**The Troubles**

The Troubles were an ethno-political conflict in Northern Ireland that spilled over at various times into the Republic of Ireland, England and mainland Europe. The duration of the Troubles is conventionally dated from the late 1960s and considered by many to have ended with the Belfast "Good Friday" Agreement of 1998. However, sporadic violence has continued since then.

The key issues at stake in the Troubles were the constitutional status of Northern Ireland and the relationship between its mainly Protestant unionist community and its mainly Catholic nationalist community. Unionists and loyalists generally want Northern Ireland to remain within the United Kingdom while Irish nationalists and republicans generally want it to leave the United Kingdom and join a united Ireland. The Troubles involved republican and loyalist paramilitaries, the security forces of the United Kingdom and of the Republic of Ireland, and politicians and political activists.

Located on the northwest periphery of the European continent, far from the center of European affairs, Northern Ireland was, and would likely have remained, distant from the thoughts of most scholars had it not been for the outbreak of the “Troubles.” During the period from 1969 until 1994, Northern Ireland became the scene of the worst political violence in Western Europe. The conflict yielded a death toll of 3,526 deaths and tens of thousands were injured. In a region with a population of slightly over 1.8 million residents, few were left untouched by the violence, instability, and social polarization that characterized the era.

**Republic of Ireland Religious Breakdown**

2011 - Protestants: 6% Catholics: 84%

**Northern Ireland Religious Breakdown**

2011 - Protestants: 48% Catholics: 45%

Although the casualty figures are large in the aggregate, the conflict took place over the span of a quarter-century, meaning the average death toll per year was only slightly more than 100.Whereas violence escalated quickly after the onset of the conflict, peaking at almost 500 deaths in 1972, there were only two years after 1978 in which more than 100 total deaths attributable to the conflict occurred within the region. Thus, the conflict in Northern Ireland represented a long, but for the most part not particularly intense, conflict relative to most civil wars.

Even though the violence did not rise to the level of most civil wars, it still represents an anomaly in that it occurred within a highly developed society. Ethnic and religious dominance appears to be the only variables that appear to be directly related to the outbreak of violence. Otherwise, one would predict a low risk of civil war in Northern Ireland, because the region had relatively high per capita income and a growing economy, high secondary school enrollment, not particularly unfavorable geography and demographics, no relevant primary commodities, and a long history without political violence.

Factors that contributed to the conflict’s long duration include: the strategic-tactical choices pursued by the Irish Republican Army (IRA); the presence of strong, but normatively restrained, state; the ability of the IRA to sustain financing through a network of illegal activities; and the presence of a demographically mixed and polarized population, which aided both militant recruitment and concealment. Efforts to resolve the conflict emerged largely from the cooperative efforts of governments in London and Dublin—efforts that eventually proved successful in marginalizing the influence of the more radical elements in Northern Irish political life.

**Roots of the Troubles in Northern Ireland**

For almost 50 years following the partition of Ireland in 1920, intercommunal and state-societal relations in Ireland were characterized by an atmosphere of fragile stability. Despite the political and economic marginalization of minority Catholics and the dominance of majority Protestants over the levers of industry and state, expressions of violent discontent were generally disorganized and isolated until the 1960s. During the 1960s, however, the dominant social order and accompanying stability that characterized the post partition era began to erode, and, by the early 1970s when “The Troubles” began, had unraveled completely.

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|  | A brief history of the Northern Ireland “Troubles” |

**1688: William of Orange arrives**  
The British invite William of Orange, a Protestant prince from the Netherlands, to rule England and Scotland. When he arrives in Britain James II - the ruling, Catholic king - is deposed and flees to Ireland. In 1690 William defeats James at the Battle of the Boyne, in north-eastern Ireland, after which the Protestants who fought alongside William are known as Orangemen. The battle is commemorated every July 12 with Orange marches.

**1916: The Easter Rising**  
Centuries of political and religious battles over whether Northern Ireland should remain part of the UK culminate in the Easter Rising on April 24 when of Irish rebels seize strategic buildings in Dublin, notably the general post office. About 20,000 British soldiers enter the city and fire on the rebels. The fighting lasts for five days and the rebels are forced to surrender. Seventy are sentenced to death and 15 are executed, fuelling support for Sinn Féin.

**1919-1922: The war of independence, and partition**  
Under the leadership of Michael Collins the IRA uses violence to force Britain to negotiate. The Government of Ireland Act is introduced, along with two parliaments, one in Dublin and one in Belfast. The settlement establishes the Irish Free State, ruled by the Dublin parliament, but leaves Northern Ireland part of the UK. Violence escalates as Catholics oppose partition.

**1922-26: Civil war and a split in Sinn Féin**  
Anti-partition forces, now known as the Free State Army, take up arms against former IRA comrades. Fighting lasts for just over a year and leaves Michael Collins dead. The provisional government puts down the violence, and over 1,000 rebels are imprisoned without trial. The leader of the Free State Army, Eamon de Valera, splits from republican colleagues and founds the Fianna Fail party, which will come to dominate Irish politics.

**1939: Bombing campaign in England**  
The IRA launches a bombing campaign in England. The Irish Free State, fearing for its independence, executes five IRA leaders and interns many more republican volunteers.

**1969: The Troubles begin in Northern Ireland**  
The Royal Ulster Constabulary attacks a Catholic civil rights protest. Counter-demonstrations by Protestant loyalists - so called for their "loyalty" to British rule - lead to escalating violence. Frustrated by what they see as the passivity of the IRA's leadership, some members form a new group, which they call the Provisional IRA.

**1971-72: Internment and Bloody Sunday**  
Nearly 2,000 people are interned, or arrested and held without trial, in a bid to prevent further attacks on British troops. After internment is introduced, on August 9 1971, violent protests follow that leave 17 dead. The move increases support for the IRA. On January 30 1972, British soldiers shoot dead 13 men and injure 14 others, one of them fatally, during a civil rights march in Derry against internment on what will become known as Bloody Sunday. Thousands of people sign up to the IRA. Amid increasing violence, the Belfast parliament is suspended and Northern Ireland is ruled directly from London.

**November-December 1974: The Birmingham bombings**  
Twenty-one people are killed in November when the IRA bombs two pubs in Birmingham city centre. The British government responds by introducing the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which allows suspects to be held without charge for up to seven days. A bomb also explodes at the House of Commons in London, injuring 11 people. In December, the IRA calls a ceasefire in the belief that the British are about to pull out of Northern Ireland. Armed violence soon resumes.

**The 1980s: Hunger strikes**  
Bobby Sands, the IRA leader held at the Maze prison, dies after refusing food for 66 days. Nine others die of starvation between May 12 and August 20 1981. Many people believe them to be martyrs to the struggle for independence, and around 10,000 people attend Bobby Sands' funeral. Support for the political wing of the IRA increases.

**1993-94: Independence declared and another ceasefire**  
Downing Street issues a declaration that the people of Northern Ireland should be free to decide their own future. Sinn Fein is offered a seat in parliament as long as IRA violence ends. The IRA declares a complete cessation of military activities on August 31 1994.

**July 1996: Riots over marches**  
Violent protests spread across Northern Ireland when police block a key Orange Order parade near Portadown, an Orange heartland. Police back down after four nights of Protestant riots across Northern Ireland and the parade passes through Portadown's main Catholic district, triggering three nights of Catholic riots and IRA gun attacks.

**February 9 1996: Ceasefire collapses**  
The IRA bombs Canary Wharf in London after John Major's government insists that decommissioning occurs as a precondition of talks. Two people are killed and millions of pounds worth of damage is caused.

**July 1997: Ceasefire restored**  
The IRA announces another ceasefire, allowing Sinn Féin to join multi-party talks. Talks are hindered by paramilitary killings on both sides, but continue until April 1998.

**April 1998: The Good Friday agreement**  
The Good Friday agreement is reached on April 10 1998. It includes a devolved parliament and a role for the Republic of Ireland in Northern Ireland affairs. Democratic Unionists oppose the deal as giving too much power to Catholics.

**July-August 1998: Violence and the Omagh bombing**  
Britain having in January granted a Catholic-Protestant commission new powers to restrict Protestant parades, police and British troops in July block Portadown's Orangemen, who abandon a week-long standoff only after three young Catholic brothers are killed in an arson attack. On August 15 a car bomb kills 29 people in Omagh, in County Tyrone. The Real IRA, a breakaway group, claims responsibility.

**December 2004: Decommissioning deal unravels**  
The first act of decommissioning was announced in October 2001 but the third, in October 2003,was rejected by unionists. In December 2004 the deal starts to fall apart over photographs of IRA arms.

**2005**  
**February:** The IRA withdraws its offer to complete decommissioning. In April Gerry Adams appeals to the IRA to continue the deal.

**June 25:** Orangemen postpone a parade on Belfast's Springfield Road because the Parades Commission insists the Orangemen must avoid their usual route, near Catholic homes, and go through an abandoned factory site instead.

**July 12:** Orangemen mount their largest annual parades across Northern Ireland. They observe Parades Commission restrictions in several areas, including on Springfield Road, but vow to stage their postponed June 25 parade eventually without restrictions. Nationalist militants [bombard](http://www.guardian.co.uk/northernireland/page/%20http:/www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,1527200,00.html) police and British troops with grenades and other weapons after a small Orange parade passes an IRA power base in north Belfast. About 100 police and 10 civilians are wounded.

**July 28:** The IRA announces that it has formally abandoned its armed campaign. Britain unveils a plan to cut the number of military bases and disband the army's locally recruited Protestant divisions.

**August 4:** The Ulster Volunteer Force, one of Northern Ireland's biggest outlawed Protestant groups, directs a mob attack on police units in the hardline areas of Shankill and Crumlin Road, in Belfast, after raids on homes of some of its members. A five-hour riot injures 40 officers and damages dozens of cars.

**September 5:** A UVF-directed mob on Shankill attacks police again following more police raids. The next day the British and Irish governments receive a report from international experts on violence being committed by UVF and other loyalist gangs.

**September 9:** Orange leaders appeal to Protestants to stage sit-down street protests as Saturday's restricted march proceeds.

**September 10:** Rioting erupts at several Orange protests at key roads and intersections and on the main highway running through Belfast. Orangemen and supporters scuffle in streets with police backed by British troops. Up to 50 police officers are wounded in two nights of rioting.

**AP Human Geography Due Thursday (1/28)**

HOMEWORK:

Write a **450-500 word** (roughly 1 ½ pages typed or 2 pages written) explanation of what the *challenges* are in Northern Ireland. In particular you should discuss the history, religious issues, and border problems. Use examples and facts from the readings, your discussions and the film.