



# TRIUMVIRATE

## MITMUNC 2014

Hello delegates!

We are delighted to welcome you to the Triumvirate Committee of MITMUNC 2014. Triumvirate operates a little differently than traditional committees and crisis committees, so come prepared to be flexible and adapt to constantly changing conditions. The topic for this year's Triumvirate Committee is the Irish War of Independence, 1919-1922, with committee members representing the Irish Republican Army (IRA), British Government, and Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). This is a challenging and multifaceted topic, with a multitude of important actors, events, and motivations, so do not be discouraged if it seems difficult to research and prepare. We believe that this topic will provide an excellent background for exciting crises and creative compromises. Please note that we will be "freezing time" on December 1, 1921, a few days before the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty that brought an eventual end to the war. Bear in mind, then, that events do not have to unfold as they did in real life: the treaty must not necessarily be signed and a historically accurate accord must not necessarily be reached. The future of Ireland and Britain is wholly in your hands, and you may act as you see fit.

As you begin to research your individual, focus not only on the historical facts and events of the War but also on the psychological and emotional aspects as well. This was a war of loyalties, a battle for a homeland, and a fight for independence that stretches back throughout the centuries. Delve deep into the reasoning behind each argument, treaty, and act of aggression. Put yourself in the mindset of an Irish rebel, fighting for the freedom and sovereignty to which you feel entitled, or a British loyalist, defending the unity of your homeland from separatist violence. This is a topic fraught with violence, betrayal, and intrigue. Start thinking of ways to end the violence and reach a compromise satisfactory for all sides. We can't wait to see what you accomplish!

And now, here's a little bit about us:

*Tanya Talkar* is the Crisis Director of Triumvirate, a sophomore studying Computer Science. This is her second year working with the Triumvirate Committee and looks forward to seeing all of the delegates in February!

*Kathryn Buggs* is Head Chair of the Irish Republican Army committee, and this is her second year chairing for MITMUNC. She is a sophomore from Wisconsin studying economics and Spanish, and she loves dancing, swimming, and listening to an eclectic mix of Eminem, Bruce Springsteen, and Irish traditional music.

*Nikhil Punwaney* is a freshman from Dubai.

*Matt DeCross* is Head Chair of the British Government committee. He is a sophomore majoring in physics and mathematics, and this is his second year chairing for MITMUNC. His interests include

theoretical physics research, programming, and percussion, none of which are particularly Irish (or British).

*Xavier Hubbard* is a junior majoring in electrical engineering and computer science, and this is his first year chairing for MITMUNC. His interests include signal processing, analog design, chess, and playing the violin, one of which is particularly Irish.

*Steven Holcomb* is a sophomore studying mechanical and biomedical Engineering (course 2A-20). He is a midshipman in Navy ROTC and eventually wants to go to medical school and do biomedical research.

Best,  
Your Chairs

# Irish War of Independence

## Background and History

The Irish War of Independence, although officially spanning 1919–1921, was the result of contentious legislation and civil unrest going back years before that, and the issues it posed continued to plague Ireland for many years after. It was primarily a fight between the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the British Government, and the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC)—the British Government’s military force in Ireland. Here is a very general sketch of each group, but it is up to you to dig deeper in your own research. What motivated the individual and group you represent? What were their goals and visions for the future of Ireland? Knowing how the war was resolved in real life, what are alternative routes that the IRA and British could have taken, and what ramifications would that have had for the future?

## Irish Republican Army (IRA)

On 11th April 1912, Prime Minister H. H. Asquith introduced the Third Home Rule Bill to the British Parliament. The bill pressed for self-government in the United Kingdom for Ireland. However, there was major debate regarding whether the Bill should be passed and much conflict arose between the Commons and the Lords. During this time, two groups, The Ulster Volunteer Force and The Irish Volunteers, were formed. As the British Parliament prolonged the passing of the Bill, the two volunteer forces began to show some sorts of uprising. However with the beginning of World War I in August 1914, the Irish Parliamentary Party reduced its agitating

efforts and agreed to support the British war effort. Soon after, the Bill was formally enacted, but its implementation was delayed. At this time, the Irish Volunteers split. While the National Volunteers served in the war as part of the British Army, the rest were led by the secret Irish Republican Brotherhood, refused to join the British army and held onto the name “Irish Volunteers”.

The Irish Republican Brotherhood planned to launch an armed rebellion in pursuit of Irish independence. On 24th April 1916, volunteers went ahead with the Rising against the British rule; however, the British force put down the rebellion in a brutal manner. During this outrage, the name “Irish Republican Army” was introduced.

At first, these outbreaks gained the Irish Republican Army resentment from the general public. However, attitude towards the situation quickly shifted to the revolutionaries’ side due to the disgust over the executions of its 16 leaders. This was further heightened in 1917 with the Conscription Crisis, an attempt by Britain to enforce mobilization on Ireland to strengthen its weakening war effort. By 1917, this was particularly disliked in Ireland due to substantial losses on the Western Front. Around this time, an Irish nationalist party, Sinn Féin, was wrongly credited with orchestrating the Easter Rising. The republican survivors of the Rising took over Sinn Féin in 1917 and dedicated the group to establishing an independent republic. From here on, the Irish Volunteers were re-organized as the army of this Republic. Hence they began to refer to themselves as the Irish Republican Army, or IRA. The first steps

towards reorganizing the defeated Irish Volunteers were taken on 27 October 1917 when a convention took place in Dublin.

De Valera was elected president. A national executive was also elected, composed of provincial representatives (including Dublin). In addition, a number of directors were elected to head the various IRA departments. Sinn Féin MPs elected in 1918 fulfilled their election promise not to take their seats in Westminster but instead set up an independent "Assembly of Ireland", or Dáil Éireann, in the Irish language. On 21 January 1919, this new, unofficial parliament assembled in the Mansion House in Dublin. On 21 January 1919, members of the IRA Third Tipperary Brigade seized a quantity of gelignite and two Royal Irish Constabulary constables were shot dead in the process. The conflict soon escalated into guerrilla warfare by what were then known as the Flying Columns in remote areas. On January 31, 1919, the IRA organ, *An tÓglách* ("The Volunteer") published a list of principles agreed between two representatives of the Aireacht, acting *Príomh Aire* Cathal Brugha and Richard Mulcahy and the Executive.

In 1919, involved the reorganization of the Irish Volunteers as a guerrilla army. In 1919, Collins, the IRA's Director of Intelligence, organized an assassination unit based in Dublin that killed police involved in intelligence work. The RIC abandoned most of their smaller rural barracks in late 1919.

From January to July 1920, the IRA carried out attacks on the fortified police barracks located in the towns. The British declared martial law in parts of the country — allowing for internment and executions of IRA men. The British deployed paramilitary forces, the Black and Tans and Auxiliary Division, and more British Army personnel into the

country. While most areas of the country saw some violence in 1919–1921, the brunt of the war was fought in Dublin and the southern province of Munster. In April 1921, the IRA was again reorganized, in line with the Dáil's endorsement of its actions, along the lines of a regular army. In May 1921, the IRA in Dublin attacked and burned the The Custom House. The action was a serious setback as five members were killed and eighty captured. By the end of the war, in July 1921, the IRA was very hard pressed by the deployment of more British troops into the most active areas and a chronic shortage of arms and ammunition. In the summer of 1921, the war was abruptly ended.

Under the Government of Ireland Act 1920, Ireland was partitioned, creating Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland.

## British Government

In 1800, an Act of Union joined the United Kingdom and Ireland as one nation, thus igniting over a century of fierce separatism and occasional violence. Throughout the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the British government, as a whole, stubbornly resisted the efforts of the Catholic nationalists in the Irish Parliamentary Party, who advocated for home rule. In Britain, opinions were divided roughly along party lines. The Liberal Party tended to promote home rule for Ireland, while the Conservative Party would have preferred appeasing the nationalists by passing pro-Irish Acts of Parliament. Regardless, the Irish nationalists reacted with vitriol. The nineteenth century saw several violent uprisings including the Rebellion of 1848 and the Fenian Uprising of 1867, as well as more legislation-oriented opposition via the Repeal Association and the Home Rule

League, which sought to repeal the Act of Union of 1800 and gain permanent home rule, respectively (Mansergh 244). In the final years of the century, two bills for Irish home rule were introduced to Parliament under the Liberal-backed government, but each was defeated. It was not until 1914 that a successful measure of devolution would be introduced to the British Parliament via the Home Rule Act of 1914.

The onset of the First World War prompted the government to pass the Suspensory Act of 1914, postponing and effectively reverting the measure of home rule. Irish Unionists fearing Catholic home rule reacted by forming the first armed group of what would soon become a full-scale rebellion, the Ulster Volunteer Force (“The 1916 Rising...”). This sect later would in fact split off from Ireland to become Ulster, which is still today part of the United Kingdom under home rule.

In 1916, the first outbreak of violence via the Easter Rising was swiftly crushed by the British. However, the British response in the aftermath of the Easter Rising did nothing but agitate Irish citizens and ensure that nationalistic tendencies were not confined to the small radical republican sects. Following Easter Week, on April 26, the government declared martial law, and the leaders of the rebellion were court-martialed and executed in early May (“The Easter Rising”). In response, the radical Sinn Féin movement was able to seize control of the Irish voice in Parliament and in 1919 declare independence. Strangely, the British response was largely apathetic. The principal measure taken by the government was via the passage of the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, which ensured the northern Unionists would remain

part of the United Kingdom as Ulster (“Nationalism and the...”).

Only after the complete onset of war did the British mobilize, primarily under the militant direction of Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon. Under his leadership, the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act of 1920 was passed, allowing installation of martial courts throughout Ireland. Furthermore, the deployment of the military divisions known as the “Auxiliaries” and the “Black and Tans” led only to needless violence against civilians, including the infamous massacre at a sporting event known as “Bloody Sunday” in November 1920 (“Nationalism and the...”). Through a combination of increasing support for the nationalist Sinn Féin and an increasing distaste for the bloodshed shared by the British public, the British government negotiated a treaty with the Irish by late 1921 via the aptly named Anglo-Irish Treaty (“The Easter Rising”).

The common vein throughout the British reaction is an overwhelming blindness to the political situation in Ireland. Despite the numerous grassroots organizations created in response to the radical Irish demands for independence, the British responded by forcing through a home rule bill which had been rejected by Parliament for thirty years. The stark reality of the situation may have been Britain’s preoccupation with apparently more pressing global matters, i.e. the impending international war. Once the general British apathy provoked a confrontation with the radical armed movements, the clumsy military overreaction inflamed the mass of the Irish citizenry to action, thus driving the ensuing, possibly unnecessary, war for independence.

## Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC, Irish Loyalists)

The Royal Irish Constabulary was Ireland's home police force from 1822 until 1922, when it was disbanded by the Partition of Ireland. The force was staffed and operated by Irishmen, who were led by Irish and British officers and answered directly to the British monarchy. From its inception, the force was widely despised by the vast majority of Ireland's rural poor, who saw it as a tool by which the British monarchy could exert dominance over Ireland. While it was not always understaffed, it was vastly underfunded and rarely respected by either the British government or the Irish citizenry. Its history was tumultuous.

The first major uprising with which the RIC dealt was the Tithe War, a collection of violent and nonviolent gatherings that arose between 1830 and 1836 where poor Irish farmers protested paying taxes ("tithes") to the Church of Ireland—the protestant church that the British had officially instituted as the state religion of largely-Catholic Ireland. During one gathering, 12 RIC constables were massacred, and the force responded by seizing property and enforcing strict law in towns throughout Ireland. This conflict set the precedent for the next hundred years of RIC existence: as common, mainly Catholic, Irish citizens opposed the British government by opposing the RIC, the force would in turn act harshly against the citizens.

Conflict came to a head in 1918, at the start of the Irish War of Independence. Following the success of Sinn Féin in the election of 1918, Irish citizens began widespread attacks on the RIC. The RIC responded by requesting reserve forces from Great Britain

and eventually resulted in the formation of the Black and Tans, a group of British WWI veterans who brutally cracked down on the Irish rebels, and eventually Irish citizens in general, on behalf of the RIC. Following the conclusion of the Irish War of Independence, the RIC was disbanded as a part of the Partition of Ireland, ending its well-intentioned but tragically violent existence.

## Themes of Debate

British desire to appeal to the increasingly more sectarian Unionist movement directing the sway of Irish public opinion to the nationalists.

Critical foreign policy issue presented by the First World War presents the key historical opportunity for Irish nationalists to seize momentum.

## Questions to Consider

What are the advantages and disadvantages of an independent Ireland vs. Ireland under home rule in the early twentieth century from Britain's perspective, and how could this shape the British political response?

How could Britain more actively respond to Sinn Féin's declaration of independence in 1919 while avoiding war without simply capitulating to the nationalists' demands?

How does Irish involvement with the political players in the First World War (e.g. Germany) affect the British response to the insurrection?

## Specifically for the RIC

Why are you a part of the force? What benefits does the Royal Crown bring to Ireland that would encourage you to support it? What are the RIC's goals? And finally,

how can it accomplish those goals and maintain its existence as an organization? Does your representative support a soft or hard approach to maintaining order, and given your lack of resources, what is within your capabilities?

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