*, 26.

⁴⁶ T.R. Dwyer, *Behind the Green Curtain: Ireland's Phoney Neutrality during WWII* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2009), 37.

⁴⁷ *Gaelic American*, October 14, 1939.

American newspapers,” also opposed repeal of the embargo, and regularly praised anti-repeal senators like Borah and Gerald Nye of North Dakota.⁴⁸ Naturally the *Irish World* criticized those public officials who favored repeal, especially the Irish-American ones like Senator James Byrnes of South Carolina.⁴⁹ Moreover, the *Irish World* encouraged its readers to wire their senators to “Keep American Youth From an Early Grave” by asking them to reject the repeal.⁵⁰ On the day the Senate planned to vote on the repeal bill, the *Irish World* printed an anti-repeal speech given by Father Coughlin, who had called on U.S. citizens to “carry on the right to save the embargo.”⁵¹

To be sure, not all Irish Americans opposed repealing the embargo as vehemently as did the Irish-American press. Indeed, Gallup polls taken on the subject indicated that a majority of Americans of all national origins except Germans favored repealing the embargo.⁵² Moreover, this same poll stated that 61% of Irish-born voters backed repeal.⁵³ Both the *Gaelic American* and the United Irish-American Societies of New York challenged these Gallup findings. The *Gaelic American* claimed:

Whereas, the delegates to the United Irish-American Societies of New York, who represent organizations with a combined membership of several thousand citizens of Irish birth or descent, report that they have been unable to find a single member of any of their units who has received a questionnaire or enquiry relative to the proposed change in the neutrality law from Dr. Gallup.⁵⁴

Had Dr. Gallup done his due diligence and interviewed Irish Americans, the *Gaelic American* confidentially suggested, he would have discovered an overwhelming

⁴⁸ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality and the U.S.A.*, 26.

⁴⁹ *Irish World*, September 23, 1939. Also, Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 39.

⁵⁰ *Irish World*, September 23, 1939.

⁵¹ *Irish World*, November 4, 1939.

⁵² See William Hansen and Fred Israel, eds., *Gallup Poll; Public Opinion, 1935-1971* (NY: Random House, 1972), “The Year 1939.” And *Gaelic American*, November 4, 1939.

⁵³ *Gaelic American*, November 4, 1939.

⁵⁴ *Gaelic American*, November 4, 1939.

sentiment of opposition to repeal within the Irish-American community. Dwyer offers a somewhat different explanation of the Gallup results. In his book *Irish Neutrality and the U.S.A.*, he suggests that Gallup's data revealed a declining fervor among Irish Americans about foreign-policy issues in general, now that the Irish Free State had been established-leaving Irish Americans more willing to accept the popular Roosevelt's judgment on global policy.⁵⁵ But those Irish Americans who were paying attention to world events, Dwyer claims, may have viewed the repeal of the embargo as necessary to keep the United States out of war. "Many people," Dwyer contends, "actually viewed repeal as the best way to keep America out of the conflict, seeing that the President had astutely included a provision in his bill forbidding American ships to travel in waters in a zone extending around belligerent countries including such neutrals as Belgium, Holland and Ireland." Dwyer continues, "Thus, it was argued, the bill reduced the danger that American opinion might be inflamed either by a deliberate or accidental sinking of an American ship."⁵⁶

Despite the Irish-American press' best efforts, both the House and Senate overwhelmingly passed the cash-and-carry bill on November 5, 1939.⁵⁷ The *Gaelic American* bitterly predicted "that a great number" of those who voted for cash-and-carry "will welcome some 'incident' or help to make one as a pretext to get us into the war."⁵⁸

The Irish-American newspapers, of course, did not waiver in their attempts to keep the United States out of joining the war on Britain's side. They not only incessantly

⁵⁵ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 28. For this same point, see also McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America*, 154 and Glazer & Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, 253.

⁵⁶ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 28.

⁵⁷ *Gaelic American*, November 11, 1939.

⁵⁸ *Gaelic American*, November 11, 1939.

criticized Britain, but they also subtly sided with Germany—not unlike what these papers had done during the First World War. For example, the June 15, 1940, edition of the *Gaelic American* published a list of all the territories and peoples Britain had conquered over time--the point being, of course, that Britain was being grossly hypocritical in claiming “to the world [that it was fighting Germany] to promote peace between the nations.”⁵⁹ The *Gaelic American* also defended the famed aviator Charles Lindbergh, a vocal isolationist who early in the war called for Britain to give up some territories, including Canada, then still a dominion of imperialist Britain.⁶⁰ Lindbergh hoped that his controversial proposal would draw attention away from Germany’s recent territorial acquisitions and instead put the focus on Britain’s centuries-old expansionist policies. “Colonel Lindbergh has done another outstanding service to his country,” the *Gaelic American* stated, “and he has again in consequence become the target of abuse by the Anglophiles, the internationalists, the controlled plutocratic press and various groups of war-mongers.”⁶¹

Echoing the *Gaelic American*’s hateful stance against Britain, the *Irish World* hypocritically accused Britain (and France) of having failed to come to the aid of such weaker nations as “Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Finland;” the paper made this charge even as it simultaneously was demanding that the United States remain neutral in the face of the Nazi takeover of Europe.⁶² More incredibly, shortly after the war began, the *Irish World* claimed that “During Poland’s long night of suffering and while England was

⁵⁹ *Gaelic American*, June 15, 1940.

⁶⁰ *Gaelic American*, October 28, 1939.

⁶¹ *Gaelic American*, October 28, 1939.

⁶² *Irish World*, March 30, 1940.

callously indifferent, she had no more sincere friend and sympathizer than Ireland.”⁶³ A week later, the *Irish World* resumed this same line of attack in an editorial that read in part:

. . . Have you noticed England working her old tricks again? She told Poland that she would aid her, and posed for the world’s applause for her kindness. Now where is she? Looking on at a mutilated Poland that she will reach in time for the funeral of the brave land and doubtless shed crocodile tears⁶⁴

“England,” the *Irish World* routinely insisted, “is not out for the freedom of small nations—she is out for England, and England only.”⁶⁵

Beyond that, both the *Gaelic American* and the *Irish World* clearly seemed to relish in reporting the advances of the Germany army. One *Gaelic American* headline described the Nazi advance on Paris as “An Amazing Incredible Week,” while the *Irish World* mocked Britain’s failed defense of Norway by publishing a cartoon on its editorials page depicting Britain as a magician and its Norway trick failing.⁶⁶

Probably out of deference to FDR’s continued popularity among Irish Americans generally, the leading Irish-American newspapers refrained from attacking him personally. That said their opposition to his reelection in 1940 could not have been more obvious. In a reference to the upcoming presidential contest, for example, the *Gaelic American* ran a story under the headline, “Has President Roosevelt Disqualified Himself?” for a third term, as a consequence of his war leanings and mainstream

⁶³ *Irish World*, September 16, 1939.

⁶⁴ *Irish World*, September 30, 1939.

⁶⁵ *Irish World*, April 13, 1940.

⁶⁶ *Gaelic American*, June 15, 1940. Also, *Irish World*, May 18, 1940.

America's isolationism.⁶⁷ Later, just days before the election, the *Gaelic American* warned that the "Re-election of Roosevelt Would Undoubtedly Jockey United States Into War."⁶⁸ The *Gaelic American* feared that both the cash-and-carry policy and later the destroyers-for-bases deal that gave Britain fifty American destroyers in exchange for rights to British territories, unmistakably indicated that Roosevelt was leading the country into war. The *Irish World* agreed. It ran several articles, editorials, and cartoons demanding that the United States remain neutral—an obvious jab at the pro-Ally steps Roosevelt had taken.⁶⁹ Beyond that, it openly endorsed Roosevelt's Republican opponent Wendell Willkie of Indiana with "A Message to Irish Voters: Vote For Willkie" because "Our nation is worth saving."⁷⁰ In its endorsement, the newspaper printed statements by Willkie where he promised, "If you elect me President of the United States I shall never send an American boy to fight in a European War."⁷¹ Moreover, the *Irish World* directed its readers to "Honor the Traditions of This Country," and "vot[e] AGAINST A THIRD TERM" for Roosevelt.⁷²

Other Irish-American elites beyond the newspaper editors also opposed a third Roosevelt term and the heightened possibility of going to war. In May 1940, members of the Clan na Gael gathered in Worcester Massachusetts, to warn against American entrance into war and to push Britain to "Set a Good Example to All Nations by Getting out of Ireland."⁷³ In September 1940 thousands of Irish Catholics in Boston gathered to

⁶⁷ *Gaelic American*, June 22, 1940.

⁶⁸ *Gaelic American*, November 2, 1940.

⁶⁹ See *Irish World* September 30, November 18, December 9, 1939.

⁷⁰ *Irish World*, November 2, 1940.

⁷¹ *Irish World*, November 2, 1940.

⁷² *Irish World*, November 2, 1940.

⁷³ *Gaelic American*, May, 18, 1940.

hear the Archbishop of New York, Francis Spellman, speak against the dangers of “barbaric entanglement in England.”⁷⁴ In late October 1940, the Irish-American Brian Boru Club met in New York City’s Central Opera House to protest against the drift toward U.S. entrance into the war.⁷⁵ In November 1940, the Ancient Order of Hibernians in New York City met and passed two resolutions, one calling on the United States to keep out of war and the second encouraging Americans to demand that their government stop shipping to Britain arms that were being “used to destroy and enslave the Irish people.”⁷⁶ Also in 1940, the Irish-American economist John T. Flynn published a damning biography of FDR titled *Country Squire in the White House*. More than 50,000 copies of Flynn’s book were distributed, and the Irish leaning *Chicago Daily Tribune* published excerpts from the volume just days before the election.⁷⁷ Finally, Father Coughlin continued to use his Sunday broadcasts in 1939 and 1940 to attack Roosevelt and demand “strict neutrality,” a policy he believed the Administration was not following.⁷⁸ Collectively, Irish-American leaders in 1940 were voicing strong isolationist sentiments, and in raw political terms this meant that they had, at the very least, serious misgivings about Roosevelt’s winning a third term.

Irish-American leaders not only supported neutrality for the United States but neutrality for Ireland, as well. At the onset of World War II, the Taoiseach of the Irish Free State, Eamon De Valera, had declared that Ireland would remain neutral in order “to keep our people safe from such consequences as would be involved by being in the

⁷⁴ *Gaelic American*, September 28, 1940.

⁷⁵ *Gaelic American*, November 3, 1940.

⁷⁶ *Irish World*, November 30, 1940.

⁷⁷ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 33.

⁷⁸ *Irish World*, September 9, 1939.

war.”⁷⁹ Predictably, Britain disapproved of this decision, and it disturbed Roosevelt as well. In mid-August 1940 Roosevelt informed his new Minister to Ireland, David Gray, that the Irish people “must realize that in the end they will have to fish or cut bait,” meaning that they must take a side regarding the ongoing war.⁸⁰ But Irish-American newspapers disagreed, and hailed what they regarded as De Valera’s courageous decision. The *Irish World* published a petition for readers to fill out and send to Roosevelt demanding “Protection of Ireland’s Neutrality.”⁸¹ The *Gaelic American* happily reported that 97% of the 26 counties in Eire favored the policy of neutrality.⁸² Irish American leaders even agreed with De Valera’s decision to prohibit the British from using Irish ports as naval bases during the war. The *Irish World* proudly printed De Valera’s explanation for taking that step:

This question is one which involves our national sovereignty and our peoples’ will. It is also one which involves the safety of our people. You—in the United States are 3,000 miles away from immediate bombing. If we handed over the ports to Britain we would thereby involve ourselves directly in the war with all its consequences.⁸³

Notably, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill offered to compromise with De Valera in order to secure British use of the Irish ports. Churchill in 1940 first offered full Irish unity (i.e., an end to partition) in exchange for access to these strategic locations.⁸⁴ Churchill later repeated this offer after the Japanese attacked America at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. But De Valera refused to compromise, as he doubted

⁷⁹ Sean Cronin, *Washington’s Irish Policy, 1916-1986: Independence, Partition, and Neutrality* (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1987), 72. Also see *Irish World*, September 9, 1939.

⁸⁰ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 81.

⁸¹ *Irish World*, November 30, 1940.

⁸² *Gaelic American*, September 14, 1940.

⁸³ *Irish World*, November 30, 1940.

⁸⁴ Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A History of Ireland During the Second World War* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 386.

Britain would keep its promises.⁸⁵ Moreover, De Valera feared for the fate of tiny Ireland should it get involved in the war. Ireland, he concluded, had nothing to gain by helping the Allies.

American diplomats also tried to secure Irish help for the Allied Powers in exchange for an end to partition. Even before the war began in Europe, John Cudahy, then Ambassador to Ireland, had encouraged Roosevelt to pressure Britain to acquiesce to Irish unity. "An Ireland friendly to Great Britain," Cudahy explained, "means the approval by a great share of American public opinion of closer American-British relations."⁸⁶ Roosevelt did nothing at first, but upon war's outbreak and the declaration of Irish neutrality, the promise of a unified Ireland became a formidable bargaining chip. This fact did not escape the next Minister to Ireland, Gray, who took over the job in February 1940.⁸⁷ Within a month, Gray visited with Pope Pius XII and obtained his approval of a united Ireland, with a clear separation of church and state.⁸⁸ Gray then attempted to establish contact between De Valera and the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, James Craig, First Viscount (Lord) Craigavon.⁸⁹ However, Lord Craigavon, refused to consider a separation from England, and for his part De Valera adamantly declared, "We could never bargain with our neutrality."⁹⁰ Then, as the war escalated in the summer of 1940, Britain threatened to seize Irish ports, and the British press accused De Valera of being pro-German.⁹¹ But even as pressure on him steadily mounted, De

⁸⁵ Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 386.

⁸⁶ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 47.

⁸⁷ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 47.

⁸⁸ Trevor West, "Roosevelt v. De Valera: 1939-1945: Part I," *Fortnight*, No. 167 (May 12-26, 1978), 12.

⁸⁹ West, "Roosevelt v. De Valera," 12.

⁹⁰ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 51.

⁹¹ West, "Roosevelt v. De Valera," 13.

Valera stuck to his decision. This continued Irish neutrality created an additional pressure on Roosevelt in 1940 to stay out of the war if he hoped to be certain of having solid Irish-American support come November.

As previously noted, the Irish-American public did not react with the same adamant opposition as did some of that community's elites with respect to Roosevelt's foreign policies in general and Irish neutrality in particular. While most Irish Americans supported Ireland's decision to stay out of the war, far fewer agreed that Ireland should keep their ports closed to England during the war with Germany. In a January 13, 1941, Gallup Poll that asked Irish Americans their opinion concerning the Irish ports issue, only 52% opposed British use of these ports as war bases, while 40% were in favor and 8% were undecided.⁹² Simply put, the Irish-American public did not hate the British with the same vitriol that the editors of *Gaelic American* and *Irish World* routinely displayed. As the historian Francis McMahon wrote in his 1945 book, *A Catholic Looks at the World*:

The anti-British factor was there, but it was not so strong as generally believed. The *Gaelic American* of New York City and a few other papers of limited circulation . . . appealed to the rapidly diminishing group of "professional Irish". . . but rabid anti-British feelings were in the decline The Irish who were opposed to the war were swayed quite as much by the traditional isolationism of the American mind as by the Cromwellian outrages of the seventeenth century.⁹³

But with so many Irish-American elites against him, President Roosevelt had to be concerned about the depth of support he had in that community. This was especially true given that FDR's Republican opponent Willkie openly mocked the President's

⁹² See William Hansen and Fred Israel, eds., *Gallup Poll; Public Opinion, 1935-1971* (NY: Random House, 1972), 260.

⁹³ Francis E. McMahon, *A Catholic Looks at the World* (NY: Vanguard Press, 1945), 104.

promises of continued neutrality. “Who really thinks that the President is sincerely trying to keep us out of war?” Willkie asked in his speeches.⁹⁴ Willkie also suggested that there might be an “international understanding to put America into the war that we citizens do not know about.”⁹⁵ Sensing a potentially serious political threat, Roosevelt turned to the one man he believed could help assure Irish Americans that the President’s pledge to keep the country out of war would be honored.

That man was Joseph Kennedy. By fall 1940, Kennedy had become bored with his ambassadorial duties and was returning home from London.⁹⁶ More importantly, Kennedy had acquired highly isolationist views, based partly on his not very well concealed admiration for Nazi Germany, and partly on his belief that Britain could not long stave off a German invasion.⁹⁷ Rumors circulated in both America and Britain that Kennedy would endorse Willkie for President, a betrayal that FDR feared would cost him Irish-American votes.⁹⁸ Roosevelt was specifically concerned with the amount of information Kennedy had learned as Ambassador to Britain, which included the secret correspondence between FDR and Churchill.⁹⁹ Accordingly, Roosevelt assiduously courted Kennedy. Some reports suggest that FDR promised Kennedy the 1944 Democratic presidential nomination if he endorsed Roosevelt’s candidacy in 1940.¹⁰⁰ But Kennedy told close friends that he had done FDR’s bidding on behalf of his son Joe Kennedy, Jr.’s political career, not his own. “I simply made a deal with Roosevelt,”

⁹⁴ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 33.

⁹⁵ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 33-34.

⁹⁶ Beschloss, *Kennedy and Roosevelt*, 212-215.

⁹⁷ Beschloss, *Kennedy and Roosevelt*, 212, 215.

⁹⁸ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 34.

⁹⁹ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 34.

¹⁰⁰ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 34.

Kennedy said, “We agreed that if I endorsed him for President in 1940, then he would support my son Joe for governor of Massachusetts in 1942.”¹⁰¹

In any event, Kennedy wound up surpassing Roosevelt’s hopes and expectations. On October 29, 1940, one week prior to Election Day, Kennedy gave a radio address to the nation.¹⁰² Speculation had run rampant that Kennedy would use the airwaves to announce his break with the President. Instead, Kennedy issued a ringing endorsement of the President and emphatically assured the American people that the President was indeed the peace candidate in the upcoming campaign. “[I]t is for the very reason that I serve as Ambassador to England,” Kennedy told the country, “that I am addressing you in order that you may have an accurate report and my estimate of the future on the eve of this, probably the most critical election year of our existence.”¹⁰³ He continued:

Yesterday I received a letter from a colleague who was with me in Washington, and who is head of one of the great industries. He said it was my duty, regardless of any friendships I might have, to inform the American people if, as he believed, there was a secret commitment beyond what the American people had been made aware of and unknown to the Congress as a commitment by Roosevelt to Great Britain to lead us into war.

Mr. Roosevelt has already denied that, and I, as the Ambassador of the American people in London, who would certainly become aware of this fact in one way or another, can assure you now with absolute sincerity and honesty that there has been no such commitment.¹⁰⁴

A grateful and no doubt relieved Roosevelt sent Kennedy a telegram the very night of the address. FDR told him: “WE HAVE ALL JUST LISTENED TO A GRAND SPEECH

¹⁰¹ Beschloss, *Kennedy and Roosevelt*, 221.

¹⁰² Beschloss, *Kennedy and Roosevelt*, 219.

¹⁰³ Joseph Kennedy, “Radio Address,” October 29, 1940. Amanda Smith, ed., *Hostage to Fortune: The Letters of Joseph P. Kennedy* (NY: Penguin Group, 2001), 483.

¹⁰⁴ Kennedy, “Radio Address,” 484.

MANY THANKS. LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ALL TOMORROW EVENING.”¹⁰⁵

Most Irish Americans believed what Kennedy had told them. His role in the U.S. government and his high stature in the Irish-American community gave his words all the credibility needed to sway voters. Not even nationalistic Irish-American newspapers like the *Irish World* or the *Gaelic American* dared openly to refute Kennedy’s words.¹⁰⁶

Roosevelt himself made the campaign’s final pitch to reassure isolationist voters of all ethnicities. “I have said this before,” Roosevelt said in a memorable speech he delivered on October 30, 1940, in Boston, “but I shall say it again and again and again, your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars.”¹⁰⁷ This emphatic promise, along with Kennedy’s words of endorsement, probably did more than anything else to ensure the Irish-American vote for a third term.¹⁰⁸

Among all his national campaigns, Roosevelt probably worried more about 1940 than any of the others. In the end, however, he won a landslide victory, taking 449 Electoral votes to 82 for Willkie.¹⁰⁹ To be sure, Roosevelt had not managed to convince all Irish Americans of his sincerity on the great issue of the election. This is evidenced by the fact that a number of areas in New York State with heavy concentrations of Irish-American voters backed Willkie.¹¹⁰ But even in the face of such defections Roosevelt took New York, along with most of the nation. As for Joe Kennedy, who had effectively

¹⁰⁵ Franklin Roosevelt to Joseph Kennedy, October 29, 1940. Smith, *Hostage to Fortune*, 489.

¹⁰⁶ See November 2, 1940, issues of both newspapers. There are no references to the speech.

¹⁰⁷ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 35.

¹⁰⁸ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ Shade and Campbell, eds., *American Presidential Campaigns and Elections*, vol. 2, 769.

¹¹⁰ Edgar Eugene Robinson, *They Voted for Roosevelt: The Presidential Vote 1932-1944* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1947), 131-133.

done his part to get Roosevelt that third term, he would be forced to resign as Minister to Britain in December 1940, after he unguardedly told the *Boston Sunday Globe* that “Democracy is finished in England”--and then adding for good measure that democracy might be finished in the United States, as well.¹¹¹

The *Gaelic American* explained the disappointing election results by saying that both the Republicans and Democrats had engaged in “Anglophilia” and “war-mongering” and as such voters had little in the way of an actual choice.¹¹² Naturally FDR’s victory did not lead the paper to soften its vehement advocacy of the isolationist cause. Indeed, the *Gaelic American* continually reminded the President of the pledge he had made on the stump.¹¹³

However, events in 1941 moved America ever-closer to war. In March 1941 Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease Bill, which allowed the United States to loan war supplies to Britain.¹¹⁴ In August Roosevelt met with Churchill to draft and sign the Atlantic Charter, which outlined the principles that should prevail in the post-war world.¹¹⁵

War for America seemed increasingly inevitable, notwithstanding the efforts of isolationist die-hards like John Cudahy, Roosevelt’s former Minister to Ireland. Now a correspondent, Cudahy on May 23, 1941, had the last interview conducted by an American with Hitler.¹¹⁶ During that meeting, Cudahy sought to assure Hitler that

¹¹¹ *Boston Sunday Globe*, November 10, 1940. Also, Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 290.

¹¹² *Gaelic American*, November 9, 1940.

¹¹³ See *Gaelic American* editions from November-December 1940.

¹¹⁴ West, “Roosevelt v. De Valera,” 12.

¹¹⁵ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 43.

¹¹⁶ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 42.

America had no intention of entering the war on the Allied side. After the interview, Cudahy reported that his efforts probably had been in vain, as the “Nazis expect the United States in the war” regardless of what he had told them.¹¹⁷ But Cudahy could take satisfaction that he had done all he could--indeed, he had gone to a greater extreme than any other American isolationist.¹¹⁸

Of course, it was Japan, not Germany, that pushed the United States into World War II. Following the deadly sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt successfully asked Congress for and received a Congressional declaration of war. Germany then declared war on the United States, and so America found itself fighting an epic, two-theater conflict.

The historian Gordon W. Prange wrote in his monograph about the Pearl Harbor attack, *At Dawn We Slept*, that “Japan’s devastating air strike against Pearl Harbor aroused the people of the United States as no other event in their history ever had. From coast to coast, north to south, the tragic words rasped over American tongues, burned into American minds.”¹¹⁹ Isolationism immediately ended nearly everywhere, and this definitely included the Irish-American community. On December 13, 1941, the *Gaelic American* ran the headline, “WAR WITH JAPAN! WE HERE WILL FIGHT FOR THE HONOR AND GLORY OF UNITED STATES.”¹²⁰ The *Gaelic American* also encouraged Irish Americans to pick up arms to defend America by lauding the actions of Captain Colin P. Kelly, the first American hero of the war. Kelly died while sinking a

¹¹⁷ *New York Times*, June 10, 1941.

¹¹⁸ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 42.

¹¹⁹ Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (NY: Penguin Books, 1981), 582.

¹²⁰ *Gaelic American*, December 13, 1941.

Japanese battle ship, *Haruna*, at Manila.¹²¹ In its story about Kelly, the *Gaelic American* movingly wrote, “The tradition which has endured through the life of the Republic, that the Irish would always be the first to fight and die for the United States, has already been upheld in the present conflict.”¹²² Nearly all Irish-American organizations and leaders wholly agreed. To cite one example, John J. Sheahan, the New York City Saint Patrick’s Day Parade Chairman, called upon members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and all Irish Americans to be ready, now that war had come, to defend the “physical and cultural development of this country”¹²³

The only prominent Irish American who remained isolationist after Pearl Harbor was radio priest Father Coughlin despite his proclamation--“we submit to the will of the government”--immediately after the attack.¹²⁴ Because restrictions in broadcasting had gone into effect in 1940, the incendiary Coughlin now increasingly relied on his newspaper *Social Justice*, to express his discontent with America’s entrance into the war. He wrote of the Axis Powers’ formidable strength and warned his readers to beware of siding with the “sleazy Britishers.”¹²⁵ But patriotic Irish Americans no longer took Coughlin seriously. Few lamented when the government barred Coughlin’s seditious newspaper from the mails and his bishop ordered him to cease his radio program, both in the spring of 1942.¹²⁶

¹²¹ *Gaelic American*, December 20, 1941.

¹²² *Gaelic American*, December 20, 1941.

¹²³ *Gaelic American*, December 13, 1941.

¹²⁴ Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 267.

¹²⁵ Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 268.

¹²⁶ Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, 268.

In his book *Textures of Irish America*, Lawrence McCaffrey writes, “[N]o group exceeded Irish Americans in devotion to the war effort.”¹²⁷ Although the number of Irish Americans who served in the war cannot be determined, the “countless Irish-American heroes during the Second World War” serve as testament to that ethnic group’s dauntless patriotism and bravery.¹²⁸ Many others followed the example set by Colin Kelly. The five Sullivan brothers from Iowa—Albert, Francis, George, Joseph, and Madison--all perished during the sinking of the cruiser *Juneau* off the Solomon Islands in November 1942.¹²⁹ Future President John F. Kennedy survived the sinking of his *PT-109* in the Pacific on August 1943. Irish-American Audie Murphy became the most highly decorated soldier of World War II, with his greatest act of bravery occurring in January 1945 when he mounted a burning tank in France to kill 50-100 approaching German soldiers. Father Joseph O’Callahan served as the chaplain of the USS *Franklin*, and he led 700 men to safety after the ship was bombed on March 19, 1945--for which Father O’Callahan received the Congressional Medal of Honor.¹³⁰ Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe, another Irish American, served during the Battle of the Bulge and, while surrounded at Bastogne, issued the famous “Nuts” reply to the German demands that he and his troops surrender. The heroism and sacrifices of these few representative men are emblematic of the thousands of other Irish Americans who served the country bravely during World War II.

¹²⁷ McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America*, 155.

¹²⁸ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 302

¹²⁹ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 302.

¹³⁰ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 302, 304.

Despite their country's official neutrality, as the war progressed many Irish in Ireland also helped America and the Allied effort. The Irish Coast Watching Service, for one, shared intelligence and weather reports with the British and Americans throughout the course of the war which enabled the Allies to better plan their attacks.¹³¹ Moreover, some Irish spied on the Germans who sought to use neutral Ireland as a convenient base of operations.¹³² The Irish government also permitted Irish men to enlist in the British Army, and about 150,000 of them did so.¹³³ Also, as early as 1940 Ireland gave Britain access to Irish air space.¹³⁴ Beyond that, De Valera imprisoned numerous pro-German members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) who actively sought to destabilize Britain; De Valera explained that such IRA actions jeopardized Irish neutrality.¹³⁵ Although De Valera was neither pro-British nor ambiguous about the necessity of maintaining Irish neutrality, he realized, as did the majority of the Irish population, that "a British victory would be much more beneficial [than a German one], if only because they too [the British] were democratic."¹³⁶ To be sure, when Hitler committed suicide just before Germany's final collapse on April 30, 1945, De Valera made the public-relations blunder of giving his condolences to Edouard Hempel, the Nazi German Minister to Ireland—an act that some British and Americans never forgot.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, overall it can be confidently said that the Irish both in America and abroad aided the Allied cause and contributed to the victory over Nazism.

¹³¹ Timothy White & Andrew J. Riley, "Irish Neutrality in World War II: A Review Essay," *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 19 (2008), 147.

¹³² White & Riley, "Irish Neutrality," 149.

¹³³ Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 110.

¹³⁴ White & Riley, "Irish Neutrality," 147.

¹³⁵ Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 95.

¹³⁶ White & Riley, "Irish Neutrality," 147.

¹³⁷ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality*, 202.

Harry Truman:

America's Commander-in-Chief during World War II did not live to see America's victory. On April 12, 1945, Roosevelt died suddenly, elevating Harry S. Truman of Missouri to the Presidency. His years in the White House would be dominated by the end of the Second World War, and by the Cold War, both domestically and abroad. Historians regard his Presidency as one of the most significant in U.S. history, a remarkable feat for a figure whom few in the country knew much about when he became Chief Executive.

Truman possessed Irish roots--he was Scots-Irish--and his political career included important Irish-American influences. His bond with Irish Americans began during World War I. Having returned to farming after a series of railroad and clerical jobs, Truman was eligible for the draft exemption given to farmers, but he volunteered for duty anyway as part of the National Guard. In April 1918 he landed in France, and in July he became Commander of the Battery D Artillery unit of the 129th Regiment. This outfit had been nicknamed "Dizzy D," because the men in its ranks had acquired a notorious reputation for chronic insubordinate behavior.¹³⁸ Most of the Battery D soldiers were Irish-American college boys from Kansas City.¹³⁹ "They'd had four commanding officers before [him]," Truman would recall, "and none of them could

¹³⁸ David McCullough, *Truman* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 116.

¹³⁹ Merle Miller, *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman* (NY: Berley Publishing Grove, 1974), 94.

control those Irish boys.”¹⁴⁰ Lieutenant Edgar Hinde of the 129th Regiment agreed with that assessment: “They were a pretty wild bunch of Irish, I’ll tell you that.”¹⁴¹

Naturally these men were predisposed to dislike any officer, and such was their reaction to Truman the first time they met him on July 11, 1918. “Although they were standing at attention,” as Hinde recalled, “you could feel the Irish blood boiling—as much to say, if this guy thinks he’s going to take us over, he’s mistaken.”¹⁴² But Truman soon managed to win the confidence and respect of these men. Better still, he earned their loyalty for life during a surprise German artillery shelling on the unit that occurred on August 29, 1918, in the Vosges Mountains.¹⁴³ Instead of standing their ground during the attack, Truman’s men panicked and started to flee. But Captain Truman, screaming every profanity he knew at them, ordered the “no-good Irish sons-of-bitches” to return.¹⁴⁴ Thanks largely to Truman’s leadership, all the men of Battery D survived this frightening episode and got back safely to base.¹⁴⁵ Truman chose not to court-martial any of the men, even though he had reason enough to do so.¹⁴⁶ That gesture, along with their awareness that he had shown courage when they had not, further endeared him to the men. Private William O’Hare of Battery D later wrote to his father, “We have a captain who cannot be beaten.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁰ Miller, *Plain Speaking*, 94.

¹⁴¹ McCullough, *Truman*, 117.

¹⁴² McCullough, *Truman*, 117.

¹⁴³ Miller, *Plain Speaking*, 98.

¹⁴⁴ Alonzo Hamby, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 69.

¹⁴⁵ Hamby, *Man of the People*, 69.

¹⁴⁶ Miller, *Plain Speaking*, 98.

¹⁴⁷ Hamby, *Man of the People*, 69.

Truman's Irish boys would support him in his subsequent political career. But one Irish-American man, Thomas Pendergast, made that career possible, and years later yet another Irishman, Robert Hannegan, twice decisively aided Truman's ascent into political prominence. Truman got his start in Missouri politics through the Pendergast "machine" that ran Kansas City and the western part of the state in the 1920s and 1930s. Pendergast's political machine was nicknamed "Little Tammany" because of its considerable influence over state and local affairs, and for its notoriously corrupt ways.¹⁴⁸ In 1923, Truman became a judge of Jackson County, Missouri, with the help of the Pendergast machine, and later in 1926 the people of Jackson County elected Truman "presiding" judge, a post from which where he controlled the patronage jobs distributed by "Little Tammany."¹⁴⁹ In the early 1930s Pendergast strove to get one of his men into the U.S. Senate, and ultimately he selected Truman, who won in 1934.¹⁵⁰

Truman would have served a term as a competent and honest but utterly forgettable Senator, had it not been for his friendship with Hannegan, a Missouri Democratic political operative in the St. Louis Democratic machine. In 1940 Truman faced a tough reelection battle, but Hannegan gave him vital help in the eastern part of the state, enabling Truman to win the party primary narrowly, and then the general election.¹⁵¹ In 1944 Hannegan, now the Democratic National Chairman, strongly advocated at the Party convention that Truman be picked to replace erratic, ultra-liberal Vice President Henry Wallace on the 1944 ticket.¹⁵² Hannegan and other Democratic

¹⁴⁸ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 271.

¹⁴⁹ Whitney, *American Presidents*, 299, 303.

¹⁵⁰ Whitney, *American Presidents*, 299, 303.

¹⁵¹ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 303.

¹⁵² Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 277.

bosses knew that this choice had a unique importance, because FDR was in poor health and probably would not survive a fourth term.¹⁵³ Other contenders had supporters, but Hannegan's preference for Truman won the critical backing of other top Democrats, and Roosevelt went along with their recommendation.¹⁵⁴ The Roosevelt-Truman team prevailed over Republican Tom Dewey of New York, and when FDR died just a few months into his fourth term, Truman became President.

He quickly acquired a solid Irish-American base of support. This can only partly be explained by his Democratic Party affiliation. What Irish Americans especially liked about Truman was his staunch anti-communist policies, such as the Truman Doctrine of 1947, the Marshall Plan of 1948, and the Berlin Airlift of 1948-49. Anti-communist sentiment came naturally to Irish Americans during the early decades of the Cold War. Communism rejected religion, and therefore all good Catholics rejected Communism. Before dying in 1939, Pope Pius XI had attacked Communism as an ideology that "strips man of his liberty, robs human personality of all its dignity, and removes all the moral restraints that check the eruptions of blind impulse."¹⁵⁵ His successor Pius XII referred to Communists as "those who trample underfoot the sacred rights of the Catholic Church."¹⁵⁶ Irish Americans followed their Catholic leaders and rejected Communism

¹⁵³ Whitney, *American Presidents*, 303.

¹⁵⁴ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Years of Trials and Hope*, vol. II (NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956), 204.

¹⁵⁵ Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, in *The Papal Encyclicals, 1903-1939*, Claudia Carlen, ed. (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 539.

¹⁵⁶ Pius XII, *Summi Maeoris*, in *The Papal Encyclicals, 1939-1958*, Claudia Carlen, ed. (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1981), 172.

outright. They also disavowed Communism's attack on capitalism and other defining principles of American life.¹⁵⁷

Irish Catholics of the post-World War II era sought and achieved full assimilation into U.S. society. They profited from the booming postwar job market, took advantage of the GI Bill to get a college education, and left their urban tenements for suburban houses with white picket fences.¹⁵⁸ As Dermot Quinn writes in *The Irish in New Jersey*, after World War II “the Irish became bourgeois . . . The pig in the parlor was now porcelain; the curtains were now made of lace.”¹⁵⁹ By the late 1940s, Irish Americans strikingly resembled their Anglo-Saxon neighbors. Opposing Communism contributed to this transformation, as it “reinforced a sense of American exceptionalism,” that the Irish-American community, like most in the country at the time, largely embraced.¹⁶⁰ Some Irish Americans even criticized Ireland for being pro-Red. The Irish-American run *Brooklyn Tablet* often published long letters from readers concerned about “an Ireland subject to the seductive siren call of the Left and the domination of an alien and atheistic ideology.”¹⁶¹

Truman of course fully recognized the anti-communist views of Irish-American voters as he geared up to win a term in his own right in 1948. On Saint Patrick's Day that year, the President spoke before a New York Irish fraternal organization and his remarks included some strong anti-communist rhetoric. Former Vice President Wallace

¹⁵⁷ Robert McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 14 (2003), 82.

¹⁵⁸ Dermot Quinn, *The Irish in New Jersey* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 172.

¹⁵⁹ Quinn, *Irish in New Jersey*, 173.

¹⁶⁰ Quinn, *Irish in New Jersey*, 172.

¹⁶¹ *Brooklyn Tablet*, December 10, 1960.

was running for president as the nominee of the new Progressive Party, which had largely been taken over by Communists.¹⁶² Even so, Wallace's candidacy threatened to siphon off liberal and left-liberal votes that probably would have gone to the Democrat Truman. In his St. Patrick's Day address, Truman defiantly declared that he would not seek any support from Wallace's followers because, the President stated, "any price for Wallace and his Communists is too much for me to pay."¹⁶³ Truman knew this assertion would play well before this Irish-Catholic audience, and, as it turned out Wallace proved far less of an electoral threat than many originally expected.¹⁶⁴ In the most famous upset in U.S. presidential-election history, Truman defeated Republican nominee Dewey by an Electoral College count of 303-189, with the segregationist "Dixiecrat" nominee Strom Thurmond winning a few Electoral votes in the South.¹⁶⁵

Of course, some Irish Catholics took anti-Communism to an extreme level. U.S. Senator Joe McCarthy, a Republican from Wisconsin, personified that dangerous tendency. McCarthy first gained national prominence in February 1950, when during a speech delivered in Wheeling, West Virginia, he accused members of Truman's State Department of harboring Communists within its ranks.¹⁶⁶ "I have here in my hand," McCarthy claimed in this infamous *Enemies from Within* speech, "a list of 205 . . . names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department .

¹⁶² Kennedy, Cohen, and Bailey, *American Pageant*, 881.

¹⁶³ Sean Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 118.

¹⁶⁴ Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party*, 118.

¹⁶⁵ *New York Times*, April 9, 2000.

¹⁶⁶ Herman, *Joseph McCarthy*, 8.

...¹⁶⁷ McCarthy repeated his sensational allegation many times over the succeeding weeks and months, with the specific number of alleged traitors consistently increasing. President Truman and most leading Democrats recoiled from these attacks, with Truman later noting in his memoirs that McCarthy sought to make it seem “that any person claiming his rights under the Fifth Amendment is guilty” of subversion.¹⁶⁸ Nonetheless, McCarthy initially enjoyed considerable popularity with the American public, including many Irish-American Democrats.¹⁶⁹ The country, as William Shannon writes was “receptive to a search for a scapegoat” that could be blamed for all the post-War social stresses, and Communists readily filled that need.¹⁷⁰ By 1954, however, McCarthy’s accusations had become so reckless that in December of that year the Senate censured him by a vote of 67-22.¹⁷¹

Resolutely anti-communist, the Irish-American community actively supported America’s involvement in the Korean War. That conflict began in June 1950 when Communist North Korea, supported by the USSR and Communist China, invaded pro-American South Korea. As they had done in all of America’s previous wars, many Irish Americans fought in the three-year Korean War, and twenty-eight of them lost their lives.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Joseph McCarthy, “Enemies from Within” (Wheeling, West VA, February 9, 1950). Accessed at <http://historymattersgmu.edu/d/6456> Accessed 9/25/14.

¹⁶⁸ Truman, *Memoirs*, 270.

¹⁶⁹ McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America*, 107.

¹⁷⁰ William Shannon, *The American Irish: A Political and Social Portrait* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1963), 373-374.

¹⁷¹ *New York Times*, December 3, 1954.

¹⁷² Wild Geese, “The 28 Irish GIs who Died in Korea” at wildgeese.com/profiles. Accessed 9/26/14.

Interestingly, Irish Americans backed this conflict despite the fact that some 100,000 British troops joined in the coalition effort to save South Korea.¹⁷³ Some Irish-American leaders noted the irony of Britain's efforts on behalf of democracy on the Korean peninsula, even as Britain continued to defend its partition of Ireland. "Britain Wants All Korea To Be Free While It Denies Freedom to Ireland," read one headline printed in the *Irish Echo*, an Irish-American newspaper published in New York.¹⁷⁴ To underscore that British hypocrisy, in this same issue, the *Irish Echo* quoted British Labour Party leader Ernest Bevin as saying, "There must no longer be North Koreans and South Koreans, just one Korea, and Korean people who must be encouraged to work together to rebuild their country."¹⁷⁵ Not even the paramount cause of fighting the global Communist threat could completely distract the Irish from their ancient quarrel with Great Britain.

The Eisenhower Years:

In 1952 the Republican Party nominated Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had been the Supreme Allied Forces Commander in the European Theater of World War II. The personification of America's victory in that enormous conflict, "Ike," as Eisenhower was called, enjoyed such massive popularity that the Democrats, who nominated Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson, simply had no chance for victory. Eisenhower won 35,580,000 popular votes to Stevenson's 26,031,000 and Ike took 457 Electoral votes to Stevenson's 73.¹⁷⁶ In the Eisenhower-Stevenson rematch of 1956, Ike prevailed by

¹⁷³ *Irish Echo*, October 7, 1950.

¹⁷⁴ *Irish Echo*, October 7, 1950.

¹⁷⁵ *Irish Echo*, October 7, 1950.

¹⁷⁶ John A. Krout and Arnold S. Rice, *United States History from 1865* (NY: Harper Resource, 1991), 310.

similar margins. Like most other groups in the country, Irish Americans voted heavily for Eisenhower.

His Presidency had many challenging moments, but none of them directly affected Ireland. That country settled into relative stability during the Eisenhower era. Years earlier in 1948, the Dáil had passed the Republic of Ireland Act after the majority of the electorate in Ireland decided officially to end Ireland's dominion status and make the country a Republic.¹⁷⁷ Receiving recognition from countries around the world, including Britain, the Irish Republic enjoyed considerable peace during the 1950s, even though the separation from Northern Ireland remained troubling to many.¹⁷⁸

Across the Atlantic, the Irish-American community became so fully assimilated into U.S. society that to an increasing degree they were shedding their identity as a discrete political bloc within the Democratic Party coalition.¹⁷⁹ Nonetheless, President Eisenhower still felt it necessary to court Irish Americans, an acknowledgement of this group's formidable political presence in America. With that reality in mind, Eisenhower invited the first president of the newly established Irish Republic, Sean T. O'Kelly, to the United States on Saint Patrick's Day in 1959. The Eisenhower White House believed that such a visit would help in the "developing [of] friendly American support for the administration in the large cities where there is a concentration of people of Irish descent."¹⁸⁰ Eisenhower greeted O'Kelly upon his arrival at Washington National

¹⁷⁷ Moody and Martin, eds., *The Course of Irish History*, 331.

¹⁷⁸ Moody and Martin, eds., *The Course of Irish History*, 331.

¹⁷⁹ William Rogers and Nicole Anderson, "Keeping the Tradition Alive," in *The Irish-American Experience in New Jersey and Metropolitan New York: Cultural Identity, Hybridity, and Commemoration*, ed., Marta Deyrup and Maura Harrington, 25-45 (NY: Lexington Books, 2014), 32.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Loftus, "The Politics of Cordiality: Continuity and Change in Irish-American Diplomacy during the Johnson Presidency, 1963-9," *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 20 (2009), 148.

Airport, and in his welcoming remarks the President repeated the standard joke about how “today everybody in the United States is Irish.” Eisenhower, continued, “Now those who look Irish and sound Irish and have Irish names, they don’t have to prove this in any way. But anyone with the name Eisenhower must wear something green—which I have. In any event, all of us are Irish.”¹⁸¹ Notably, in his comments Eisenhower referred to Irish ethnicity as a desirable, even sought after, characteristic —another testament, however lightly expressed, to how integral the Irish had become in U.S. society. At the state dinner later that same evening, Eisenhower elaborated on this sentiment. He thanked Ireland for having played “such a big part in helping to win the wars in which we [America] have been so unfortunate to indulge.”¹⁸² Eisenhower made those comments despite the fact that in his own memoir of the war, *Crusade in Europe*, he had written, “Southern Ireland was neutral” in the conflict.¹⁸³

Eisenhower’s state-dinner comments can be explained in two ways, which are not mutually exclusive. First and most obvious, Ike in such a context simply had to say words of thanks and approval to O’Kelly and to people of Irish heritage generally. Beyond that, Eisenhower likely came to realize, with the perspective of time, that Ireland, in spite of its declared neutrality during World War II, had in fact assisted the United States and the Allies innumerable times and in various critical ways. President Eisenhower wanted, in 1959, to make sure that the Irish people both back in the

¹⁸¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Remarks of Welcome to President O’Kelly of Ireland at the Washington National Airport,” March 17, 1959. *Public Papers of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1959* (Washington, D.C., 1960), 58.

¹⁸² Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Toasts of the President and the President of Ireland,” March 17, 1959. *Public Papers*, 284.

¹⁸³ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1949), 56.

homeland and those living as citizens in the United States perceived his gratitude regarding Ireland's contribution to America's victory over Hitler's tyranny.

Kennedy--The First Irish-Catholic President:

When Senator John F. Kennedy (JFK) won the presidency in 1960, the famous Irish-American film director John Ford said he now felt, for the first time, like a first-class American.¹⁸⁴ Countless other Irish Americans reacted in much the same way to Kennedy's victory. At last, one of their own had become president, and as such Kennedy's election ushered in a new era for the Irish in America. Never again would they be outcasts in any segments of U.S. society; Kennedy's election served as the culminating moment in Irish America's long odyssey of assimilation.

His triumph over Republican Vice President Richard M. Nixon did not come easily. In preparing to run, Kennedy and his family had to "come to terms with their Irish Catholic inheritance in a manner acceptable to a potentially hostile majority, while not severing ties with Irish America and thus occasionally with Ireland."¹⁸⁵ It undoubtedly helped that Kennedy had been striking that delicate balance his entire life. He never had fit the mold of the boisterously rough-and-tumble, stereotypical Boston Irish politician. Indeed, as historian David Oshinsky writes in *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy*, "Kennedy's image was that of the cultured Irish Brahmin, the fellow who had made it into the establishment, who could appeal to Irish Catholic voters without

¹⁸⁴ McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America*, 117.

¹⁸⁵ John Ahtes, "The Kennedys, Ireland and Irish America," *The Irish Review* (1986-) No. 11 (Winter, 1991/1992), 24.

alienating their traditional enemies.”¹⁸⁶ Even before entering the political arena, JFK charmed those otherwise predisposed to dislike him. While attending Harvard, for example, Kennedy got invited to join the Spee club—a highly exclusive, Protestant social organization that had excluded John’s older brother Joe because he was Irish-Catholic.¹⁸⁷ Spee probably would have rejected John too, but the future president had befriended too many of his fellow Protestant classmates, that a number of them let it be known that they would refuse to join any club that barred JFK—a threat that enticed the Spee club to invite John.¹⁸⁸

Despite his popularity within elite, largely Protestant, social circles, Kennedy always had taken care to treat his Irish-American brethren respectfully. Prior to America’s entrance into World War II, Kennedy, while still a student at Harvard, wrote an article for the *New York Journal-American* concerning Ireland’s strict neutrality policy during the conflict.¹⁸⁹ At the time his father and his brother Joe, both of whom vocally supported a continuation of America’s traditional isolationism, also believed that Ireland should remain completely neutral, even to the point of barring Britain from using its ports as bases in the fight against the Nazis.¹⁹⁰ John Kennedy did not entirely share that mindset, inasmuch as he recognized that Germany had been taken over by a totalitarian government that threatened the world.¹⁹¹ Still, Kennedy deliberately refrained from criticizing those who advocated Irish neutrality; indeed, in his *Journal-American* piece,

¹⁸⁶ David Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy* (NY: The Free Press, 1983), 240.

¹⁸⁷ Ralph Martin, *Seeds of Destruction: Joe Kennedy and his Sons* (NY: Putnam’s Sons, 1995), 56.

¹⁸⁸ Martin, *Seeds of Destruction*, 56.

¹⁸⁹ Nigel Hamilton, *JFK: Reckless Youth* (NY: Random House, Inc., 1992), 399.

¹⁹⁰ Hamilton, *JFK: Reckless Youth*, 398.

¹⁹¹ *New York Journal-American*, February 2, 1941.

he “took no sides” on that controversial question.¹⁹² But young JFK did remind the Irish that if Britain survived, Ireland “would stand a far better chance of living in peace and freedom in a world free from the menace of Hitler.”¹⁹³ Kennedy also fair-mindedly presented the Irish viewpoint: “To give the British these bases would mean involvement of Ireland in a war for which they are completely unprepared.”¹⁹⁴ Even at this early stage of life, Kennedy perceived that it would be unwise, regardless of how he personally felt about an issue, to offend Irish Americans by expressing unqualified criticism of the homeland.

In 1945, following his distinguished wartime service, Kennedy once again gave a nod to the Irish--and this time he had clear political reasons for doing so. At the time, Kennedy was working as a special correspondent for the Hearst newspaper syndicate, one of the largest chains in the United States, but already plans were afoot to have him run for a Congressional seat in Massachusetts in 1946.¹⁹⁵ With that upcoming election in mind, his father sent a telegraphic message to JFK urging him to visit Ireland: “THINK IT MOST IMPORTANT THAT YOU GO AND COVER THE SITUATION [in Ireland] . . . PAPERS AND MAGAZINES WILL BE VITALLY INTERESTED.”¹⁹⁶ Ever the astute political strategist, Joe Kennedy saw John’s trip to Ireland as a way for his son to acquire variable attention from Massachusetts’ large Irish population.

Once in Ireland, John Kennedy covered the debate over the Irish Free State’s political status. Irish Taoiseach De Valera claimed that the Irish Free State was a

¹⁹² Hamilton, *JFK: Reckless Youth*, 398.

¹⁹³ *New York Journal-American*, February 2, 1941.

¹⁹⁴ *New York Journal-American*, February 2, 1941.

¹⁹⁵ Hamilton, *Reckless Youth*, 714.

¹⁹⁶ Martin, *Seeds of Destruction*, 135.

Republic, but others questioned how it could be when it remained part of the British Commonwealth.¹⁹⁷ During that debate, the issue of Irish partition and eventual unification also surfaced, with Northern Ireland's Protestant leaders overwhelmingly wanting to remain separate from the Irish Free State. Once again Kennedy covered a complex and controversial Irish issue with impressive tact. He carefully presented both sides of the issue, including De Valera's view that Ireland in its entirety must be "the master of its own destiny," and the arguments of Sir Basil Brooke, the head of the Northern Ireland government, who insisted that "not an inch" of Northern Ireland will be absorbed into Southern Ireland.¹⁹⁸

In 1946 Kennedy ran as intended for the House of Representatives in the heavily-Irish Eleventh District of Massachusetts.¹⁹⁹ His key objective was to win the all-important primary in this overwhelmingly Democratic area, whereupon the general election would be a mere formality.²⁰⁰ On the campaign trail, Kennedy brought along his Irish-American buddies Kenny O'Donnell and David Powers to help mobilize votes for him.²⁰¹ But Kennedy, who for nearly all his life had been in the company of well-to-do, educated gentlemen, initially "appeared ill at ease and pathetically self-conscious as he made the rounds of the tough tenement [and predominantly Irish] neighborhoods that largely made up the district."²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ Hamilton, *Reckless Youth*, 715.

¹⁹⁸ Hamilton, *Reckless Youth*, 716.

¹⁹⁹ Victor Lasky, *J.F.K.: The Man and the Myth, A Critical Portrait* (NY: The MacMillan Company, 1963), 91.

²⁰⁰ Whitney, *The American Presidents*, 329. Also Lasky, *J.F.K.: The Man and the Myth*, 92.

²⁰¹ Thomas C. Reeves, *A Question of Character: A Life of John F. Kennedy* (NY: Free Press, 1991), 89.

²⁰² Lasky, *J.F.K.: The Man and Myth*, 92.

Perceiving the problem, Joe Kennedy appointed his cousin Joe Kane, who had a long background in Massachusetts politics, to help John adjust his social skills so that he could effectively connect with working-class voters.²⁰³ Through a combination of Kane's assistance and John's "natural affinity with the Irish," JFK soon found himself easily conversing with Irish and other ethnics in the district. Kennedy also began delivering campaign speeches that focused on the issues directly of concern to Irish Americans in the Eleventh District: rent control, minimum wages, jobs, and better housing.²⁰⁴ "I never thought Jack had it in him," Joe Kennedy gleefully noted about his son's transformation.²⁰⁵

Joe should have had more faith in his son; Kane certainly did. "Your son is worth a king's ransom," Kane told Kennedy, Sr. "He has poise, a fine Celtic map."²⁰⁶ The former Mayor of Boston and famous (and in some respects infamous) James Curley thought the same: "With those two names, Kennedy and Fitzgerald," Curley rhetorically asked, "how could he lose."²⁰⁷ Curley was referring to Jack's father who had made the Kennedy name a highly respected one in U.S. politics, and the candidate's maternal grandfather, John (Honey Fitz) Fitzgerald, who years earlier had served as mayor of Boston as well as other prominent political offices. Kane and Curley both realized that Jack Kennedy's Irish background, coupled with his graceful demeanor, made him an extremely attractive figure to the Irish voters who dominated the Eleventh District's electorate. Irish Americans did not resent Kennedy's wealth; in fact his wealth made him

²⁰³ Lasky, *J.F.K. The Man and Myth*, 93.

²⁰⁴ Lasky, *J.F.K.: The Man and Myth*, 95.

²⁰⁵ Thomas Maier, *The Kennedys: America's Emerald Kings, A Five-Generation History of the Ultimate Irish-Catholic Family* (NY: Basic Books, 2003), 201. Also, Lasky, *J.F.K. The Man and Myth*, 93.

²⁰⁶ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 204.

²⁰⁷ Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *The Kennedys: An American Drama* (NY: Summit Books, 1984), 152.

all the more impressive and likeable to voters. Many of them felt that just by being in his presence—and voting for him, they acquired a momentary association with those traits. Supporting Kennedy even had a certain snob appeal to some Irish Americans, who had for so long been held in undisguised disdain by their supposed Yankee betters.²⁰⁸

With this bloc of ardent Irish-American support behind him, Kennedy easily prevailed in the primary. He received 22,183 votes, almost double of that of his closest rival. Victory in the general election came as expected, and Kennedy headed to Washington to join the House of Representatives.²⁰⁹ Voters resoundingly reelected him to that Congressional seat in 1948 when he ran unopposed, and in 1950, when he faced only token opposition.²¹⁰

In 1952 Kennedy sought a promotion to the U.S. Senate. This election pitted him against incumbent Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., the grandson and namesake of Senator Lodge of the Wilsonian era. “The campaign,” as Victor Lasky explains in his book *J.F.K.: The Man and the Myth*, “was between a truly Proper Bostonian and a Lace Curtin Irishman.”²¹¹ Lodge had served in the Senate since 1936, except for a brief period of military service during World War II, and many political observers expected him to win, especially given Eisenhower’s massive appeal at the top of the Republican ticket that year.²¹² But Kennedy’s wealth, name, and most importantly his image as an “Irishman of

²⁰⁸ Lasky, *J.F.K.: The Man and Myth*, 97.

²⁰⁹ Lasky, *J.F.K.: Man and Myth*, 98.

²¹⁰ Collier and Horowitz, *The Kennedys: An American Drama*, 177.

²¹¹ Lasky, *J.F.K.: Man and Myth*, 149.

²¹² Whitney, *American Presidents*, 329.

family” and a candidate that other “‘secular’ Irish politicians [could only] hope to equal” gave him irresistible appeal among the 750,000 Irish Catholics in the Bay State.²¹³

Kennedy’s Senate campaign team once again included Kenneth O’Donnell, but to manage the effort, JFK selected another Irish-American Lawrence O’Brien.²¹⁴ He and the rest of the team successfully presented Kennedy to Massachusetts voters through a series of lavish tea parties held all over the state—thirty-five in total.²¹⁵ Lodge himself had used tea parties as a campaign tactic as early as 1936—but Kennedy’s campaign did it better in 1952 by “democratiz[ing] the stuffy, mannered tea party and turn[ing] it into a mass gathering more Barnum and Bailey than Brahmin.”²¹⁶ The tea socials targeted women voters, an important constituency in 1952 inasmuch as they, for the first time in Massachusetts history, outnumbered their male counterparts.²¹⁷ Lodge may have won over the elite ladies, but Kennedy attracted to his tea parties more numerous working-class Irish-American women who relished the chance to spend an afternoon in sophisticated, upscale company with a representative of arguably the most prestigious Irish-American family.²¹⁸

In retrospect, it seems clear that Lodge had only one potential trump card against JFK. The Communist-hunting Senator McCarthy, who in 1952 was at the peak of his popularity, might have given his fellow Republican Lodge a big boost by going to Massachusetts and campaigning for him, considering that McCarthy, like Kennedy, was

²¹³ Lasky, *J.F.K.: Man and Myth*, 149. Also, Laurence Leamer, *The Kennedy Men: 1901-1963* (NY: HarperCollins, 2001), 301.

²¹⁴ Reeves, *A Question of Character*, 99, 105.

²¹⁵ Also, Leamer, *The Kennedy Men*, 299.

²¹⁶ Leamer, *The Kennedy Men*, 299.

²¹⁷ Leamer, *The Kennedy Men*, 298.

²¹⁸ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 239.

immensely popular with Irish-American voters.²¹⁹ McCarthy alone might have loosened JFK's hold on that key constituency. But McCarthy liked the Kennedy family, and Joe Sr. made sure matters stayed that way by making a big contribution to the Wisconsin Senator's own reelection bid that year.²²⁰ McCarthy stayed out of Massachusetts.²²¹

Eisenhower, as expected won big in Massachusetts, but nevertheless Kennedy beat Lodge by a margin of 70,000 votes.²²² Notably, the Irish wards in Boston voted overwhelmingly for Kennedy, with "margins five and six to one."²²³ The ever-astute Lodge fully understood why he had lost the seat that he had possessed for so long. "All along I always knew," Lodge admitted after the election, "if there came a man with an honest, clean record who was also of Irish descent, he'd be almost impossible to beat."²²⁴

Despite the heavy support that Kennedy received from Massachusetts' Irish-American population, Kennedy still did not feel completely comfortable assuming the persona of the typical Irish politician. A minor incident that occurred during his victory party proves as much. There, the Kennedy camp cajoled the Senator-elect to fulfill an earlier campaign promise that he would sing a couple of verses of "Sweet Adeline"—the favorite Irish tune of the recently deceased Honey Fitz. John did so, but only reluctantly.²²⁵ Kennedy no doubt appreciated the support he had received from the Irish Americans of Massachusetts, but nevertheless he knew he was not and never could be the kind of Irish-American politician his maternal grandfather had been.

²¹⁹ Reeves, *A Question of Character*, 101.

²²⁰ Reeves, *A Question of Character*, 101.

²²¹ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy so Immense*, 241.

²²² Whitney, *American Presidents*, 329.

²²³ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 247.

²²⁴ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 240.

²²⁵ Reeves, *A Question of Character*, 106.

Once a senator, Kennedy would have to contend with another larger-than-life Irish-American figure and straddle issues important to his Irish base. By 1953, Senator McCarthy had become so wild and reckless in his charges of domestic communist subversion that nearly all Democrats, and many Republicans as well, now viewed him as a menace to civic stability. But, Senator Kennedy did not publicly express opposition to McCarthy inasmuch as JFK's father Joseph Kennedy greatly admired McCarthy.²²⁶ Moreover, McCarthy continued to enjoy considerable popularity among Irish Americans in Kennedy's home state of Massachusetts despite his provocative rants.²²⁷ Indeed, Robert Kennedy, John's younger brother, even joined the staff of McCarthy's Senate investigative subcommittee in 1953, as part of the Democratic minority.²²⁸ Beyond that, the future President agreed with McCarthy that domestic subversion was a major threat to national security.²²⁹ One night Kennedy attended a meeting of his old Spee Club at Harvard, at which a speaker equated McCarthy with Alger Hiss, a former high-ranking State Department official who recently had been caught spying for the Soviet Union. "How dare you couple the name of a great American patriot [McCarthy] with that of a traitor?" Kennedy shouted as he stormed out of the meeting.²³⁰

To be sure, Kennedy privately was uncomfortable with Joe McCarthy.²³¹ As historian Oshinsky writes in his biography of McCarthy:

²²⁶ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 240.

²²⁷ McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America*, 107.

²²⁸ Herman, *Joseph McCarthy*, 10.

²²⁹ Herman, *Joseph McCarthy*, 10.

²³⁰ Herman, *Joseph McCarthy*, 10.

²³¹ Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 240.

McCarthy was too crude for him, too much like the rough-and-tumble ward bosses from the Curley days . . . For John Kennedy, embracing Joe McCarthy was a step in the wrong direction.²³²

That said, Kennedy did not reveal his personal feelings about the Wisconsin senator either to his pro-McCarthy constituents or to his family.

When the Senate moved to censure McCarthy in 1954, Kennedy ducked the vote—the only Democratic senator not to participate.²³³ Years later, Kennedy tried to explain away the episode by claiming that he would have voted for censure, but had been absent because of residual pain from a back operation.²³⁴ Actually Kennedy was “caught between the many Massachusetts voters (especially Irish Americans) who loved McCarthy and the liberal Democrats who abhorred him.”²³⁵ Simply put, Kennedy feared retribution from his Irish-Catholic base had he voted for censure, even as he also knew that a vote against censure probably would have permanently injured his standing among liberal Democrats. As it was, following the McCarthy censure, prominent figures from the liberal wing of the Party held Kennedy’s non-vote against him, and they would continue to do so for years to come.²³⁶

But Kennedy had another, larger problem. By the time he began seriously planning to run for president, his Irish-Catholic background remained a potentially troubling issue. In particular, Kennedy’s religion became a frequent friction point, just as it had for Al Smith in 1928. To be sure, by 1960 voters had become far more tolerant

²³² Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, 240.

²³³ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy, Interviews with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., 1964* (NY: Hyperion, 2013), Location 4865. (Kindle Edition).

²³⁴ Herman, *Joseph McCarthy*, 10.

²³⁵ Schlesinger, Jr. *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations*, Location 4865. (Kindle Edition).

²³⁶ *New York Times*, December 3, 1954. Also, Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense*,

than the electorate of 1928. Yet even so, a May 1959 *Time* magazine poll revealed that “one of every four respondents wouldn’t vote for a presidential candidate who was Catholic.”²³⁷

A good example of the subtle bigotry Kennedy faced in 1960 can be found in a *Life* magazine article written by Archibald MacLeish, a famous American writer and intellectual at the time. In the article, MacLeish referred to Irish Catholics as “among the most persistent and politically powerful advocates of increasing censorship in the United States and who are brought up to submit to clerical authority in matters which the American tradition reserves to the individual conscience.”²³⁸ MacLeish was expressing a concern still felt by many Americans in 1960: an Irish-Catholic president could not separate church and state, and ultimately his allegiance would be to the Catholic Church’s hierarchy, not to the Constitution. Most of the attacks on Kennedy during the 1960 campaign focused on his Catholic religious faith, not his Irish ethnicity. Of course, already there had been a number of Scots-Irish who had served as president, but never a Catholic Irishman. Yet, with so many Scots-Irish having for so many years married and had children outside their ethnic group, Irish Americanism in 1960 was widely thought of as nearly synonymous with Catholicism.

For his part, Vice President Nixon refused to participate or encourage anti-Irish Catholic attacks against his 1960 opponent. During the campaign Nixon had to disavow some extreme remarks by a group known as the National Conference of Citizens for Religious Freedom which was led by one of his top supporters, the Reverend Dr. Norman

²³⁷ See *Time Magazine*, May 1959.

²³⁸ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 328.

Vincent Peale, the pastor of New York's Marble Collegiate Church.²³⁹ Any Roman Catholic president, Peale's group asserted, would be subjected to "extreme pressure from the hierarchy of his church" and as such could not be trusted as president.²⁴⁰ In an April *Meet the Press* interview following Peale's comments, Nixon distanced himself from the Reverend's assertions, flatly stating, "I don't believe there is a religious issue as far as Senator Kennedy is concerned." Nixon continued, "I have no doubt whatever about Senator Kennedy's loyalty to this country."²⁴¹

Ironically, for all the controversy that the ethno-religious issue generated, Kennedy was in key respects neither very Irish nor very Catholic. Neither trait had played a large role in Kennedy's upbringing or in the later development of his personal belief system. In his book *The Kennedy Imprisonment*, Garry Wills dedicates an entire chapter to the Kennedys' "semi-Irishness." According to Wills, John as well as the rest of the Kennedys distanced themselves as much as possible from the traditional Irish lifestyle. Joe Kennedy, Sr., for example, sought and obtained the ambassadorship to Britain because that job, of all he could have obtained in the world, most set him apart from coming across as a typical Irishman.²⁴² Joe Kennedy also raised his sons to be as un-Irish as possible. The historian Ralph Martin in his book *Seeds of Destruction: Joe Kennedy and His Sons*, matches Wills' assessment of Joe when he writes, "All his life, he (Joe, Sr.) had tried to take the Irish out of his sons' speech and souls. He saw it as a handicap."²⁴³ Martin continues, the senior Kennedy "had neutralized his own speech at

²³⁹ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 341.

²⁴⁰ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 342.

²⁴¹ *Meet the Press*, April 17, 1960. For footage see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAB2rwT7_OA Accessed 1/14/15.

²⁴² Wills, *Kennedy Imprisonment*, 66. Also, Collier and Horowitz, *The Kennedys*, 94.

²⁴³ Martin, *Seeds of Destruction*, 432.

Harvard and elsewhere, and had sent his sons to private schools, where they met few, if any, children with Irish backgrounds.”²⁴⁴

Given his upbringing, it is not surprising that John Kennedy also rejected stereotypical Irish ways. While serving in the Pacific during World War II, he reacted angrily when his naval friends asked why his father did not have a lower-class, Boston Irish accent; it irritated the future president that anyone would expect his father “to talk mick.”²⁴⁵ Moreover, JFK refused to wear a hat, as did most Irish politicians of that era. This may have been simple vanity given Kennedy’s full head of hair, or it may have been an example of Kennedy intentionally separating himself from the trademark Irish look.²⁴⁶ John Kennedy also continually distanced himself from his maternal grandfather Honey Fitz who personified the “Irish” type of politician who relied on political machines and a brogue to win votes.²⁴⁷ Honey Fitz’s old-fashioned ways embarrassed JFK, who like his father learned early on, as Wills notes, “to use the Irish connection only when necessary.”²⁴⁸ An example of this was a technique John learned from his maternal grandfather: “the Irish switch,” the ability to shake hands with one person while looking at the second and noticing the third, all while making all three of them feel important.²⁴⁹

As for religion, Kennedy did not take his Catholic faith at all seriously. “I think it is unfair for Jack to be opposed because he is a Catholic,” his wife Jackie said during the 1960 campaign. “After all, he’s such a poor Catholic.”²⁵⁰ JFK did not attend church

²⁴⁴ Martin, *Seeds of Destruction*, 432.

²⁴⁵ Wills, *Kennedy Imprisonment*, 63.

²⁴⁶ Wills, *Kennedy Imprisonment*, 64-65.

²⁴⁷ Maier, *Kennedys*, 337.

²⁴⁸ Wills, *Kennedy Imprisonment*, 64.

²⁴⁹ Martin, *Seeds of Destruction*, 142.

²⁵⁰ Wills, *Kennedy Imprisonment*, 62.

regularly, and, as is now well known, he certainly did not at all adhere to Catholic teachings regarding sexual intercourse outside of marriage.²⁵¹ Kennedy “simply wanted to be President and happened to be a Catholic,” his speechwriter and aide Theodore Sorensen succinctly stated.²⁵² Indeed, in 1960, Kennedy “in most ways . . . appeared more of a WASP than his opponent, Vice-President Nixon.”²⁵³

None of this, however, hurt Kennedy’s standing with the New York-based *Irish Echo*, a leading Irish-American newspaper of the time. On July 9, 1960, the paper announced that it had “taken a hard look at all the candidates and we must say Kennedy is the man the Democrats should nominate, and the man we want as the Democratic standard-bearer because he is qualified.”²⁵⁴ After Kennedy secured the nomination, the *Irish Echo* ran an “Elect John F. Kennedy” advertisement that compared his and Nixon’s views on the partition of Ireland. The ad quoted Kennedy saying he had co-sponsored a resolution in the U.S. Senate in 1956 “favoring self-determination for the people of Ireland.”²⁵⁵ By contrast the ad quoted Nixon saying said that the Irish self-determination issue “is not . . . one in which we can properly or usefully intervene.”²⁵⁶ After Kennedy participated in New York City’s Columbus Day Parade less than a month before the election, the *Irish Echo* reported that the event had been “a tremendous success” and that, “to coin an old phrase, Senator Jack and his lovely wife stole the show.”²⁵⁷ To be sure, at times, the *Irish Echo* published pro-Nixon articles, such as one by Al Smith’s daughter,

²⁵¹ Wills, *Kennedy Imprisonment*, 65.

²⁵² Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (NY: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 126.

²⁵³ Ahtes, “Kennedys, Ireland and Irish America,” 27.

²⁵⁴ *Irish Echo*, July 9, 1960.

²⁵⁵ *Irish Echo*, October 29, 1960.

²⁵⁶ *Irish Echo*, October 29, 1960.

²⁵⁷ *Irish Echo*, October 22, 1960.

“5 Reasons for Electing Nixon,” as well a separate article in the same edition that listed by name “Irishmen Voting for Nixon.”²⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the preference of the *Irish Echo* for Kennedy could not have been missed by any regular reader of the paper.

The majority of Irish Americans, especially in cities like New York and Boston with large Irish populations, also admired Kennedy. In an article commemorating the 50th anniversary of Kennedy’s death, the *Boston Globe* included a quote by political commentator, writer, and poet laureate of the Red Sox, Dick Flavin, that expressed the Irish-American excitement over Kennedy’s candidacy. “The pre-war generation of Irish-Americans in Boston,” Flavin stated, “went to their graves thinking JFK was a saint.” He continued, “The Irish had made it, even though JFK had more in common with Queen Elizabeth than with my father.”²⁵⁹ Working-class Irish Americans knew that the Kennedy family’s wealth, status, and education greatly separated it from nearly all Irish-American households. Nevertheless, they saw in JFK “an identifiable Irish Catholic ethos, a sense of obligation to family, church and country.”²⁶⁰ Kennedy represented the “embodiment of the American dream,” and Irish Americans were intent to see their dream of the first Irish-Catholic president come to fruition.²⁶¹

Kennedy’s candidacy and ultimate victory also thrilled the people of Ireland. During the summer before the election, the Irish newspaper *Irish Independent* endorsed Kennedy and described him simply as “A young man people like.”²⁶² This influential Irish newspaper also proudly said about Kennedy, “After three generations a young man

²⁵⁸ *Irish Echo*, November 5, 1960.

²⁵⁹ *Boston Globe*, November 23, 2013.

²⁶⁰ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 536.

²⁶¹ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 536.

²⁶² *Irish Independent*, July 10, 1960.

of fully Irish stocks has reached the last point of integration into American life.”²⁶³

Clearly elated at the possibility of an Irish-Catholic American president, the *Irish Independent* maintained a close watch of American politics in 1960, consistently reporting on Democratic primary results and then the pre-election presidential poll numbers.²⁶⁴

It is also critical to note that Kennedy’s Irish-Catholicism may well have been more of a help than a handicap in his 1960 race. A study prepared by Kennedy’s aide Sorensen back in 1956, and distributed by Connecticut Democratic political boss, John Bailey, argued that “such a thing as a ‘Catholic vote,’ whereby a high proportion of Catholics of all ages, residences, occupations, and economic status would vote for a well-known Catholic candidate or a ticket with special Catholic appeal,” existed.²⁶⁵ Sorensen based his findings on several voter surveys plus statistics concerning the 1928 and 1952 presidential elections; the 1952 one in particular reportedly showed a high turnout of Catholic voters.²⁶⁶ At the time, Sorensen had hoped that this information, put together in what came to be known as the “Bailey Report,” would help Kennedy get the 1956 Vice-Presidential nomination. Sorensen argued that placing a Catholic on the ticket would attract Irish-Catholics back to the Democratic Party—a necessary objective given that some Irish had defected to the Republican Party after World War II in the course of their “integration into mainstream America.”²⁶⁷ JFK did not get the vice-presidential

²⁶³ *Boston Globe*, November 23, 2013.

²⁶⁴ See *Irish Independent*, May 8, November 1, 1960.

²⁶⁵ “Bailey Report,” in Victory Lasky, *J.F.K.: The Man and the Myth, A Critical Portrait* (NY: The MacMillan Company, 1963), Appendix B-589.

²⁶⁶ Bailey Report, Appendix B-590.

²⁶⁷ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 283.

nomination that year, but the Kennedy team would use the Irish-Catholic issue again, to far better advantage in the presidential campaign of 1960.

That year JFK and his advisors, who included his old friends Kenny O'Donnell, Larry O'Brien, and David Powers, floated the suggestion that the decision to vote against Senator Kennedy amounted to a kind of test of whether one was prejudiced against Catholics.²⁶⁸ In his article, "Kennedy, Ireland and Irish America," John Ahtes observes that the Kennedy team wanted "Protestant and Liberal voters to question their own tolerance any time they contemplated the religious question."²⁶⁹ The Democrats knew that Irish-Catholics would vote for Kennedy in huge numbers, but they also hoped that many "non-Irish Catholics would vote for a co-religionist who did not stress his 'Irishness' . . . by making many non-Catholic Americans question whether a vote against Kennedy was inspired by prejudice."²⁷⁰

Kennedy proved to be his own best spokesperson regarding the Catholic issue. He responded to religious attacks calmly and effectively, always stressing his and his family's patriotism. After narrowly winning the April 5 Wisconsin primary, while losing the state's Protestant districts, Kennedy addressed the Catholic issue head-on in the critical second primary state, heavily Protestant West Virginia.²⁷¹ In mid-April, speaking in Morgantown, West Virginia, JFK reminded his audience that "nobody asked me if I was Catholic when I joined the U.S. Navy and nobody asked my brother if he was Catholic or Protestant before he climbed into an American bomber plane to fly his last

²⁶⁸ Reeves, *A Question of Character*, 153.

²⁶⁹ Ahtes, "Kennedys, Ireland and Irish America," 27.

²⁷⁰ Ahtes, "Kennedys, Ireland and Irish America," 27.

²⁷¹ Theodore White, *The Making of the President: 1960* (NY: HarperPerennial, 1960), 95.

mission.”²⁷² Soon after making that statement, Kennedy asked Sorensen to focus his upcoming speech to the American Association of Newspaper Editors at the Washington National Press Club on the religious issue. At that event, Kennedy subtly challenged the tolerance of non-Catholic Americans: “Are we to say that a Jew can be elected Mayor of Dublin, a Protestant can be named Foreign Minister of France, a Moslem can sit in the Israeli Parliament, but a Catholic cannot be President of the United States?”²⁷³

Kennedy won the May 10 West Virginia primary over Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, thereby proving that a Catholic could win in a Protestant state. Kennedy continued the strategy of making speeches that called on America to discard its long-held religious prejudice. “I believe in an America,” Kennedy said to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association in Houston September, “where religious intolerance will someday end.” He continued, “This is the kind of America I believe in--and this is the kind of America I fought for in the South Pacific, and the kind my brother died for in Europe.”²⁷⁴

Kennedy captured the Democratic presidential nomination, and he chose Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson of Texas as his running mate. Johnson reinforced Kennedy’s stance on the religious issue. “I believe,” Johnson proclaimed during the fall campaign, “that most people think that if a man is good enough to fight for his country and die for his country, he ought to be allowed to serve his country without a test of his

²⁷² Robert Friedenberg, *Notable Speeches in Contemporary Presidential Campaigns* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 49.

²⁷³ John F. Kennedy, “The Responsibility of the Press,” April 21, 1960. Theodore Sorensen, ed., *‘Let the Word Go Forth’: The Speeches, Statements, and Writings of John F. Kennedy, 1947 to 1963* (NY: Delacorte Press, 1988), 129.

²⁷⁴ John F. Kennedy, “The Refutation of Bigotry,” September 12, 1960. Sorensen, ed., *‘Let the Word Go Forth,’* 132.

race, religion or regional status.”²⁷⁵ The argument worked. In one of the closest presidential contests in U.S. history, Kennedy defeated Nixon by a popular-vote margin of 34,220,984 to 34,108,157, and by an Electoral College count of 303--219.²⁷⁶

The intriguing question continues to be asked: was Kennedy’s Irish-Catholic background more of a help or a hindrance in his election effort? According to a study of the religious issue in the 1960 election conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan, Kennedy’s faith hurt him with devout Protestants but helped him with his fellow Catholics.²⁷⁷ Kennedy carried 83% of the Roman Catholic vote nationally, while by contrast Stevenson in 1956 had only carried 45% of that vote. On the other hand, Kennedy did very poorly with church-attending Protestants. He only carried 25% of the Baptist vote, 31% of Methodists, 24% of northern evangelicals, 30% of southern evangelicals, and 0% of Pentecostals.²⁷⁸ Indeed, “by one estimate, as many as 4.5 million Protestants who voted for Stevenson in 1956 switched to Nixon in 1960.”²⁷⁹ Nevertheless, JFK’s overwhelming share of the Catholic vote enabled him to squeeze out a victory.²⁸⁰ “For more than a century,” Thomas Maier writes in his book *The Kennedys: The Emerald Kings*, “the Irish in America had suffered from religious intolerance, and now one of their kind had broken the most significant barrier to power in this land of immigrants.”²⁸¹ A new era had dawned.

²⁷⁵ Maier, *Kennedys*, 345.

²⁷⁶ White, *The Making of a President: 1960*, 350.

²⁷⁷ See analysis of the study in Lynn Kellstadt and Mark Noll, “Religion, Voting for President, and Party Identification, 1948-1984,” in Mark Noll, ed., *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the 1980s* (NY: Oxford Press, 1990), 355-379.

²⁷⁸ Kellstadt and Noll, “Religion, Voting for President, and Party Identification, 1948-1984,” 355-379.

²⁷⁹ Maier, *Kennedys*, 355.

²⁸⁰ Maier, *Kennedys*, 355.

²⁸¹ Maier, *Kennedys*, 356.

During Kennedy's nearly three-year presidency, Irish affairs did not surface as important issues for the Administration. By 1961 the Irish demand for unification lay temporarily dormant, Americans had forgotten Ireland's neutrality during World War II, controversial Taoiseach De Valera had stepped down and taken the ceremonial post of President of Ireland, and Irish Americans had fully assimilated into American society.²⁸² Nevertheless, several of Kennedy's actions as President had their roots in his Irish perspectives and preferences, as well as, his desire to appeal to his Irish constituency.

Two days after reading a poem at Kennedy's inauguration, Robert Frost told Kennedy to "Be more Irish than Harvard."²⁸³ Kennedy listened, in several respects, to the advice of this Pulitzer-prize winner and soon-to-be Poet Laureate of Vermont. For one, Kennedy brought his Irish-American aides from his pre-presidential days to the White House. The media dubbed these men "the Irish Mafia." They included David Powers, who had run the President's first House of Representatives campaign; Kenny O'Donnell, who had played football with Bobby Kennedy at Harvard and later organized thousands of volunteers and workers for Jack's House and Senate campaigns; Larry O'Brien, who had managed JFK's 1952 Senate campaign and served as the "lynchpin" of the "Mafia;" and of course Bobby Kennedy, John's brother and the new Attorney General.²⁸⁴ All of them also had assisted Jack in his 1960 campaign.²⁸⁵ Ted Sorensen denied in his 1965 monograph *Kennedy* that a division existed between the politically savvy "Irish Mafia" and Kennedy's "brain trust" of policy-minded, "egg-head"

²⁸² Loftus, "The Politics of Cordiality," 155. Also, Ahtes, "Kennedys, Ireland and Irish America," 28.

²⁸³ *New York Times*, January 21, 1961.

²⁸⁴ John Davis, *The Kennedys: Dynasty and Disaster* (NY: McGraw Hill, 1985), 335-336. Also, Schlesinger, Jr., *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations*, Location 4565 (Kindle Edition). Also, Loftus, "The Politics of Cordiality," 152. Also, Reeves, *A Question of Character*, 89, 105.

²⁸⁵ Reeves, *A Question of Character*, 153.

advisors.²⁸⁶ Instead, Sorensen claims that the entire Kennedy team worked together to help the President in his various executive and political endeavors. Kennedy's White House historian, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., agrees with Sorensen. In his book *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, Schlesinger asserted, "[T]he Irish Mafia did not possess Kennedy any more than anyone else did."²⁸⁷ Nevertheless, those closest to Kennedy at the time recognized that he did view his "Irish Mafia" as distinct from his other advisors, and with respect to political matters at least, he valued their counsel over that of others around him.²⁸⁸ As his wife Jacqueline once said to Schlesinger about JFK's Irish entourage, "he loved all of them, and they all loved him."²⁸⁹

Kennedy's Irishness might also have influenced some of the President's policy decisions. Historian Thomas Maier, author of *The Kennedys: America's Emerald Kings*, purports that Kennedy's push for immigration reform during his Presidency had roots in his Irish heritage.²⁹⁰ In July 1963, Kennedy unveiled a new immigration plan that called upon Congress to eliminate the quota system employed since the 1920s.²⁹¹ Kennedy told Congress that "a compelling need" existed for a new immigration system "that serves the national interest and reflects in every detail the principles of equality and human dignity to which our nation subscribes."²⁹² The President's passion for immigration reform was not new. In a little-known booklet he had written in 1958, *A Nation of Immigrants*, Kennedy criticized the "national origins" restrictions created by the 1924 Act that favored

²⁸⁶ Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 261.

²⁸⁷ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 94.

²⁸⁸ Davis, *Kennedys' Dynasty and Disaster*, 335-336.

²⁸⁹ Schlesinger, Jr., *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations*, Location 4230 (Kindle Edition).

²⁹⁰ *Washington Times*, November 23, 2013.

²⁹¹ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 425.

²⁹² Maier, *The Kennedys*, 425.

Northern Europeans (including the Irish) over other ethnic groups.²⁹³ Kennedy believed the “[i]mmigration policy should be generous; it should be fair; it should be flexible”—thus ensuring that the American Dream could be available to all oppressed people around the world.²⁹⁴ Maier explicitly links Kennedy’s stance on immigration to the President’s Irish-American background: “Jack Kennedy could see the parallels . . . [between] other minorities who landed in America” and his own ancestors, and he strove for the newcomers to get the same chance his family had received as immigrants.²⁹⁵ Quoting *Only in America* author Harry Golden, Maier writes, “Mr. Kennedy’s whole life gave him an understanding of discrimination and bigotry, because he came from a religion and a nationality which had known persecution.”²⁹⁶ While Kennedy would not live to see his immigration plan come to fruition, his successor President Johnson would sign into law the Immigration Act of 1965, a measure largely modeled on Kennedy’s 1963 proposal.²⁹⁷ The new law dropped preferences to Northern Europeans, thus leveling the playing field for immigrants everywhere who wanted to live in the United States.

However, the most conspicuously “Irish” act that Kennedy partook in as president was his June 1963 stop in his ancestral homeland as part of a European tour. The visit made him the first American president to visit Ireland. Kennedy felt genuinely enthused about his stay in Ireland, a sentiment wholly shared by Irish Americans and by the people of Ireland.²⁹⁸ Historian Ryan Tubridy writes in *JFK in Ireland: Four Days that Changed a President*, “Every minute of the President’s stay in Ireland had been analysed [sic] and

²⁹³ John F. Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants* (NY: Harper & Row, 1964), 49.

²⁹⁴ Kennedy, *Nation of Immigrants*, 50.

²⁹⁵ *Washington Times*, November 23, 2013.

²⁹⁶ Maier, *The Kennedys*, 424.

²⁹⁷ *Washington Times*, November 23, 2013.

²⁹⁸ Ahtes, “Kennedys, Ireland and Irish America,” 28.

people planned to show up at whatever point they felt might afford them the slightest glimpse of him, even if they weren't close enough to hear what he had to say."²⁹⁹ Indeed, eight days before Kennedy's arrival, the Government Information Bureau in Dublin released the timetable for the trip and Irish newspapers like the *Irish Independent* reprinted this detailed information to help Irish citizens in their quest to see the American President.³⁰⁰

Kennedy landed in Dublin Airport on June 26.³⁰¹ Speaking in Gaelic, President De Valera greeted him:

Our welcome, Mr. President, universal and heartfelt. We welcome you in the first place as the head and chief executive and first citizen of that great Republic of the West upon whose enlightened, wise and firm leadership hangs the hope of the world.

We welcome you in the second place as the representative of that great country in which people sought refuge when driven by tyrant laws from their motherland, sought refuge and found for themselves and their descendants a home in which they prospered, won renown and gave distinguished service in return.³⁰²

Kennedy's first stop was County Wexford, where some of his relatives lived.³⁰³

A large crowd greeted him with palpable excitement. As the President's green and white helicopter prepared to land above O'Kennedy Park, JFK and his entourage were welcomed by the word *failte* (welcome) spelled out by children dressed in black and white.³⁰⁴ Upon Kennedy's arrival, people gathered all around him, clapping with delight as the song "Boys of Wexford" serenaded the President once and then again, the second

²⁹⁹ Ryan Turbidity, *JFK in Ireland: Four Days that Changed a President* (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2010), 88.

³⁰⁰ *Irish Independent*, June 19, 1963.

³⁰¹ *Fermanagh Herald*, July 6, 1963. Also, Maurice Hennessy, *I'll Be Back in the Springtime* (NY: IVES Washburn, Inc., 1966), 40, 41.

³⁰² *Fermanagh Herald*, July 6, 1963.

³⁰³ *Irish Independent*, June 19, 1963. Also, *Fermanagh Herald*, July 6, 1963.

³⁰⁴ Turbidity, *JFK in Ireland*, 113.

time with the President's participation.³⁰⁵ When Kennedy then gave a short, humorous speech about his family's history with the area, the crowd "whooped with delight."³⁰⁶

Kennedy stated:

I am so glad to be here. It took 115 years to make this trip and 6,000 miles. And three generations. And I am proud to be here When my great grandfather left here to become a cooper in East Boston, he carried nothing with him except two things: a strong religious faith and a strong desire for liberty. I am glad to say that all of his great grandchildren have valued that inheritance.³⁰⁷

Listening to these inspiring words that had linked Kennedy's achievements with his roots in Ireland, the crowd seemed all but overcome with emotion.

When Kennedy entered his relatives' Wexford home, they were struck by how much he genuinely relished their company. "Cousin Jack came here like an ordinary member of the family," his second-cousin Mary Kennedy Ryan stated, "He crouched at the fire and blew the bellows. Kennedy asked everything about the family and the farm."³⁰⁸ He also made sure to thank his kinfolk for their hospitality. "This is great," he graciously told them, "I love this tea and I want to thank you all for the trouble you have gone to."³⁰⁹ He then joked, "I promise I won't come more than once every ten years to cause you this much trouble again."³¹⁰ Upon leaving his ancestral home, Kennedy made sure to shake the hands of every family member and endeared himself to them all the more when he said, "I'm glad some of the Kennedys missed the boat and didn't all go to Washington."³¹¹

³⁰⁵ *Fermanagh Herald*, July 6, 1963. Also, Turbidy, *JFK in Ireland*, 113.

³⁰⁶ Turbidy, *JFK in Ireland*, 119.

³⁰⁷ Turbidy, *JFK in Ireland*, 119.

³⁰⁸ Joan Meyers, ed., *John Fitzgerald Kennedy . . . As We Remember Him* (NY: Atheneum, 1965), 205.

³⁰⁹ *Fermanagh Herald*, July 6, 1963.

³¹⁰ *Fermanagh Herald*, July 6, 1963.

³¹¹ Meyers, *John Fitzgerald Kennedy . . . As We Remember Him*, 205.

On June 28, Kennedy addressed the Irish Parliament.³¹² In this speech, Kennedy highlighted the valor of Irish Americans in the American Civil War and the numerous other contributions they had made to the United States. He told the Irish legislators that if his ancestors had not left Ireland, “I might be fortunate enough to be sitting here with you.”³¹³ Kennedy pointedly emphasized that the violent phase of Ireland’s past had ended, and that a new period of diplomacy with Britain had begun.³¹⁴ Kennedy said:

For self-determination can no longer mean isolation; and the achievement of national independence today means withdrawal from the old status only to return to the world scene with a new one. New nations can build with their former governing powers the same kind of fruitful relationship that Ireland has established with Great Britain--a relationship founded on equality and mutual interests. And no nation, large or small, can be indifferent to the fate of others, near or far. Modern economics, weaponry and communications have made us all realize more than ever that we are one human family and this one planet is our home.³¹⁵

Kennedy knew of course that Britain was an important player and American ally in the Cold War struggle against Communism.³¹⁶ Implicitly, JFK was telling the Irish that in order to maintain a good relationship with the United States, Ireland would have to accept America’s special relationship with Britain. Beyond that, Kennedy did not visit Northern Ireland despite an invitation to do so from the Northern Irish Prime Minister, Captain

³¹² Hennessy, *I’ll Be Back in the Springtime*, 69.

³¹³ *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 22, 1989.

³¹⁴ Ahtes, “Kennedys, Ireland and Irish America,” 28.

³¹⁵ John F. Kennedy, “Address Before the Irish Parliament,” (Dublin, Ireland, June 28 1963). Accessed at <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/IPAi7jx2s0i7kePPdJnUXA.aspx> Accessed 10/9/14.

³¹⁶ For more information on this subject see David Nunnerley, *President Kennedy and Britain* (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1972).

Terence O'Neill. The President wanted an altogether pleasant trip, not one in which he would have to confront directly the issue of British control over Northern Ireland.³¹⁷

Before leaving for Shannon Airport, Kennedy stopped in Galway in the province of Connacht on June 29. There he left all Irish men and women of that city with a feeling of camaraderie for their family members in America. "I don't know what it is about you that causes me to think that nearly everybody in Boston comes from Galway. They are not shy about it at all," Kennedy told the crowd that came out to hear him speak.³¹⁸ He continued, "I want to express as we are about to leave here, to tell you in this country how much this visit has meant."³¹⁹ Kennedy sentimentally concluded, "So I must say that though other days may not be bright, as we look towards the future, the brightest day will continue to be those on which we visited you here in Ireland."³²⁰

Kennedy's trip must be regarded as a success. He strengthened the U.S.-Ireland relationship without damaging U.S. ties with Britain. Even the American media, which initially dismissed the President's entire European tour including the trip to Ireland as a waste of time, realized the visit's diplomatic benefits. Kennedy's stay in Ireland, according to the *New York Times*, had been "good, clean fun" and, along with his other stops, helped Kennedy establish his "leadership of the Western alliance" against Communism.³²¹

³¹⁷ Ahtes, "Kennedys, Ireland and Irish America," 28.

³¹⁸ *Connacht Tribune*, July 6, 1963.

³¹⁹ *Connacht Tribune*, July 6, 1963.

³²⁰ *Connacht Tribune*, July 6, 1963.

³²¹ *New York Times*, June 30, 1963.

Kennedy referred to his Ireland trip as some of the “happiest days of my life” and promised to return to Ireland in the spring of 1964.³²² But of course that never occurred. On November 22, 1963, a Communist sympathizer named Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated JFK in Dallas Texas.³²³ Irish and Irish Americans alike were devastated. Kennedy’s Assistant Secretary of Labor, Irish-American Daniel Patrick Moynihan, best expressed the grief felt by his Irish brothers and sisters, when he said, “I don’t think there’s any point in being Irish if you don’t know that the world is going to break your heart eventually. I guess we thought that we had a little more time. So did he.”³²⁴ After Kennedy’s assassination, the President’s “status grew” even higher in Irish hearts.³²⁵ Vice President, Lyndon B. Johnson assumed the Presidency as a result of the tragedy, and it would be he who would lead the country during some of the most tumultuous years in American history.

Lyndon B. Johnson--He Gets a Pass from the Irish:

To understand Johnson’s relationship with the Irish, one must think of LBJ within the context of the Vietnam War that did so much to define his Presidency. A major battle zone in the larger Cold War, Vietnam was a faraway region in which all the post-World War II presidents thought it necessary to contain the spread of Communism. That policy made sense to Irish Americans. As, Lawrence McCaffrey asserts in his book *The Irish Catholic Diaspora in America* “Irish Catholic obsession with communism was a key

³²² Ralph G. Martin, *A Hero for Our Time: An Intimate Story of the Kennedy Years* (NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983), 492.

³²³ Kennedy, Cohen, and Bailey, *American Pageant*, 926.

³²⁴ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “Radio Interview with *Washington’s Top News*,” December 5, 1963. Steven Weisman, ed., *Daniel Patrick Moynihan: A Portrait in Letters of an American Visionary* (NY: Public Affairs, 2010), 70.

³²⁵ *Irish Times*, June 19, 2013.

factor in America's Vietnam involvement"³²⁶ Of course, other groups in U.S. society shared that conviction, and few Americans raised serious objections during the early phase of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. It seemed like a fairly straightforward application of the overall policy of containment that both political parties had backed from the start of the Cold War.

Unfortunately, various factors, especially Vietnamese nationalism, made that Southeast Asian conflict a far more complex struggle than the simple clash of freedom-versus-Communism that all the Presidents from Truman through Ford erroneously claimed it to be. Those complications, it seems clear enough in retrospect, made Vietnam an unwinnable war for the United States. At the time none of the U.S. presidents realized this, but it was Johnson who made the fateful decision to deploy hundreds of thousands of military troops to Vietnam.³²⁷ That set off a wave of massive anti-war demonstrations back in the States, and ultimately the domestic turmoil generated by those protests would force Johnson to retire rather than seek another presidential term in 1968.³²⁸

Irish Americans did not participate in the anti-war movement to a significant extent. Rather, most Irish Americans steadfastly regarded the overarching theme of the Vietnam conflict as a struggle between the evils of Communism and the virtues of Western civilization, exemplified by the United States. Irish Americans for the most part refused to join the protesters who demanded that the United States stand down and permit

³²⁶ Lawrence McCaffrey, *The Irish Catholic Diaspora* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of American Press, 1997), 180.

³²⁷ Loftus, "The Politics of Cordiality," 157.

³²⁸ Kennedy, Cohan, and Bailey, *American Pageant*, 938.

the “Reds” to take over all of Vietnam and thereby significantly strengthen their presence in Asia.³²⁹

A number of “[p]rominent Irish Americans were enthusiasts for the war” and they, along with Irish-American publications, did much to forge a pro-war consensus of opinion within the Irish-American community.³³⁰ Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York vocally backed the War and visited U.S. troops in Vietnam so frequently that anti-war activists called him “the Bob Hope of clergy”--a reference to the famous actor/comedian who had been organizing entertainment shows for overseas troops since World War II.³³¹ Patrick Scanlan, the Irish-American editor of the widely read *Brooklyn Tablet*, ardently supported America’s intervention in Vietnam. Indeed at one point, Scanlan went so far as to criticize the Kennedy Administration for its role in the assassination of the pro-U.S. (and Catholic) president of South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem, who Scanlan believed “had rendered the world a great service in the fight against the Red pestilence.”³³² Beyond that, the *Brooklyn Tablet* stood by President Johnson in January 1968 after the Tet Offensive, the name given to a series of Vietcong and North Vietnamese attacks on South Vietnam. While most other newspapers viewed the attacks as proof that Johnson had been lying about America’s supposed good progress in the war, the *Brooklyn Tablet* depicted the Tet Offensive as affirmation of the Communists’

³²⁹ McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 82.

³³⁰ McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 82.

³³¹ John Cooney, *The American Pope: The Life and Times of Francis Cardinal Spellman* (NY: Times Books, 1984), 299.

³³² *Brooklyn Tablet*, November 7, 1963.

dedication to their “brutal ideology of dictatorship of the proletariat . . . and [need for] victory by any means.”³³³

The *Irish Echo* also supported the Vietnam War. In October 1965 the paper emphatically endorsed Johnson’s escalation of the conflict.

If the Vietnamese War is to be pursued, and geared to such an extent that World War III might emanate from it, then so be it. If it can be avoided by our leaders, then let’s do everything to keep the U.S. strong, powerful and intact.³³⁴

Even as late as 1969, when most of the country favored an American pullout in Vietnam, the *Irish Echo* remained hawkish. In November of that year, the newspaper asked its readers to respond to anti-war protests by going outside and waving the American flag “to show that most Americans know the road to peace is one of strength, not weakness.”³³⁵

The New York-based Irish-American chronicle *Hibernia* also defended Johnson’s policies. *Hibernia* admitted that unlike his predecessor, Johnson “was practically devoid of personal appeal.”³³⁶ Nevertheless, the paper respected LBJ for continuing Kennedy’s policies both at home and abroad. “The President was dead, but his policies live on,” *Hibernia* stated, “to be pressed to conclusion not only in the mould fashioned by John Kennedy but in the very words he had projected them. Here rests a major element of Mr. Johnson’s leadership.”³³⁷

³³³ *Brooklyn Tablet*, February 22, 1968.

³³⁴ *Irish Echo*, October 9, 1965.

³³⁵ *Irish Echo*, November 15, 1969.

³³⁶ *Hibernia*, March 1964.

³³⁷ *Hibernia*, March 1964.

The Irish-American mayor of Chicago, Richard Daley, agreed and “remained a supporter of the war until the end.”³³⁸ He also possessed no patience for anti-war demonstrations, a trait he memorably displayed in the brutal manner that he and his Chicago police force crushed anti-war protestors who tried to disrupt the 1968 Democratic National Convention.³³⁹ Many older Irish Americans watching the convention chaos on their television sets lauded Daley as a hero for suppressing the protests. Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense for both Kennedy and Johnson, puts the episode in a somewhat broader context in “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” an article published in 2003, “Daley [and the other pro-war figures] reflected the feelings of many Irish Americans who were upset not only by the anti-war agitation but also by the staggering social changes of the 1960s, be it the changes in social mores, increased crimes, or the riots that increasingly accompanied civil rights and anti-war agitation.”³⁴⁰

During the 1960s and early 1970s, Irish Americans became increasingly disenchanted not just with the ongoing protests and social chaos of that time, but with their Democratic Party. Many Irish Americans also rejected leaders of their own ethnicity, such as New York Senator Robert F. Kennedy and Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy, with McCarthy serving as the first “establishment” Democrat to criticize Johnson’s policy and demand an “unconditional halt to North Vietnam bombing and further de-escalation of the war.”³⁴¹ By 1968 Kennedy joined McCarthy’s anti-Vietnam ranks and called for a cease-fire in that war-torn Asian land.³⁴² Kennedy’s stance did not

³³⁸ Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (NY: Routledge, 2000), 299.

³³⁹ Kennedy, Cohen, and Bailey, *American Pageant*, 938.

³⁴⁰ McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 82. Also, *Irish Echo*, May 15, 1971.

³⁴¹ *New York Times*, November 7, 1967.

³⁴² *New York Times*, March 15, 1968. Also, Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 357.

sit well with the Irish. According to a March 31, 1968, edition of the Irish newspaper the *Sunday Press*, Irish emigrants and later-generation Irish Americans had become openly hostile to Robert Kennedy, because he had become an even more strident opponent to the Vietnam War than McCarthy. Ninety-five percent of the Irish whom their correspondent spoke to “HATED Bobby Kennedy and all he stood for.”³⁴³ To be sure, some of that hostility may well have stemmed from other factors, including Kennedy’s support of the 1965 Immigration Act, which, according to the *Irish Echo*, “closed the door of this great country . . . to young Irishmen” by opening emigration to other ethnicities.³⁴⁴ Others disapproved of the Senator’s progressive civil rights stance, which some Irish Americans felt gave “the Negroes too much say in this country.”³⁴⁵ Nevertheless, as Maier writes in *The Kennedys: America’s Emerald Kings*:

To these second- and third-generation Irish Catholics, Kennedy’s anti-war position smacked of indecency when American boys were getting killed. They were too proud of their country not to support the president’s effort. Kennedy had become too liberal for these Irish Catholics who had moved out of the old ethnic neighborhoods for the ranches, Cape Cods, and split-levels in Westchester, Rockland and Long Island.³⁴⁶

Accordingly, many Irish Americans opposed Bobby Kennedy’s 1968 bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, after Johnson announced he would not seek another term. On March 17, 1968, Kennedy declared his candidacy in Washington, D.C., then went to New York City to march in the Saint Patrick’s Day Parade. There he encountered unexpected heckling from some of the onlookers.³⁴⁷ One reveler called him a “coward and opportunist” another shouted, “you’ll never make it you bum” and still

³⁴³ McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 90.

³⁴⁴ *Irish Echo*, August 6, 1966.

³⁴⁵ McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 90.

³⁴⁶ Maier, *Kennedys*, 511.

³⁴⁷ Maier, *Kennedys*, 510.

another threatened “I swear to God, if he didn’t have 20 cops around I’d punch him right in the mouth.”³⁴⁸ As the *New York Times* reported, Kennedy “heard and saw enough to realize there was strong resentment to his candidacy, even among the Irish.”³⁴⁹

In sum, a rightward shift in Irish-American political attitudes occurred in the late 1960s.³⁵⁰ Irish Americans appeared unwilling in 1968 to back either of the two anti-Vietnam Democratic candidates, Kennedy or McCarthy, notwithstanding the Irish heritage of both men. How Irish Americans would have voted had Kennedy received the Democratic nomination can never be known, because an assassin murdered him in early June in California right after he had won that state’s primary.³⁵¹

Ultimately Vice President Hubert Humphrey, not McCarthy, received the 1968 Democratic presidential nomination. Humphrey had been a vocal cheerleader of the Vietnam War, and as such his nomination constituted something of an endorsement--or at least, certainly not a repudiation--of President Johnson’s Vietnam policy to date.³⁵² The selection of Humphrey also amounted to a bid for the continued loyalty of Irish-American Democratic traditionalists, who seemed to want to stay the course and win in Vietnam.³⁵³ However, in November, many such voters, disgusted by the drift of national affairs over the past several years, decided to abandon Humphrey--who during the campaign did all he could to distance himself from LBJ as well as his own pro-Vietnam stance.³⁵⁴ Such voters either stayed at home, voted for the segregationist third-party

³⁴⁸ *New York Times*, March 17, 1968.

³⁴⁹ *New York Times*, March 17, 1968.

³⁵⁰ McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 91.

³⁵¹ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 357.

³⁵² Kennedy, Cohen, and Bailey, *American Pageant*, 939.

³⁵³ Hogan, ed., *Irish American Chronicle*, 357.

³⁵⁴ Kennedy, Cohen, and Bailey, *American Pageant*, 939.

candidate George Wallace of Alabama, or joined what came to be called the “Silent Majority” and backed Republican nominee Nixon. On November 5, 1968, Nixon won, taking 301 Electoral College votes to 191 for Humphrey and the remaining handful for Wallace.³⁵⁵ Two years later, “[t]he rightward drift in Irish-American politics was confirmed when the vacant Senate seat of Bobby Kennedy was won in 1970 by an Irish-American Catholic, [a right-winger,] James Buckley, on the Conservative Party ticket.”³⁵⁶

Interestingly, the government of the Republic of Ireland, in contrast to many other European countries at that time, tended to support U.S. foreign policy.³⁵⁷ As soon as Sean Lemass became the Taoiseach in 1959, representing Fianna Fail (the center-right Irish Party), he let the United States know that Ireland would back America’s Cold War initiatives, even as Ireland remained militarily neutral.³⁵⁸ As President Johnson escalated the war, the Irish government expressed no public criticism or concern and simply affirmed its confidence in America’s judgment. “The U.S. is handling the situation,” Lemass said in 1966, “in what it believes to be the best possible fashion.”³⁵⁹ When Jack Lynch of the Fianna Fail Party succeeded Lemass in 1966, he pursued the same course, refusing to publicly criticize the American government and instead providing “moral support for combating communism in the region.”³⁶⁰ Three reasons account for Ireland’s support. First, U.S. investments greatly helped to strengthen Ireland’s economy. In the 1960s, “the US investment totaled \$72 million, and 11,500 workers were employed in

³⁵⁵ McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 91.

³⁵⁶ McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 91.

³⁵⁷ See, Loftus, “The Politics of Cordiality.”

³⁵⁸ Loftus, “The Politics of Cordiality,” 157. Also, McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 83.

³⁵⁹ Loftus, “The Politics of Cordiality,” 157.

³⁶⁰ Loftus, “The Politics of Cordiality,” 157.

US-owned enterprises.”³⁶¹ Naturally, the Irish government shied away from rhetoric or policy decisions that might give the Americans reason to pull its financial backing out of Irish enterprises. Second, the Fianna Fail Party feared the growing socialism of the Irish Labour Party during the 1960s. Part of Fianna Fail’s campaign strategy for the 1969 elections, for example, was to paint the Labour Party with the “Communist Brush in a red scare election”—a strategy it could not accomplish if Fianna Fail members of Parliament were themselves criticizing America for fighting Communists in Vietnam.³⁶² Third, most mainstream Irish citizens, much like their Irish-American counterparts, were resolutely anti-communist, and that in itself stopped many Irish government officials from being overly critical of U.S. efforts to contain Communism in Asia. Finally, the Irish government and its citizens understood that newly arrived Irish immigrants to America were fighting in Vietnam; as such they took care to be respectful of that military mission.³⁶³ Consequently, few anti-Vietnam student protests occurred in Ireland, and those that did take place, were “very poorly attended” thus failing to inspire others “onto the streets.”³⁶⁴

Of course, some left-leaning Irish politicians, such as the Labour Party’s Conor Cruise O’Brien, believed that the Irish government should voice discontent with America’s foreign policy. He believed that if Ireland exerted such pressure in the United Nations, this might have created enough international outrage to halt America’s military campaign in Vietnam. O’Brien argued that Irish criticism of the U.S. bombing of North

³⁶¹ McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 83.

³⁶² McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 83.

³⁶³ *Irish Voice*, November 24, 1998. Also, *Irish Echo*, September 3, 1966.

³⁶⁴ McNamara, “Irish Perspectives on the Vietnam War,” 83, 87.

Vietnam “would have significantly strengthened the [UN] Secretary General’s position . . . and they could have given valued encouragement to the peace movement in the United States”³⁶⁵ O’Brien likely overestimated the influence Ireland had on the UN and world opinion generally. Nonetheless, it will forever remain unknown how much effect, if any, a concerted effort on Ireland’s part to end the Vietnam War would have had, on both UN and U.S. policy.

Conclusion:

The Fifth Party System proved to be a transformative time for people of Irish extraction on both sides of the Atlantic. Irish Americans took advantage of opportunities to advance in society and prove their long-held commitment to democracy and capitalism. The presidents from Franklin Roosevelt to Lyndon Johnson counted on Irish-American votes and Irish-American support of their domestic and foreign endeavors. Also during this era, Ireland remained relevant both in its controversial decision to remain neutral during World War II as well as its emergence as a sovereign republic recognized by the international community. Except for the election of Kennedy, Irish issues, as such, did not emerge to any marked degree during this era. However, as the Sixth Party System began with the election of Richard Nixon, unrelated troubles in Northern Ireland would bring the Irish Question back into the headlines and into the forefront of Irish and Irish-American consciousness.

³⁶⁵ Conor Cruise O’Brien, “Ireland in International Affairs,” in Owen Dudley Edwards, ed., *Conor Cruise O’Brien Introduces Ireland* (London: Deutsch, London, 1969), 134.

Chapter 7: The Late 20th Century to the Present

(1968-)

With Irish Americans fully assimilated into U.S. society by the late 1960s, the Sixth Party System might have been expected to be an era devoid of specific Irish and Irish-American affairs. But as this Party System--one dominated by divided government, with the two major parties often controlling either the legislative or executive branch, but not both--commenced with the 1968 election of Republican Richard Nixon, violence reignited in Northern Ireland. Catholics in that region demanded “an end to the apartheid-like system that their Protestant government had imposed on them for more than forty years.”¹ With the help of the local police and later the British military forces, the Northern Ireland government cracked down brutally on Catholic protestors, which in turn prompted reaction from the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), the more violent successors of the original IRA.² “Thus began a period known as ‘The Troubles’-- a three-decade-long fight between the Catholic/Nationalist and Protestant/Unionist forces in Northern Ireland.”³ The American response to the Troubles constitutes a small but significant chapter in the politics of the Sixth Party System.⁴

The Troubles reconnected many Irish Americans to their Irish identity.⁵ “In the years prior to this conflict, Irish Americans had been distracted away from their Irish culture by events in the United States, but the Troubles reawakened bitter historical

¹ Rogers and Anderson, “Keeping the Tradition Alive,” 34.

² In this chapter, the Provisional IRA will be referred to as simply the IRA. Christine Kinealy, *War and Peace: Ireland since the 1960s* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 64.

³ Rogers and Anderson, “Keeping the Tradition Alive,” 34.

⁴ Kinealy, *War and Peace*, 41.

⁵ Daryl Cronin and Mike Adair, *The Wearing of the Green: A History of Saint Patrick's Day* (NY: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), 213.

memories of Britain's long abuse of the Irish."⁶ Many Irish Americans, emotionally re-aroused by the disquieting developments in Northern Ireland, coalesced in solidarity with their brethren back home.

In order to satisfy the calls of their Irish-American constituents, American presidents felt compelled to respond to the civil strife in Northern Ireland. To be sure, they remained ever-mindful of America's special relationship with Britain and the diplomatic necessity of maintaining that alliance, particularly during the Cold War years.⁷ While all the American presidents during the Troubles played some role in Anglo-Irish affairs, the actions of Ronald Reagan and William (Bill) Clinton particularly stand out. During Reagan's Administration, America and Britain cultivated, in British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's words, a "very, very special" relationship, inasmuch as she and Reagan established a friendship and political alliance forged by their shared anti-communist, conservative principles.⁸ Reagan refrained from making Irish affairs a major U.S. foreign policy issue, especially in his first term. However, many historians believe that he privately urged Thatcher to encourage peace in Northern Ireland, and for this he merits credit for aiding in the adoption of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, which set the foundation for future peace efforts. Clinton acted more boldly in his efforts to bring a peace settlement to Northern Ireland. Indeed, during his presidency, Clinton "took many risks" to make peace in Northern Ireland, "at some points jeopardising America's relations with Great Britain" to secure social stability and civil rights for Catholics in

⁶ Rogers and Anderson, "Keeping the Tradition Alive," 34.

⁷ Connor O'Clery, *Daring Diplomacy: Clinton's Secret Search for Peace in Ireland* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1997), 126.

⁸ O'Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 127.

Northern Ireland.⁹ His Administration's efforts produced the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which effectively ended the Troubles and finally brought peace to Northern Ireland.

Even with the crisis in Ireland over, Clinton's successors still took an interest in the Irish. President George W. Bush of Texas used his influence to continue the good work Clinton had begun in Northern Ireland. Domestically, Bush appealed to the more conservative Irish American voters of the 21st century. The first African-American President, Barack Obama, followed Bush in the Oval Office. Obama visited Ireland in May 2011, and undoubtedly to the surprise of some, lauded his own distant Irish roots.¹⁰ Clearly, U.S. presidents continued to emulate those who had served before them in recognizing the potent strength of the Irish-American segment of the electorate.

Richard Nixon:

Although the Troubles began during the Nixon Administration, the President gave minimal attention to that developing crisis in Northern Ireland. Understandably, Nixon had other serious foreign-policy goals on his agenda: these included, ending America's increasingly unpopular involvement in Vietnam, developing a détente policy with the USSR, and opening relations with Communist China. Yet, while he gave Irish issues scant attention, even so, the professional politician Nixon well knew the voting power possessed by Irish Americans—and he acted on that awareness on numerous occasions during his long career.

⁹ David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 2002), Location 62 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁰ *New York Times*, May 23, 2011.

Nixon had begun courting Irish-American votes as early as 1952 when he was running for the Vice Presidency alongside Eisenhower on the Republican ticket. In September of that year, then-Senator Nixon gave a televised address, later known as the “Checkers Speech,” to explain a fund that had been created by his supporters to reimburse him for political expenses.¹¹ At that time, Nixon feared that the controversy about this fund would compel the Republican Party to replace him with another vice-presidential nominee. Facing a T.V. audience of more than 60 million viewers, Nixon gave an effective and emotional defense of the fund and the contributions made to it.¹² The speech’s most memorable moment came when he admitted that he had received and would keep one gift, a black-and-white dog that his children had already named “Checkers.”¹³ During what would forever-after be known as the “Checkers” speech, Nixon also confronted the issue of whether he should leave the Republican ticket. It was here that Nixon referenced his wife’s Irish heritage, when he stated:

Let me say this: I don’t believe that I ought to quit because I’m not a quitter . . . And, incidentally, Pat’s not a quitter . . . After all, her name was Patricia Ryan and she was born on St. Patrick’s Day, and you know the Irish never quit.¹⁴

Pat Nixon in fact was not born on St. Patrick’s Day; her birthdate was March 16, but the family always celebrated the occasion on the Irish holiday. The far more important point was that Nixon had used a biographical tidbit of his wife’s to reach out, in a highly sentimental way to the influential Irish-American voting bloc. How many Irish were moved by the gesture cannot be determined, but one suspects that it impressed at least

¹¹ Roger Morris, *Richard Milhous Nixon: The Rise of An American Politician* (NY: Henry Holt & Company, 1990), 826.

¹² Morris, *Nixon*, 836.

¹³ Morris, *Nixon*, 832.

¹⁴ Morris, *Nixon*, 834.

some of them. Nixon's "Checkers" speech aroused overwhelming public sympathy, and he remained on the ticket and became Vice President.

Years later President Nixon continued to highlight his (he was Scots-Irish) and his wife Pat's Irish roots. A good example was his 1971 Saint Patrick's Day statement. As became customary with all presidents in the second half of the twentieth century, Nixon commemorated the Irish holiday by extolling the contributions of Irish Americans. "Americans of Irish descent," Nixon stated, "have given a great deal to this country, in fields ranging from government and politics to business and commerce, from science and technology to art and music and literature."¹⁵ Nixon added: "I have always felt particularly close to Ireland. One could hardly feel any other way when some of his own ancestors came from that country—and when his wife is the former Pat Ryan, and celebrates her birthday on St. Patrick's Day."¹⁶

In the fall of 1970, Nixon sought to appeal to Irish Americans from abroad when he embarked on a week-long European trip, with Ireland as the final stop.¹⁷ Nixon's National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, explained in his memoirs why Nixon ended the tour with a two-day stay-over in Ireland:

The Irish stop has no great international significance, except that Ireland has not been totally passive in world affairs. It has served, and can in the future, as a constructive and reliable neutral. This worthy objective would not normally require personal Presidential attention for a full forty-eight hours. The stop was frankly a domestic political one. It enabled Nixon to bring his claim to Irish

¹⁵ Richard Nixon, "Saint Patrick's Day Statement," March 16, 1971. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1971* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 435-436.

¹⁶ Nixon, "Saint Patrick's Day Statement," March 16, 1971. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1971*, 436.

¹⁷ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 935. Also, Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (NY: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1978), 488.

ancestry to the attention of Irish-American voters and to pay off an obligation to a wealthy American contributor at whose extravagant castle we stayed.¹⁸

Outside observers also recognized the political motivations behind Nixon's visit.

The Irish nationalist-turned unionist, Connor Cruise O'Brien, claimed in the pro-unionist *Irish Times* that

Mr. Nixon's sole object on this visit is to drum up electoral support for the Republicans in a congressional election year, he means to do so in two ways: first and mainly, by working the harp and leprechaun circuit but also by showing concern about peace while continuing to wage war.¹⁹

O'Brien's war comment, of course, referred to the continuing Vietnam conflict.

O'Brien clearly also much resented Nixon's scant interest in Irish affairs beyond the political capital to be gained by appearing to be concerned about such matters.

During his visit, Nixon made an effort to highlight his Irish ancestry. Yet, luck was not with him. The *New York Times* reported that prior to Nixon's visit "United States Embassy officials here [Ireland] have been scouring the Irish countryside for distant cousins to meet President Nixon and Mrs. Nixon—the former Patricia Ryan."²⁰ Nixon's Irish-American advisor, Daniel P. Moynihan, became the President's "conspicuous aide of Irish ancestry."²¹ Nixon had said his great-great-great-great grandfather on his mother's side originated in County Kildare.²² Unfortunately, there was no one named Milhous (the maiden name of Nixon's mother) to be found in 1970,

¹⁸ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 935.

¹⁹ *Irish Times*, October 3, 1970.

²⁰ *New York Times*, September 25, 1970.

²¹ *New York Times*, September 28, 1970.

²² *New York Times*, September 20, 1970.

while on the other hand far too many Ryans existed to determine conclusively which of them were related to Mrs. Nixon.²³

Despite the failed search for relatives, Nixon still tried to cultivate solidarity with the Irish people. “I can’t find anyone in this country who can claim me as a relation,” Nixon said upon arriving in Shannon Airport, “but when I married Mrs. Nixon she was Patricia Ryan and had a birthday on St. Patrick’s Day and what more Irish could there be?”²⁴ Regardless of the failed search for relatives, the President had a good time in Ireland. As his Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman wrote in his diary, “Some good crowds in little towns” came out to see the President and he even came across a man who claimed to remember the Milhous clan.²⁵ But unfortunately for Nixon, the trip had its unpleasant moments. While in Dublin, the presidential car got pelted with eggs, and the President encountered anti-Vietnam War protesters more upset than the Irish government with U.S. actions in Southeast Asia.²⁶

After returning home, Nixon of course could not entirely avoid responding to the developing crisis in Northern Ireland. This was especially so after what came to be known as the “Bloody Sunday” episode of January 30, 1972. On Bloody Sunday, British paratroopers fired on Catholic Irish protestors in Derry who were peacefully marching to protest against the British government’s policy of interning suspected IRA members without trial.²⁷ Thirteen innocent protestors in Derry died on the scene, and a fourteenth died a month later from injuries acquired during that protest. In response, a “score of

²³ *New York Times*, September 25, 1970.

²⁴ *New York Times*, October 4, 1970.

²⁵ H.R. Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the Nixon White House* (NY: Putnam’s Sons, 1994), 201.

²⁶ Haldeman, *Haldeman Diaries*, 201. Also, *New York Times*, October 3, 1970.

²⁷ Edward Kennedy, *True Compass: A Memoir* (NY: Hachette Book Group, 2009), 355.

witnesses,” including Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy testified at a three-day long hearing (February 28-30, 1972) of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Europe, to call on Congress and the Nixon Administration to demand that Britain withdraw its troops from Northern Ireland, relinquish its retention of the province, and sanction the unification of Ireland.²⁸ Senator Kennedy’s testimony included an impassioned description of the Troubles; a “new chapter of violence and terror is being written in the history of Ireland,” Kennedy asserted.²⁹ Moreover, Kennedy called the British killing of 13 Catholics “Britain’s Mylai [sic],” a reference to the murdering of more than 300 innocent South Vietnamese civilians by American military forces in 1968.³⁰ Kennedy’s remarks at this hearing actually constituted Senator Kennedy’s second serious attempt to get British forces removed from Northern Ireland. In the fall of 1971, Kennedy and fellow Democratic Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff, of Connecticut, had introduced a resolution urging Nixon to demand that Britain make such a withdrawal.³¹ At that time, the U.S. Embassy in London under Nixon’s direction had issued a statement that the Kennedy-Ribicoff proposed resolution did not represent the Administration’s policy.³² Charles W. Bray III, a State Department spokesman, had added “that this seems to us a matter for the people most immediately concerned to work out among themselves.”³³ The British and Northern Ireland Parliaments also had disavowed the resolution.³⁴

²⁸ *New York Times*, February 29, 1972.

²⁹ *New York Times*, February 29, 1972.

³⁰ *New York Times*, February 29, 1972.

³¹ *New York Times*, October 21, 1971. Also, Kennedy, *True Compass*, 355.

³² *New York Times*, October 21, 1971.

³³ *New York Times*, October 22, 1971.

³⁴ *New York Times*, December 10, 1971.

The Nixon Administration responded much the same way to Bloody Sunday and the calls at the hearings by Kennedy and others for British troop withdrawal. Martin J. Hillenbrand, then the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, served as the Administration's spokesperson on the issue and emphatically denounced calls for Nixon to demand a British pull-out. "We cannot go off promiscuously condemning governments and their policies," Hillenbrand stated, "unless we have solutions to offer that realistically can relieve the situation."³⁵ The only such solution the Nixon Administration could offer was a suggestion that the United States serve as a mediator if both sides formally asked for such an intervention; neither side, as it turned out, did so.³⁶ Secretary of State William Rogers, appearing at a news conference following Hillenbrand's statement, echoed his colleague: "It would be both inappropriate and counterproductive for the United States to attempt to intervene in any way in the area."³⁷

Newly released White-House recordings shed some further light into Nixon's refusal to intervene in the Northern Ireland crisis. A taped conversation between Nixon and Rogers on February 2, 1972, reveals that Nixon did not think very highly of the Irish protestors in Northern Ireland. "These people, the Irish, are pretty goddam bad here," Nixon told Rogers.³⁸ "They're the Kennedy type, out raising hell, blowing up the place, burning down the embassy."³⁹ To be sure, Nixon did note during this nine-minute conversation with Rogers that Northern Ireland was "a terrible tragedy" and that "the British, with all their great points, always mishandled Ireland."⁴⁰ But then Nixon

³⁵ *New York Times*, March 1, 1972.

³⁶ *New York Times*, March 1, 1972.

³⁷ *New York Times*, February 4, 1972.

³⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, August 13, 2004.

³⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, August 13, 2004.

⁴⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, October 4 and August 13, 2004.

immediately reconsidered that judgment. “I don’t know whether they’re mishandling it now or not. They probably aren’t,” the President concluded.⁴¹ Nixon and Rogers wound up deciding that the British would be allowed to vet in advance any statements made by the United States concerning Northern Ireland issues. Nixon and Rogers also agreed that Senator Kennedy was “demagoguing” the issue by siding with the Irish Nationalists.⁴²

While trying to think of some other means of assisting the situation, Nixon suggested sending one of America’s most prominent Protestant Ministers—perhaps Norman Vincent Peal or Billy Graham--or perhaps instead New York City’s Cardinal Terence Cooke to Ireland to encourage a negotiated settlement of the crisis.⁴³ Finally, in regard to requests by Ireland Taoiseach Jack Lynch to visit America in order to discuss the growing dangers in Northern Ireland, Nixon told Rogers that they could consider Lynch’s visit but only after Nixon’s historic trip to China. The suggested Nixon-Lynch meeting never took place.⁴⁴ Nixon simply did not have either the time or the interest to become deeply involved in the Northern Ireland situation. In any case his strong personal bias in favor of the British would have made him an unsatisfactory mediator of the crisis.

Gerald Ford:

Gerald Ford became president upon the resignation of Nixon, forced upon him by the Watergate scandal. Ford’s unpopular decision to pardon Nixon, a hostile Democratic Congress, and a stagnant economy all limited Ford’s effectiveness during his two-and-a

⁴¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, August 13, 2004.

⁴² *Belfast Telegraph*, August 13 and October 1, 2004.

⁴³ *Belfast Telegraph*, October 1, 2004.

⁴⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, October 1, 2004.

half years in the White House. Even so, President Ford managed to play a constructive role in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Both Ford and the Irish Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave grew increasingly concerned while they were in office about the extensive Irish-American funding for the IRA. The largest Irish-American fund-raising organization was the Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAIID) based in the Bronx, New York.⁴⁵ This organization had been founded by the Irish immigrant and nationalist Michael Flannery in the spring of 1970. Flannery had fought the British during the 1919-1921 War of Independence, and he had been part of the “irregulars” who opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty during the Irish Civil War.⁴⁶ Flannery assured Irish Americans that NORAIID’s purpose was to help families in Northern Ireland who had been adversely affected by the Troubles.⁴⁷ However, by 1975 various American news organizations began reporting that NORAIID was “heavily involved in the arm’s supply business” to the IRA.⁴⁸ On Christmas Eve of that that year, for example, the *New York Times* ran a story with the headline, “Dollars for Death,” which quoted the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Garret Fitzgerald as saying, “Hundreds of the deaths in Northern Ireland have resulted from money being collected in the United States being used for the purchase of guns by the IRA.”⁴⁹ Fitzgerald continued, “Every dollar bill contributed to agencies such as the Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAIID) contributes to the killing of Irish people.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ *New York Times*, December 24, 1976. Also, Kinealy, *War and Peace*, 144.

⁴⁶ Andrew Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict, 1968-1995* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of American Press, 1995), 43.

⁴⁷ Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict*, 43.

⁴⁸ Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict*, 118.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, December 24, 1975.

⁵⁰ *New York Times*, December 24, 1975.

Irish Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave visited America in March 1976 to participate in the American Bicentennial celebrations, and to meet formally with President Ford about the financial support that the IRA was receiving from Americans.⁵¹ Ford persuaded Cosgrave to issue a statement asking the American people to refrain from giving money to the IRA.⁵² Cosgrave obliged in grand style during an address to both houses of Congress on Saint Patrick's Day.⁵³ The television networks showed clips of his speech, which included this admonition:

There are in this country some people who contribute in the most direct way possible to violence in Ireland by sending guns and bombs for use in Northern Ireland. A large number have contributed, thoughtlessly or otherwise, to organizations nominally engaged in relief work which have used that money to buy arms and explosives. What they are doing, whatever their motives, with every dime or dollar they give thoughtlessly, is helping to kill and maim Irish men and women of every religious persuasion.⁵⁴

According to Andrew Wilson in his *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict*, Cosgrave's speech and Ford's subsequent support of the address largely brought about their intended results.⁵⁵ Irish Americans believed Cosgrave when he said their help was making a bad situation even worse, and significant numbers of Irish Americans stopped supporting republican groups like NORAIID.⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Irish Times*, December 30, 2006.

⁵² Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict*, 119.

⁵³ Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict*, 119.

⁵⁴ *CBS Evening News*, March 17, 1976.

⁵⁵ Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict*, 120.

⁵⁶ Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict*, 120.

Jimmy Carter and the End of America's Non-intervention:

In Senator Edward Kennedy's words, Democratic President Jimmy Carter of Georgia, "ended the era of official nonintervention by America in the Irish conflict."⁵⁷ He was a strong advocate of international humanitarian efforts, but his eagerness to become involved in the Northern Ireland crisis also had a political dimension. Carter fully appreciated the electoral clout of Irish Americans, whose support he had coveted when he ran against Gerald Ford in 1976. During that campaign, Carter twice took an Irish-nationalist stance, once with a symbolic gesture and another time in prepared remarks. On March 17, 1976, he marched in the New York City Saint Patrick's Day Parade sporting a lapel button that read, "Get Britain Out of Ireland."⁵⁸ On October 26, near the election's end, Carter went even further in a controversial speech he made in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Referring to the disturbing affairs in Northern Ireland, Carter said:

The Democratic National Convention plan [on Ireland] was written jointly by our own staff and Mayor [Richard J.] Daley of Chicago to be sure that the world knows that the Democratic Party understands the special problems of Ireland and it is a mistake for our country's government to stand quiet on the struggle of the Irish for peace, for the respect of human rights, and for unifying Ireland.⁵⁹

As Sean Cronin writes in *Washington's Irish Policy, 1916-1986*, "[t]his innocuous statement caused a political storm . . ." because of Carter's last line calling for Irish unification.⁶⁰ To historians like Cronin, Carter's statement appears strategic, an eleventh-

⁵⁷ Kennedy, *True Compass*, 356.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, August 31, 1977.

⁵⁹ Sean Cronin, *Washington's Irish Policy, 1916-1986: Independence, Partition, Neutrality* (St. Paul, MN: Anvil Books, 1987), 312.

⁶⁰ Cronin, *Washington's Irish Policy*, 312.

hour attempt to garner Irish-American votes in New York via a nationalist stance on Ireland. If that was indeed Carter's intention, then he succeeded. "Carter carried New York and by a narrow margin won the election," Cronin observes. "His Pittsburgh comments probably helped him."⁶¹

When in the White House, Carter shifted his stance, taking care to use "neutral" language when referring to either side of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Carter wanted to disclose his actual opinion of the crisis, and in the summer of 1977 he and his aides wrestled with the question of whether he should do so.⁶² Seeking advice as well as political support, Carter conferred with major Irish-American political figures like Democratic Speaker of the House Thomas (Tip) O'Neill of Massachusetts, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, and Senator Kennedy. These three men, along with Democratic New York Governor Hugh Carey, also an Irish American, would become known as the "Four Horsemen" because of their activist commitment to bringing an end to the Troubles in Northern Ireland.⁶³

After listening to the perspectives, President Carter decided to use America's economic power to persuade both sides in Northern Ireland to work toward peace.⁶⁴ In a statement he made on August 30, 1977, Carter promised to encourage American job-creating investments once a peace settlement was agreed upon. Carter also promised that

⁶¹ Cronin, *Washington's Irish Policy*, 312.

⁶² *New York Times*, August 25, 1977.

⁶³ Kennedy, *True Compass*, 356.

⁶⁴ *New York Times*, August 25, 1977.

the United States would not become overly involved in Irish affairs.⁶⁵ The President stated:

The United States wholeheartedly supports peaceful means for finding a just solution that involves both parts of the community of Northern Ireland and protects human rights and guarantees freedom from discrimination . . .

We hope that all those engaged in violence will renounce this course and commit themselves to peaceful pursuit of legitimate goals . . . I ask all Americans to refrain from supporting with financial or other aid organizations whose involvement, direct or indirect, in this violence delays the day when the people of Northern Ireland can live and work together in harmony, free from fear.

We support the establishment of a form of government in Northern Ireland which will command widespread acceptance throughout both parts of the community. However we have no intention of telling the parties how this might be achieved . . .

At the same time, the people of Northern Ireland should know that they have our complete support in their quest for a peaceful and just society. It is a tribute to Northern Ireland's hard-working people that the area has continued to attract investment, despite the violence committed by a small minority. This is to be welcomed, since investment and other programs to create jobs will assist in ensuring a healthy economy and combating unemployment . . .

It is still true that a peaceful settlement would contribute immeasurably to stability in Northern Ireland and so enhance the prospects for increased investment. In the event of such a settlement, the U.S. Government would be prepared to join with others to see how additional job-creating investment could be encouraged to the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland.⁶⁶

Carter's words met with wide approval. Taoiseach Jack Lynch, serving his second non-consecutive term, called Carter's statement "a constructive development in American relations with Ireland and Britain."⁶⁷ Moreover, "President Carter," Lynch continued, "rightly underlines the importance of finding a just solution by peaceful means which protect human rights, in which both parts of the community in Northern Ireland as

⁶⁵ *New York Times*, August 31, 1977.

⁶⁶ Jimmy Carter, "Northern Ireland Statement on U.S. Policy," August 30, 1977. Original Sources.com, *Addresses of the Presidents: Jimmy Carter* (Orem, Utah: Western Standard Publishing), 2005, Location 39660, 39669, 39678 (Kindle Edition).

⁶⁷ *New York Times*, August 31, 1977.

well as the Irish and British Governments will be involved.”⁶⁸ Although Carter made no reference in his statement to Irish unification, “official sources” in Dublin said that the “President’s acceptance of the need for some form of power-sharing system of government in Northern Ireland was ‘implicit’ in his remarks.”⁶⁹

Back in America, the Four Horsemen also approved of Carter’s pledge. Governor Carey stated enthusiastically, “I am heartened that for the first time in memory, a United States President has spoken out for the human rights of the minority in the North of Ireland.”⁷⁰ Senator Kennedy echoed Carey’s enthusiasm: “It is the most important and constructive initiative ever taken by an American President on the Irish issue.”⁷¹ All Four Horsemen later would issue a joint statement about Irish unification, in which they asserted that “President Carter spoke for us and for all Americans who care about peace in Northern Ireland . . .” when he called for a “just solution” to the Troubles in 1977.⁷² Moreover, decades later Ted Kennedy would write in his memoir *True Compass* that “Jimmy Carter committed his administration to supporting a form of government in the North that would ‘command widespread acceptance throughout both parts of the community,’ meaning Catholic and Protestant, and added the incentive of economic assistance in the event of a settlement.”⁷³ Kennedy also appreciated Carter’s desire for a peaceful agreement. Neither he nor the other three Horsemen approved of IRA violence and, like Carter, they encouraged, as Senator Kennedy writes, “all organizations engaged

⁶⁸ *New York Times*, August 31, 1977.

⁶⁹ *New York Times*, August 31, 1977.

⁷⁰ *New York Times*, August 31, 1977.

⁷¹ *New York Times*, August 31, 1977.

⁷² *Irish Echo*, March 24, 1979.

⁷³ Kennedy, *True Compass*, 356.

in violence to renounce their campaigns . . . and [all] Americans to renounce actions that supported such violence.”⁷⁴

Carter remained actively concerned about the Troubles late into his Presidency. On November 8, 1979, Taoiseach Lynch visited the United States. In separate statements, both leaders denounced terrorism and encouraged a peaceful resolution in Northern Ireland, one that would create an equal society for Catholics and Protestants.⁷⁵ Carter and Lynch emphasized, “[T]he need that terrorism be put down, no matter where it raises its head, especially in the north of Ireland, and those who support terrorism must be deterred from doing so.”⁷⁶ Carter also repeated his earlier statements that a “modus vivendi between the two communities in the north of Ireland” be created and “that it would lead to a greater degree of cooperation and harmony and, ultimately peace between those two communities in the north and to North Ireland as a whole.”⁷⁷ A touch of politics also entered Carter’s speech when he concluded, “It’s important also to point out that a President of the United States represents more Irish people than the Prime Minister of Ireland”⁷⁸ Clearly, Carter realized that his actions regarding Northern Ireland were being closely watched by a significant segment of the U.S. electorate.

In retrospect, some observers believe that Carter does not truly deserve heroic status regarding his involvement in Northern Ireland issues. Instead, this harsher

⁷⁴ Kennedy, *True Compass*, 356.

⁷⁵ *New York Times*, November 9, 1979.

⁷⁶ Jack Lynch, “Visit of Prime Minister Lynch of Ireland, Remarks to Reporters Following a Meeting,” November 8, 1979. Original Sources.com, *Addresses of the Presidents*, Location 152518 (Kindle Edition). Also, *New York Times*, November 9, 1979.

⁷⁷ Jimmy Carter, “Visit of Prime Minister Lynch of Ireland, Remarks to Reporters Following a Meeting,” November 8, 1979. Original Sources.com, *Addresses of the Presidents*, Location 152518 (Kindle Edition).

⁷⁸ Jimmy Carter, “Visit of Prime Minister Lynch of Ireland, Remarks to Reporters Following a Meeting,” November 8, 1979. Original Sources.com, *Addresses of the Presidents*, Location 152535 (Kindle Edition).

perspective contends that he was essentially uninformed about that region and, worse, allowed himself to become little more than a puppet of the Four Horsemen. The pro-British *Irish Times* published an article on December 31, 2009, that accused Carter and his White House Staff of being “not just ignorant of the basic facts about Northern Ireland but also apparently unwilling to study the issue or even to take it seriously”⁷⁹

This critical article continues:

As long as former Senator Edward Kennedy and former Speaker of the House of Representatives, TP “Tip” O’Neill agreed on ‘what it was the president should do in relation to Ireland or the Irish-Americans’ then Mr. Carter did it ‘without seriously questioning and possibly without understanding what he was doing.’⁸⁰

Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister from 1979-1990, seems in her autobiography to agree with the sentiment expressed by the *Irish Times*. In that volume she writes that in “foreign affairs” President Carter “was over-influenced by the doctrines then gaining ground in the Democratic Party”⁸¹ Thatcher’s statement does not specifically reference Northern Ireland; however, inasmuch as the Four Horsemen consisted of four of the most powerful Democrats of that era, she may well have had the Irish issue, among others, in mind when she leveled that criticism of Carter’s Presidency.

Indeed, Carter often demonstrated a limited comprehension of foreign affairs overall, and he certainly had no expertise on the issues that were tearing Northern Ireland apart. Still, instead of ignoring the conflict altogether, Carter did at least use America’s economic power to encourage a peaceful resolution in Northern Ireland. For that alone, he deserves some credit in the pages of history with respect to Northern Ireland.

⁷⁹ *Irish Times*, December 31, 2009.

⁸⁰ *Irish Times*, December 31, 2009.

⁸¹ Margaret Thatcher, *Margaret Thatcher: The Autobiography* (NY: Harper Perennial, 2010), 284.

Ronald Reagan, Vice President George W. Bush, and the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher:

During his 1980 presidential campaign, the Republican nominee and former Governor of California Ronald Reagan stated, “I have no views on Irish unity.”⁸² He believed, he said, that “It is not for the United States to interfere in the process or prescribe solutions, but rather to urge the parties to come together to work for a solution and to join in condemnation of terrorism by either side . . . Peace cannot come from the barrel of a terrorist’s gun.”⁸³ Despite the fact that Reagan was of Irish ancestry, he felt minimally inclined to engage in Irish affairs, and during his race against President Carter he saw no need to feign concern about this Irish issue. His ostensible antipathy did not hurt him in the polls with Irish Americans. “Reagan carried the Irish vote in every major state,” Theodore White states in *America in Search of Itself: The Making of the President, 1956-1980*, and “the results were astounding (California 64/28, New York 53/35, Texas 65/31).”⁸⁴ Overall, Reagan won in a landslide victory against Carter, 489-49 in the Electoral College.⁸⁵

President Reagan strongly desired to maintain cordial relations with Britain’s Conservative Prime Minister Thatcher. That of course required that he not interfere in Irish politics. As *Boston Globe* staff writer John Farrell noted years later, “U.S. foreign policy establishment [by the 1980s] reverted to its traditional stance: that the United States should not anger Great Britain, its closest Cold War ally, by meddling in its

⁸² *Irish Times*, June 7, 1980.

⁸³ Cronin, *Washington’s Irish Policy*, 319.

⁸⁴ Theodore White, *America in Search of Itself: The Making of the President, 1956-1980* (NY: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1982), 414.

⁸⁵ White, *Making of the President*, inside page.

internal affairs.”⁸⁶ Moreover, Reagan and Thatcher became good friends as well as close allies in the still-ongoing Cold War with the USSR. As Reagan recalled in his autobiography, *An American Life*, about the first time he met Thatcher prior to either of them leading their respective countries, “I liked her immediately—she was warm, feminine, gracious, and intelligent—and it was evident from our first words that we were soul mates when it came to reducing government and expanding economic freedom.”⁸⁷ Thatcher reciprocated Reagan’s sentiments in her own autobiography: “When we met in person,” she wrote about their first encounter, “I was immediately won over by his charm, sense of humor and directness.”⁸⁸ For these reasons Reagan took great pains not to offend or criticize Thatcher—who felt exactly the same way about him.

Reagan resolutely rejected any and all forms of terrorism. Accordingly, like Thatcher, he publicly denounced the IRA and its attempts to unite Ireland through force. On July 20, 1982, the IRA detonated two bombs during British military ceremonies in London at Hyde and Regent’s Park. “I speak for all America,” Reagan wrote to Thatcher, “in expressing my heartfelt abhorrence of the IRA’s latest terrorist activity in London. We mourn the tragic loss of life caused by this cowardly act and stand firmly by you in condemning such violence.”⁸⁹ Reagan sent similar telegrams to Thatcher in reaction to subsequent IRA attacks in Britain. After the IRA bombed Harold’s Department Store in central London, in December 1983, the President reaffirmed his loyalty to Thatcher, “We remain resolved, as I know you are,” he told her, “to eliminate

⁸⁶ *Boston Globe*, June 30, 2000.

⁸⁷ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 204.

⁸⁸ Margaret Thatcher, *The Autobiography* (NY: Harper Perennial, 2010), 213.

⁸⁹ Ronald Reagan to Margaret Thatcher, July 20, 1982. Accessed at www.margaretthatcher.org/search/results.asp?ps=500&w=mtrr Accessed 11/16/14.

these cowardly acts of senseless violence.”⁹⁰ A few years later, in his Saint Patrick’s Day statement, Reagan reminded Americans that they “should not give either financial or moral support to Irish terrorists, any Irish terrorists.”⁹¹

Of course, Reagan was scarcely oblivious to the political influence, even in America, of IRA martyrs. In May 1981, IRA member Bobby Sands, who had been sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment in the Maze Prison of Northern Ireland for a firearms offense, died in a prison hospital near Belfast after a sixty-five day hunger strike.⁹² Nine other hunger-strikers also died that summer in the Maze Prison.⁹³ The deaths of Bobby Sands and the others aroused much sympathy worldwide, including in America. The U.S. magazine *T.V. Guide* with a circulation of 18 million, termed them the ““biggest international news story of the day.””⁹⁴

However, no amount of public sympathy for Sands and the others could sway Thatcher. She refused to negotiate with imprisoned terrorists or meet with Irish Parliamentary members who had done so.⁹⁵ Thatcher also continued to deny “political status” (prisoner-of-war status) to IRA and other Republican protesters.⁹⁶ Newspapers like the *New York Times* contended that the Prime Minister’s “inflexibility” had

⁹⁰ Ronald Reagan to Margaret Thatcher, December 19, 1982. Accessed at www.margaretthatcher.org/search/results.asp?ps=500&w=mtrr Accessed 11/16/14.

⁹¹ Ronald Reagan, “Statement on the Observance of St. Patrick’s Day,” March 17, 1986. Accessed at <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/86mar.htm> Accessed 11/16/14.

⁹² *New York Times*, April 29, 1981. Also, Cronin, *Washington’s Irish Policy*, 320.

⁹³ *Irish Echo*, October 10, 1981.

⁹⁴ Cronin, *Washington’s Irish Policy*, 321.

⁹⁵ *New York Times*, April 29, 1981. New information suggests that Thatcher did engage in covert negotiations concerning imprisoned IRA members. See Kinealy, *War and Peace*.

⁹⁶ Cronin, *Washington’s Irish Policy*, 320. Also, *New York Times*, April 29, 1981.

contributed to the hunger strikers' martyr status. As the *Times* reported on April 29, 1981:

On the question of principle, Britain's Prime Minister Thatcher is right in refusing to yield political status to Bobby Sands, the Irish Republican Hunger striker. But this dying young man has made it appear that her stubbornness, rather than his own, is the source of a fearful conflict already ravaging Northern Ireland. For that, Mrs. Thatcher is partly to blame. By appearing unfeeling and unresponsive, she and her Government are providing Bobby Sands with a deathbed gift—the crown of martyrdom.⁹⁷

Arguments such as those advanced by the *New York Times* left Thatcher unfazed. She held to her conviction that IRA terrorists should receive no concessions and no mercy.

Reagan stood by the Prime Minister during his first term, despite mounting domestic political pressure for him to reverse course. The Four Horsemen encouraged Reagan to talk to her about the crisis in Northern Ireland, and specifically about the Irish prisoners held captive by the British. In February 1981 Speaker O'Neill and 23 other members of Congress organized the Friends of Ireland, a group that committed itself to working toward constitutional nationalism in Northern Ireland.⁹⁸ In May 1981 O'Neill warned Reagan that "Intense media coverage of the hunger strike in the United States has dramatically improved the image of the Provisional IRA among 35 million Irish-Americans and reversed a five-year trend of declining financial support of the IRA."⁹⁹ O'Neill continued, "Members of the IRA are terrorists and should be treated as such. But

⁹⁷ *New York Times*, April 29, 1981.

⁹⁸ Peggy Noonan, *What I Saw at the Revolution: A Political Life in the Reagan Era* (NY: Random House, 1990), 203. Also, John Dumbrell, "The United States and the Northern Irish Conflict 1969-94: From Indifference to Intervention" *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 6 (1995), 118.

⁹⁹ *Boston Globe*, June 30, 2000.

by refusing to negotiate regarding prison rules, Mrs. Thatcher is permitting the terrorists to undo significant political progress.”¹⁰⁰

Additionally, Irish-born Father Sean McManus, founder of the 1972 Irish National Caucus, tried to get New York Republican Congressman Hamilton Fish to use his friendship with Vice President George H.W. Bush to acquire “some influence” over Administration policy regarding Ireland. These stratagems did not work.¹⁰¹ “There is little to be gained by such a meeting,” National Security Advisor William Allen informed presidential aide Ed Meese.¹⁰² Nor would Reagan agree to meet with members of Congress concerned about the events in Northern Ireland.¹⁰³ Thatcher appreciated Reagan’s resolve. “It was good to know that, however powerful the Irish republican lobby in the USA might be,” she noted in her 1993 memoir *The Downing Street Years*, “the Reagan Administration would not buckle before it.”¹⁰⁴

Foreign sources also pressured Reagan to interject America into Northern Ireland issues. Upon becoming Prime Minister of Ireland in the summer of 1981, Garret Fitzgerald, the Leader of Fine-Gael/Labor Coalition, immediately wrote to Reagan imploring him to intervene with Thatcher.¹⁰⁵ Fitzgerald viewed Reagan as his only hope in persuading the so-called Iron Lady, inasmuch as “Margaret Thatcher valued her relationship with President Reagan,” and would probably respect whatever advice he

¹⁰⁰ *Boston Globe*, June 30, 2000.

¹⁰¹ Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict*, 191.

¹⁰² *Boston Globe*, June 30, 2000.

¹⁰³ *Boston Globe*, June 30, 2000.

¹⁰⁴ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1993), 166.

¹⁰⁵ Cronin, *Washington’s Irish Policy*, 320.

might give her.¹⁰⁶ But Reagan responded just as he had with similar entreaties from domestic sources; a White House official explained that the President was “sympathetic and concerned” but did not “feel that diplomatic intervention would be helpful.”¹⁰⁷ Moreover, “Reagan made it clear to Dublin and to the Friends of Ireland that he ‘did not wish to aid prisoners detained for terrorism.’”¹⁰⁸

It is of course possible that Reagan may have spoken privately to Thatcher about Irish issues despite his unwillingness to engage her publicly. According to historian Sean Cronin in *Washington’s Irish Policy*, Reagan discussed the prisoner controversy quietly with the Prime Minister during the Ottawa Economic Summit in July 1981.¹⁰⁹ However, exactly what transpired in this conversation is unknown, and in any case no discernable policy change on Thatcher’s part ensued.

Reagan knew his loyalty to Thatcher could threaten his popularity with Irish Americans. Not-so-coincidentally, Reagan and his wife Nancy departed for a three-day trip to Ireland in June 1984, just months before the November presidential election against Democrat and former Vice President Walter Mondale of Minnesota. This trip followed one by Vice President George H.W. Bush in 1983 during which the Vice President described Ireland as “a strong, staunch friend” of the United States.¹¹⁰ Reagan, upon landing at Shannon Airport on June 1, echoed his Vice President’s expression of American-Irish camaraderie: “. . . I’m returning not only to my own roots,” Reagan

¹⁰⁶ Garret Fitzgerald, *Just Garret: Tales from the Political Life* (Dublin: Liberties Press, 2011), Location 8224 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁰⁷ Cronin, *Washington’s Irish Policy*, 320.

¹⁰⁸ Dumbrell, “The United States and the Northern Irish Conflict,” 118.

¹⁰⁹ Cronin, *Washington’s Irish Policy*, 320.

¹¹⁰ *The Independent*, December 28, 2013.

stated, “I’m returning to America’s roots. So much of what America means and stands for we owe to you”¹¹¹ Reagan next visited Galway to commemorate the city’s 500th anniversary; then he journeyed to Ballyporeen, his ancestral home in County Tipperary where his great-grandfather Michael Reagan had resided before leaving for America during the middle of the nineteenth century.¹¹² In Ballyporeen, a priest showed Reagan his great-grandfather’s handwritten baptism record, as well as the church where the service took place.¹¹³ Upon viewing these ancestral artifacts, Reagan became surprisingly emotional. In his autobiography, *An American Life*, he wrote:

Although I’ve never been a great one for introspection or dwelling on the past, as I looked down the narrow main street of the little town from which an emigrant name Michael Reagan had set out in pursuit of a dream, I had a flood of thoughts, not only about Michael Reagan, but about his son, my grandfather whom I had never met . . . What an incredible country we lived in, where the great-grandson of a poor immigrant from Ballyporeen could become president.¹¹⁴

In his remarks to the people of Ballyporeen, the President did not hesitate to express the gratitude he felt. “I feel like I’m about to drown everyone in a bath of nostalgia,” the President stated. “Of all the honors and gifts that have been afforded me as President, this visit is the one that I will cherish dearly.”¹¹⁵

Just as President Kennedy had done some 20 years prior during his own trip to Ireland, Reagan concluded his visit with an address to a joint session of the Irish

¹¹¹ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks on Arrival at Shannon Airport in Shannon, Ireland,” June 1, 1984. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1984*, Book I (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1986), 788.

¹¹² Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at University College, Galway, Ireland,” June 2, 1984. *Public Papers of the Presidents*, 796. Also, Reagan, *An American Life*, 373.

¹¹³ Reagan, *An American Life*, 373.

¹¹⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, 374.

¹¹⁵ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks to the Citizens of Ballyporeen, Ireland,” June 3, 1984. *Public Papers of the Presidents*, 799.

Parliament in Dublin.¹¹⁶ Mimicking Kennedy's approach, Reagan lauded his Irish roots, but, as he was much older than Kennedy had been, the President also included a couple of quips about his advanced age--a frequent criticism levied by his political opponents back home. He said:

As I look around this chamber, I know I can't claim to be a better Irishman than anyone here, but I can perhaps claim to be an Irishman longer than most any of you here. There are those who just refuse to let me forget that. I also have some other credentials. I am the great-grandson of a Tipperary man; I'm the President of a country with the closest possible ties to Ireland¹¹⁷

Cognizant of how unpopular his administration's non-involvement in Northern Ireland continued to be among Irish people on both sides of the Atlantic, Reagan also explained his resolve to stay neutral:

The position of the United States in all of this is clear: We must not and will not interfere in Irish matters nor prescribe to you solutions or formulas. But I want you to know that we pledge to you our good will and support, and we're with you as you work toward peace.¹¹⁸

Reagan astutely ended his remarks with a reference to John F. Kennedy, a man the Irish still loved and mourned. "But surely in our hearts," Reagan stated, "there is the memory of a young leader who spoke stirring words about a brighter age for mankind, about a new generation that would hold high the torch of liberty and truly light the world."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ *New York Times*, June 1, 1984.

¹¹⁷ Ronald Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Irish National Parliament," June 4, 1984. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 805.

¹¹⁸ Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Irish National Parliament," June 4, 1984. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 806.

¹¹⁹ Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Irish National Parliament," June 4, 1984. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 811.

Reagan called upon the Irish to carry that torch and to continue to stand in solidarity with America in the cause of freedom.

Reagan's trip to Ireland undoubtedly was a political one; nevertheless he appeared to genuinely enjoy his visit on a personal level. In his own words, he had "felt a tug in his heart when he saw the Emerald Isle from Air Force One," and upon his and his wife's departure, he lamented that he "wished the world would just slow down so we could have more time with all of you."¹²⁰ Notably, Reagan's sentimental response to Ireland came despite the various protests he encountered throughout his trip. In addition to the Northern Ireland issues, many Irish citizens and politicians opposed America's aggressive foreign policy activities in Latin America and elsewhere, as well as its "too bellicose" attitude toward the Soviet Union.¹²¹

Reagan won reelection in 1984, defeating Mondale by a landslide; the Electoral College count was 525-13.¹²² During his second term, Reagan became considerably more active on the Northern Ireland issue. Reagan's positive summer trip to Ireland possibly had strengthened his resolve to end violence in Northern Ireland. Regardless of what motivated him, Reagan and Speaker O'Neill jointly "played roles they could take pride in," in furtherance of "the beginning of the end to the Troubles."¹²³

¹²⁰ Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on the Trip to Europe," (June 2, 1984), The American Presidency Project at <http://www.presidency.ucsba.edu/ws/index.php?pid=40008>. Also, *New York Times*, June 1, 1984. Ronald Reagan, "Remarks on Departure from Dublin, Ireland," June 4, 1984. *Public Papers of the Presidents*, 814.

¹²¹ *New York Times*, June 1, 1984.

¹²² Chris Matthews, *Tip and the Gipper: When Politics Worked* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 304.

¹²³ Matthews, *Tip and the Gipper*, 335.

In his second term, the President worked with such groups as the New Irish Forum—an all-Irish group. The leaders of three Irish political parties--Fine Gael (Fitzgerald's Party), Labour, and Fianna Fail—and that of Northern Ireland's Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) had formed the Forum in April 1983, so as to plan how “lasting peace and stability could be achieved in a new Ireland through the democratic process and to report on possible new processes through which this objective might be achieved.”¹²⁴ In May 1984 the Irish Forum developed some possible solutions for settling the conflict. These ideas included a unified Ireland as the preferred settlement, but also created alternatives such as a federal/confederal state that maintained the “existing identities” of the North and South, and “joint authority” (joint sovereignty) in the North. In all these proposed solutions, the Irish government would exercise a role in the future of Northern Ireland.¹²⁵

Prime Minister Thatcher did not favorably receive the Forum's advice.¹²⁶ At a November 19, 1984, press conference following a meeting with Fitzgerald she summarily rejected the Forum's proposed solutions one by one with the comment “that's out.”¹²⁷ Indeed, Thatcher repeated the phrase “that's out” so many times that journalists and politicians referred to her remarks at the press conference as the “Out...Out...Out” speech.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Cronin, *Washington's Irish Policy*, 321-322.

¹²⁵ Cronin, *Washington's Irish Policy*, 322

¹²⁶ Dumbrell, “The United States and the Northern Ireland Conflict,” 118.

¹²⁷ Margaret Thatcher, “Press Conference Following Anglo-Irish Summit,” (Downing Street, Westminster, November 19, 1984). Accessed at <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105790>.

¹²⁸ Fitzgerald, *Just Garret*, Location 8201 (Kindle Edition).

Thatcher's hardline stance generated harsh criticism. "The usually Anglophile *New York Times* and *Washington Post* joined with the Friends of Ireland in Congress in attacking her."¹²⁹ O'Neill, Moynihan, and Kennedy collaborated together in a letter to President Reagan claiming that "the destructive alienation and violence that plague the people of that land [Northern Ireland] are also unfortunately becoming an increasing source of contention between the United States and Great Britain."¹³⁰ They warned that if Thatcher did not soften her position toward the Irish Forum, she risked compromising her country's ties with America. Significantly, Reagan, acting through his Secretary of the Interior and former national security advisor, William Clark, supported the Forum. After Thatcher's remarks, Clark publicly applauded "the Irish statesmen for their courageous and forthright efforts recently embodied in the report of the New Ireland Forum."¹³¹

Reagan went still further. During the Christmas season of 1984, he invited Thatcher to join him at Camp David. In preparation for the meeting, Fitzgerald had asked Reagan to "find an opportunity to express his concern about the Anglo-Irish situation."¹³² To Fitzgerald's surprise, Reagan did so.¹³³ While historians do not know exactly what Reagan said to Thatcher during their holiday discussions, most believe that he pressed Thatcher to work with the Irish government in order to settle affairs in Northern Ireland. "Certainly, something was said at Camp David," the historian Sean Cronin writes, "or Mrs. Thatcher read the signs right."¹³⁴ Cronin continues, "When she

¹²⁹ Cronin, *Washington's Irish Policy*, 322.

¹³⁰ *Irish Times*, December 22, 1984.

¹³¹ *Irish Times*, December 24, 1984.

¹³² Fitzgerald, *Just Garret*, Location 8224 (Kindle Edition).

¹³³ Fitzgerald, *Just Garret*, Location 8224 (Kindle Edition).

¹³⁴ Cronin, *Washington's Irish Policy*, 322.

talked to the press she stated emphatically that the impression ‘that there are problems between the Taoiseach and myself—that is not so.’”¹³⁵

Knowing now that her ally Reagan wanted a settlement in Northern Ireland, Thatcher expressed willingness to work with the Irish government to resolve the protracted crisis. In February 1985, Thatcher returned to Washington and addressed a joint session of Congress. In addition to giving a ringing endorsement of Reagan’s Cold War policies, she spoke in far more conciliatory tones about the Irish government than she had done in months past. Now, she portrayed herself and Garret Fitzgerald as like-minded anti-terrorist warriors joined in the same cause for peace. “Garret Fitzgerald and our respective Governments,” she stated, “are united in condemning terrorism.” She continued, “Garret Fitzgerald and I will continue to consult together in the quest for stability and peace in Northern Ireland. We hope we will have your continued support for our joint efforts to find a way forward.”¹³⁶ As Cronin no doubt correctly observes, “One assumes that Ronald Reagan and the political climate in America had something to do with that” softening of Thatcher’s stance on Northern Ireland.¹³⁷

The greatest achievement of Reagan’s Administration concerning Northern Ireland was the much-debated Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. Consisting of 13 articles, the Agreement recognized Dublin’s right to help determine, with Britain, the future of Northern Ireland’s political, security, and legal affairs.¹³⁸ According to Fitzgerald, Thatcher reluctantly signed the Agreement, bowing to the wishes of Reagan and to

¹³⁵ Cronin, *Washington’s Irish Policy*, 322. Also, *Irish Times*, December 24, 1984.

¹³⁶ *New York Times*, February 21, 1985.

¹³⁷ Cronin, *Washington’s Irish Policy*, 323.

¹³⁸ Dumbrell, “The United States and the Northern Ireland Conflict,” 118.

American pressure in general.¹³⁹ Fitzgerald notes in his memoir, *Just Garret: Tales from the Political Frontline*, that Reagan and Thatcher's Christmas 1984 meeting along with their February 1985 discussions "had a profound effect on Margaret Thatcher and the British Government," to the point that they agreed to meet at the negotiation table with Irish representatives.¹⁴⁰ Thatcher and Fitzgerald signed the agreement on November 15, 1985, and thereby recognized their respective countries' joint interest in Northern Ireland affairs.¹⁴¹

In response, Reagan and O'Neill appeared at a joint press conference to promise substantial aid to the Northern Ireland peace effort; later that year Congress approved an aid package of \$50 million for fiscal year of 1986 and \$35 million in 1987.¹⁴² In speaking of the agreement during a visit to Washington on March 17, 1986, Fitzgerald offered heartfelt appreciation to Reagan for the work he had done in forging the Anglo-Irish Agreement. "Our gratitude goes out to the President, to the Congress, and the people of the United States," Garret proclaimed, "for the support they have given to us in what we're trying to do with the British Government in this respect."¹⁴³

No one ever will call Reagan an Irish-American warrior for Northern Irish Peace. Given his strong relationship with Thatcher, he could have wielded far more influence far more quickly than he did to end the Troubles. Nevertheless, behind closed doors he used

¹³⁹ Fitzgerald, *Just Garret*, Location 8224 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁴⁰ Fitzgerald, *Just Garret*, Location 8224 (Kindle Edition). Also Dumbrell, "The United States and the Northern Irish Conflict," 119.

¹⁴¹ Matthews, *Tip and the Gipper*, 334.

¹⁴² Dumbrell, "The United States and the Northern Irish Conflict," 120.

¹⁴³ Garret Fitzgerald, "Remarks Following Discussions with Prime Minister Garret Fitzgerald of Ireland," (Washington, D.C., March 17, 1986). Accessed at <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/86mar.htm>. Accessed at 11/20/14.

his formidable presidential power and leveraged his friendship with Thatcher to guide Britain, Ireland, and Northern Ireland on a path toward reconciliation. All things considered, that was no small achievement.

The George H.W. Bush Years:

Reagan's Vice President George H.W. Bush won the 1988 presidential election over Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts with the help of many Irish-American voters who approved of his hardline on Communism and family values.¹⁴⁴ During Bush's term in office, the Soviet Union disintegrated, Communist regimes collapsed in Eastern Europe, and Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait, whereupon he assembled an international coalition led by the U.S. military that drove the Iraqis out of that tiny country. With so much geopolitical upheaval occurring on his watch, President Bush had little time or interest in Ireland or Northern Ireland. Indeed as president, Bush probably paid less attention to Irish matters than he had as vice president.¹⁴⁵ Affairs in Northern Ireland posed no threat to U.S. security, and so Bush felt comfortably returning to a policy of non-involvement in that crisis, while retaining the "special relationship" America had fostered with Britain for most of the century.¹⁴⁶

All this said, it is possible that President Bush indirectly affected Northern Ireland by staying the course in the fight against world communism, and ultimately prevailing over the often-violent purveyors of that ideology. As historian William Hazleton observes, the fall of the Soviet Union affected more than just Russia, the other former

¹⁴⁴ Conor O'Clery, *Daring Diplomacy: Clinton's Secret Search for Peace in Ireland* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1997), 25.

¹⁴⁵ See Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict*.

¹⁴⁶ Joseph Thompson, *American Policy and Northern Ireland* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 145.

Soviet republics, and Eastern Europe; it may have also curbed violence in Northern Ireland. Hazleton explains:

The collapse of communism also affected Sinn Féin [the leading nationalist political party in Ireland and Northern Ireland] and the IRA. As radical revolutionary groups staged a retreat or entered the political process in other parts of the world, the Irish Republican movement was forced to re-evaluate the ideological underpinnings of its armed strategy and contemplate a political alternative.¹⁴⁷

Bush's unyielding and successful response to the Soviet Union, and for that matter his reaction to the Iraqi challenge of the status quo in the Middle East, cannot have been welcome news to other violent challengers to the existing global order, such as the IRA revolutionaries at war with Britain. This new state-of-affairs, arguably created by President Bush, may have had the effect of creating a climate in Northern Ireland more conducive to a settlement. Of course, many would argue that leading nationalist politicians in Northern Ireland were looking for a peace deal irrespective of Bush's foreign policy in Europe and the Middle East, and as such were pining for an American president who, unlike Bush, would actively assist in the process. If so, they would soon have their wish granted.

The Breakthrough Bill Clinton Years:

Bill Clinton's interest in Northern Ireland began decades before he became president in January 1993. "I had been interested in the Irish issue, since 'the Troubles' began in 1968, when I was at Oxford."¹⁴⁸ His daughter Chelsea notes in her Stanford University senior thesis on the Irish peace process that her father "first got involved in the

¹⁴⁷ William Hazleton, "Encouragement from the Sidelines: Clinton's Role in the Good Friday Agreement" *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 11 (2000), 107.

¹⁴⁸ Clinton, *My Life*, 401.

Irish issue because of the politics of New York, but it became one of the great passions of [his] presidency.”¹⁴⁹ Her comment about New York politics, in which Irish Americans have long been prominent, underscores anew how potent that vote remains to ambitious politicians like Clinton. But, as his daughter recognized, Clinton’s concern about Ireland/Northern Ireland went deeper than politics. Indeed, more than any other American president, Bill Clinton fundamentally transformed Irish political affairs.

Clinton expressed interest in Northern Ireland even during his 1992 presidential campaign. Shortly before the Democratic primary in New York, John Dearie, a prominent Irish-American New York politician, organized a forum for Irish Issues in Manhattan’s Sheraton Hotel for candidates Jerry Brown, a former governor of California, and Clinton.¹⁵⁰ Asked by a panelist whether he would appoint a peace envoy to Northern Ireland if elected, Clinton replied that he would do so. Clinton also stated that he “would support a visa for Gerry Adams,” and that he favored what came to be called the MacBride Principles.¹⁵¹ Named after Amnesty International founder Sean MacBride, these Principles established equal opportunity employment guidelines for American corporations operating in Northern Ireland.¹⁵² The leader of the Northern Irish nationalist SDLP, John Hume, opposed the MacBride Principles and the new Taoiseach of Ireland Albert Reynolds only gave them “lukewarm support,” inasmuch as both leaders believed the Principles would serve as a “disincentive to investment” in the eyes of American

¹⁴⁹ Clinton, *My Life*, 401.

¹⁵⁰ Gerry Adams, *A Farther Shore: Irelands Long Road to Peace* (NY: Random House, 2003), Location 3078 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁵¹ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3078 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁵² Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3071 (Kindle Edition). Also, O’Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 16.

businessmen.¹⁵³ The last thing Hume and Reynolds wanted to do was give American corporations any reason not to operate in Northern Ireland.

As for Adams, he was the long-time leader of Sinn Féin, the political arm of the IRA.¹⁵⁴ Since the 1970s, the U.S. government had barred Adams from entering America because of his association with the terrorist group.¹⁵⁵ Clinton, however, believed that the visa “would be totally harmless to our national security interests and it might be enlightening to the political debate in this country about the issues involved.”¹⁵⁶ Clearly, Clinton did not fear going against the political grain if doing so might help bring peace to Northern Ireland.

Beyond those statesmanlike considerations, the astute politician Clinton sensed the potential political gain he might reap from this issue. He looked to capitalize on the positive reception he hoped that his bold comments and pledges would get in the Irish-American community, now some 44 million strong.¹⁵⁷ Clinton wanted their attention and their votes, and he calculated that a risk-taking, even revolutionary policy stance on Northern Ireland might achieve those ends.¹⁵⁸ Consequently Chris Hyland, Clinton’s deputy national political director, approached the owner of the New York-based *Irish Voice* newspaper and *Irish America* magazine, Niall O’Dowd, who conveniently “had been looking around for ways to get the Democratic candidate interested in the peace process which was developing in Northern Ireland.”¹⁵⁹ Hyland asked him to create a

¹⁵³ O’Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 16.

¹⁵⁴ O’Cleary, *Daring Diplomacy*, 16.

¹⁵⁵ O’Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 16.

¹⁵⁶ O’Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 16.

¹⁵⁷ Niall O’Dowd, *An Irish Voice* (Dublin: The O’Brien Press, 2010), Location 2201 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁵⁸ *The New York Beacon*, December 13, 1995.

¹⁵⁹ O’Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 26.

committee to organize support for Clinton among Irish Americans.¹⁶⁰ O'Dowd happily obliged, and he appointed former Congressman Bruce Morrison, a Connecticut lawyer wildly popular with Irish Americans, as the first chairperson of the new Irish Americans for Clinton group.¹⁶¹

A month before the 1992 general election, Clinton's aide Nancy Soderberg drafted a letter to Morrison that outlined Clinton's position on Ireland.¹⁶² In the letter, Clinton promised that if elected he would actively involve the United States in the settlement of the Irish Troubles, and he would "work with the leaders in those nations to achieve a just and lasting settlement of the conflict."¹⁶³ Expressing a willingness to partially set aside America's "special relationship" with Britain, Clinton added, "We also believe that the British government should establish more effective safeguards against the wanton use of lethal force and against further collusion between the security forces and Protestant paramilitary groups."¹⁶⁴ As Gerry Adams states in his memoir, *A Farther Shore*, Clinton's "letter was viewed as a major breakthrough."¹⁶⁵ Clearly, candidate Clinton had made an effective appeal to Irish nationalists and to Irish Americans--both groups having grown sick of the seemingly endless cycle of violence and lack of progress in Northern Ireland.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3081 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁶¹ O'Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 26.

¹⁶² Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3081 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁶³ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3081 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁶⁴ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3091 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁶⁵ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3091 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁶⁶ George Mitchell, *Making Peace: The Behind-the-Scenes story of the negotiations that Culminated in the signing of the Northern Ireland Peace Accord told by the American Senator who served as independent Chairman of the Talks* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 14.

Understandably, nationalists like Adams supported Clinton in the 1992 election.¹⁶⁷ Equally unsurprisingly, Conservative British Prime Minister John Major wanted Bush to win reelection, and Major went so far as to make public Clinton's passport files from his 1968-1970 days as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, which included a trip he had made to Moscow.¹⁶⁸ Major also attempted to unearth records of Clinton's activities in England during the anti-Vietnam War protests there.¹⁶⁹ Major's goal, of course, was to foment suspicion among American voters about Clinton's patriotism, thereby aiding Bush in the upcoming contest. Major wanted to keep matters as they stood as much as possible. But his ploy did not work: on November 3, Clinton defeated Bush 370-168 in the Electoral College.¹⁷⁰ Clinton clearly had effectively made use of Irish issues in his campaign, and likely won added Irish-American votes, particularly in New York, to his base of support. Now that he had won, both Irish Americans and Gerry Adams expected that President Clinton would act on his lofty promises regarding Ireland.

To encourage him to do so, the group Irish Americans for Clinton reformed itself into Americans for a New Irish Agenda.¹⁷¹ This organization included Niall O'Dowd, who continued in a leadership role, as well as Bruce Morrison, U.S. Representative Charles Feeney, businessman William Flynn, and other prominent Irish Americans.¹⁷² To the group's delight, on Saint Patrick's Day 1993, President Clinton appointed Senator Ted Kennedy's sister, Jean Kennedy Smith, as the U.S. Ambassador to Ireland.¹⁷³ Irish

¹⁶⁷ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3090 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁶⁸ Clinton, *My Life*, 433.

¹⁶⁹ Hillary Clinton, *Living History* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 320.

¹⁷⁰ Clinton, *My Life*, 444.

¹⁷¹ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3091 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁷² Tim Pat Coogan, *The Troubles* (NY: Palgrave, 2002), 416. Also, O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 3117 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁷³ Clinton, *My Life*, 578.

and Irish Americans regarded her, and indeed the entire Kennedy family, as committed advocates of peace and social justice in Northern Ireland.¹⁷⁴ Amidst their joy over the Smith appointment, however, came disappointing news from Reynolds who was at the White House for the Irish holiday.¹⁷⁵ Reynolds informed Clinton that he not only remained hesitant about the MacBride principles, but he also agreed with John Major's rejection of a peace envoy to Northern Ireland.¹⁷⁶ To be sure, Reynolds had a legitimate reason for rejecting the envoy. He and John Major had been secretly collaborating on a plan for the future of Northern Ireland--this plan in less than a year would become the Downing Street Declaration.¹⁷⁷ Considering the circumstances, it was bad timing for America to send a peace envoy to Northern Ireland. Reynolds told Clinton at least that much: "[T]he last thing you want or I want is failure . . .," Reynolds explained to the President. "If you do it now [send an envoy]," Reynolds warned, "nobody will talk to this guy."¹⁷⁸ Reynolds asked the President to put the peace envoy idea "on the shelf" at the present time, and Clinton, sensing that Reynolds was committed to the Northern Ireland peace process, obliged, backing away from both the envoy and the MacBride Principles. Still, one more campaign promise remained on the table: granting a visa to Gerry Adams.

Americans for a New Irish Agenda maintained pressure on Clinton to honor his pledge regarding Adams.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, early in 1993 O'Dowd had met with Ted Howell, director of Sinn Féin's overseas department, to tell Howell his plan to get members of the

¹⁷⁴ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3101.

¹⁷⁵ O'Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 46

¹⁷⁶ O'Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 46-47.

¹⁷⁷ O'Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 46.

¹⁷⁸ O'Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 47.

¹⁷⁹ Gerry Adams, "Irish America and the Struggle for Freedom in Ireland" (Quinnipiac University, Quinnipiac, CT, September 25, 2012).

Americans for a New Irish Agenda to come to Belfast to meet with Adams and his Sinn Féin colleagues.¹⁸⁰ Afterwards, that group would report to the White House and, if all went well, hopefully secure a visa for Adams.¹⁸¹ A delegation for the New Irish Agenda arranged to travel to Ireland and Northern Ireland in May 1993, but the trip got postponed when one member of the delegation, former Boston mayor Ray Flynn, backed out of the trip.¹⁸² After some reconfiguration, the group--now made up of O'Dowd, Morrison, Feeney, and Bill Flynn--finally travelled to Ireland on September 6 and to Belfast on September 7, 1993.¹⁸³

In preparation for this meeting, the IRA had called an informal ceasefire beginning September 4 and ending September 11—covering a little more than the length of the delegation's trip.¹⁸⁴ Once in Belfast, the group conferred with Adams and various Sinn Féin leaders; subsequently O'Dowd, Morrison, Feeney, and Flynn became known as the Connolly House Group, a reference to Sinn Féin's West Belfast offices where this historic meeting took place.¹⁸⁵ The Connolly House Group developed a plan for finally getting Adams to the United States. Bill Flynn served as chairman of a non-profit organization, the National Committee on Foreign Policy, and he was going to ask that group to host a forum in New York City about the Irish peace process, to which all party

¹⁸⁰ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3103 (Kindle Edition). Also, O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 2687 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁸¹ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3111 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁸² O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 3008 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁸³ O'Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 64. Also, O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Locations 3117, 3148 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁸⁴ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 3127, 3188 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁸⁵ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 2984 (Kindle Edition).

leaders from the six counties would be invited, including Adams.¹⁸⁶ Flynn succeeded in his plan, and the conference date was set for February 1.¹⁸⁷

The Clinton Administration was no passive bystander throughout this process. Indeed, when O'Dowd contacted the White House to tell Clinton officials what was going on, he learned that the Clinton team already knew about the temporary IRA ceasefire and the meeting between the Connolly House Group and the Sinn Féin leaders.¹⁸⁸ That is because Clinton Administration officials surreptitiously had oversaw the Adam's visa process; they maintained secrecy about their involvement so that if "anything went wrong they had total deniability"¹⁸⁹ As O'Dowd later put it, "We knew the White House was a looming but invisible presence, somewhere out there in the ether."¹⁹⁰

The importance of working with the Clinton Administration certainly did not escape either Sinn Féin or the IRA. Their temporary ceasefire was "aimed solely at the White House to let them know that the Republican movement was serious about making a major outreach."¹⁹¹ In a 2015 interview, Adams explained why engaging with the White House was so important to Sinn Féin in the 1990s:

The Sinn Féin peace strategy recognised the need for an international dimension as an additional point of leverage in any negotiation with the British government. Most successful peace processes had such an element. It seemed logical that given the long association between Ireland and the USA, the strength of Irish America, and the existence of Irish Americans willing and anxious to help, that

¹⁸⁶ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3140 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁸⁷ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3149 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁸⁸ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 3137 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁸⁹ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 3137 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁹⁰ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 3137 (Kindle Edition).

¹⁹¹ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 3137 (Kindle Edition).

our best hope of beginning the process of building an international dimension lay in the USA.¹⁹²

Clearly, Adams saw Clinton's Presidency as a long-awaited catalyst to finally move the peace process forward in Northern Ireland.

Soon after the delegation's visit to Belfast, the visa issue came to a head when Irish Taoiseach Reynolds and British Prime Minister Major issued the Downing Street Declaration on December 15, 1993.¹⁹³ With this Declaration, the British government at last recognized the right of self-determination by the Northern Irish people. The Declaration also pledged that Great Britain would relinquish its claim on the six counties of Northern Ireland if the people of those counties voted for independence.¹⁹⁴ The Declaration stated:

[I]t is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish.¹⁹⁵

While the Downing Street Declaration had taken a ground-breaking step in the right direction, it nonetheless failed to provide details for initiating a peace process for Northern Ireland, nor did it include "how Sinn Féin would be able to participate in" any such process--an omission that naturally angered Adams and other Sinn Féin leaders.¹⁹⁶ Thus, the Downing Street Declaration raised hopes while also leaving important matters unsettled.

¹⁹² Gerry Adams, email interview, March 20, 2015.

¹⁹³ Clinton, *My Life*, 578.

¹⁹⁴ Mitchell, *Making Peace*, 17-18.

¹⁹⁵ Mitchell, *Making Peace*, 18.

¹⁹⁶ Clinton, *My Life*, 578. Also, Albert Reynolds, *My Autobiography* (London: Transworld Ireland, 2009), 317.

However, this vacuum might be filled, many concluded, by Clinton's finally granting Adams a visa to the United States. Apparently fearful of potential negative fallout from taking such a step, Clinton twice shied away from doing so.¹⁹⁷ Of course this "offended Irish Americans who thought the new president was ready to undo American uninvolvedness in Northern Ireland."¹⁹⁸ Now, more than ever, the Connolly House Group worked hard to have their plan for Adams to enter the United States come to fruition.

O'Dowd and his colleagues succeeded. The Clinton Administration issued Adams a two-day visa on January 30, 1994, so that he could attend the National Committee on Foreign Policy forum in New York City.¹⁹⁹ Adams could not travel more than 25 miles outside of New York, and he was prohibited from doing any fundraising while in the United States.²⁰⁰ Clinton's National Security Advisor Tony Lake and Nancy Soderberg, now a member the National Security Council, both supported the visa decision.²⁰¹ So did 40 members of Congress, including the Four Horsemen Ted Kennedy and Daniel Moynihan, the latter of whom, through the help of the Connolly House Group, had called the President to urge that he grant the visa.²⁰² John Hume of the SDLP historically had disagreed with Sinn Féin because of its connections with the IRA; nevertheless, he also supported the visa issuance inasmuch as he secretly had been collaborating with Adams since the late 1980s about the possibility of peace.²⁰³

¹⁹⁷ *Irish Voice*, January 11, 1994.

¹⁹⁸ *The Independent*, January 31, 1994.

¹⁹⁹ *The Independent*, January 30, 1994.

²⁰⁰ *The Independent*, January 30, 1994.

²⁰¹ Clinton, *My Life*, 580.

²⁰² *The Independent*, January 31, 1994.

²⁰³ Mitchell, *Making Peace*, p. 17.

Taoiseach Reynolds who by this time “had developed a unique relationship of trust with Clinton,” also backed the visa initiative.²⁰⁴ Indeed, while Clinton had been pondering this big decision, Reynolds had telephoned the President directly, imploring him to grant Adams a visa. “If Adams was allowed into America,” the Taoiseach said, “it would prove that he and Sinn Féin were being accepted politically and internationally on a completely new level and it would make everyone realize that the years of violence could be over.”²⁰⁵

Not everyone reacted positively to the visa initiative, however. Secretary of State Warren Christopher pleaded with Clinton not to issue the visa unless the IRA renounced violence.²⁰⁶ Abroad, British Prime Minister Major was also furious, and an outraged British press printed numerous columns blaming Clinton for having “damage[d] the special relationship between [the] two countries.”²⁰⁷ Unsurprisingly, Unionists in Northern Ireland echoed Major’s anger, and the Unionist leaders refused to attend the National Committee on Foreign Policy forum in New York.²⁰⁸ As Adams would later explain, “The British and Unionist parties believed that it was possible to defeat Irish republicanism . . . Engaging with Sinn Féin [which Clinton’s issuance of a visa to Adams symbolically advocated] was viewed as running counter to this strategy.”²⁰⁹

Regardless of the opposition it aroused, granting the 1994 visa to Adams probably stands as Clinton’s greatest contribution to the Irish Peace Process. The visa unlocked a

²⁰⁴ O’Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 191. Also, Clinton, *My Life*, 580.

²⁰⁵ Reynolds, *My Autobiography*, 334.

²⁰⁶ O’Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 3277 (Kindle Edition).

²⁰⁷ Clinton, *My Life*, 580.

²⁰⁸ Adams, “Irish America and the Struggle for Freedom in Ireland.”

²⁰⁹ Adams, email interview, March 20, 2015.

new passageway to peace in Northern Ireland, and as O'Dowd observed, "the key was President Clinton."²¹⁰ In his autobiography *My Life*, Clinton takes credit for the initiative. "My first visa to Adams," he observes, "and the subsequent intense engagement of the White House made a difference"²¹¹ Clinton denied claims that he had granted the visa "to appeal to the Irish vote in America" or to get even with John Major "for his attempts to help President Bush during the campaign."²¹² Clinton granted the visa, he said, because "I thought it was the best shot we had to bring the violence to an end."²¹³

For his part, Adams agreed that Clinton's visa decision "was a demonstration of the American Administration's commitment to help and to take its own stance on the [Northern Ireland] issue."²¹⁴ It redirected the course of the peace process and rallied many Irish Americans behind Adams and Sinn Féin. Of his visit to New York City Adams later wrote:

An unprecedented amount of people heard the Sinn Féin message. The door into the United States had been opened. Irish-American opinion was invigorated and informed. That potentially powerful community had a real sense of what was possible and there were new participants—particularly within corporate America—who were prepared to play a new role.²¹⁵

Adams felt genuinely "uplifted by the huge response of people" to him and to what he "and Sinn Féin were trying to do" as a result of his two-day trip to America.²¹⁶ Between the National Committee on Foreign Policy forum he attended at the Waldorf-Astoria, an

²¹⁰ O'Dowd, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3247.

²¹¹ Clinton, *My Life*, 784.

²¹² Clinton, *My Life*, 581.

²¹³ Clinton, *My Life*, 581.

²¹⁴ Adams, email interview, March 20, 2015.

²¹⁵ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3198 (Kindle Edition).

²¹⁶ Adams, email interview, March 20, 2015.

Irish American event sponsored by the Connolly House Group at the Sheraton Hotel in New York, and the multiple interviews he did with American news reporters, Adams managed to put Sinn Féin before the American people in a positive light, and thus undo many of the misconceptions the public had about this nationalist group and its operations.²¹⁷ Adams largely succeeded in his public-relations offensive, the result being that if the Irish, Northern Irish, and British really did seriously seek peace, they now knew they would have to acknowledge and work with Sinn Féin.

On August 31, 1994, some seven months after the granting of the Adams visa, the IRA announced a ceasefire.²¹⁸ In an explanatory statement, the IRA declared:

Recognising the potential of the current situation and in order to enhance the democratic peace process and underline our definitive commitment to its success . . . there will be a complete cessation of military operations. Our struggle has seen many gains and advances made by nationalists and for the democratic position. We believe that an opportunity to create a just and lasting settlement has been created.²¹⁹

Following the IRA's lead, on October 7, 1994, various Protestant paramilitary organizations that wanted to remain a part of Great Britain, unified as the Combined Loyalist Military Command, also called a ceasefire.²²⁰ Moreover, under pressure from the United States and the Republic of Ireland, the British government lifted the censorship and traveling restrictions it long ago had placed on Adams and other Sinn Féin leaders, including the organization's chief negotiator, Martin McGuinness.²²¹

²¹⁷ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3188 (Kindle Edition).

²¹⁸ Clinton, *My Life*, 581. Also, Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3584.

²¹⁹ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3587 (Kindle Edition).

²²⁰ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3804 (Kindle Edition).

²²¹ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3810 (Kindle Edition).

To be sure, the road from visa to a peace agreement remained rocky. The British government continued to play hardball with Sinn Féin even after the ceasefire. As 1995 began, British authorities refused to include Sinn Féin in peace negotiations unless the IRA pledged to decommission itself of all of its weapons.²²² According to Adams, such a tactic served as a manipulative way to stall the peace process and “portray Sinn Féin as being the unreasonable and inflexible party.”²²³

In the meantime, the White House was moving in the opposite direction. Clinton appointed former Senate Democratic Majority Leader George Mitchell as an American envoy to Northern Ireland to pave the way for future peace talks.²²⁴ (Aware that the British were “sensitive” to the word “envoy,” the Clinton Administration identified Mitchell as “special advisor to the President on economic affairs in Northern Ireland.”)²²⁵ Moreover, Clinton lifted the ban on direct U.S.-Sinn Féin contacts that had been in force for decades.²²⁶ This new openness led to a phone conversation between Vice President Al Gore and Adams, then finally to the long-awaited meeting of Clinton and the Sinn Féin leader.

On March 17, 1995, much to the chagrin of John Major and the British government, President Clinton invited Adams to the White House for a Saint Patrick’s Day dinner with various White House officials and Congressmen.²²⁷ When the two men finally met, many of the seventy-six St. Patrick’s Day White House dinner guests

²²² Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3915 (Kindle Edition).

²²³ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3905 (Kindle Edition).

²²⁴ Mitchell, *Making Peace*, 10.

²²⁵ Reynolds, *An Autobiography*, 434.

²²⁶ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3753 (Kindle Edition).

²²⁷ O’Cleary, *Daring Diplomacy*, 180.

applauded.²²⁸ During their conversation, Adams became highly “impressed by his [Clinton’s] commitment” and by his “grasp of the detail, the personalities, the politics and the strategies involved.”²²⁹ That meeting, followed by subsequent conversations with the President, convinced Adams that Clinton was fully committed to seeing peace come to Northern Ireland. This was important, because if Clinton had been any less enthusiastic upon meeting Adams, the Sinn Féin leader may have been less willing to cooperate with Washington in the peace settlements.

Equally as historic as Adam’s visit to the White House was Clinton’s visit to Northern Ireland on November 30, 1995. He thus became the first American president to visit the six Ulster counties.²³⁰ Clinton later would refer to this two-day trip as “the best days of my presidency.”²³¹ It was a positive event for Northern Ireland as well, inasmuch as Clinton’s visit had a direct and beneficial effect on the ongoing peace process. Not all coincidentally, just before Air Force One touched down in Northern Ireland, the British and Irish prime ministers agreed to the creation of an international body, with George Mitchell as chairperson, that would “provide an independent assessment of the decommissioning issue;” the group’s work would begin at the end of February 1996.²³²

While in Northern Ireland, Clinton and his wife Hillary met with Adams, John Humes, and other nationalist leaders.²³³ When he appeared before crowds, the President denounced violence, declaring at one point, “The time has come for the peacemakers to

²²⁸ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3967 (Kindle Edition).

²²⁹ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3967 (Kindle Edition).

²³⁰ *New York Beacon*, December 13, 1995.

²³¹ Clinton, *My Life*, 686.

²³² O’Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 235. Also, Reynolds, *My Autobiography*, 433.

²³³ Clinton, *My Life*, 688.

triumph in Northern Ireland, and the United States will support them as they do.”²³⁴ Moreover, Clinton encouraged all parties involved to expedite the peace process by cooperating with each other more readily than they had in the past. “[E]ngaging in honest dialogue,” the President declared, “is not an act of surrender, it is an act of strength and common sense.”²³⁵ Later Clinton traveled to the Republic of Ireland and met with Irish President Mary Robinson and the new Taoiseach, John Bruton. Reynolds had resigned because of a controversy involving his government and a Catholic priest who was serving a prison sentence for abusing children.²³⁶ The loss of Reynolds potentially represented a major blow to the peace process, because he had led, in Adams’ opinion, “the strongest government in more than twenty-five years. That stability and leadership had been crucial to persuading the IRA that the peace process . . . was a viable alternative to the armed struggle.”²³⁷ Still, the change in Irish leadership in no way weakened Clinton’s resolve. He remained adamant about the need for peace, and so impressed the Irish with his commitment that even the pro-unionist *Irish Times* commended him:

If Mr. Clinton’s visit to Belfast, and then to Derry and Dublin, can be compared to any previous visit by a U.S. president, it is Jack Kennedy’s 32 years ago. Then, too, a young dynamic leader came at a defining moment, and left his mark on a society and system of politics that were starting to shake off the rigidities of the past.²³⁸

Notwithstanding Clinton’s wholehearted support for a meaningful agreement, another impediment to the peace process beyond Reynolds’ resignation arose in February

²³⁴ Clinton, *My Life*, 687.

²³⁵ *Los Angeles Daily News*, December 1, 1995.

²³⁶ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3823 (Kindle Edition).

²³⁷ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 3823 (Kindle Edition).

²³⁸ *Irish Times*, November 30, 1995.

1996 when the IRA declared an end to its ceasefire.²³⁹ Adams explained that the IRA's resumption of violence came as a direct reaction to Britain's perpetual unwillingness to fully work with Sinn Féin without an IRA arms decommissioning.²⁴⁰ O'Dowd, in his book *An Irish Voice*, refers to this ceasefire collapse "as one of the worst days of my life," particularly inasmuch it had been announced, quite literally, with a bang--an IRA bomb in Canary Wharf in London killed two people and caused extensive property damage.²⁴¹ The violence would continue for more than a year, not ending until July 19, 1997.²⁴² Throughout that time, the Clinton Administration remained in contact with both Adams, so as to constantly urge him to work toward peace, and with British Prime Minister Major, to encourage him to show maximum flexibility during these difficult times.²⁴³

The restoration of the ceasefire in July 1997 came about through successful lobbying by the Clinton Administration and by the work of Adams and Sinn Féin negotiator McGuinness to reengage the political parties in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Britain in support of the peace process.²⁴⁴ Once Adams could credibly claim to the IRA that Sinn Féin would not be ignored in the negotiations, the IRA reinstituted the ceasefire of August 1994.²⁴⁵

The Clinton Administration sprang into renewed action. Clinton's right-hand man in Northern Ireland affairs, Senator Mitchell, resumed peace talks that had fallen

²³⁹ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 3678 (Kindle Edition).

²⁴⁰ Clinton, *My Life*, 700.

²⁴¹ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 3678 (Kindle Edition).

²⁴² Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 5690 (Kindle Edition).

²⁴³ Clinton, *My Life*, 700.

²⁴⁴ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 5690 (Kindle Edition).

²⁴⁵ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 5690 (Kindle Edition).

dormant and invited Sinn Féin leaders to join.²⁴⁶ Mitchell added a “practical approach” to the talks, Clinton later noted.²⁴⁷ Adams agreed. “George Mitchell was a crucial figure in his work at the time not least because he represented the President and the interest of so many Irish Americans.”²⁴⁸ Adams continues, “His patience and forbearance prevented a collapse of talks and he held to the principle of inclusion.”²⁴⁹ Specifically, Chairman Mitchell allowed all the parties involved to establish their respective positions even as he simultaneously pressed them to consider compromise.²⁵⁰ Mitchell’s job became easier upon the election of a new British Prime Minister, the Labour Party leader Tony Blair in 1997. Blair proved less resistant to working with Sinn Féin for the purpose of forging a peaceful settlement in Northern Ireland. Indeed, upon first meeting Blair, Adams was impressed and later described the encounter as “the first time in my lifetime, we had a British Prime Minister listening directly to Irish republicans and listening to our concerns and our hopes.”²⁵¹ The election of Bertie Ahern as Taoiseach in the summer of 1997 gave a further push to the peace talks, as he too had no objection to including Sinn Féin in the negotiations.²⁵²

The resumed talks took place from September 1997 to April 1998, and “the Clinton Administration played an important role at various stages in the process especially in the final stages”²⁵³ Clinton made numerous calls to Mitchell, Adams,

²⁴⁶ Kevin Rafter, “George Mitchell and the Role of the Peace Talks Chairman” *The Irish Review* (1986-), No. 38, Good Friday Agreement Anniversary (Spring 2008), 17.

²⁴⁷ Rafter, “George Mitchell and the Role of the Peace Talks Chairman,” 20.

²⁴⁸ Adams, email interview, March 20, 2015.

²⁴⁹ Adams, email interview, March 20, 2015.

²⁵⁰ Mitchell, *Making Peace*, 175.

²⁵¹ Adams, *A Farther Shore*, Location 6109 (Kindle Edition).

²⁵² Rafter, “George Mitchell and the Role of the Peace Talks Chairman,” 17.

²⁵³ Rafter, “George Mitchell and the Role of the Peace Talks Chairman,” 18.

David Trimble (leader of the Ulster Unionist Party), the leaders of the other Ulster political parties involved, Bertie Ahern, and Tony Blair. Then, at 2:30 a.m. on April 10, Mitchell called the White House requesting that the President contact Adams once more to “seal the deal.”²⁵⁴

The involved parties finally signed what came to be called the Good Friday Agreement on April 10, 1998.²⁵⁵ Ireland, Britain, and Northern Ireland agreed that Northern Ireland was a sovereign political entity entitled to decide its own future. Ireland relinquished its claims to the six counties, and Britain repealed the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, which had proclaimed Northern Ireland a British territory; this repeal acknowledged Northern Ireland’s right to leave the United Kingdom at some future point.²⁵⁶ Beyond that, the Agreement set the deadline for the decommissioning of all arms currently held by paramilitary groups for the year 2000; normalized security arrangements for Northern Ireland were also established. On May 22, the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland voted overwhelming for the Good Friday Agreement, with 71% approving it in Northern Ireland and more than 90% of Irish voters backing the deal.²⁵⁷ American involvement had made a critical difference. If Mitchell had been less “perfect for the job” or if Clinton had not “made some decisive calls to party leaders,” peace may well not have come to Northern Ireland in 1998.²⁵⁸

“[N]ever was [I] more proud of my Irish heritage,” a still-exultant Clinton wrote in his autobiography, than when the Irish and Northern Irish voted for the Good Friday

²⁵⁴ Clinton, *My Life*, 784.

²⁵⁵ *New York Times*, April 11, 1998.

²⁵⁶ Clinton, *My Life*, 784.

²⁵⁷ Clinton, *My Life*, 787.

²⁵⁸ O’Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 3704 (Kindle Edition).

Agreement.²⁵⁹ Of course, it had to be equally pleasing to Clinton that the Irish in both Ireland and America were quite proud of him--and deeply thankful for his crucial role in the successful Northern Ireland peace process. To be sure, progress in Northern Ireland probably would have happened at some future point absent Clinton's help. But "[I]t would have taken longer and been more difficult," Adams recognizes, "without his involvement."²⁶⁰ Current Sinn Féin deputy leader and Irish parliamentary member Mary Lou McDonald agrees. "What happened [in 1998] was enormous," she said while speaking at a Drew University Easter Rising conference in New Jersey on March 20, 2015, and it would "not have happened without Irish Americans and Bill Clinton."²⁶¹

George W. Bush and the Irish of the 21st Century:

George W. Bush's presidency was largely defined by the Al Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Forced to respond to the most destructive attack ever levied against the United States, Bush understandably had little time for Irish affairs. Even so Irish and Irish-American issues arose during his Presidency.

To start, Irish Americans may have played a significant role in Bush's razor-thin victory in 2000 against Democratic Vice President Al Gore of Tennessee. After weeks of recounts and a U.S. Supreme Court decision in his favor, Bush prevailed 271-266 in the Electoral College, despite having lost the popular vote by a half-million votes.²⁶² The

²⁵⁹ Clinton, *My Life*, 787.

²⁶⁰ Adams, email interview, March 20, 2015.

²⁶¹ Mary Lou McDonald, "Keynote Address" (Drew University, Madison, NJ, March 20, 2015).

²⁶² Bill Sammon, *At Any Cost: How Al Gore Tried to Steal the Election* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2001), 256.

historian Jim Webb, in his book *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America*, advances an intriguing theory that cosigns responsibility for Bush's narrow triumph to one particular group. Webb suggests that the Scots-Irish, who because of their total assimilation had become all but forgotten in U.S. history after their important role in the Early Republic, provided Bush with just enough support in critical states to give him the victory. Webb writes:

They [Scots-Irish] are a culture founded on guns, which considers the Second Amendment sacrosanct, while literary and academic America considers such views not only archaic but also threatening. And yet it is not hyperbole to say that Al Gore lost the 2000 election by going against them on this issue, causing Tennessee and West Virginia to vote for George W. Bush.

And they are the heartbeat of fundamentalist Christianity, which itself is largely derived from the harsh demands of Scottish Calvinism. As such, they have produced their share of fire-and-brimstone spiritual leaders, whose conservative views on social issues continually offend liberal opinion makers.²⁶³

Webb's thesis cannot be proved, of course. However, it is a fact that, had Gore won either West Virginia or his own home state of Tennessee, he, not Bush, would have become the country's forty-third president.

In 2000, Niall O'Dowd suggested in his newspaper the *Irish Voice* that Gore may have lost, in part, because of the Irish-Catholic vote. O'Dowd notes:

The Catholic vote, which has a large Irish component, went for Gore 49%-47%, a drop of four points from the total that Bill Clinton got in 1996. Extrapolating from that, it seems clear that fewer Irish Catholics gave Gore their vote than went for Clinton.²⁶⁴

Niall blames Gore's inability to make "a connection with the American people" as well as "his failure to bring up Ireland in any of the debates or to stage a high profile Irish

²⁶³ Webb, *Born Fighting*, Location 291, 302 (Kindle Edition).

²⁶⁴ *Irish Voice*, December 12, 2000.

event” for the lack of Irish-Catholic enthusiasm for his campaign.²⁶⁵ Gore may have been the vice president under Clinton, but to Irish Catholics, O’Dowd suggests, Gore possessed little of the personal appeal that the dynamic Clinton radiated in abundance.

The second President Bush also made a meaningful contribution to maintaining the peace in Northern Ireland. In her 2007 article “The United States and Post-Agreement Northern Ireland, 2001-6,” Mary Alice Clancy concludes that “Bush’s administration . . . has had a profound impact on the politics of post-Agreement Northern Ireland.”²⁶⁶ The Bush team played an influential role in the decommissioning of the IRA in Northern Ireland—the primary lingering matter that needed to be accomplished to ensure the success of the Good Friday Agreement.²⁶⁷ Early in his Presidency, Bush had “privately informed Downing Street that it [his Administration] had scant interest in an issue that it considered to be the sole responsibility of Britain.”²⁶⁸ The deadline for decommissioning the IRA had been set for 2000, but that date had passed without the task having been accomplished even before Bush took the Oath of Office in January 2001. As a further indication of the Bush Administration’s scant interest in the region, Richard Haas, the new Special Envoy to Northern Ireland, criticized former President Clinton’s over-involvement in Northern Ireland affairs, and accordingly gave the former President only “one cheer” for his efforts.²⁶⁹ The 9/11 attacks, however, changed everything, including Bush’s policy on Northern Ireland.

²⁶⁵ *Irish Voice*, December 12, 2000.

²⁶⁶ Mary Alice Clancy, “The United States and Post-Agreement Northern Ireland, 2001-6,” *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 18 (2007), 173.

²⁶⁷ Clancy, “The United States and Post-Agreement Northern Ireland,” 173.

²⁶⁸ Clancy, “The United States and Post-Agreement Northern Ireland,” 160.

²⁶⁹ Richard Haas, “The Squandered Presidency,” *Foreign Affairs* 79(3) (2000), 136-41.

These attacks prompted the Bush Administration to take a hardline on all terrorists, including the IRA. On the day of the attacks, Haas was scheduled to meet with the Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern after the Taoiseach met with Sinn Féin Leader Gerry Adams. The meetings concerned, in part, the three IRA members who had been found in Colombia training the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) guerrillas exactly one month prior to 9/11.²⁷⁰ As Adams was leaving the Taoiseach's company and Haas was entering into it, the attack on the World Trade Center occurred. Haas of course quickly learned of this catastrophe and experienced, along with the rest of the Bush Administration, a dramatic change in mindset regarding the IRA. As a senior Irish official interviewed by Clancy and present with Haas on 9/11 reported:

. . . September 11 had a significant effect on the whole thing, because all of sudden terrorism . . . if there was perceived to be a certain tolerance or understanding with the Irish that went back generations, all of a sudden this became an absolute no-no. And Sinn Féin were quick to recognize that. And Haas was quick to make sure they recognized that.²⁷¹

Given the new global environment created by the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., Haas, under the direction of the President, put aside his dislike for Adams, and learned to work with the leader to bring about positive change, eventually becoming "enamored" with Adams.²⁷² When asked why Haas changed his mind about Adams, a US official stated, ". . . Gerry Adams is mesmerising, you know? And he'll spin a story and a narrative, and in it you just can't see how you could do anything other than give Gerry the sweeties he's asked for."²⁷³ To assist in the decommissioning

²⁷⁰ Clancy, "The United States and Post-Agreement Northern Ireland," 161.

²⁷¹ Clancy, "The United States and Post-Agreement Northern Ireland," 161.

²⁷² Clancy, "The United States and Post-Agreement Northern Ireland," 161. Also, *Irish Voice*, September 7, 2004.

²⁷³ Clancy, "The United States and Post-Agreement Northern Ireland," 162.

process, Haas successfully encouraged the British government to dismantle watchtowers and installations in order to normalize the now-excessive security measures in Northern Ireland.²⁷⁴ Haas also applauded the launch of the new Police Force in Northern Ireland, which aspired to include 50% Catholic policemen.²⁷⁵

Beyond that, Haas and his successor Mitchell Reiss continued to work with Sinn Féin.²⁷⁶ Their work in combination with White House pressure on the IRA paid off: in September 2005 “the decommissioning of the arms of the IRA [became] an accomplished fact” and the IRA disarmed.²⁷⁷ Two years after Bush’s presidency ended, David Sherzer, the President’s spokesperson, would state, “President Bush and his administration played an active diplomatic role in promoting lasting peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland.”²⁷⁸

The Bush Administration’s positive work in Northern Ireland did not, however, translate into pro-Bush sentiments in Ireland or Northern Ireland. During his Presidency, Bush visited both areas, yet he won over little support from the people, particularly during his trip to Ireland in June 2004 to attend the EU-US Summit.²⁷⁹ Much like Nixon during his 1970 visit to Ireland, Bush visited the country while he was waging an unpopular war, in Bush’s case the invasion of Iraq. Angry crowds jeered him, most notably the 1,000 anti-war protestors who surrounded Shannon Airport upon his

²⁷⁴ Richard Haas, “Remarks to the National Committee on American Foreign Policy” (New York, January 7, 2002). Accessed at <http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/p/rem/7300.htm>

²⁷⁵ Haas, “Remarks to the National Foreign Policy.” Accessed at <http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/p/rem/7300.htm>

²⁷⁶ Clancy, “The United States and Post-Agreement Northern Ireland,” 168.

²⁷⁷ *The Guardian*, September 26, 2005.

²⁷⁸ *New York Times*, March 11, 2010.

²⁷⁹ *Sunday Mirror*, June 27, 2004.

departure: from that crowd came shouts of, “George, you are the No. 1 terrorist” and “You have blood on your hands.”²⁸⁰ These Irish protestors particularly despised the friendship Bush had developed with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, both of whom agreed with the necessity of invading Iraq. Protestors carried banners with slogans that alliteratively read “Bush, Blair, and Bertie—Weapons of Mass Destruction.”²⁸¹ Finally, the protestors accused Bush of visiting Ireland for political reasons, yelling “Bush is only here to get Irish American voters.”²⁸²

No doubt to the vast displeasure of those Irish protestors, a number of Irish Americans backed Bush’s 2004 reelection effort against Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, himself a practicing Catholic.²⁸³ Once again, Bush supporters included the Scots-Irish who in October of that campaign year a columnist for the *Wall Street Journal* labeled the “Secret GOP Weapon.”²⁸⁴ Still other Bush backers were Catholics, of which Irish Americans make up a significant chunk.²⁸⁵ Catholics voted for Bush over Kerry by a margin of 52-47%.²⁸⁶ The Irish Catholics who supported Bush in 2004 largely resided outside the West and East coasts, living in Rust-Belt Mid-Western states and more rural areas.²⁸⁷ These traditional-minded Irish Americans approved of the President’s conservative economic policies, which included tax cuts, and his stance on

²⁸⁰ *Sunday Mirror*, June 27, 2004.

²⁸¹ *Sunday Mirror*, June 27, 2004.

²⁸² *Sunday Mirror*, June 27, 2004.

²⁸³ Feargal Cochrane, “Irish-America and the Presidential Race,” *Fortnight*, No. 457 (February 2008), 12.

²⁸⁴ *Irish Voice*, October 26, 2004.

²⁸⁵ *New York Times*, November 7, 2004. Also, Cochrane, “Irish-America and the Presidential Race,” 12. Also, *Irish Voice*, October 5, 2004.

²⁸⁶ *New York Times*, November 7, 2004. To be sure, many of those Catholics included Hispanic Americans. The Hispanic vote went for Kerry in 2004, but Bush won more Hispanics than any other Republican presidential candidate since the creation of exit polls in 1972.

²⁸⁷ *Irish Voice*, October 5, 2004. Also *New York Times*, November 7, 2004.

social policies, including his opposition to abortion and gay marriage and his reluctance to give full support to stem-cell research.”²⁸⁸ Most urban Americans, including Irish Catholics, opposed the Republican Party because of these issues, and had done so in 2004 and for many years prior.²⁸⁹ But Bush’s strong support elsewhere, including a big Scots-Irish and rural Catholic-Irish vote, gave him a second slim margin of victory.

The Election and Presidency of Barack Obama:

The 2008 presidential election was a momentous one, and once again Irish issues found their way into the campaign. By this time, informed political observers recognized that “no cohesive Irish-American vote” existed.²⁹⁰ Irish Americans split among themselves on social and economic issues, as well as on foreign-policy concerns, particularly now that peace had come to Northern Ireland.²⁹¹ Yet, even if they no longer voted almost uniformly for the Democratic Party, the two leading Democratic contenders in 2008, Senator Hillary Clinton of New York and Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, sought to attract voters from within that vast constituency.²⁹²

Throughout the primary campaign, Clinton asserted that she had more foreign-policy experience than her main opponent Obama. As evidence of this claim, she cited her supposed contribution to achieving the Good Friday Agreement.²⁹³ During an interview with National Public Radio’s (NPR) Steve Inskeep, Clinton lauded her own foreign-policy credentials and asserted that she had played an instrumental role in ending

²⁸⁸ Cochrane, “Irish-America and the Presidential Race,” 12.

²⁸⁹ *New York Times*, November 7, 2004. *Irish Voice*, August 10, October 5, 2004.

²⁹⁰ Cochrane, “Irish-America and the Presidential Race,” 11.

²⁹¹ Cochrane, “Irish-America and the Presidential Race,”

²⁹² Cochrane, “Irish-America and the Presidential Race,” 11. Also, *Irish Voice*, August 24, 2004.

²⁹³ *New York Times*, March 22, 2008.

the conflict in Northern Ireland.²⁹⁴ Similarly, she claimed to ABC News that she had been “deeply involved in the Irish peace process” and to CNN that she “helped bring peace to Northern Ireland.”²⁹⁵ It is true that as First Lady she accompanied her husband on his 1995 trip to Belfast, where she made pro-peace remarks and met with women who belonged to various grassroots community groups there.²⁹⁶ Moreover, during the trip she visited a fish-and-chips shop where she encouraged Protestant and Catholic women around her to band together in support of a future peace agreement. In her 2008 retelling of the fish-and-chips story, however, the former First Lady and current presidential candidate changed the setting of the meeting to Belfast’s City Hall.²⁹⁷ Also, she said she had gathered together Protestant and Catholic women “enemies” there and encouraged them to work together.²⁹⁸

But Mrs. Clinton’s earlier 500-page autobiography *Living History*, published in 2003, recounts the story somewhat differently. In that tome, Clinton describes the Northern Ireland trip in detail, yet she makes no reference to a gathering of women “enemies” in Belfast’s City Hall. She does describe a Christmas tree-lighting there that she and Bill participated in, followed by a reception at Queens University—an event she explains as one involving Catholic and Protestant political party leaders standing on opposite sides of the room.²⁹⁹ Moreover, her autobiography gives no indication that she

²⁹⁴ National Public Radio, “Is ‘First Lady’ a Foreign Policy Credential,” March 12, 2008. Accessed at highbeamresources.com. Accessed 12/15/14.

²⁹⁵ Cochrane, *Irish-America and the Presidential Race*, 12. Also, *The Weekly Standard*, May 16, 2015. Accessed at <http://www.weeklystandard.com> Accessed 3/21/15.

²⁹⁶ National Public Radio, “Is ‘First Lady’ a Foreign Policy Credential,” March 12, 2008. Also, Clinton, *My Life*, 687.

²⁹⁷ *Boston Globe*, January 7, 2008.

²⁹⁸ *Boston Globe*, January 7, 2008.

²⁹⁹ Clinton, *Living History*, 322-323.

convinced women adversaries to collaborate for peace, even those she met in the fish-and-chips shop. In *Living History* Clinton references the fish-and-chips gathering, but describes it as a meeting among Catholic and Protestant women who already were promoting peace. “Because they were willing to work across the religious divide,” she writes of that meeting, “they had found common ground.”³⁰⁰

John O’Farrell, a former Northern Ireland journalist who covered the Clintons’ 1995 Belfast visit, said in a 2008 telephone interview with the *Boston Globe* that Clinton’s “heart was always in the right place . . . But the idea of her bringing together fiercely opposed combatants is a considerable exaggeration.”³⁰¹ Mark Devenport, a Northern Ireland political editor for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) who also covered Bill Clinton’s Belfast trip, agreed. He described the fish-and-chips event as an “artificial occasion . . . brought in to capture the moment,” rather than a groundbreaking union of political opponents.³⁰² Even Bill Clinton’s chief Northern Ireland peace negotiator, George Mitchell, said in a 2008 interview with Michael Dobbs of the *Washington Post* that the First Lady was “not involved directly” in the negotiations leading up to the Good Friday Agreement.³⁰³ At best, Hillary Clinton while in Northern Ireland had spoken and worked with people who were already receptive to the idea of cooperation, while her husband successfully brought together bitter foes in pursuance of peace.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ Clinton, *Living History*, 321.

³⁰¹ *Boston Globe*, January 7, 2008.

³⁰² National Public Radio, “Is ‘First Lady’ a Foreign Policy Credential,” March 12, 2008.

³⁰³ *The Weekly Standard*, March 16, 2015.

³⁰⁴ *Boston Globe*, January 7, 2008.

Nevertheless, Hillary should be credited for reaching out to women and thereby giving them at least some voice in the Northern Ireland conflict and solution. Years later Niall O'Dowd, who had been so instrumental in bringing Gerry Adams and President Bill Clinton together in the 1990s, wrote, "It cannot be underestimated just how few women were in any positions of power in the North back then, and Hillary went about changing that from the grassroots up."³⁰⁵ Paraphrasing the late trade union organizer and human rights activist Inez McCormack, O'Dowd continued, "Hillary had single-handedly empowered women in the Northern Ireland conflict, which had a profound impact."³⁰⁶ Adams concurs. In a 2015 interview, the Sinn Féin leader recognized that Hillary "made a point of meeting women's organisations and encouraged them to ensure their voices were heard" during her 1995 visit with her husband to Northern Ireland. Consequently, "I believe," Adams stated, "she played a key role" in the peace process.³⁰⁷

While on the campaign trail in 2008 Clinton met with a number of important figures in Ireland and Northern Ireland, as well as with numerous prominent Irish Americans. In December 2007, shortly before the critical Iowa caucuses, she visited with Sinn Féin negotiator Martin McGuinness.³⁰⁸ On Saint Patrick's Day 2008, Clinton met with Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to discuss the future of Ireland and Northern Ireland. At this meeting Clinton again referred to her alleged role in the Northern Ireland peace agreement. Clinton said:

It is always an honor to meet with the Taoiseach. Over the many years that we have worked together, on closer ties between Ireland and New York, on the peace process and the future of Northern Ireland, and on many other issues of mutual

³⁰⁵ *Irish America*, April/May 2015.

³⁰⁶ *Irish America*, April/May 2015.

³⁰⁷ Adams, email interview, March 20, 2015.

³⁰⁸ Cochrane, "Irish-America and the Presidential Race," 12.

concern, I have been grateful for his steady leadership and dedication to peace. I look forward to continuing our long and productive relationship, and that of our two nations in the future.³⁰⁹

While seeking the 2008 Democratic nomination, Clinton enjoyed the backing of Niall O'Dowd who served on her finance committee.³¹⁰ During the primaries, O'Dowd claimed that Hillary Clinton's role as First Lady in the peace process netted her some two million in campaign donations from Irish Americans.³¹¹ O'Dowd later would call himself "A Soldier in Hillary's Losing Battle" against Barack Obama.³¹² Still, he remained her dependable cheerleader and seven years after the election inducted Hillary into his *Irish America* magazine's Irish Hall of Fame.³¹³

It can fairly be said that Obama and his supporters' means of soliciting Irish-American favor in 2008 exhibited even more audacity than Clinton's stratagem. The child of a black father and a white mother, Obama encouraged Irish Americans to regard him as a kindred spirit.³¹⁴ To facilitate such thinking, a website supporting Obama's campaign claimed that he was in fact part Irish, buttressed by a list of other African Americans whose ethnic backgrounds included at least some degree of Irish ancestry. The website read: "Muhammad Ali, Victor Mooney, Alex Haley, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Alice Walker, Ishmael Reed are not the only African Americans with Irish roots. It has emerged that Barack Obama's great-great-great-grandfather originated from Moneygall in County Offaly."³¹⁵

³⁰⁹ Capitol Hill Press Release, "Senator Clinton Meets with Ireland's Taoiseach Ahern Today in Washington," March 17, 2008. Accessed at highbeamresources.com. Accessed at 12/13/14.

³¹⁰ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 83 (Kindle Edition). *The Weekly Standard*, May 16, 2015.

³¹¹ Cochrane, "Irish-America and the Presidential Race," 12.

³¹² O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 81 (Kindle Edition).

³¹³ *Irish America*, April/May 2015.

³¹⁴ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 159 (Kindle Edition).

³¹⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, February 21, 2007. Also, Cochrane, "Irish-America and the Presidential Race," 11.

Like other presidential candidates before him, Obama made a point of highlighting his Irishness, however far back one had to go to find it. When asked by Niall O'Dowd during the campaign if he would visit Ireland if elected president, Obama said, "Of course. I have relatives from there . . . I will definitely make it there as president."³¹⁶ O'Dowd, despite being an outspoken supporter of Senator Clinton, could not help but like Obama and said as much in *An Irish Voice*: "In spite of my Hillary sympathies, I found myself gripped by him as was everybody else."³¹⁷ O'Dowd and no doubt many other Irish Americans saw similarities between their ancestors and Obama's. A victory for Obama, a black man, constituted a win for all minorities barred for so long from the upper echelons of U.S. society and national politics. In explaining this partially shared historical background, O'Dowd wrote, ". . . here we are: one group who came as slaves, and so many of the others in coffin ships . . . in the house that kept Irish and blacks out for so long."³¹⁸

A group of Irish-American writers, poets, and filmmakers echoed O'Dowd's sentiments. In 2008, some 22 artists formed "The Irish American Writers and Artists Association," and took out a full-page advertisement in the *Irish Echo* to endorse Obama and reject the occasional media claim that an "Irish working-class racism" existed.³¹⁹ These Irish American artists stood in solidarity with African Americans, and emphasized their blue-collar roots: "We are the descendants of the generations of Irish American working class women and men who helped build this country, nurse its sick, care for its

³¹⁶ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 159 (Kindle Edition).

³¹⁷ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 127 (Kindle Edition).

³¹⁸ O'Dowd, *An Irish Voice*, Location 27 (Kindle Edition).

³¹⁹ *Evening Herald*, April 19, 2008.

children, work its mines, fight its wars, and police its streets”³²⁰ The ad implied that Irish Americans, like so many African Americans, had come from an industrious stock, and that just as these two groups had worked together to build this great country, they would now come together to support Obama’s bid for the presidency. That the Irish American Writers and Artists Association chose to take out an advertisement in the *Irish Echo* underlined its belief that support for Obama existed among the paper’s wide Irish-American readership.

Obama won further favor among Irish Americans with his stand on immigration reform--an issue that still unifies most Irish-American Democrats.³²¹ Although the flow of immigrants from Ireland had greatly decreased by the twenty-first century, Irish Americans possessed historical memories of a long history of diaspora to the United States, even as recently as the late-twentieth century during the Troubles.³²² In fact, about 50,000 undocumented Irish lived in the United States by 2008, many having come over during the thirty-year Northern Ireland conflict.³²³ During a primary debate in Philadelphia, Obama unequivocally supported driver’s licenses for illegal immigrants, while Clinton by contrast flip-flopped on the issue within the span of five minutes.³²⁴ Obama had scored a point with various ethnic groups, including Irish Americans, many of whom welcomed any reform that would bring undocumented Irish Americans closer to living in America legally.³²⁵

³²⁰ *Evening Herald*, April 19, 2008.

³²¹ Cochrane, “Irish America and the Presidential Race,” 11.

³²² Cochrane, “Irish America and the Presidential Race,” 11.

³²³ *Irish Independent*, April 10, 2009.

³²⁴ *New York Times*, November 1, 2007.

³²⁵ *Irish Independent*, April 10, 2009.

Obama prevailed in the nomination contest, and in November he made history by becoming the first Black President of the United States. He soundly defeated Republican Senator John McCain of Arizona, 365-173 in the Electoral College.³²⁶

Ethnic voters, including Irish Americans, “came out in record numbers” to support Obama.³²⁷ Moreover, he won the backing of Irish-American Democrats in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and Ohio—particularly in the Buckeye State’s heavily Irish-populated Cuyahoga County.³²⁸ Although the collapse of the stock market in the fall of 2008 all but guaranteed Obama’s victory, some observers, perhaps only half-seriously, have suggested that the Irish-American vote made the difference. “Who knows?” Professor James Murphy of the Irish Studies Program at Villanova University writes, “Had Candidate McCain bothered to join in the ‘McCain-McKane O’Kane DNA Family Project,’ he might have swung the Irish vote away from O’Bama [sic].”³²⁹ After the election, some prominent black and Irish politicians and business people formed McBlackpac, a political action group whose purpose was to encourage black and Irish Americans to vote for Obama again in 2012.³³⁰

Obama fulfilled his promise to O’Dowd as President when he visited Ireland in May 2011. He made a speech in front of a massive crowd of Dubliners, who celebrated his recently unearthed Irish roots. Standing in front of grinning onlookers, Obama began his address, “Hello, Dublin! Hello, Ireland! My name is Barack Obama—of the

³²⁶ *New York Times*, November 5, 2008.

³²⁷ *Irish Times*, September 5, 2012.

³²⁸ *Irish Times*, September 5, 2012.

³²⁹ James Murphy, “O’Bama, O’Hara, and all the rest,” review of *Of Irish Descent: Origin Stories, Genealogy, and the Politics of Belonging*, by Catherine Nash, *Irish Literary Supplement*, September 22, 2009.

³³⁰ *Irish Times*, September 5, 2012.

Moneygall Obamas. And I've come home to find the apostrophe that we lost somewhere along the way."³³¹ After the laughter and cheers subsided, Obama focused his speech on the deep connections shared by America and Ireland. He referenced the Irish diaspora and his maternal great-great-great grandfather who came to America with countless others during the Great Hunger.³³² Obama spoke about his hometown city of Chicago, where "you could stand on 79th Street and hear the brogue of every county in Ireland."³³³ His own visit to the Emerald Isle, Obama said, "reaffirmed the bonds" between America and Ireland's common history. "When we strove to blot out the strain of slavery and advance the rights of man," Obama said, "we found common cause with your struggles against oppression."³³⁴ Beyond that, Obama paid special tribute to the nineteenth-century, Irish-Catholic-nationalist leader Daniel O'Connell and his relationship with the former American slave turned abolitionist Frederick Douglass. "Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave and our great abolitionist," Obama stated, "forged an unlikely friendship right here in Dublin with your great liberator, Daniel O'Connell. His time here, Frederick Douglass said, defined him not as a color but as a man. And it strengthened the non-violent campaign he would return home to wage."³³⁵ Finally, Obama described America's history through the prism of Irish-American contributions: the Irish Brigade

³³¹ Barack Obama, "Obama's Remarks at Irish Celebration in Dublin," (College Green, Dublin, Ireland, May 23, 2011). Accessed at <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2011/05/20110523154519su0.8628308.html#axzz3Hl3pS3ll>. Accessed 11/25/14.

³³² Obama, "Obama's Remarks at Irish Celebration in Dublin."

³³³ Obama, "Obama's Remarks at Irish Celebration in Dublin."

³³⁴ Obama, "Obama's Remarks at Irish Celebration in Dublin."

³³⁵ Obama, "Obama's Remarks at Irish Celebration in Dublin."

that fought bravely in the Civil War, the soldiers of World Wars I and II, and the first Irish-Catholic U.S. President, John F. Kennedy.³³⁶

On its surface, Obama's 2011 speech did not appreciably differ from those made by presidents before him who had visited Ireland and extolled the land and its people. What was noteworthy about Obama's address, of course, was the image it presented: the first Black American president lauding his Irishness in order to garner support from the Irish. America had indeed come a long way from the time when anti-Irish bigotry abounded. No longer, not even to the slightest degree, did that hateful outlook blight the discourse of American politics.

Conclusion:

Each Sixth Party System president realized the political importance of appealing to Irish Americans, for while they no longer voted as a bloc as they had in the past, their sheer numbers continued to make them a formidable presence in U.S. politics. That said, the years encompassed by the Sixth Party System probably would have been devoid of prominent Irish-related issues had domestic concerns been the exclusive consideration. After all, in modern America many Irish Americans belong to the upper echelons of U.S. society and its economy, with millions more solidly in the middle class. However, the long conflict in Northern Ireland continually drew the attention of Irish Americans as well as American presidents. Although some of those Chief Executives, particularly Nixon and Ford, took minimal action regarding Northern Ireland, some of presidents who followed them wielded U.S. influence to help forge a lasting Irish peace. Reagan and

³³⁶ Obama, "Obama's Remarks at Irish Celebration in Dublin."

Clinton stand out for their activist roles regarding Northern Ireland, with Clinton serving as the primary American catalyst to the peace process. Whether the peace that he, Reagan, the Irish, the British, and others helped forge will endure, only time will tell.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Both the Scots-Irish and their Irish-Catholic countrymen came to the United States for reasons similar to so many other immigrants before and after them. The Irish who journeyed across the Atlantic to become Americans were oppressed, destitute, often hungry, and generally in search of greater freedom and a better life. But unlike many of the other immigrant groups, neither the Scots-Irish nor the Catholic Irish initially accepted a marginal role in U.S. politics. Instead both groups of Irish dove immediately into the electoral fray, and both groups made early and sizable impacts on American political history, including at the presidential level. Both groups of Irish at first encountered substantial hostility and prejudice in the public arena; yet before long each of them, Scots-Irish and Catholic Irish, made themselves formidable factors in presidential elections.

Political developments in Ireland also at times have affected U.S. presidential politics and diplomacy. Ireland has never been a major country in world affairs, nor has it ever threatened U.S. national security or interests; yet occasionally Presidents of the United States have found themselves contending with issues directly pertaining to Ireland. Moreover, in recent decades, presidential goodwill visits to Ireland have become commonplace events, almost expected of anyone who resides in the White House.

The story of the Irish role in American presidential politics begins with the Scots-Irish—a group long overshadowed by the huge numbers of Catholic Irish who arrived later in America. But absent the presence of the sturdy Scots-Irish, possibly there would be no American presidency, because there would be no United States. The rough-and-tumble Scots-Irish made up almost forty percent of General George Washington's

Continental Army during the American Revolution. Their contribution to the victory over the British whom they so despised should not be lost in the history books.

Independence achieved, the Scots-Irish did much to shape the First Party System in American politics. Alarmed by the nativist sentiments of the Federalist Party, notwithstanding their hero President Washington's support for that group, the Scots-Irish rallied to Thomas Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party. Democratic-Republicans stoutly opposed the Federalist-sponsored Alien and Sedition Acts, a kind of legislative declaration of war against immigrant groups and opponents of the Federalist-run government, the Scots-Irish chief among them. With the loyal support of Scots-Irish voters, the Democratic-Republicans enjoyed ultimate electoral triumph over the Federalists, while the ideological tenets of the Democratic-Republican majority coalition--non-elitism, universal suffrage, states-rights, hostility to Britain--reflect the views that prevailed among Scots-Irish Americans during the years of the Early Republic. Moreover, the fiercely determined organization known as the United Irishmen, led by indomitable figures like Archibald Hamilton Rowan, Matthew Carey, and William Duane, rallied the Scots-Irish populace in defense of Presidents Jefferson and Madison, particularly during the crisis times of the War of 1812 against England. In a sense the Scots-Irish and other ardent backers of the Democratic-Republicans succeeded all too well; by the 1820s the Federalist Party had ceased to exist, and with no adversary to unify them, the Democratic-Republicans split into various competing factions, ending the First Party System.

The Second Party System, pitting the new Democratic Party against first the National Republicans and then their successors the Whig Party, came to be dominated by

Andrew Jackson—the first Scots-Irish President of the United States. With support from the Scots-Irish and others, Jackson formed the Democratic Party and destroyed the most visible example of Federalist Party ideology—the National Bank. Moreover, during the first half of the Second Party System American presidents and other politicians found that there now existed two prominent groups of Irish voters: the still-dominant (though not for much longer) Scots-Irish, and the new-immigrant Catholic Irish, whose population in America steadily grew during the late 1820s and early 1830s, then increased by enormous numbers in the 1840s and beyond because of the terrible Potato Famine that beset Ireland. These Irish-Catholic newcomers inspired a renewed nativist reaction among native-stock Americans, whose ranks now included none other than the Scots-Irish, now fully assimilated members of U.S. society, who energetically participated in the xenophobic hostility to their own Irish brethren. Even as the Scots-Irish gravitated to the more-nativist Whig Party, the Catholic Irish instinctively aligned themselves with the Democratic Party--exactly as the Scots-Irish had done with respect to the Democratic-Republican Party a generation or two before. It was also during the Second Party System that American presidents first responded to affairs occurring in Ireland. The ninth president, John Tyler, supported the Repeal Movement in Ireland, while his successor James Polk felt pressure, which he successfully resisted, to send federal funds to Famine-stricken Ireland.

The Third Party System, which includes the Civil War era and the ensuing Gilded Age, stands out as one of the most tumultuous periods in U.S. political history, and the Irish played a large and growing role in those dramatic times. During the American Civil War, Irish Americans fought bravely for both the Confederate Gray and, despite many of

their numbers' dislike of Lincoln and the Republican Party, overwhelmingly for the Union Blue. Soon after the conflict concluded with the Union intact, a small group of nationalist Irish Americans known as the Fenians audaciously tried to weaken their nemesis England by invading Canada from American territory. Although the Johnson and Grant Administrations condemned these ill-fated invasion attempts, both presidents did so with caution and even some reluctance, a testament to the presidents' lingering resentments against the British for their having unofficially helped the Confederacy during the war, and an acknowledgment of the growing political clout of Irish-American voters. The presidential elections of 1884 and 1888 demonstrated with unmistakable clarity just how potent that group had become, inasmuch as both contests turned on the votes of an aroused and angry Irish-American constituency.

The Fourth Party System witnessed America's entering the world stage as an imperialist power. During this time, disenchanted Irish-American elites lambasted Republican Presidents McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Taft in the pages of the *Irish World* and *Gaelic American* for following a path of conquest and colonialism paved before them by the hated Britain. However, Irish-American leaders' biggest political battle of the Fourth Party System occurred not against Republican presidents but with the Democrat Woodrow Wilson, a confirmed Anglophile who, despite his own lofty rhetoric in support of national self-determination, refused after World War I to support Ireland's bid for full independence from Great Britain. Feeling betrayed, Irish Americans joined the ranks of those who successfully blocked ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, which included a provision creating Wilson's beloved League of Nations. In 1920 many traditionally Democratic Irish Americans went even further: they supported Republican

Warren Harding for no other reason than to register in raw political terms their continued antipathy for Wilson and his betrayal of Irish aspirations for freedom. However, Irish Americans returned in droves to the Democratic fold in 1928, when that party nominated its first Irish-Catholic presidential nominee, Al Smith of New York. To their chagrin Smith suffered a resounding defeat, but his loss owed more to his religion and his Tammany Hall affiliations than to his Irish ethnicity. Of course, anti-Irish attitudes continued to exist in America during the late 1920s and beyond, but they were fast disappearing as Irish Americans continued to make great strides in business, the professions, and most importantly, politics.

The Great Depression and the election in 1932 of Franklin Roosevelt, whose vast coalition included many prominent Irish Americans, ushered in the new Fifth Party System. A master politician, Roosevelt recognized the electoral power that Irish America now wielded, and to help ensure that this large constituency would remain in his camp, he gave important jobs to such figures as James Farley, Ed Flynn, and Joseph P. Kennedy. FDR enjoyed enormous support among Irish Americans, so much so that not even the highly popular “radio priest” Father Charles Coughlin, a one-time Roosevelt backer who turned against the President, could sway the Irish away from their beloved FDR. As the world became increasingly more dangerous during the 1930s, Roosevelt, himself instinctively an internationalist, recognized that much of the nation, including Irish Americans, was staunchly isolationist in sentiment. Irish Americans also ardently supported Ireland’s declaration of total neutrality in the European conflict that broke out in 1939. Nonetheless, when America entered into the war in December 1941, Irish

Americans rallied behind Commander-in-Chief Roosevelt, and many of them fought bravely in both theaters of that epic conflict.

Peace came in 1945, only to be followed almost immediately thereafter by the outbreak of the Cold War, pitting democratic-capitalist America against the totalitarian-Communist Soviet Union. Resolutely anti-Communist in outlook, Irish Americans wholly supported the hardline Cold War policies of Democrat Harry Truman. Truman's political career, notably enough, had been enormously advanced by Irish-Catholic Americans like Kansas City political boss Thomas Pendergast and by the Missouri politician and later Democratic National Committee Chairman Robert Hannegan. Owing to the ferocity of their anti-Communist convictions, many Irish Americans supported Wisconsin Senator Joe McCarthy, whose crusade against domestic Communist subversion went to grotesquely excessive lengths until it finally came to an end in 1954 with his censure by the U.S. Senate. Truman's Republican successor and fellow Cold War Warrior, Dwight Eisenhower, also appealed to Irish Americans, who greatly appreciated his invitation to the first President of the Irish Republic, Sean T. O'Kelly, to visit the United States in 1959.

Domestically, many Irish Americans in the post-World War II era took advantage of the GI Bill and the booming economy to move to the suburbs and begin well-paying corporate and professional careers. As their Scots-Irish brethren had done a century earlier, this generation of Catholic Americans attained full assimilation into U.S. society—absent of course one crowning achievement. That pinnacle moment finally occurred in 1960, with the election of the first Irish-Catholic president, John F. Kennedy. Although far wealthier and more sophisticated than most of the Irish Americans who so

enthusiastically voted for him, Kennedy radiated an Irish-Catholic ethos with which that electorate heartily, indeed almost gratefully, identified. Kennedy personified for them the long-awaited, Irish American achievement of the American Dream in full. Kennedy's Irish background inspired elements of his presidency. He surrounded himself with political advisors whom the media dubbed the Irish Mafia, he sought to break down immigration barriers into the United States, and his four day trip to his ancestral homeland in June 1963 emotionally touched and inspired countless Irish on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Sixth Party System, which commenced with the 1968 election, came to be dominated, at least with respect to Irish and Irish-American concerns, by the thirty-year conflict known as the Troubles in Northern Ireland. This protracted struggle to achieve Irish unity and independence for the Protestant-majority counties of Northern Ireland that remained under British authority forced American presidents, often reluctantly, to concern themselves with the affairs of Ireland. Over the years such presidential involvement became unavoidably necessary, as a growing number of prominent Irish-American politicians, Senator Edward Kennedy chief among them, urged presidents of both parties to engage in that bloody conflict and use America's prestige to bring about an equitable resolution to that crisis. Of the American Chief Executives who served during the Troubles, Democratic President Bill Clinton did the most to forge a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. By granting a visa to Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams, and in being the first president to visit Northern Ireland, Clinton risked compromising America's "special relationship" with England in order to achieve a substantive

agreement between the Irish and British. Clinton achieved that objective with the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which officially ended the Troubles.

Two years later, Republican George W. Bush won the extremely close 2000 election with the critical support, at least one historian asserts, of the long-assimilated Scots-Irish populace in crucial states like Tennessee and West Virginia. In 2008, Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama both appealed to Irish-American voters, notwithstanding the fact that this population no longer votes monolithically Democratic. Yet in what must be regarded as the culmination of both the absolute acceptance of the Irish into American society and their enduring clout at the ballot box, the African-American Obama publicly lauded his Irish roots and, once he became president, visited Ireland to reconnect with long-lost relatives there.

Throughout American history, Irish and Irish-American events, issues, and personalities have helped shape the course of American presidential politics, often in memorable and significant ways. Indeed, neither the Scots-Irish nor the Catholic Irish who arrived later ever resigned themselves to a passive, essentially powerless role in U.S. politics, including at the presidential level. The virulent discrimination that both groups of Irish endured during their early years in politics dissuaded neither from joining political parties, working hard for their favored candidates, and pushing steadily upward to the topmost rungs of political influence and power. They insisted that their voices be heard and, when necessary, they saw to it that their votes would be feared. To this day “Irish America,” in the words of Gerry Adams, “is still a powerful force in the USA” and

politicians of both the Democratic and Republican parties assiduously seek its support.¹

Ireland, as well, has on occasion played a notable role in American politics, quite beyond supplying millions of immigrants and future voters. Ireland is “not some unknown place thousands of miles away,” Adams also has stated, “but a place with real connections to the USA.”² The interplay of events in Ireland and domestic U.S. politics has always been present, and at times has meaningfully affected presidential decision-making and even electoral contests. Politically, the Irish in America have done far more than endure; they have in fact prevailed, and in doing so have helped steer the most powerful office in the most influential country of modern times.

¹ Adams, email interview, March, 20, 2015.

² Adams, email interview, March 20, 2015.

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