

**‘Miserable conflict and confusion’:
Definitions and Understanding of the Irish
Question in British Newspapers, 1917-21**

Erin Kate Scheopner

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Department of
History, Goldsmiths, University of London

2018

Declaration

Declaration of Authorship

I, Erin Kate Scheopner, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____ Date:

Acknowledgements

This thesis owes much to the kind work and support of many people. Professor Richard Grayson for painlessly guiding me through this process, your sound advising, encouraging support, excellent communication, and reading through every draft. Dr Erica Wald for your uplifting support, reading through drafts, and fuelling me with sweets. Mom and dad for your unconditional love and for *always* supporting and believing in me. Aubrey for your unconditional love, guidance, wisdom, and for paving the way. Ryan, Ellie, and Addie for being my cheerleaders through thick and thin. Grandma Sullivan for your love and pride of your roots. Iris for your friendship, companionship, humour, patience, and wisdom. Chris for your friendship, unending support, and laughter. Mona and Lukas for your friendship, enthusiasm, and continuous encouragement. My extended family, the Rice's, the Tancioco's, the Farley's, the Emswiler's, Andrea, Jamie, Ana, Claire, Lizzy, Chanda, Sarah, Gina, Elisa, Sofia, Emeline, Maggie, Misha, Paz, Chris, Lisa, Denise, JP, Quin, Maggie Mae, and the Goldsmiths Department of History for your support, friendly check-ins, and encouragement. I am indebted to all of you.

Abstract

This thesis analyses British newspaper coverage of the 'Irish question' – Ireland's constitutional relationship with Britain – from the aftermath of the Easter Rising to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, 1917-21. It examines how eleven British newspapers reported and editorialised the situation and how such writing illuminates press understanding of the Irish question. The central question addressed is how did British press definitions and understanding of the Irish question develop throughout 1917-21? This is in order to address a gap in the historiography: how the Irish question was defined within the British press leading to the 'solution' of the Treaty.

This thesis argues that the press concentrated on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question but did not reconcile the fact that the Irish question had fundamentally changed from its pre-war iteration following the postponement of Home Rule. In addition, common tropes of violence, conflict, and emotion that had been historically utilised to explain issues relating to Ireland were retained and the emotiveness of questions of nationhood were not adequately regarded and managed. These debates also occurred within the context of the global war and post-war period in which the importance of civilian morale was recognised. As a result, the press debates on *what* the Irish question was and *who* was responsible for its resolution oscillated and were particularly influenced by the general public distaste of violence and the prospect of an end to conflict through British constitutional politics.

Contents

Introduction	6
Chapter 1: 'Fallen as a bombshell' - The Rise of Republicanism, 1917-18.....	35
Chapter 2: 'A new Ireland surges into view' - Home Rule Reassessed, 1919-20	95
Chapter 3: A 'nightmare to the mind and a laceration to the soul' - The Irish Question, 1920-21	170
Chapter 4: 'A first practical step towards peace' - Truce, 1921	251
Chapter 5: The 'elements of a solution are there' - Treaty, 1921-22	327
Conclusion: "Let us put an end to it." - Anglo-Irish Relations and the Treaty	408
Bibliography	414

Introduction

No act of British state policy in which I have been concerned aroused more violently conflicting emotions than the Irish Settlement.¹ – Winston Churchill

British leader Winston Churchill's recollection came from a man who had served in government through the Great War and took part in countless peacetime controversies, yet it was the 'Irish Settlement' which stood out for him as featuring the most 'violently conflicting emotions'. Such an analysis of politics relating to Ireland is an example of how common tropes of violence, conflict, and emotion were utilised in Britain to explain what had happened in Ireland, often ignoring the underlying grievances or contesting political ideas. This thesis explores how those tropes were put forward in the British newspaper coverage of the 'Irish question' from the aftermath of the Easter Rising to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, 1917-21. It examines how eleven British newspapers reported and editorialised the situation and analyses how such writing illuminates understanding of the Irish question within the British press.

This thesis argues the press concentrated on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question and did not recognise the fact that the Irish question had fundamentally changed from its pre-war iteration and the postponement of Home Rule. This hindered the development of any sense of what the best choice solution might be. These debates also occurred within the context of the global war and post-war period in which the

¹ Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath* (London: Thornton Butterworth Limited, 1929), p. 295.

importance of civilian morale was recognised. As a result, the press debates on *what* the Irish question was and *who* was responsible for its resolution oscillated and were particularly influenced by the general public distaste of violence and the prospect of an end to conflict through British constitutional politics.

The Irish Question

What is the 'Irish question'? Its definition, like any other political 'question', is dependent on the historic context and climate of opinion of the time. The British press discourse on the Irish question during the period analysed, 1917-21, was influenced by the great political and social changes that occurred worldwide in the 19th and early 20th centuries. At the heart of the debate was Ireland's constitutional relationship with Britain and whether or not Ireland would be a united or a divided nation and what sort of position it should occupy (if any) within the United Kingdom. Analysis of British press coverage also suggests this debate was fractured further: was the Irish question about nationality/race, religion, or economics? Was it indeed an Irish question at all, or instead a more narrowly focused Ulster question, or a broader Britannic question addressing Ireland's place within the empire? These (sometimes overlapping) considerations were scrutinised in tandem with the British governments' attempts to resolve the elusive Irish question leading to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 with the press main focus centred on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question.

Considering the legacy of the English (and later British) presence in Ireland gives context for exploring the 1917-21 Anglo-Irish relationship and identifying the origins of

the political problem known as the 'Irish question'. In the initial conquest of Ireland over 1169-72, Anglo-Normans acquired land through victories in a series of battles and steadily centralised control.² This began a connection that complicated the social, religious, economic, and political dimensions of the Anglo-Irish relationship. By the mid-14th century, resurgent Irish rulers increasingly challenged English power.³ However, in 1541, English control was consolidated when Henry VIII was declared King of Ireland in the Irish parliament.⁴

Throughout the 16th and early 17th centuries, colonial expansion in Ireland progressed, especially in Ulster.⁵ Differences between settlers and the indigenous population were exacerbated by the Reformation, which meant that settlers from Britain were now Protestant. A series of conflicts between the indigenous Catholic Irish majority and the Anglo-Scottish settlements followed.⁶ These wars further consolidated British rule and are the genesis for the sectarian split between Ulster Protestants and Irish Catholics.⁷ Beyond theology, this split saw the Protestant minority emerge as the more politically and socially dominant class over Catholics who largely constituted the landless and politically underprivileged portion of society.⁸

² 'The Conquest of Ireland, 1169-72'. *nationalarchives.gov.uk*. The National Archives (formally the Public Record Office; hereafter TNA). Web. 7 April 2017.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kevin Kenny, *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 6.

⁶ Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 30.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Lawrence John McCaffrey, *The Irish Question, 1800-1922* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), p. 2.

In January 1801, the Anglo-Irish connection was formalised with the Act of Union, which united Great Britain and Ireland as the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland'. Consequently, discontented Ireland became a partner in the new body politic.⁹ And, questions of nationality/race, religion, and economics had to be considered. Ireland was both 'colonial' and 'imperial' and, much like other imperial subjects in the settler and crown colonies, Irish men and women developed an ambiguous mixture of identities as members of the global empire and, as a result, the Irish and British populations adopted varied viewpoints of one another.¹⁰ Moreover, the split within Irish political opinion between those who supported union with Britain (unionists) and those who opposed it to varying degrees (nationalists) matured.¹¹

Under the union, a phrase steadily developed in Britain to describe any conflict in Ireland: the 'Irish question'. The earliest use of this phrase in the British parliament was in an 1825 House of Commons debate on 'the state of Ireland', which focused on 'religious animosities'.¹² When Irish Member of Parliament (MP) Daniel O'Connell entered the Commons in 1829, he helped to create modern Irish nationalism through mobilising Irish Catholic national opinion.¹³ O'Connell used the victory of Catholic emancipation, which granted political equality to Catholics across the UK, to repeal the

⁹ Grenfell Morton, *Home Rule and the Irish Question* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1980), p. 7.

¹⁰ Simon J. Potter, *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c.1857-1921* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), pp. 13-15.

¹¹ Ronan Fanning, 'Anglo-Irish Relations: Partition and the British Dimension in Historical Perspective', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1985), 1-20 (p. 2).

¹² HC Deb., 26 May 1825, vol. 13, cols. 841-98.

¹³ McCaffrey, *Irish Question*, p. 19.

union.¹⁴ Prime Minister (PM) Robert Peel treated this call for repeal with indifference, hoping to show that the British government could not be intimidated and undermine confidence in O'Connell's leadership to stunt the growth Irish nationalism.¹⁵ Yet, while 'religious animosities' formed a core challenge to the Anglo-Irish relationship, as union had accentuated, the Irish question encompassed many factors.

In 1844, MP Benjamin Disraeli put forward a definition of the Irish question, which addressed its wide-ranging nature:

[O]ne said it was a physical question; another, a spiritual... they had a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church, and, in addition, the weakest executive in the world. That was the Irish question... The connexion with England thus became the cause of the present state of Ireland. If the connexion with England prevented a revolution... England logically was in the odious position of being the cause of all the misery in Ireland. What then, was the duty of an English Minister? To effect by his policy all those changes which a revolution would do by force. That was the Irish question in its integrity. [sic]¹⁶

Disraeli's definition addressed the implications of union and suggested the British government's Irish policy should assist with Ireland's development. However, this definition ignored the success of industrial growth seen particularly in the northeast of

¹⁴ Jacqueline Hill, 'The Language and Symbolism of Conquest in Ireland, c. 1790-1850', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, Vol. 18 (2008), 165- 186 (p. 179).

¹⁵ McCaffrey, *Irish Question*, p. 51.

¹⁶ HC Deb., 16 February 1844, vol. 72, cols. 1001-96.

Ireland.¹⁷ Additionally, *how* to assist with Ireland's development was not made clear. Ultimately, the constitutional aspect and the difference between what England could consent, and Ireland be contented to receive,¹⁸ formed the foundation of the Irish question for British politics.

The Famine of 1845-52 had a profound impact on the Anglo-Irish relationship and on Ireland's economic and social structures.¹⁹ It ended any hopes that Peel's Irish policy had of soothing Irish nationalism under O'Connell and pushed the agrarian issue to the forefront of the Irish question debates.²⁰ Some considered the British government's response to be a mockery of the union, emphasising Ireland's unequal partnership and exposing the underlying colonial nature of the relationship.²¹ And, mass emigration from Ireland fostered a commitment to Irish nationalism by emigrants, particularly in Britain and America.²²

In 1858, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and its sister organisation the Fenian Brotherhood (also referred to as 'Fenianism') were established in Ireland and the United States. These military societies merged anti-colonial and separatist movements dedicated to the establishment of an Irish Republic, which, unlike O'Connell's nationalism, ignored the social and economic questions and looked to the establishment

¹⁷ Morton, *Home Rule and the Irish Question*, p. 74.

¹⁸ D.G. Boyce, *The Irish Question and British Politics, 1868-1986* (London: Palgrave, 1988), pp. 1-2.

¹⁹ Roy Douglas, Liam Harte & Jim O'Hara, *Drawing Conclusions: A Cartoon History of Anglo-Irish Relations 1798-1998* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1998), p. 50.

²⁰ McCaffrey, *Irish Question*, p. 66.

²¹ Douglas, Harte & O'Hara, *Drawing Conclusions.*, p. 51.

²² McCaffrey, *Irish Question*, p. 64.

of an Irish Republic as *the* solution to Ireland's problems.²³ This formation not only challenged the union and what the British government could consent but also gave a modern militaristic element to Irish dissatisfaction with this republican offshoot of nationalism. Remarkably, the first use of the word 'terrorist' outside of its historically bound context of the French Revolution was in an 1866 British account of the emergence of Fenianism.²⁴ This idea of 'terror' would continue to develop throughout the period analysed in this thesis as the Irish question was continually debated and redefined during a period of international upheaval.

Beginning in 1868, Prime Minister Gladstone initiated a program of Irish reform to halt the spread of Irish nationalism and to address grievances.²⁵ In the 1870s, MP Isaac Butt advocated Home Rule as a solution to the Irish question, calling for the establishment of an Irish parliament with control over Irish affairs, which he believed would reconcile the conflicting class, economic, and religious issues challenging the Anglo-Irish relationship.²⁶ MP Charles Stewart Parnell and the Irish Parliamentary Party also argued for Home Rule in the 1880s, calling for the legislative independence of Ireland and land reforms.²⁷ In 1886, Gladstone introduced the Government of Ireland Bill, which represented the first formal attempt by the British government to enact a law creating Home Rule.²⁸ But, Conservatives and Liberals attacked the proposal for being a

²³ McCaffrey, *Irish Question*, pp. 82-83.; Amy Martin, *Alter-Nations: Nationalisms, Terror, and the State in Nineteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012), p. 162.

²⁴ Martin, *Alter-Nations*, p. 110.

²⁵ McCaffrey, *Irish Question*, p. 86.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 93 & 98.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

concession to extremist Irish parties and a threat to the union and empire.²⁹ This impassioned battle over Home Rule threatened the institution of parliament and, consequently, the British state.³⁰ Ultimately, Home Rule was rejected in the Commons in 1886 and a second proposal was defeated in the Lords in 1893.³¹

As a result of the Home Rule proposal, the Liberal Party split and those opposed to Home Rule, led by MP Joseph Chamberlain, worked as 'Liberal Unionists' with the Conservatives under a single 'Unionist' banner. Initially drawing in a significant number of southern unionists, the anti-Home Rule cause gradually took on a specifically Ulster character, prompting the 'Ulster question'. In 1904, the Ulster Unionist Council was created. This group centralised the unionist forces in Ulster, determined policy, and represented Ulster's interests in the British parliament.³² The Parliament Act of 1911 abolished the absolute veto of the Lords by providing that any Bill passed by the Commons in successive sessions could only be vetoed twice, which meant Ulster leaders could only block the passage of the Home Rule Bill by non-parliamentary means.³³ In September 1912, the Ulster Covenant was signed by almost 500,000 unionists who pledged to resist Home Rule using 'all means necessary', a phrase that implied the possibility of force.³⁴ In early 1913, unionists gave practical effect to this threat by creating the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Later that year, nationalists created the Irish

²⁹ Ibid., 122.

³⁰ Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History 1800-2000* (London: Phoenix, 2003), p. 4.

³¹ Ronan Fanning, *Fatal Path: British Government and Irish Revolution 1910-1922* (London: Faber & Faber, 2013), pp. 10-12.

³² Patrick Buckland, *A History of Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981), pp. 10-12.

³³ Alan J. Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations, 1899-1921* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), p. 70.

³⁴ Ibid.

Volunteers, a group modelled on the UVF.³⁵ The existence of these rival forces meant there was a real threat of civil war.

In April 1912, under Prime Minister Asquith, a third Home Rule Bill passed its first reading in the Commons. Enacting Home Rule was a means of survival for Asquith's government who relied on the votes of the Irish Parliamentary Party, led by MP John Redmond, which held the balance of power in the Commons.³⁶ However, with the Bill's initial passing it became readily apparent that Ulster would not abide by it.³⁷ Civil war looked likely. The Bill eventually passed and received royal assent in September 1914, but by that time the First World War had broken out, and its implementation was suspended, initially for a year but later for the duration of the war.³⁸

The First World War transformed the Anglo-Irish relationship and influenced the political development of modern Ireland.³⁹ In Ireland, both unionist MP Carson and nationalist MP Redmond initially encouraged their supporters to enlist to leverage their respective political aspirations.⁴⁰ However, Irish support of the Great War created a challenge for Irish politics. For unionists, war suggested that a choice between patriotism and politics might have to be made, but the history of conservative rhetoric

³⁵ Cornelius O'Leary & Patrick Maume, *Controversial Issues in Anglo-Irish Relations, 1910-1921* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), p. 35.

³⁶ William D. Rubinstein, *Twentieth-Century Britain: A Political History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 48.

³⁷ Jason Knirck, *Imagining Ireland's Independence: The Debates Over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), p. 28.

³⁸ Fanning, *Fatal Path*, pp. 132-34.

³⁹ Senia Pašeta, *Modern Ireland: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 73.

⁴⁰ Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 177.

dictated that there was no choice but patriotism.⁴¹ Subsequently, the unionist threat to engage in civil war dissipated as the war effort took priority (and in any case, Home Rule was not implemented).⁴²

For nationalists, the Great War extinguished hopes of seeing Home Rule implemented and postponement left them 'hovering on the threshold of success'.⁴³ While Redmond had secured support by calling on Irish citizens to defend the rights of small nations, as war progressed, deeper issues surfaced and undermined this call to action.⁴⁴ The Irish Volunteer movement split as a result of Redmond's decision to pledge troops.⁴⁵ Although a vast majority supported Redmond, a small group actively campaigned against Irish enlistment.⁴⁶ This split ignited movements outside of the popular Irish Parliamentary Party and intensified the main divide in Irish political opinion with the growth of a southern republican contingent.

Ultimately, the Great War led to accelerated militarism within Ireland and provided separatist movements a new sense of urgency and purpose.⁴⁷ Although Irishmen fought in the same army together with a common foe, they still held different political views.⁴⁸ Despite serving the same cause during war, unionists and nationalists

⁴¹ John O. Stubbs, 'The Unionists and Ireland, 1914-18', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (December 1990), 867-893 (p. 869).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Fanning, *Fatal Path*, p. 15; R.B. McDowell, *The Irish Convention, 1917-18* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), p. 45.

⁴⁴ Robert Gerwarth & Erez Manela, *Empires at War: 1911-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 158 & 161.

⁴⁵ Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, p. 73.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 75.

⁴⁸ Richard Grayson, *Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died Together in the First World War* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 1.

had not been brought closer together. And Home Rule's emotional hold over Irish and British politics continued.⁴⁹ This forced a re-examination of the Anglo-Irish relationship and of the British government's Irish policy. Ireland's constitutional relationship and place within the empire, as well as questions about nationality/race, religion, and economics were tested in the midst of other 20th century social debates. This thesis examines that process of scrutiny via British press coverage, definitions, and understanding of the Irish question leading to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

The Role of the British Press

[T]here were three Estates in the Parliament; but, in the reporters' Gallery yonder, there sits a Fourth Estate, more important far than they all.⁵⁰ – Whig MP Edmund Burke

In 1831, the Lords introduced the first reporters gallery, which was subsequently adopted by the Commons in 1834.⁵¹ By the late 1860s, the press had firmly established itself as the independent 'fourth estate' and challenged parliament as the central forum for political discussion.⁵² In the mid-19th century, the press gained more freedom following the repeal of press taxation, or 'taxes on knowledge'.⁵³ Furthermore, following the Franchise Act of 1884, which expanded the right to vote to almost all male heads of

⁴⁹ Jackson, *Home Rule*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Colin Seymour-Ure, *The Press, Politics and the Public: An Essay on the Role of the National Press in the British Political System* (London: Methuen & Co., 1968), p. 241.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁵² Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 30.

⁵³ James Curran & Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: The Press, Broadcasting, and New Media in Britain* (London: Routledge, sixth edition 2003), p. 3.

household, the British electorate grew from 28 percent to 58 percent of the adult male population.⁵⁴ Subsequently, with the steady extension of the franchise, the British domestic situation changed as British politicians became more aware of 'public opinion', whether through mass media or through political groups.⁵⁵ The growth of the press and expansion of the voting public nurtured a relationship that would continue to develop and critically assess the British government's policies.

The business of the British press was boosted with the production of the *Daily Mail* in 1896. The paper was the first in Britain to achieve mass circulation, costing half of what its competitors charged, allowing broader swathes of the population access to its content.⁵⁶ In 1916, the paper's proprietor, Lord Northcliffe, wrote its success was,

[D]ue to the combination of good luck and careful preparations. The good luck was the inertia of the London newspapers... and the great public desire for more cable news.⁵⁷

This desire for more news meant the press was robustly utilised as a forum of political expression by journalists, the public, and politicians.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Hugh W. Stephens, 'The Changing Context of British Politics in the 1880s: The Reform Acts and the Formation of the Liberal Unionist Party', *Social Science History*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer 1977), 486-501 (p. 487).

⁵⁵ Paul Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy 1870-1945: Eight Studies* (London: Fontana, 1984), p. 18.

⁵⁶ Stephen Badsey, 'Mass Politics and the Western Front'. *BBC.co.uk. BBC*, 3 March 2011. Web. 24 October 2016.

⁵⁷ Lord Northcliffe, 'The Rise of "The Daily Mail"', *Daily Mail*, 4 May 1916, p. 4.

⁵⁸ de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy*, p. 33.

During the First World War press coverage flourished. Arguably, it can be considered the 'first media war'.⁵⁹ The creation of the 'home front' concept incorporated civilians into the war effort and morale and consent assumed an increasing importance for mass warfare.⁶⁰ This wartime morale depended on the prospect of victory or ending the war.⁶¹ As a result, it became increasingly apparent that governments could no longer ignore public opinion when creating policies.⁶² In Britain, the lack of opposition, especially after the formation of a coalition government in May 1915, put the British press in a position to question government policies.⁶³ Although Prime Minister Asquith failed to build a relationship with the press, his predecessor, Lloyd George, cultivated an alliance, which helped to keep him in office.⁶⁴ After he was made Prime Minister in 1916, Lloyd George's first meeting was with two newspapermen: George Riddle of the *News of the World* and Lord Burnham of the *Daily Telegraph*.⁶⁵ This indicates his recognition of the power and potential influence of the British press, which was tied to his political stability through support of his agenda.

Throughout the Great War, Lloyd George and the coalition had to balance the war effort with the British domestic situation and the unresolved Irish question. The government's response to debates on the Irish question evolved and adapted to both

⁵⁹ Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 212.

⁶⁰ Matteo Ermacora, 'Civilian Morale'. *1914-1918-online.net*. International Encyclopedia of the First World War (WWI), 10 August 2015. Web. 14 May 2018.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Rubinstein, *Twentieth-Century Britain*, p. 86.

⁶⁴ J. Lee Thompson, *Politicians, the Press, and Propaganda: Lord Northcliffe and the Great War, 1914-1919* (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1999), p. 2.

⁶⁵ J.M. McEwen, 'The National Press during the First World War: Ownership and Circulation', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (July 1982), 459-486 (p. 459).

the changing political situation and the critical analysis within the press. By the end of the Great War, newspapers with a mass circulation 'dominated the political landscape'.⁶⁶ With the further expansion of the British electorate in 1918 – extending the franchise to all men over twenty-one and all women over thirty years old⁶⁷ – the importance of the voting public was amplified too. Lloyd George acknowledged the representativeness of the press and voting public in one 1918 Commons debate, in which he argued:

I would suggest to the House of Commons that, when they complain that the Press is taking a certain line, they must not be too sure that the Press in that respect — I am not referring to any particular Press, I am referring to the Press as a whole — is not interpreting very largely the voice of the nation.⁶⁸

The symbiotic relationship between the press, voting public, and government would continue to evolve in the post-war period together with the Irish political situation. Along with this, the scholarly study of the press developed with media's growth. In the 1920s, the Frankfurt School of writers offered a critique of the media contending it played a role in manipulating society and that totalitarianism was a result of the decline of liberal principles.⁶⁹ However, this critique is not without debate. Subsequent empirical research analysed the ways in which we understand media and its

⁶⁶ Maurice Walsh, *The News from Ireland: Foreign Correspondents and the Irish Revolution* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2008), p. 10.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶⁸ HC Deb., 11 March 1918, vol. 1014, cols 73-146.

⁶⁹ Curran & Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility*, pp. 324-25.

effects.⁷⁰ This research counters the Frankfurt School and instead suggests the political effects of media on popular opinion are complex and varied.⁷¹ Consequently, critical analysis of media and its discourse, from its production, to its reception by society and government, is determined by a number of factors.

Arguably, the 'normative concept' of democracy is one in which the public actively participates and pressures policy-makers to alter their decisions.⁷² The media's attentiveness to specific issues may provide the voting public with an accessible, though fallible, connection to their political environment and may in turn assist elites in interpreting and predicting public reactions.⁷³ Opinions surface from the discussions of individuals attempting to formulate and understand interpretations of the news, which mobilises the community to act.⁷⁴ However, a certain quantity of diversity of speech must exist to advance the causes of democracy.⁷⁵ This diversity of speech helps to ensure variety and supports the nuances of opinion. Ultimately, the press relationship with society promotes democratic values and helps to shape opinion and government response. In 1920s Britain, this concept was supported by the demographic and ideological shift in the government's decision-making, which saw a move from a select

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 329.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 334.

⁷² Diana Mutz & Joe Soss, 'Reading Public Opinion: The Influence of News Coverage on Perceptions of Public Sentiment', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (Autumn 1997), 431-451 (pp. 448-49).

⁷³ Ibid., p. 432.

⁷⁴ Robert E. Park, 'News and the Power of the Press', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (July 1941), 1-11 (p. 2).

⁷⁵ Judith Lichtenberg, 'Foundations and Limits of Freedom of the Press', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Autumn 1987), 329-355 (p. 341).

group of aristocrats to the beginning of a time when popular opinion was more influential in the success and failure of the government.⁷⁶

This thesis has been informed by aspects of media theory and argues that as a tool of recorded history newspapers provide significant insights into past opinions. However, as a source newspapers also offer a challenge to historians. Newspaper content is mediated and compliant to a variety of factors including its proprietor, political structure, and readership. News reports may include biases, inaccuracies, changing political tones, and potential for manipulation. Additionally, newspaper analysis is subjective. Newspapers are not transparent records of the past and need to be approached critically. Yet with that critical analysis, newspapers can provide important evidence of events, influences, prejudices, and assumed beliefs.⁷⁷ While taking these limitations into consideration, and acknowledging the challenges of newspaper analysis, this thesis utilises popular British newspapers to analyse the Anglo-Irish relationship and the path to settlement culminating with the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty.

Historiography

The aim of this study is to analyse the British press debates, definitions, and understanding of the Irish question throughout 1917-21. The impact of the British government's competing political agenda on the Anglo-Irish relationship has been

⁷⁶ Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy*, p. 29.

⁷⁷ Ian Kenneally, *The Paper Wall: Newspapers and Propaganda in Ireland 1919-1921* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2008), p. 2.

covered by many historians who have offered useful scholarship and debate but have done so largely to the neglect of the British press. Unsurprisingly, that is the case for work from the 'high politics' school produced half a century ago, embodied by Maurice Cowling's *The Impact of Labour*, which concentrates analysis on a leadership elite and matters of a narrowly-defined state to the exclusion of wider parliamentary and extra-parliamentary pressures.⁷⁸ However, the same applies to more recent work too. Ronan Fanning offers a case study of high politics in Anglo-Irish relations in *Fatal Path*.⁷⁹ Sheila Lawlor explores the origins of the Anglo-Irish relationship through British Cabinet policy and leadership changes in *Britain and Ireland 1914-23*.⁸⁰ Additionally, Kevin Matthews explores the political priorities of British leaders, particularly of Lloyd George and his relationship with the coalition, in *Fatal Influence*.⁸¹

While these historians have addressed important political concerns for the British government, which in turn impacted its Irish policy, they do not consistently utilise the British press. Through focusing on another perspective, these works do not address what the Irish question was said to be in newspapers and what was put before the British voting public. They do not consider what was meant by anyone who used the phrase 'Irish question'.

⁷⁸ Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour, 1920–1924: The Beginning of Modern British Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); David M. Craig, "High Politics' and the 'New Political History'", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (June 2010), 453-475 (p. 455).

⁷⁹ Fanning, *Fatal Path*, p. 5.

⁸⁰ Sheila Lawlor, *Britain and Ireland 1914-23* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), p. 7.

⁸¹ Kevin Matthews, *Fatal Influence: The Impact of Ireland on British Politics, 1920 – 1925* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004), p. 7.

Alternatively, other historians have considered the British press and the Anglo-Irish relationship. However, the existing work does not specifically address the central aspect of this thesis: British press definitions and understanding of the Irish question. Maurice Walsh has pointed out how media history of this period 'is distinguished by intense interest in the British press barons'.⁸² He adds that in contrast, journalists' perspectives on the Irish revolution are 'regarded as unworthy of detailed consideration'.⁸³ Consequently, the bulk of the historiography considers the relationship between the press and policy to be solely concerned with what the press urged the government to do rather than considering how the press understood the problem.

D.G. Boyce's *Englishmen and Irish Troubles* examines the influence of public opinion on the British government's Irish policy and how it affected Lloyd George's solution to the Irish question.⁸⁴ G.K. Peatling traces political rhetoric and the impact of the First World War on transforming British thinking from empire to commonwealth to address the Irish question in *British Opinion and Irish Self Government*.⁸⁵ Ian Kenneally explores the attempts made to control, influence, or intimidate the press within Ireland through an examination of the British Government's Public Information Branch (PIB) and the Dáil Éireann's Department of Propaganda in *The Paper Wall*.⁸⁶ Nicholas Mansergh explores the failure of the British government to resolve the Irish question prior to 1921

⁸² Walsh, *The News from Ireland*, p. 8.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ D.G. Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles: British Public Opinion and the Making of Irish Policy 1918-22* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p. 180.

⁸⁵ G.K. Peatling, *British Opinion and Irish Self-Government, 1865-1925: From Unionism to Liberal Commonwealth* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2001), pp. 170 - 175.

⁸⁶ Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, p. 2.

contending the British electorate refused to decide in favour of any particular policy in *The Irish Question: 1840-1921*.⁸⁷ Maurice Walsh is unusual in the context of wider historiography in considering in detail the accounts of newspaper reporters who visited Ireland and argues that the Irish republicans effectively communicated their cause through press coverage.⁸⁸ However, within the historiography there remains no consideration of how the Irish question was defined within the British press. This is not because past writers were in some way inaccurate in their interpretations but rather because they chose to focus on a different facet of the subject matter.

Such an analysis of how the British press defined the Irish question is necessary because, as Walsh points out, in Irish historiography ‘newspaper evidence is often cited but rarely analysed’.⁸⁹ We cannot fully understand how the public and politicians might have responded to press accounts unless we clearly define what it was the press was putting forward to them. This study therefore seeks to add to the existing body of research by critically analysing the evolution of British press debate throughout the 1917-21 time period through a study of British press coverage. It assesses how and why British press opinion, definitions, and responses to the Irish situation evolved and shifted. It argues the press lack of commitment to a solution came not from ‘refusal’, as Mansergh suggests, but from a failure even to define the problem in a consistent and accurate manner and to concentrate on the constitutional aspect of the debate, which

⁸⁷ Nicholas Mansergh, *The Irish Question, 1840-1921: A Commentary on Anglo-Irish Relations and on Social and Political Forces in Ireland in the Age of Reform and Revolution* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), p. 180.

⁸⁸ Walsh, *The News from Ireland*, pp. 182-8.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

hindered the development of any sense of what the 'best choice' might be. This was directly connected to the broader historic challenge and neglect of defining *what* the Irish question was, and its intricacies, as well as *who* was most responsible for its resolution.

Methodology

British newspapers comprise the core of primary source research examined within this thesis. Eleven newspapers were selected (see table 1) and were studied (on microfilm) in the Newspaper Reading Room at the British Library, St Pancras. The newspapers were selected for their readership, political affiliation, ownership, and editorship. Each was considered part of the British 'national press' with a national readership.⁹⁰ Despite the difficulty of gathering newspaper circulation totals from 'the period of secrecy between the 1850s and the 1930s',⁹¹ estimates suggest the papers selected represent the vast majority of the highest circulating British newspapers.

The rise of party politics in Britain made for a close connection between political parties and commercial journalism.⁹² The results of this connection can be seen in the newspapers selected for this study. The newspapers consulted were aligned with established political parties, as well as influential business leaders, MPs, and the Prime Minister. While considering these connections, the data collected for this thesis were comparatively analysed by examining daily reporting to trace the press articulation of

⁹⁰ McEwen, 'National Press', p. 461.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 465-466.

⁹² Curran & Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility*, p. 6.

the Irish question to draw out themes, to recognise high points of public response, and to consider the issues in relation to the evolution of the government's Irish policy. The newspapers have been grouped into four categories, defined in the section below: government-loyal, settlement-focused, pragmatic, and partisan.

Table 1⁹³

Category	Newspaper	Circulation Figures (to nearest 000) 1910-30	Political Policy	Proprietor
Government-loyal	<i>Daily Chronicle (post-1918)</i>	400 – n/a	Liberal	Lloyd George (1918)
	<i>Daily Express</i>	400 - 1,603	Independent Conservative	Lord Beaverbrook (1916)
	<i>Daily Mail</i>	900 - 1,968	Independent right-wing Conservative	Lord Northcliffe (1896)
Settlement-focused	<i>Daily Chronicle (pre-1918)</i>	400 – n/a	Liberal	E. Lloyd (1871)
	<i>Manchester Guardian</i>	40 - 47	Independent Liberal	Manchester Guardian (1821)
	<i>The Times</i>	45 - 187	Independent Conservative	Lord Northcliffe (1908)
	<i>Westminster Gazette</i>	20 – n/a	Liberal	George Newnes (1893)
Pragmatic	<i>Daily Mirror</i>	630 - 1,071	Independent	Lord Rothermere (1914)
	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	230 - 222	Conservative	Burnham & family (1855)
	<i>Observer</i>	n/a - 201	Conservative	William Astor (1911)
Partisan	<i>Morning Post</i>	n/a - 119	Conservative	Lady Bathurst (1908)
	<i>Daily Herald</i>	n/a - 750	Labour	Daily Herald & Odhams Press (1912)

⁹³ David Butler & Gareth Butler, *British Political Facts 1900-1994* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1994), pp. 489-501.; McEwen, 'National Press', pp. 466 & 469.

In addition to newspapers, this research utilised a combination of sources from British government departments. British Cabinet papers from the National Archive, Kew were consulted, including official British government reports, meeting minutes, memorandums, and letters. The British Parliamentary Archive was consulted for transcripts of Commons and Lords debates. Spreadsheets for each of these archives were created to track the topics covered and the individuals involved. These spreadsheets helped to connect the newspaper content with the official papers and to identify key figures active in the Irish debates.

Sources from the individuals identified as active in the Irish debates were also consulted. Sources explored include Churchill's memoirs; the personal diaries of Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George's mistress, personal secretary, and second wife; Thomas Jones, Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet; Lord Riddell, newspaper proprietor and government liaison; Austen Chamberlain, British statesman who held the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer and later Lord Privy Seal leader of the Commons; and Sir Horace Plunkett, Irish leader and chair of the 1917-18 Irish Convention. These personal papers were used to corroborate news events and to identify decisive moments for decision-makers.

Categorising Press Coverage

The four newspaper categories – government-loyal, settlement-focused, pragmatic, and partisan – represent the dominant themes identified for the British press coverage of the Irish question from those studied in this thesis. These categories have been employed to assist with addressing the differences in press opinion. However, they

are not rigid, not least because the press reporting during this period oscillated, especially when violence was a factor. While a solution was generally desired, *what* it should be and *how* to implement was debated. The press instead concentrated on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question and the prospect of the end to conflict through British constitutional politics. It is important to note too that towards the end of the period covered, particularly in 1921, these categories breakdown as there was significant cross over and similar press coverage as settlement neared. This will be explored further in later chapters.

The partisan press, the *Daily Herald* and *Morning Post*, represent the newspapers which most consistently supported a particular party or cause and had the clearest views regarding Anglo-Irish relations. The *Herald* supported the Labour party and Irish nationalism and was consistently critical of British rule in Ireland. Conversely, the *Post* supported unionism and advocated Ulster's cause, particularly through the maintenance of the union and what it defined as the restoration of law and order.

The settlement-focused press, the *Westminster Gazette*, *Manchester Guardian*, and *The Times*, were primarily concerned with securing an Irish settlement. These papers changed their tone the most out of those analysed, particularly responding to violence (real or threatened), international opinion, and the potential failure to reach settlement. Depending on the political climate, these papers shifted criticism from the government, who were often described as incompetent and childish, and Irish leaders, particularly Ulster, who were considered to be barriers to settlement. With the exception of *The Times*, these papers were the least forthright in terms of offering

alternatives to the government's Irish policy, focusing a majority of their collective reporting and criticism on the need to resolve the Irish question without clearly defining what that was or how it could be solved and relying on constitutional politics. It is important to note that the *Daily Chronicle* started as a settlement-focused paper, as seen in chapter one, but transitioned to a government-loyal line following Lloyd George's acquisition of the paper in October 1918.

The government-loyal press, the *Daily Chronicle* (from late 1918), *Daily Mail*, and *Daily Express*, were the most supportive of the government's Irish policy as well as the British presence in Ireland. These papers focused their reporting on the perceived need to restore law and order in Ireland, including rationalising the use of British security forces in Ireland, but were different from the *Post* in that they did not align with the Ulster unionist position. Notably, these papers were owned by leading government figures, including Lord Beaverbrook and Prime Minister Lloyd George.

The pragmatic press, the *Daily Telegraph*, *Observer*, and *Daily Mirror*, offered a measured tone and tended to be more cautious and reflective in their reporting. They often backed the international appeal for improvements that had been promised post-war and supported the process of constitutional politics. They were like the settlement-focused press in urging the need for a solution but also supported the government. Like the settlement-focused press, the need to maintain favourable international opinion was also emphasised. Notably, these papers featured recurring columns from various MPs involved in the Irish debates including the nationalist Stephen Gwynn. It is important to note too that the *Daily Mirror* was a pictorial publication. This format

differs from the rest of the papers consulted for this study but was considered of interest due to Rothermere's political connection as Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, his familial connection to Lord Northcliffe, and for the paper's circulation totals.

Chapters

This thesis is split into five chronological chapters. These chapters provide an assessment of the evolution of the press articulation and understanding of the Irish question as identified in the newspapers analysed for this case study. Beginning with an overview of the 1916 Easter Rising, chapter one examines the press reporting on the government's Irish policy during the 1917-18 Irish Convention. The rise of republicanism via Sinn Féin represented a fundamental challenge for the government and its Irish policy. Yet the threat that Sinn Féin posed to settlement was substantially under recognised outside of the common tropes of violence, conflict, and emotion. Despite increased interest in Irish affairs as a result of the events of the Rising and the British government's subsequent response, the press debates were primarily concerned with apparently trying but largely failing to determine *what* the Irish question was and identifying blame for *who* was best charged with resolving it. In these debates, it was mainly thought that the Convention proceedings represented the potential for resolution and that with resolution Sinn Féin would simply go away. But the rise of republicanism had fundamentally changed the Irish question from its pre-war iteration and required a new approach.

The second chapter analyses the evolution of the Irish political situation in the immediate post-war period, 1919-20. It considers the hierarchy of the British government's agenda following the Armistice and the growth of Sinn Féin's political reach. During this period, the Irish question was once more reconsidered, as the Irish War of Independence began, involving a guerrilla war between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and British security forces. Once more, common tropes were utilised in defining what the Irish question was. During this period the press progressed in its recognition of Sinn Féin and was willing to consider the 'Ulster problem' in relation to general Irish settlement. However, there remained an overall neglect to consider that the possibility for a Home Rule type settlement was not going to work on an all-Ireland basis and it likewise did not go far enough for Sinn Féin. Instead, the press continued to focus on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question and to advocate an amorphous solution as violence and threats of violence maintained its interest.

The third chapter examines 1920-21 with a focus on the Government of Ireland Act. This Act represented a continuation of past Home Rule proposals but with some attempt to deal with the Ulster question through the establishment of two Home Rule parliaments. Such an approach might have worked if the main representatives of Irish nationalism had still been the Irish Parliamentary Party. However, they had been replaced by Sinn Féin, whom the British press still continued to underestimate as a factor even if there was growing recognition of their significance. During this time the main lines of the settlement-focused, government-loyal, and pragmatic press addressed the positive aspects that the proposed Act offered. Meanwhile, the partisan press began

to really set itself apart. The violent reprisals seen in the Irish War of Independence, particularly those from the Black and Tans, had sustained press debate and led to critical press coverage of the British presence in Ireland, the effectiveness of the government's Irish policy, and the recognition of outside opinion remained key considerations within the press response. However, the press as a whole failed to consider that Home Rule would not satisfy Sinn Féin at this stage, whether that was a partitioned Home Rule or all-Ireland.

The fourth chapter examines the Government of Ireland Act and the continued pressure for the government to resolve the Irish question throughout 1921. In particular, it analyses the role that the Act played in loosening the British government's attachment to long-held policies, which saw an opportunity to explore settlement through negotiation and concessions. However, the press understanding of how the Act impacted Ulster and Sinn Féin, and subsequently changed the Irish question, suggests once more an overall neglect to thoughtfully differentiate Irish political opinion and to recognise that Home Rule was not a viable solution. Instead, the press oscillated in its blame for *who* was responsible for resolution and indicated just a general intent to resolve the Irish question via constitutional politics.

The fifth chapter analyses the transformation of the Irish question throughout 1921-22 with the press coverage of the negotiation period leading to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921 and the immediate aftermath. During this period, the press commentary focused around fears of failing to achieve a resolution. This coverage reflected an overall pressing desire for settlement, though still undefined, and

sustained weariness of violence. The partisan press remained the exception to this, further underscoring how the Irish question was understood in conflicting manners, with a large majority desiring a settlement at any cost and willing to consider half measures, while the partisan press was unwilling to sacrifice the causes for which they stood, unionism and nationalism respectively. Following the Treaty's signing, the press, with the exception of the partisan *Morning Post*, expressed general satisfaction. The press was able to be satisfied because all they had ever wanted was a solution and therefore neglected to understand what the remaining problems were. Subsequently, with transition, the press reporting and critical analysis of the Irish situation steadily lessened. The exception to this was, once more, the *Post*, which remained active in its criticism and reporting, particularly with the Treaty's ambiguous treatment of the Ulster border.

The conclusion offers a summary of the main arguments presented in this thesis. It also considers the broader context of the Anglo-Irish relationship and the British press coverage, definitions, and understanding of the Irish question.

Chapter 1: 'Fallen as a bombshell' - The Rise of Republicanism, 1917-18

This great experiment will mark a new era in the relations of Ireland with the United Kingdom and the Empire.¹ – Conservative MP Bonar Law, Commons debate

The Irish Convention of 1917-18 signified an attempt to assemble Irish representatives to prepare a plan of government for Ireland within the British Empire. For the British government, the Irish question – concerning Ireland's constitutional relationship with Britain – was a political obstacle that was connected to and influenced by various other political issues. The rise of republicanism represented a fundamental challenge for the government and its Irish policy. And, the combination of First World War experiences and the aftermath of the Easter Rising influenced the priorities of the representative Irishmen entering the Convention. In Ireland, the British government-led prosecution of Rising leaders and participants generated sympathy and facilitated a change in opinion resulting in more Irish citizens supporting the republican call for independence. However, this call for independence neglected Ulster's political aspirations and the unionist desire to remain part of the United Kingdom sustained.

The 'new era in relations' marked by the Convention continued the British press interest in the political proceedings in Ireland and the government's Irish

¹ HC Deb., 15 June 1917, vol. 94, cols. 1384-92.

policy. The Convention was largely considered to have the potential to secure a resolution that would supersede and lead to the decline of the republican movement gaining traction under Sinn Féin. Yet the press did not reconcile the fact that the rise of republicanism had fundamentally changed the Irish question from its pre-war iteration. For the partisan press, the Irish question was a matter of recognising the individual interests of the Irish causes that each supported: nationalism for the *Herald* and unionism for the *Post*. Within the government-loyal press, the violence of the Rising and emergence of republicanism was reported to be a threat to the government's agenda. However, opinion differed on what the main threat was and how to confront it. The settlement-focused and pragmatic press each offered the most hopeful commentary with regard to the potential of the Convention to lead to settlement and each likewise warned against the potential failure to reach an agreement. The settlement-focused press, however, were more vocal than the pragmatic press with regard to criticising the government.

The press failure to adequately define the Irish question was by not taking into account the way in which opinion was already changing in Ireland following the Rising. It was violence and the threat of violence that garnered press attention but beyond violence there was no clear sense of what the Irish question was. The emotiveness of questions of nationhood was underestimated and the constitutional aspect of the Anglo-Irish relationship was instead prioritised. Beginning with an overview of the 1916 Easter Rising, this chapter examines the

press reporting on the government's Irish policy during the 1917-18 Irish Convention period. The main issue examined is how was the Irish question articulated in the press following the events of the Rising?

Republicanism

The government of Ireland by the English has continually tended to reduce the Irish in emotion and intellect to the status of a child – and the English have now to deal with the outbursts that such a training has rendered inevitable.² – Index, *Daily Telegraph*

The tensions of British rule in Ireland reached a critical point during the Great War. The 'outbursts that such a training has rendered inevitable' manifested in the Easter Rising, which set the course for a period of sustained British press coverage and debate on the Irish question and its resolution. On Easter Monday 1916, a republican charge to establish an independent Irish Republic was launched. Some 1,500 members of the Irish Volunteers joined with members of the Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan seeking to end British rule in Ireland by seizing a number of buildings around Dublin, assembling a provisional government, and reading the proclamation of the provisional government of Ireland.³ The British government responded by dispatching British troops who engaged in heavy

² Index, 'Ireland and Sinn Fein', *Daily Telegraph*, 9 July 1917, p. 6.

³ Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 75-77.

exchanges of fire over a week, resulting in 485 deaths and over 2,500 injuries, the majority of which were civilians.⁴

Following the Rising, the British government established martial law for the whole of Ireland.⁵ This move inconvenienced the ordinary Irish citizen who was not interested in the rebellion and was perceived by many as a communal punishment.⁶ The government also sought retribution against the rebellion leaders, making mass arrests of known participants and ordering a series of executions on Irish leaders charged with political crimes. In total, sixteen participants were shot, 3,500 'suspects' were arrested, of which 1,500 were quickly released, and the other 1,841 interned.⁷

For the British government, the executions were considered to be the least that could be done in a time of war.⁸ Yet with more direct knowledge of the Great War warfare circulating, the first cracks in domestic morale appeared,⁹ which coincided with the events of the Rising. Republicans and nationalists referred to the Western Front in their claims that the rebels had fought fairly and bravely and therefore had the right to be treated as prisoners of war.¹⁰ For the British press, while the crime of rebellion was legally punishable by death as an act of high

⁴ Enda Kelly, '1916 Necrology 485'. *glasnevintrust.ie*. Glasnevin Trust, 10 March 2015. Web. 9 April 2017.; Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, p. 77.

⁵ Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, p. 79.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Tom Garner, '1916's Easter Rising transformed Great Britain as well as Ireland'. *historyanswers.co.uk. History of War*, 22 April 2016. Web. 22 October 2017.

⁹ Ermacora, 'Civilian Morale'. *1914-1918-online.net*.

¹⁰ Ibid.

treason, how to contend with the political fallout thereafter was less clear. Subsequently, this period saw significant press debate that worked to define and assess the Irish question. However, the press largely overlooked the threat that republicanism as represented by Sinn Féin posed to settlement and instead tropes of race and violence were put forward as securing Ireland's place in empire remained paramount.

For the settlement-focused press, the Rising had potential negative ramifications on international opinion and because of this the need to resolve the Irish question was underscored. This was articulated in a series of articles and letters to the editor featured in *The Times*. In one correspondent's report it was argued, 'having easily crushed the rebellion, we are... confronted with the immeasurably more difficult task of dealing with its political aftermath'.¹¹ A letter to the editor by nationalist MP Hugh Law similarly contended, 'It is when we come to deal with charges, not of murder but of insurrection, that difficulties begin and differences of opinion are permissible'.¹² In another letter to the editor it was argued that the government's handling of the insurrection destroyed 'the sympathy which, when the outbreak occurred, was largely on the side of the Government'.¹³ The letter continued,

¹¹ Own Correspondent, Washington, 'American Comment', *The Times*, 15 May 1916, p. 10.

¹² Hugh A. Law, 'Justice and Vengeance', *The Times*, 16 May 1916, p. 10.

¹³ Halifax, 'The Irish Problem', *The Times*, 14 November 1916, p. 10.

If Sir Roger Casement and the leaders of the rising had been shot at once, in the course of putting down the insurrection, no one would have complained. It is the trials and executions afterwards which have done the mischief.¹⁴

While letters to the editor cannot be read as necessarily indicative of any paper's editorial position, in these cases, along with the correspondents' report, they were an element in the papers' consideration of the challenge of the government's post-Rising response strategy. This set a settlement-focused tone that the paper would progress and refine throughout the Irish question press debates. Significantly, the complexity of distinguishing war crimes of proven murderers against those known to have simply participated in the Rising was underscored. As another editorial warned,

A legend is already in existence in Ireland, and is in danger of becoming historical, to the effect that a few harmless idealists, fighting heroically for their ideal, have been butchered in cold blood by an overwhelming and vindictive Army.¹⁵

The government-loyal press differed from the settlement-focused press characterisation of Irish leaders and was unsurprisingly the most critical of the insurrection and the potential it had to threaten British interests. This was captured

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ 'Mr. Asquith's Task in Ireland', *The Times*, 22 May 1916, p. 9.

in a cartoon featured in the *Daily Mail* that depicted U.S. President Wilson and 'The All Highest' Irish politician accompanied by a Sinn Féin friend.¹⁶ The cartoon's title, 'More Promises', suggested that the Irish leaders were fickle and untrustworthy. This was further emulated in the mannerisms of the political leaders as Wilson looks to his Irish counterparts in a sceptical manner as he contemplates their ability to 'behave like gentlemen'.¹⁷ While it is difficult to know the intention or reception of this cartoon, at its core it offered an observation of the Irish-American relationship and characterised the Irish leaders as cartoonish delinquents. This characterisation worked against the portrayal of martyrdom that had surfaced following the British-sanctioned executions and followed historic tropes of conflict and terror depictions of Irish people. It likewise supported the government's focus on the political connection with America, which was particularly important for securing assistance in the Great War.

¹⁶ Louis Raemakers, 'More Promises', *Daily Mail*, 4 May 1916, p. 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*



'More Promises', *Daily Mail*, 4 May 1916, p. 10.

Caption: 'Well sir, if you really insist, we might try to behave like gentlemen.'

Meanwhile, the response by the partisan press set the stage for the tone that each paper would take with the *Morning Post* supporting unionism and the *Daily Herald* nationalism. One correspondent's report in the *Post* contended,

It is not an ordinary political crisis, where a concession here or a readjustment there will achieve a temporary solution and all the

individual leaders to get on with the work at hand. It is here a question of building right from the foundation.¹⁸

This line of argument demanded the government resolve the Irish situation following the shock of the Rising, which had propelled the need for resolution. However, from the onset, striking a balance with the Irish parties and building a solid foundation was a challenge. Since the Rising had neglected to consider the political desires of unionists, calling instead for an independent Irish republic, it worked against the historically developed agitation and split in Irish political opinion. The topic of neglect was emphasised in another article by a political correspondent who argued, 'In all that is being written and said about a settlement of the Irish question the position of the Unionists in the three Provinces outside Ulster has been almost ignored'.¹⁹ These contentions offer an early indication of the political tone the paper would develop in its reporting of the Irish situation and suggest from the *Post's* perspective, Ulster needed to be considered in resolution.

Conversely, the *Daily Herald* put forward support of nationalism, blaming unionists and the British government equally for their roles in the aftermath of the Rising. One article argued, 'The guilt of the massacre is upon Sir Edward Carson's hands; and, in a lesser degree, Mr. Asquith, who shrank when the time called for action'.²⁰ This contention advanced a view, which would also find some support in

¹⁸ Own Correspondent, 'Mr. Asquith's Task', *Morning Post*, 17 May 1916, p. 5.

¹⁹ Political Correspondent, 'The Irish Dilemma', *Morning Post*, 27 May 1916, p. 4.

²⁰ Harold J. Laski, 'The Irish Rebellion', *Daily Herald*, 27 May 1916, p. 4.

the settlement-focused press, which denounced Ulster for blocking the way to settlement. It also questioned Asquith's 'wait and see' policy with Ireland, which lacked firm action and instead allowed issues to simmer. The article concluded,

The England that is battling for the rights of small nations has here a unique opportunity to prove her earnestness. That, without question, is the only security for Irish loyalty... The misery of Ireland is England's opportunity.²¹

This argument flipped the contention that 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity' to propose a new way of thinking of the Irish question. It also appealed directly to England's active involvement in the Great War and sought to solicit sympathy by linking their war effort to the Irish cause. Overall, this article advanced a sympathetic tone for the Irish cause and challenged the liberal nature of British politics, which was a line the paper would continue to develop as the Irish situation evolved.

Later in 1916, the press largely turned against Prime Minister Asquith and called for him to be removed from his duties.²² The press helped to push a showdown between Asquith and Secretary of War leader Lloyd George, with many papers advancing support of Lloyd George in their columns.²³ Lloyd George had

²¹ Ibid.

²² Rubinstein, *Twentieth-Century Britain*, p. 87.

²³ J.M. McEwen, 'The Press and the Fall of Asquith', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (December 1978), 863-883 (p. 878).

been commissioned by Asquith to facilitate negotiations with Irish leaders following the Rising.²⁴ During this time he came to view his Liberal colleagues as timid and doubted their capacity to address the urgent war issues,²⁵ drawing favour from those who wanted a stronger British war effort. On 5 December 1916, Asquith formally resigned and Lloyd George became Prime Minister the following day.²⁶ Lloyd George became leader of the second coalition government of the war and increasingly relied on his conservative colleagues, with whom the Ulster unionists were allied.²⁷ The Irish question remained a relevant issue during Lloyd George's tenure and its resolution would come to define his career.

Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George's mistress, personal secretary, and second wife, addressed the Prime Minister's concern with solving the Irish question in an April 1917 diary entry that summarised a conversation he had with unionist leader Carson. She wrote Lloyd George sought an Irish settlement on 'imperial grounds' and asserted,

[T]he Irish question is a stumbling block in the conduct of the war. It ought to have been settled last year. I feel that I was a coward then not to insist upon a settlement then. Now that America has come in I get

²⁴ Michael Fry, 'Political Change in Britain, August 1914 to December 1916: Lloyd George Replaces Asquith: The Issues Underlying the Drama', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (September 1988), 609-627 (p. 615).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 620.

²⁶ Rubinstein, *Twentieth-Century Britain*, p. 87.

²⁷ Fry, 'Political Change in Britain', p. 609; Walsh, *The News from Ireland*, p. 45.

the same representations from that side... If we do not settle now, this government will not be able to continue.²⁸

In this exchange, Lloyd George made clear that a settlement for Ireland was not only desired but also necessary. For the government, the Irish situation was tied to the British war effort and consequently to American assistance. Meanwhile, the British press understanding of the Irish question was developing its scrutiny of the government's Irish policy and was influenced by the violence of the Rising and by the government's response to it. Therefore, the impact of the unresolved Irish question and lingering Rising misgivings were the driving force for Lloyd George and the coalition in establishing the Irish Convention in 1917. The decision to convene a convention represented a concerted effort by the government to bring more stability to Ireland following the Rising, to placate dissenting press opinion, and to interrupt the momentum of republicanism.

Irish Convention

[I]t is necessary not merely that the Convention should come to an agreement, but that it should be a Convention whose agreement would be likely to secure the adhesion of all interests.²⁹ – PM Lloyd George, Commons debate

²⁸ Frances Stevenson; edited by A.J.P. Taylor, *Lloyd George: A Diary* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1971), p. 155.

²⁹ HC Deb., 11 June 1917, vol. 94, cols. 612-21.

John Stubbs has pointed to four sources of pressure that led to the formation of the Irish Convention in 1917: first, the nationalist threat of parliamentary disruption; second, imperial pressure, including threats on existing relationships; third, American pressure; and finally, the government's belief in the need for Irish conscription.³⁰ In addition to this, we must consider the British government's overriding concern with the Great War (beyond conscription), which remained the chief interest for the government at this time. Recognising this distinguishing factor and the underlying pressure of the British press debates are vital to comprehending the government's aim in holding the Irish Convention. The Convention was a political tool to pacify the Irish situation and to, as Lloyd George said, 'secure the adhesion of all interests'. It reframed the British government's intentions with Ireland and supported the British foreign policy focus on enlisting the United States as an ally with the intention to secure support for the British war effort. Ultimately, the Convention helped to eliminate many of the external pressures and allowed the government to focus on its war effort while awaiting the Convention's proposed solution, with the goal of seeing a settlement for the Irish question that fitted within the British Empire.

The press debates that had surfaced following the Rising expanded after Lloyd George's proposal for the Irish Convention in May 1917. As one *Times* article contended, the Irish question had 'ceased to be insular and has become an Imperial

³⁰ Stubbs, 'The Unionists and Ireland', pp. 884-885.

concern'.³¹ The imperial connection, especially during wartime, was an important consideration as finding a solution to the Irish question was linked to the stability and security of the British Empire, which was one of the facets of the Irish question. The government had to be tactful in handling its own internal problems and to balance competing resources and priorities to maintain its stature and ensure that important allegiances remained. With Lloyd George's proposal, the government had 'invoked the world to witness its settlement on the Irish question'.³²

Intertwined with the imperial concern was the longstanding issue of Home Rule, which provided another divisive challenge for the Convention. Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, Thomas Jones, rightfully confided in his diary that the Rising had 'irrevocably changed' the nature of the Anglo-Irish relationship and that Home Rule had become outdated.³³ This was surfacely addressed by the pragmatic *Daily Telegraph* in one article that argued while 'the horrors of war... is turning men's minds to hope of some kind of a settlement', from the Ulster point of view, 'Ulster can hardly be expected to disarm so long as the Home Rule question remains where it is'.³⁴ As these contentions indicated, the debate on the Irish question was revived as old controversies, such as Home Rule, were pitted against the changed political situation that the Rising had helped to facilitate. The Convention offered an opportunity to address those challenges.

³¹ 'Ireland and the Convention', *The Times*, 23 May 1917, p. 7.

³² 'Government's Task in Ireland', *The Times*, 9 May 1917, p. 7.

³³ Thomas Jones, edited by Keith Middlemas, *Whitehall Diary, Volume III: Ireland 1918-1925* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 1.

³⁴ 'Irish Problem', *Daily Telegraph*, 17 May 1916, p. 10.

In its inception, the Convention was meant to represent the leading sides of Irish politics via local Irish representatives comprising 101 men in total.³⁵ Irish women's groups, who had vocally lobbied for the right to have representatives, were excluded.³⁶ Additionally, Sinn Féin refused to commit representatives and argued the Convention lacked proportional representation.³⁷ Unionists also expressed scepticism and took time to debate the merits of participating, eventually deciding in June to partake. As these initial participation concerns indicated, by its very nature, the Convention had enormous challenges to face. There was a complicated balance that needed to be maintained, which also had to be counterbalanced with British press opinion. Yet the press was still hindered by *how* to define and resolve the Irish question, which was made more complicated by the fact that the Convention members did not adequately represent the popular concerns of Irish men and women.

Elected Convention chairman, Sir Horace Plunkett, underscored the challenge of the Convention in a diary entry that stated, 'no course in a matter so mismanaged will be free from both injustice & inexpediency'.³⁸ This contention emphasised the importance attributed to the Convention process and its final recommendation. However, the initial apprehensions from Irish participants and

³⁵ Karl F. Geiser, 'The Irish Convention', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (May 1918), 292-296 (pp. 293-294).

³⁶ Senia Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 232.

³⁷ Geiser, 'The Irish Convention', p. 294.

³⁸ Horace Plunkett, '7 June 1917'. *nli.ie*. Sir Horace Plunkett Papers, 1881-1932 (hereafter HPP), National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI). Web. 23 March 2016.

questions from the Rising and the Home Rule debates left an air of uncertainty and scepticism lingering over the Convention that would remain throughout the proceedings. Finding a solution that ‘would be likely to secure the adhesion of all interests’, as desired by Lloyd George, was not a straightforward task. Competing agendas and priorities represented one hurdle, but there were also ancient biases, prejudices, and grudges that would likewise test the work of the Convention.

In an attempt to address some of the outstanding difficulties that remained for the Convention, in June, Bonar Law announced the British government’s decision to release prisoners who had been interned for their participation in the Rising. This decision was reported as being motivated by the approaching session of the Irish Convention.³⁹ The decision to release the prisoners represented a tactical political move by the government to remove, as much possible, outstanding impediments to the Convention. It was intended as a gesture to show its commitment to the proceedings. However, the benefit and implication of the decision was debatable and there was a negative impact to be considered. As one *Times* article detailed,

[T]he most serious feature of this lawlessness is the impression which it has left on Irish Unionists. They suspect that the Government in its anxiety to make an atmosphere for the Convention has been unwilling to enforce law and order.⁴⁰

³⁹ ‘Irish Amnesty’, *The Times*, 16 June 1917, p. 7.

⁴⁰ ‘Disorder in Ireland’, *The Times*, 27 June 1917, p. 3.

The divide in Irish political opinion was underscored in this decision by the government, which served to strengthen the air of scepticism over the Convention.

In July, the results of the by-election for the East Clare constituency in Ireland served to further threaten the prospect of the nearing Convention with the victory of Sinn Féin candidate Éamon de Valera. De Valera was the highest-ranking survivor of the Rising, having been spared from execution as a result of holding American citizenship.⁴¹ Plunkett described the win as a 'death blow' to the Irish Parliamentary Party as leader de Valera ran as an 'out and out Republican'.⁴² The victory was a decisive moment for Sinn Féin and altered the composition of the main divide in Irish nationalist opinion with republicanism replacing nationalism in opposition to unionism. It confirmed that the support for the Irish Parliamentary Party under John Redmond had waned and that the voting majority in Ireland was gradually shifting from less traditional political parties as Irish citizens increasingly sought more radical and independent forms of political representation. This in turn inherently threatened any decision that the Convention members were to propose, as the members did not represent this change in opinion.

Despite its significance, the British press were slow to acknowledge or comprehend the significance of the election result. This was apparent in the *Westminster Gazette's* description of the result, which it reported had 'fallen as a

⁴¹ Pašeta, *Modern Ireland*, p. 80.

⁴² Horace Plunkett, '11 July 1917'. *nli.ie*. HPP, NLI. Web. 23 March 2016.

bombshell’ and that the ‘Sinn Fein majority was as startling as it was unexpected’.⁴³ Post-election, the press collectively fundamentally misunderstood that the rise of republicanism changed the Irish question from its pre-war iteration. While the main press lines addressed the significance of the defeat, they did not connect that the Convention had little hope to address Sinn Féin’s demands or its relevance for Ulster opinion. Instead, the primary focus remained on the constitutional perspective and the impact of the election for the Convention itself, suggesting the press still considered it to be a valuable exercise that could produce an acceptable settlement.

In response to the election, the *Daily Express* contended the Convention had ‘been made more difficult by the Nationalist party’s loss of prestige’ and the *Times* argued that made ‘the Convention more necessary than ever’.⁴⁴ The *Westminster Gazette* similarly contended the significance of the Convention ‘cannot be doubted’ and added ‘if the Convention acts quickly, and the Ulster Unionists can be persuaded to support a scheme of Home Rule for all Ireland, the constitutional movement in Ireland may, it is hoped, yet be saved’.⁴⁵ In an attempt to quell fears by the election result, Plunkett wrote a short article for the *Observer*, as requested by its editor, J.L. Garvin, in which he ‘denied that the Convention would be killed – it might be helped – by East Clare’.⁴⁶ He likewise was reported to have stated: ‘I

⁴³ ‘East Clare’, *Westminster Gazette*, 12 July 1917, p. 3.

⁴⁴ ‘Ireland’s Chance’, *Daily Express*, 25 July 1917, p. 2.; ‘Irish Convention’, *The Times*, 13 July 1917, p. 7.

⁴⁵ ‘East Clare’, *Westminster Gazette*, 12 July 1917.

⁴⁶ Horace Plunkett, ‘13 July 1917’. *nli.ie*. HPP, NLI. Web. 23 March 2016.

don't care whether the Convention is popular or not at the start, nor how many times it is killed. All that matters is the report'.⁴⁷ However, he privately questioned 'whether this will open the eyes of the English government to the real feeling of nationalist Ireland. It is another "too late"'.⁴⁸

The urgency for the Convention to secure a solution before Sinn Féin made more political headway in Ireland was made evident by the East Clare election result. The timing of the Convention was crucial for the British government to address the spiralling Irish political situation by attempting to stifle the growth of an emerging political party that threatened the Anglo-Irish relationship and attracted the attention of the press. However, the threat of republicanism complicated not only the work of the Convention but also the press understanding of the Irish question. As the election result continued to be weighed, more press debate would emerge as fear of the Convention ending was put forward.

Growth of Political Discourse

Has not the Convention already performed a great part of its functions in enabling the Government to avoid dealing with the Irish question?⁴⁹ – Irish Parliamentary Party MP Arthur Lynch, Commons debate

⁴⁷ 'Task of the Convention', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 July 1917, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Plunkett, '11 July 1917'.

⁴⁹ HC Deb., 3 July 1917, vol. 95, cols. 899-900.

The result of the East Clare election tested any hope that the government may have had to 'avoid dealing with the Irish question' with the Convention. As seen in the press coverage, the result also challenged the press understanding of the Irish question and how to achieve settlement. The press neglected to grasp the emotiveness of questions of nationhood and to recognise the rise of republicanism and its subsequent impact on settlement was underscored in the post-election period, which saw the fear of potential 'Irish chaos' put forward. The pragmatic press warned of the potential for the Convention to fail and the consequences it could have on Britain. With this fear, the government-loyal and settlement-focused press remained the most committed to the Convention. Conversely, the partisan press questioned the ability of the Convention to lead to a useful solution, though this questioning did not confront the main issue at stake – namely the way in which Irish opinion was changing with the Sinn Féin victory. Overall, the press debates remained concentrated on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question and continued to address facets of the question, particularly focusing on Ireland's place within the British Empire.

The press debate regarding the Convention was challenged when, prior to the opening session, the Defence of the Realm Act (D.O.R.A.) was enacted, which stipulated that only reports authorised by Chairman Plunkett were granted publication rights.⁵⁰ Consequently, press coverage during the Convention period was largely relegated to editorial columns and letters to the editor that featured

⁵⁰ 'Forbidden References', *Daily Mirror*, 21 July 1917, p. 2.

opinions from those unaffiliated with the Convention. One correspondent's report from the *Daily Chronicle* criticised D.O.R.A., arguing that the government would 'do well to take note' that the Convention, 'on which all is staked, will depend very much on public opinion'.⁵¹ As this argument suggested, the role of British opinion in supporting the work and result of the Convention was a significant consideration. However, it is likewise important to consider the benefit of D.O.R.A. It allowed the Convention to control the dissemination of information and to proceed without fear of potential press meddling. With the challenges that had already presented themselves pre-Convention, this type of constraint was arguably necessary.

The first meeting of the Convention was held on 25 July 1917 with 92 members present.⁵² Following its opening session, the initial reports of the Convention were generally cautiously optimistic, particularly within the pragmatic and settlement-focused press. *The Times* wrote moderate Irish men 'feel that it is a gain that the Convention should meet at all' and the *Daily Telegraph* similarly argued the Convention offered hope for 'a brighter chapter in the history of Ireland'.⁵³ Yet despite this general optimism, the substance of what the Convention represented and sobering reality of what failure could potentially deliver was increasingly vocalised. The *Manchester Guardian* reported that the only difficulty in the path of the Convention was 'that the extremists among the Sinn Feiners, in

⁵¹ Special Correspondent, 'The Irish Convention', *Daily Chronicle*, 8 August 1917, p. 2.

⁵² Geiser, 'The Irish Convention', p. 294.

⁵³ 'Convention Secrecy', *The Times*, 23 July 1917, p. 3.; 'Scenes at the Assembly', *Daily Telegraph*, 26 July 1917, p. 7.

their pursuit of the impossible, may wreck the result'.⁵⁴ *The Times* added that failure by the Convention would 'give the last blow to the prestige of the Nationalist Party and would confront Unionist Ulster with the fact... that the Home Rule Act is on the Statute-book'.⁵⁵ Additionally, the *Daily Mirror* astutely acknowledged that any agreement with Ireland would required every party to,

[R]enounce something – a little... The other course is eternal and yet impotent dissension, with both sides coming into contempt from the world outside them and both also bringing Britain into contempt before the rest of the world stirred by this war to question all things and to demand fundamental solutions for all.⁵⁶

As these contentions suggested, Sinn Féin's potential for disruption was beginning to be considered. However, beyond the Convention breaking down, the commentary did not address what alternative solutions could be approached, particularly in light of Home Rule, which was still on the statute-book. What was acknowledged was the need for compromise and a resolve to see the Convention process through.

The desire for compromise was initially addressed with the format of the Convention, which operated through meetings held across Ireland, including Dublin, Cork, and Belfast. The changing venues allowed for diverse perspectives,

⁵⁴ 'The Irish Convention', *Manchester Guardian*, 27 August 1917, p. 4.

⁵⁵ 'To-day in Ireland', *The Times*, 27 July 1917, p. 7.

⁵⁶ 'Before the Convention', *Daily Mirror*, 25 July 1917, p 5.

which the settlement-focused press were particularly approving of. In one article, the *Manchester Guardian* favourably wrote, 'High hopes are entertained that the visit of the Convention to Belfast this week will give a definite set to the flow of ideas and the growth of friendly understanding and sentiment'.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, a correspondent for the *Daily Chronicle* pointed to the educative possibilities of switching venues stating,

It is a process of education in the conditions of their own country which perhaps was necessary for these representative men, often too localized in their experience; and it is, at any rate, a good preparation for the work they have to do.⁵⁸

As these articles indicated, the change of venue was largely seen as a beneficial step to open the lines of communication and to offer opportunities for exploring settlement suggestions. Whether it would be successful in bridging the political divide remained to be seen.

As the Convention commenced, letters to the editor proved to be a popular form of expression of opinion within the press. The *Manchester Guardian* featured two letters from Thomas Sinclair, a prominent Ulster businessman, outlining what he saw were the obstacles for the Convention. Sinclair's letters pointed to the

⁵⁷ 'Irish Convention's Belfast Visit', *Manchester Guardian*, 3 September 1917, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Special Correspondent, 'The Irish Convention in Belfast', *Daily Chronicle*, 8 September 1917, p. 2.

disturbance that unionists could cause if they did not participate in an agreement.

In one letter Sinclair wrote,

By going with the other provinces to make a united Ireland Ulster can be a shining link in the shield of Empire, but otherwise Ireland still remains the gaping breach in its defences. I speak for many Unionists when I say that if there is to be a settlement the broader its basis the better.⁵⁹

In a subsequent letter Sinclair wrote,

Ulstermen should be aware that if they refuse their aid to unravel the tangle it will be straightened out despite their protests. Ulstermen will help, and Ireland's real hope lies in the Convention.⁶⁰

Though representative of one form of Ulster opinion, Sinclair's letters conveyed the fact that some citizens were aware of the implications of failing to reach a solution and suggested a desire for resolution. These letters brought attention to the role of Ulster, which in the early developments of seeking an Irish solution were often overshadowed by events in the Great War and the rise of Sinn Féin. Additionally, they fitted with the settlement-focused line of the *Guardian* and brought focus on Ulster's ability to harm settlement.

⁵⁹ Mr. Sinclair, 'Ulster Unionists and Irish Unity', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 August 1917, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Mr. Sinclair, 'Ulster and a Settlement', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 September 1917, p. 4.

Irish opinion was also shared in letters to the editor featured in *The Times*.

In one letter it was argued,

No form of settlement... will help the Empire unless it appeases Irish opinion... And it is evident that the form of settlement which we understand is about to be offered, namely, the present Home Rule Act, applied to only a part of Ireland, will not produce that appeasement of Irish demands which is essential to any Irish settlement.⁶¹

Another letter similarly argued,

The urgency of the settlement at this moment is not with Ireland, but to 'save the face' of England before the world in relation to Ireland. This will not be accomplished by any half-hearted measure, nor will any such measures produce additional recruits from Ireland... One thing is certain, that the partition of Ireland, temporary or permanent, in any shape or form, will settle nothing.⁶²

Similar to Sinclair's letters, these contentions put forward a general theme of advocating a solution that acknowledged the demands of *all* of Ireland. Although not aligned to one proposed resolution, these letters of Irish opinion rightly addressed the shortcomings of Home Rule and offered a different frame with which to examine the Convention and to contemplate the Irish situation. Nevertheless,

⁶¹ Arran, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Times*, 2 May 1917, p. 8.

⁶² W.M. Murphy, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Times*, 2 May 1917, p. 8.

they fitted with the general press interpretation of Irish events by still considering that the Convention could positively address Irish desires, again revealing the neglect of comprehending that Sinn Féin demands were not going to be met with a British-sanctioned Convention. Per usual, even following the East Clare election result, defining *what* the Irish question was and *who* was responsible for its resolution was viewed from the constitutional perspective.

As the Convention progressed so too did the growth and influence of Sinn Féin, which continued to threaten the proceedings with calls for dissidence. October 1917 witnessed the death of Thomas Ashe, a Sinn Féin hunger striker who was heavily involved in the Rising, most notably as leader of the Ashbourne ambush that saw twenty-three policemen shot, eight of them fatally, by Ashe and his men.⁶³ Though freed in the June Sinn Féin prisoner release by the British government, Ashe was arrested again in September and charged with sedition, receiving a two-year sentence at Mountjoy prison in Dublin.⁶⁴ He and his fellow prisoners demanded to be treated as 'prisoners of war' and in late September took to a hunger strike.⁶⁵ Ashe died after prison officials botched an attempt to force-feed him, leading some to criticise the officials involved.⁶⁶ Though relatively small in scale, the hunger strike proved to be a high-profile event with an emotional impact on which the British press reported.

⁶³ 'The Sinn Fein Hunger Striker's Death', *Daily Chronicle*, 2 October 1917, p. 3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

The impact of the hunger strike and Ashe's death served to increase the overall tension and saw old feelings from the Rising and fear of Irish terror resurface. Prior to this event, the Convention news reports were sparse as the press observed D.O.R.A. and awaited the Convention's results. As *The Times* reflected, the Convention reports had contained 'the best news that patriotic Irishmen have read in a long time' and 'at this critical moment the death of Thomas Ashe is unfortunate'.⁶⁷ Ashe's death was a grim reminder of the challenges of the Convention and the growth of Sinn Féin. *The Times* reflected in a subsequent article that the hope of the Convention,

[R]ests in the fact that Sinn Fein is still without a rational policy of Irish government, and in the possibility that the whole country may have discovered this fact before the Convention presents its report to the Irish people.⁶⁸

The fear of the Convention unravelling and of Sinn Féin seizing such an opportunity to gain new recruits and sympathy was a growing consideration made more real by the news from Mountjoy prison. Yet as *The Times* report revealed, the press was generally less willing to consider Sinn Féin as a viable threat, instead wishing to see it as a disorganised organisation that could be defeated with a positive result from the Convention.

⁶⁷ 'Death of a Sinn Fein Hunger Striker', *The Times*, 27 September 1917, p. 3.

⁶⁸ 'Growth of Sinn Fein', *The Times*, 5 October 1917, p. 5.

Another Sinn Féin challenge came when a German plot was discovered in America in late October. The *Daily Telegraph's* New York correspondent reported the plot was meant to involve the shipment of 'large sums of money for the purchase of German bonds' to assist in another rebellion in Ireland.⁶⁹ The plot was disclosed by the United States government's offices of the Secret Service and the Department of Justice, who officially charged Baron Max von Recklinghansen, 'a German to whom Count Bernstorff had given authority to act as a secret envoy in the United States'.⁷⁰ Von Recklinghansen was thought to be working with a Sinn Féin leader.⁷¹ Though the plot was foiled, the revelation that another rebellion was being planned was an additional concern that demonstrated the advancement of Sinn Féin. The connection between Sinn Féin and Germany offered another fear that had consequences beyond the Convention as Britain and its allies were actively fighting against Germany in the Great War. As these events indicated, the growth of Sinn Féin's political movement proved both a distraction and a challenge for the British government and the Convention representatives.

On the heels of the news of the German plot discovered in America, Sinn Féin drew additional attention by hosting a convention of its own in late October to rival that of the Irish Convention. The convention featured 'delegates from over one thousand clubs or branches of Sinn Fein throughout Ireland' and the purpose was to formulate 'a Constitution for the government of Ireland according to Sinn

⁶⁹ 'Sinn Feiners in the United States', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 October 1917, p. 5.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ 'Irish Extremists in America', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 October 1917, p. 4.

Fein principles'.⁷² The convention adopted a resolution seeking that all nations 'sanction Ireland's claim to independence'.⁷³ This rival convention was an effort to distance Sinn Féin from the other Irish political parties who persisted in their efforts to work toward an agreed settlement within the British government-sanctioned Irish Convention.

In response to Sinn Féin's convention, the *Manchester Guardian* sent a special correspondent to interview participants. The correspondent reported that some members' conversion to Sinn Féin had 'little or nothing to do with the idea of a Sovereign independent Irish Republic'.⁷⁴ Instead, they 'were prepared to accept Home Rule on the colonial model as a satisfactory settlement' and argued 'the claim to the status of Sovereign independence was scarcely treated seriously'.⁷⁵ The correspondent further wrote of speaking with people who expressed 'their full sincerity in wishing complete and speedy success to the [Irish] Convention'.⁷⁶ The article concluded, 'In the present state of Ireland failure would mean disaster'.⁷⁷ This report indicated that despite Sinn Féin's bold calls for independence there was continued hope for the Irish Convention to produce a settlement. It likewise suggested a desire to see a version of Home Rule enacted if it meant peace, putting the report fully in line with an approach that had failed to come to terms with Sinn Féin's political growth and the historic challenges of implementing such a solution.

⁷² 'Sinn Fein's Aim', *Manchester Guardian*, 26 October 1917, p. 4.

⁷³ 'Sinn Fein', *Westminster Gazette*, 27 October 1917, p. 7.

⁷⁴ 'Sinn Fein Converts', *Manchester Guardian*, 29 October 1917, p. 4.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

As the Irish Convention progressed, and threats from Sinn Féin continued to advance, the press, particularly the pragmatic and settlement-focused lines, increasingly reported on general unrest in Ireland. The *Daily Telegraph* warned that Sinn Féin were 'awake and active' but contended 'the Irish executive authority alone appears to be asleep and stupefied'.⁷⁸ Another editorial cautioned, 'the passing away of the prestige of the Convention has left them [the Irish] more unanchored than ever, and probably more critical of the solution that may be presented for their acceptance'.⁷⁹ It continued, 'The Irish are a race apart, and the Sinn Fein movement is doubly interesting, and possibly doubly dangerous, because in some ways it runs counter to previously existing traditions of Irish sedition'.⁸⁰ These articles fitted with the paper's cautious line and indicated concern for the unwillingness or inability of authorities within Ireland to respond to Sinn Féin in a manner that could rival their claims and to restore the prestige of the Convention. It was feared that without such a stance, Sinn Féin would be free to continue, gaining sympathisers and undermining both Irish politics and the Convention. However, this analysis again failed to acknowledge that the continued success of Sinn Féin represented a challenge that the traditional method of the Convention was likely not able to overcome.

The *Daily Chronicle* was more willing to acknowledge the threat that Sinn Féin posed but like the *Telegraph* clung to the prospect of the Convention. In one

⁷⁸ 'Irish Unrest', *Daily Telegraph*, 9 November 1917, p. 8.

⁷⁹ Index, 'Ireland and Sinn Fein', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 November 1917, p. 6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

article it argued that ‘the political rather than the military danger of Sinn Feinism’ was ‘the danger to which our practical statesmen ought to apply their minds’.⁸¹ Another editorial contended ‘the more the Sinn Feiners talked the more certain it became that their policy could not be achieved without disturbance of the most violent revolutionary kind’.⁸² The editorial concluded by stating the problem was how to ‘revive the hopeful Convention atmosphere and the corresponding distrust of Sinn Feinism’.⁸³ Meanwhile, *The Times* attended to another factor to Sinn Féin’s growth, addressing the potential negative impact on international opinion. One article posited it was ‘urgently necessary’ to remember the Convention was about more than the settlement of Ireland – ‘It had to consider the Irish question in the light of the security of the British Empire, and, indeed, of human civilization’.⁸⁴

These arguments emphasised the concern with the growing political demands of Sinn Féin and the negative impact it could have on Britain and for international opinion. Violence and fear of violence were motivators here. The war effort was a vast undertaking for the British government and the potential threat of more Irish disturbances would add to the government’s burden. Therefore, for these parts of the press, keeping firm with plans to negotiate a solution remained imperative. Emphasis was again on the Convention and its role in resolving Ireland’s political divide was underscored.

⁸¹ ‘The Real Irish Danger’, *Daily Chronicle*, 24 November 1917, p. 4.

⁸² A.M. Drysdale, ‘A New Way with Sinn Feinism’, *Daily Chronicle*, 24 November 1917, p. 5.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ ‘Ulster Hopes of the Convention’, *The Times*, 31 October 1917, p. 3.

In late November 1917, as fear of the potential for the Convention to fail mounted, the government-loyal *Daily Express* published a series of front-page articles titled 'How to Settle the Irish Question' written by prominent Irish writer George Bernard Shaw. Shaw wrote of the task of the Irish Convention stating the need to 'reconcile three parties, all of whom have impressed their views on the Irish people by a long and sensational propaganda'.⁸⁵ He likewise addressed Ulster and the re-establishment of a parliament in Dublin, which Ulster would either accept or 'undertake a rebellion which would be a rebellion against England no less than against Ireland'.⁸⁶ He concluded by contending,

Parliamentary self-government is not liberty, but a means by which capable men with character enough to use it, courage enough to face the inevitable risks of majority rule, and sense enough to see that the alternative of minority, or foreign-rule is still more risky, can secure what liberty is possible to individuals in civilized society under that tyranny of nature and daily need against which no political constitutions can avail.⁸⁷

Shaw's articles offered perspective on the Irish situation by a well-known Irishman who was also informed on British politics. Shaw's arguments focused on political outcomes and pushed the need to find a solution that would satisfy all parties involved, suggesting more was needed to be achieved by 'capable men'

⁸⁵ George Bernard Shaw, 'How to Settle the Irish Question', *Daily Express*, 27 November 1917, p. 1.

⁸⁶ George Bernard Shaw, 'How to Settle the Irish Question', *Daily Express*, 28 November 1917, p. 1.

⁸⁷ George Bernard Shaw, 'How to Settle the Irish Question', *Daily Express*, 29 November 1917, p. 3.

outside of the remit of the Convention. These articles came at a time when Sinn Féin was successfully pivoting to a noteworthy political party capable of potential disturbance. This, coupled with other war-related events and considerations, underscored the need and desire for a resolution – though still undefined – to the Irish question. This was made further evident by a statement released from another Irishman, Plunkett, that cautioned,

Everybody knows that the Irish question was never a simple political problem, and all political problems are far more complicated and difficult at this stage in the world's history than I suppose they have ever been before.⁸⁸

With the stipulations of D.O.R.A. in place, the Convention continued as the war raged on, threats from Sinn Féin sustained, and as the Irish question remained unresolved and solution undefined. The press understanding of the Irish question and of Sinn Féin would continue to develop in parallel with these concerns. Yet the focus remained on the constitutional aspect and the Convention was still considered to be a viable step to securing the elusive 'answer' to the Irish question.

⁸⁸ 'Irish Convention', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 December 1917, p. 5.

Continued Challenges

I kept optimistic throughout but Ireland never rewards her most devoted servants.⁸⁹ – Convention chairman Horace Plunkett, personal diary

The press coverage of the Irish question advanced in 1918 as the Irish political divide, war challenges, and outside opinion continued to vex the British government's Irish policy. During this period, the need to remobilise civilian support for the general war effort was recognised and organisations like the National War Aims Committee worked to enforce and adapt the wartime message emphasising the justice of the British cause.⁹⁰ This occurred amidst more developed scrutiny of the government's Irish policy put forward within the British press as lines of opinion continued to be honed. Despite recognised challenges, the government-loyal, settlement-focused, and pragmatic press lines sustained support for the work of the Convention, revealing once more their systemic neglect to come to terms with the rise of Sinn Féin and what that meant for settlement. Meanwhile, the partisan press was the most combative of the governments' efforts particularly as Ulster opinion, under Carson's leadership, was more overtly expressed and recognised. Yet with this continued debate, the press again choose to cling to the opportunity of the Convention. This line of argument, however, would be tested as

⁸⁹ Horace Plunkett, 'Year End Summary'. *nli.ie*. HPP, NLI. Web. 23 March 2016.

⁹⁰ Ermacora, 'Civilian Morale'. *1914-1918-online.net*.

threats from Sinn Féin and other sources endangered the prospect of settlement via the Convention.

With the progression of the Great War, maintaining alliances and prestige was of paramount importance to the British war effort. American opinion was recognised as a significant part in this effort particularly by the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines. The political influence of the Irish Diaspora in the United States boosted the relevance of American opinion. With the start of the New Year, an article in the *Observer* noted that with the Convention, America 'looked on not as indifferent spectators, but with an almost strained suspense - with anxiety, with heart's desire for a saving result'.⁹¹ Another article warned failure to reach a settlement in Ireland 'would seem to be resented as much by the Irish people as a whole as by public opinion in Great Britain'.⁹² And yet another article contended,

The Irish question... is the most important practical issue in the final organization of British man-power. It is also one of the chief moral issues connected with the full development and enthusiastic cooperation of American man-power.⁹³

These arguments fitted with the *Observer's* cautious line and suggested that maintaining alliances remained a relevant concern. Consequently, the British

⁹¹ 'Ireland and the English-Speaking World', *Observer*, 6 January 1918, p. 6.

⁹² 'Political Notes', *Observer*, 20 January 1918, p. 9.

⁹³ 'Ireland and the Government', *Observer*, 13 January 1918, p. 6.

government could not afford to lose prestige over a domestic dispute when so many of its resources were tied to a global war effort. Once more, the press understanding of the Irish question was continually viewed in light of other political questions. As this article suggested, the war effort, American assistance, and civilian morale were overriding concerns not to be taken lightly.

The Times likewise addressed the American connection and civilian morale and in one article contended, 'America no longer looks upon the question as an Irish question, or even as a British question, but regards it as one in which the whole civilized world is most deeply interested'.⁹⁴ The article continued with a critique of the American understanding of the Irish question arguing,

No effort has been made by the British government to acquaint the American people with the intricacies of the Irish question, or indeed of any other question bearing upon the British Empire, and that all educational work has been done by Irish Nationalists and separatists. The results cannot fail to react very seriously upon the attitude of the people of the United States towards Great Britain.⁹⁵

This *Times* critique was an indication of how the British government had framed the Irish question. The government considered it to be a domestic dispute and its top priority was not to educate the greater public but rather to resolve the problem internally and to maintain focus and resources on the Great War. Similarly,

⁹⁴ 'America and Ireland', *The Times*, 23 January 1918, p. 6.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

despite this surface recognition by *The Times* of the potential influence of nationalists and separatists, the British press coverage mainly concentrated on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question. As evidenced by the debates leading to this point, the press had neglected to acknowledge what the rise of Sinn Féin meant for settlement and the future of Anglo-Irish relations. So, while this article called attention to a need for more effort to be made to educate international audiences to the Irish situation, the British press could have likewise benefited from a similar education.

Alternatively, the *Daily Chronicle* featured an article by American-born Lady Randolph Churchill, mother of then Minister of Munitions Winston Churchill, which observed the British understanding of the Irish question. Although supportive of the Convention, describing it as a ‘truly wonderful thing’,⁹⁶ Lady Churchill challenged the British public arguing,

It is curious how the British public when discussing Irish affairs unanimously agree on the subject of the mismanagement and injustice in the past and present meted out to Ireland by England. The fact, however, does not worry them over much. In admitting it they think they have salved their conscience.⁹⁷

This argument from Lady Randolph Churchill emphasised the importance of better recognition and comprehension of the Irish question to achieve a solution.

⁹⁶ Lady Randolph Churchill, ‘Irish Politics and the Convention’, *Daily Chronicle*, 19 January 1918, p. 2.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

When considered in relation to the *Times*' article, the importance of a clear British understanding of the Irish question and its intricacies was promoted. However, how to achieve that clarity was not addressed. And, as history had already proven, changing mindsets and resolving the Irish question was a contentious and formidable task.

As the Convention proceedings progressed, and press opinion developed, the end of January 1918 saw the resignation of unionist leader Sir Edward Carson from his post within the British War Cabinet. In a statement Carson wrote,

When I joined your Government I had no consideration in mind except the prosecution of the war, and I did not anticipate that the question of Irish government would be reopened during the war. It is, however, apparent that whatever the result of the Convention may be its proceedings may lead to a situation demanding a decision by the Government on grave matters of policy in Ireland... I am bound to my friends in Ulster.⁹⁸

With this statement and resignation, Carson made clear his allegiance to Ulster.

The unionist-leaning *Morning Post* followed the news of Carson's resignation with an article that addressed criticisms against unionists contending,

It must be apparent to all who have studied the campaign carried on recently in newspapers which are closely allied with the Prime Minister

⁹⁸ 'Sir Edward Carson', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 January 1918, p. 4.

that attempts were being made to create an impression in the public mind that the Ulster members of the Convention have adopted an attitude of *non possumus* towards a settlement of the Home Rule question. Nothing is further from the truth.⁹⁹

This argument from the *Post* differentiated the paper from its competitors by countering the perceived unfair treatment of Ulster. In this, it implied a connection between Lloyd George and other British newspapers. As suggested by the tenor of this article and by Carson's exit, recognition of Ulster remained problematic. The press neglect to clearly define the Irish question and to come to terms with the rise of Sinn Féin had largely left Ulster sidelined. Consequently, this challenged the extent to which the Convention could bridge the Irish political divide and address the outstanding issue of Home Rule.

Shortly after Carson's resignation, Lloyd George made an appeal for settlement at the Convention. The intervention was intended to 'make a final appeal to the patriotism of all sections of the Convention to bring about a settlement in the interest of a full prosecution of the war'.¹⁰⁰ Lloyd George's appeal emphasised the value and consequence of the Convention's work and likewise revealed a wartime priority for the Prime Minister. However, as the Convention challenges had underscored, the ability for it to meet Irish needs was unlikely. This was further addressed in a Lords debate in which the Earl of Meath questioned the

⁹⁹ Political Correspondent, 'Government and the Convention', *Morning Post*, 22 January 1918, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ 'The Prime Minister's Intervention', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 January 1918, p. 5.

extent to which Ireland would endorse an agreement resulting from the Convention. He argued, 'there is absolute ignorance at this moment in regard to what the masses of Irish people really do desire'.¹⁰¹ This contention rightly relayed the real issue of the fundamental misunderstanding in Britain regarding the Irish political situation, particularly as it stood following Sinn Féin's election victory. The poor understanding of the Irish question and the nuances of Irish political desires was once more exposed and challenged against the backdrop of Carson's exit and the British wartime priorities. Consequently, scrutiny of the Convention and its forthcoming results would continue to build.

The role of Ulster was further emphasised in a speech Carson gave to the Ulster Unionist Council in which he argued that to leave the Cabinet 'was to him the most serious step' and that he 'knew well the difficulties in which the Empire was'.¹⁰² However, he added his 'most emphatic protest... against the atmosphere that we being attempted to be created as to the "unreasonableness" of Ulster'.¹⁰³ He condemned the notion 'that unless the Irish question was settled America would no longer go on with the war, or would prosecute the war with less vigour' but that 'America had come in to fight for the same ideals of freedom and liberty as we had'.¹⁰⁴ Carson's speech to his unionist peers was a further indication of the political divide in Irish politics. It corroborated the contentions made by the *Post* in

¹⁰¹ HL Deb., 29 January 1918, vol. 28, cols. 1-151.

¹⁰² 'Sir E. Carson in Belfast', *Observer*, 3 February 1918, p. 7.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

defending Ulster's allegiance and countered the settlement-focused arguments against Ulster's supposed barrier to settlement. Despite the postponement of Home Rule and the work of the Convention, resolution to the Irish question continued to be influenced by a combination of factors including the rise of Sinn Féin and the Great War experience.

Subsequently, in late February, Lloyd George confirmed the British government's commitment to supporting the Convention and the importance of resolving the Irish question in a letter to Plunkett. In it, he vowed British government support for the Convention and emphasised the 'urgent importance' of a settlement and acknowledged the need for concessions, which had been made 'in every Convention, from that of the U.S.A. to that of South Africa'.¹⁰⁵ However, he required disagreements be handled after the war.¹⁰⁶ He ended with an appeal to the Convention members to 'agree upon a scheme which can be carried out at once and which will go a long way towards realizing the hopes of Irishmen all over the world'.¹⁰⁷ He concluded,

This is an opportunity for a settlement by consent that may never recur, and which, if it is allowed to pass, must inevitably entail consequences for which no man can wish to make himself responsible.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ TNA, CAB 24/47, War Cabinet, The Irish Convention, Copy of a letter from Prime Minister to Sir Horace Plunkett, 25 February 1918, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Lloyd George's letter to Plunkett prioritised the work of the Convention. It extended the British government's support but additionally situated the Convention within the context of the greater war effort. In this, finding a solution that would 'go a long way toward realizing the hopes of Irishmen' afforded a way to placate the Irish situation, with any further disagreements to be addressed after the war. The letter's conclusion, which emphasised the 'opportunity for a settlement by consent', suggested uncertainty for the future prospect of negotiation, leaving room for potential enforcement of a British government solution if a solution was not reached. Lloyd George's letter came shortly after Plunkett reflected reluctance of the Convention's process in his diary writing,

If all the Government's business – especially the business of the big war – is conducted as is this Irish business, God help England. The whole system has broken down at the heart of the Empire & I am terribly afraid that the next generation will have a ghastly time of it.¹⁰⁹

As these reflections from the two leaders suggested, the war effort was a matter of great importance. The Convention offered a chance to facilitate a settlement that worked within the confines of the needs of British constitutional politics and the war effort. However, whether it would be able to achieve that goal remained disputable.

¹⁰⁹ Horace Plunkett, '14 February 1918'. *nli.ie*. HPP, NLI. Web. 23 March 2016.

In March, the Irish connection to Britain's war effort fractured with the passing of the Irish Parliamentary Party leader John Redmond. Although Redmond had drawn support for Irish participation by calling on Irish citizens to defend the rights of small nations at the onset of the war, sustaining that support had proven difficult. The Irish war experience, coupled with Ireland's uneasy identity with empire, and the postponement of Home Rule energised political agitation in Ireland. Subsequently, Redmond's prestige had faded and was faced with opposition, most notably through Sinn Féin. As the *Manchester Guardian* reflected, Redmond's pre-eminence 'in the minds – though not, I think, in the hearts – of the Irish people had been gradually waning since the outbreak of the war'.¹¹⁰

Press responses to Redmond's passing exposed the varied understanding of the Irish question, the rise of Sinn Féin, and of the challenge for the Convention. The settlement-focused press remained firm in its endorsement of the Convention and the *Westminster Gazette* argued in one article that there was a 'peculiar irony in the stroke of fate which so often removes a political leader when his life-work is on the eve of accomplishment'.¹¹¹ The notion that Redmond had passed before 'the eve of accomplishment' naively suggests a resolution to the Irish question was within reach. This countered the more pointed tones of Carson's exit speech, Lloyd George's correspondence with Plunkett, and Plunkett's diary entry, which rightly

¹¹⁰ 'Mr. Redmond's Death', *Manchester Guardian*, 8 March 1918, p. 4.

¹¹¹ 'Mr. John Redmond', *Westminster Gazette*, 6 March 1918, p. 1.

indicated more work and compromise were needed before settlement could be reached.

Meanwhile, the pragmatic *Observer* acknowledged the remaining work and in one article likened Redmond's passing to,

[A] stroke upon the gong of Time, telling us that another generation has passed, another chapter in history has ended, another leaders' eyes have closed upon a mist-wrapt future, and still most intimate and menacing problem in the affairs of the United Kingdom remains unsolved.¹¹²

As this article indicated, Redmond's death was a reminder of the extent to which the Irish question had changed since the beginning of the Great War. Despite the efforts of the Convention to placate dissent, the Irish situation and the political divide in Irish opinion remained and were changing following the Rising and the by-elections victories of Sinn Féin candidates, including de Valera.

Following Redmond's passing, John Dillon was elected the new leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party.¹¹³ With this new posting, the settlement-focused press solidified its desire to see solution achieved through the Convention. In one article the *Manchester Guardian* argued Dillon's,

¹¹² 'Ireland's Dead Leader', *Observer*, 10 March 1918, p. 6.

¹¹³ 'The New Irish Leader', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 March 1918, p. 4.

[O]wn task would be to tell England before the world that her statesmen must cease to talk of a League of Nations or pretend that this was in defence of small nationalities until she sets her own house in order, and set free the country that had for seven hundred years groaned under her government.¹¹⁴

The *Westminster Gazette* additionally argued, 'it now rests with the Irish Convention to extricate us from this sea of troubles'.¹¹⁵ These contentions suggested the settlement-focused press saw Dillon's appointment as an opportunity to energise and guide the prospect of the Convention to see settlement achieved. This was, again, in spite of the clear popular appeal of Sinn Féin.

As Redmond's passing had confirmed, despite some general press appeals for settlement, the extent to which compromise could be attained without first addressing the persistent divide in Irish political opinion was not certain. Press definitions and understanding of the Irish question and commitment to a solution would continue to evolve and be influenced by outside factors, including the Great War and international opinion.

Conscription and Convention Results

May I assume that the Convention has practically failed? Ulster then refuses to be coerced into joining the rest of Ireland... On the other

¹¹⁴ 'The New Irish Leader', *Manchester Guardian*, 18 March 1918, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ 'Mr. John Redmond', *Westminster Gazette*, 6 March 1918, p. 1.

hand, we have Sinn Fein refusing any settlement short of absolute independence... Any scheme of Home Rule passed by Parliament cannot, therefore, in my view, possibly bring peace to Ireland... There will be continual intrigue, rebellion and disorder.¹¹⁶ - The Earl of Meath, Lords Debate

The Irish Convention reached its conclusion in March 1918. Though the final report was pending, the 'practical failure' of the Convention was largely recognised. Despite the priority given by the British government to the Convention and the prospect for it to 'answer' the Irish question, resolution proved to be too formidable a task. The divide within Irish political opinion between republicanism and unionism had not been bridged nor had the threat that Sinn Féin posed been defeated. Concern of 'continual intrigue, rebellion and disorder' developed as the priority of resolving the Irish question was reconsidered and press definitions and understanding evolved. This came as the British government sought to revise its Irish policy and to incorporate Ireland into the war effort, which elicited scrutiny and propelled debates within the British press and Cabinet. While the government-loyal press put forward general support of this action, the partisan, pragmatic, and settlement-focused press coalesced in their assorted questioning of the British government's intentions with Ireland. However, they differed in identifying what the main challenges to resolution were. Consequently, during this period, the main

¹¹⁶ HL Deb., 12 March 1918, vol. 29, cols. 367-414.

focus of the press coverage was on the condition of Ireland and the future of Anglo-Irish relations.

Against the backdrop of the Convention's lacklustre ending, the priority of addressing the Irish question vied with war demands, most notably manpower needs. Although Ireland had been exempt from conscription at the start of the Great War, many Irish had joined the initial war effort responding to appeals from Redmond and Carson. However, as the rise of Sinn Féin and Redmond's death had confirmed, support had waned, particularly amongst nationalists. The issue of conscription reinforced the split in Irish political opinion as Ulster differentiated Home Rule and conscription whereas nationalists largely supported Sinn Féin's call for independence and continually questioned Ireland's connection with Britain, the empire, and participation in the war. Consequently, conscription became a way for Ulster to show its loyalty to Britain and for republicans to rebuke the British-led charge for Irish manpower.

The chasm in Irish political opinion was exhibited in an April Commons debate in which nationalist MP John Dillon warned his colleagues that 'distrust... is the root of all trouble in Ireland'.¹¹⁷ He added that Ireland and America will see the proposal for conscription 'in the teeth of the recommendation of the Government's own Convention' was 'made for the deliberate purpose of affording the Government an opportunity of escaping from its pledges to the Irish people'.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ HC Deb., 10 April 1918, vol. 104, cols. 1475-606.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Unionist leader Lieutenant-Colonel James Craig countered by arguing that Ireland was in a 'peculiar position in that she cannot contribute to the world war so much in manufactures' but added 'there is one great contribution Ireland can make to assist this country, and that is her young manhood'.¹¹⁹ This, he argued, gave 'all Irishmen a chance with the rest of the Kingdom in taking their share in the great burden that has fallen on the Empire'.¹²⁰ As this debate substantiated, the application of conscription was a divisive topic, which would inevitably impact the press understanding and coverage of the Irish question. And, as the call for conscription advanced, the prospect of its application prompted a range of opinion within the British press and underscored the need to confront how the rise of Sinn Féin, particularly in the aftermath of the failed Convention, altered the Irish question from its pre-war iteration.

The underlying issue of conscription was the question of whether or not it could be successfully applied in Ireland. This was addressed in one article in the *Manchester Guardian* that contended the proposal had 'produced a feeling of bitter anger and of apprehension approaching panic' and added even 'the Unionist press objects to the sudden application of the whole drastic code in a country where the preliminary stages were never taken'.¹²¹ The *Daily Chronicle* contended the government's rationale for conscription and Home Rule was to 'reconcile Ulster to the creation of a Parliament for a united Ireland, and tap the resources of Irish

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ 'Irish Conscription', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 April 1918, p. 4.

manhood for the Army'.¹²² However, it called the proposal 'reckless' and 'a grave menace to our Empire' and implored the Cabinet not to 'destroy for a generation all hope of a settlement of the Irish question'.¹²³

These articles brought to the fore better awareness of the divisions within Irish political opinion. This included more sophisticated recognition of unionists especially in the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* which stood out in its separation from its press competitors on issues relating to Ulster. Additionally, newer criticism against the British government's Irish policy, including the perceived missed opportunity for applying conscription earlier was considered particularly by the settlement-focused and nationalist-leaning *Daily Herald*. The issue of conscription forced a reappraisal of the Irish situation and desire to avoid greater trouble (and the potential for violence) in Ireland. However *how* to bridge that gap and address the rise of opposition from Sinn Féin and the changes in Irish popular opinion was not made clear.

Ultimately, the Man Power Bill, granting the government the right to apply conscription in Ireland, passed in the Commons on 12 April 1918.¹²⁴ The Bill was carried by 281 votes to 116, which occurred after what the *Daily Express* reported was 'a remarkable debate, in which feeling changed twice with dramatic swiftness and violence'.¹²⁵ This account of the Bill's passage indicated how contentious the

¹²² 'The Irish Menace: The Way Out', *Daily Chronicle*, 15 April 1918, p. 2.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Alan J. Ward, 'Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish Conscription Crisis', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 1974), 107-129 (p. 115).

¹²⁵ 'Irish Conscription Clause Carried', *Daily Express*, 13 April 1918, p. 1.

issue of conscription remained. At the debate's conclusion, Bonar Law stated that with the Convention there was hope that 'a settlement might be come to', however, facing the closing of the Convention, the 'crisis' had brought forward the 'Bill for Conscription'.¹²⁶ With conscription officially enacted, an 'answer' to the Irish question and the suspended Home Rule debate remained unresolved.

Coinciding with the passing of the Man Power Bill, the Irish Convention report was officially released on 12 April 1918. In the report's introduction, Plunkett wrote to Lloyd George to offer an explanation of some of the controversies the Convention was unable to overcome, which he summarised in two words – Ulster and Customs.¹²⁷ He candidly conceded that 'perhaps unanimity was too much to expect' despite the fact that in the dominions and allied countries, 'the unsettled Irish Question is a disturbing factor, both in regard to the war effort and peace times'.¹²⁸ The report outlined a proposed scheme that would provide for the establishment of a parliament for the whole of Ireland with an executive responsible to it, with full powers over all internal legislation, administration, and direct taxation.¹²⁹ However, as Plunkett's letter to Lloyd George and the debate on conscription had indicated, the 'practical failure' of the Convention to 'answer' the Irish question had emphasised the divide in Irish political opinion and the lack of solution.

¹²⁶ HC Deb., 12 April 1918, vol. 104, cols. 1885-2006.

¹²⁷ TNA, CAB 24/47, Report of the Proceedings of the Irish Convention, 1918, p. 5.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 5-6.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 6.

Following the Bill's passage and the release of the Convention report, the press reflected on the changed Irish situation, advancing better recognition of the divisiveness of Irish political opinion. This reflection largely addressed and expanded on concerns regarding placating dissent in Ireland (out of fear of violence) and improved differentiation of unionists and republicans. Yet despite this progression, the press remained outdated in its commentary, still largely failing to consider how much support republicanism had and what that meant for settlement. Focus instead remained on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question and its resolution.

For the settlement-focused press, the Irish question remained tied to other political issues, particularly the British war effort. In one article, the *Westminster Gazette* addressed the 'uneasiness' of the situation arguing,

It is recognised that the Bill, having got so far, must become law, but I can find very few men acquainted with Ireland, either Unionists or Nationalists, who think that it will secure any serviceable number of men for the Army without the co-operation of an Irish authority.¹³⁰

A letter to the editor in the paper similarly argued the Prime Minister was 'igniting a fuse' and that the Convention was 'convened-rashly' to effect a settlement by consent had 'completely failed' but that all 'thoughts and energies should be concentrated on the war' and a government imposed settlement should be

¹³⁰ 'Our London Letter', *Westminster Gazette*, 16 April 1918, p. 3.

postponed 'until peace is established'.¹³¹ The letter concluded with a plea to British citizens and 'hope' that the public 'may open its eyes and realize the danger into which it is rushing' and 'compel these rash politicians whose inefficiency and want of foresight have brought the Empire to the brink of ruin to abandon their fatal Irish policy'.¹³²

The settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines additionally put forward concern that the enforcement of conscription would further inflame the political situation in Ireland. A letter to the editor in *The Times* perceptively argued that to impose conscription would 'imperil the hopes of a settlement offered by the Convention by throwing the mass of moderate Nationalists into the arms of Sinn Fein'.¹³³ The *Daily Telegraph* asserted it was 'clear that with the greater number of people calling themselves Nationalists and with the whole of those who have adopted Sinn Fein principles conscription is unpopular'.¹³⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* reported, 'Never within living memory has the country been so united on any subject as it is united in its intention not to have conscription'.¹³⁵ As these contentions revealed, there was better willingness to recognise the rise of Sinn Féin, including from the general public, which fed into the fact that the unresolved status of the Irish question was in peril of intensifying with unpopular government

¹³¹ West Ridgeway, 'Home Rule and Conscription', *Westminster Gazette*, 16 April 1918, p. 3.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ 'Ireland and Conscription', *The Times*, 17 April 1918, p. 10.

¹³⁴ 'Ireland and Conscription', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 April 1918, p. 5.

¹³⁵ 'Ireland Resolute Against Conscription', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 April 1918, p. 5.

decisions. However, despite this better recognition, addressing simply how to placate Irish dissent remained central to addressing the best choice solution.

The rift in Irish political opinion only complicated the press understanding of the Irish question and its solution, which was strained by the debates on the management of Ireland following the failed Convention and the publication of its report. In one article, the *Westminster Gazette* argued,

[A] valuable searchlight was thrown on the Irish situation, for it was seen that but for the uncompromising attitudes of the Ulstermen a solution of the vexed question of Irish government could have been arrived at.¹³⁶

Conversely, a political correspondent for the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* countered by arguing unionists were 'irritated at the publication' of the report, contending that it was 'an almost violent party statement' and had been 'prepared in spite of the decision of the Convention that nothing but a formal report of the proceedings should go out'.¹³⁷ The article likewise added that it had been published in most newspapers 'in many cases with little or no reference to the real report' and had 'produced an entirely wrong impression in the minds of the majority of English readers'.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ "'Ulster" Again', *Westminster Gazette*, 13 April 1916, p. 6.

¹³⁷ Political Correspondent, 'The Home Rule Plunge', *Morning Post*, 15 April 1918, p. 4.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

Similarly, the reports of the passage of the Man Power Bill further underscored the rift. *The Times* reported the unionist press warned the government the issues of conscription and Home Rule 'must be kept wholly distinct'.¹³⁹ It added 'Nationalist Ireland... has dropped the Home Rule issue altogether and is concentrating on conscription'.¹⁴⁰ The paper also published a letter from Carson in which he reaffirmed Ulster's frustration with the government having 'mixed up' the questions of Home Rule and conscription contending,

The Nationalists demand Home Rule on its merits, and are not likely to be appeased by the offer of conscription as a price for Home Rule: and the Ulster Unionists are not likely to be appeased by the offer of Home Rule as the price for conscription. But the main question to keep in view is that we want men to win the war.¹⁴¹

A correspondent for the *Morning Post* added 'indignation' described the feeling for Unionist circles 'from the leaders down to the humble working man who has been quietly doing his best to help the Empire'.¹⁴²

As these reports confirmed, Ulster's intention to remain loyal to Britain and the war effort was firm, unlike their republican rivals. Yet, Ireland's connection with England was (and always had been) complex, impacting the British press definitions and understanding of the Irish question. Complicating this issue further, despite the

¹³⁹ 'Protests in Ireland', *The Times*, 16 April 1918, p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ 'News Brief', *The Times*, 16 April 1918, p. 7.

¹⁴² Our Correspondent, 'Irish Problem', *Morning Post*, 16 April 1918, p. 6.

divide, the *Daily Telegraph* reported on a 'dramatic episode' in the Commons in which Carson and nationalist leaders rallied 'as a brother Irishman out against the Government'.¹⁴³ Although having 'ulterior objectives', the leaders questioned whether the government meant to put conscription into force or whether 'they were playing with the Nationalists, and playing with Ulster'.¹⁴⁴ Despite holding radically different views on what the future of Ireland should entail, this Commons debate was an example of the need to accurately address the fractured political desires of Ireland following the failure of the Convention. This also confronted the press characterisation of the Irish question, the governments' Irish policy, and differentiating between unionist and nationalist opinion.

Adding another layer to the complicated debate was the recognition of American opinion. America had its own mandate for conscription and in early 1918 also negotiated a reciprocal agreement with Britain stipulating that aliens had to either return to their home country or submit to the draft.¹⁴⁵ Subsequently, the republican movement had begun to see some resistance in America to their demonstrations against conscription as American troops were sent to war.¹⁴⁶ *The Times* published an article from the *New York World* that declared,

Hundreds of thousands of Americans are on their way to the front in response to a summons exactly like that which the British Empire is now

¹⁴³ 'Sir Edward Carson and the Irish Nationalists', *Daily Telegraph*, 16 April 1918, p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Francis M. Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question, 1910-23: A Study in Opinion and Policy* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978), pp. 114-115.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

to extend to Ireland... Ireland has wrongs, and has capitalized them, but Ireland has duties to itself and to the world also, and it cannot fail in them without sacrificing friends and sympathy everywhere.¹⁴⁷

The *Daily Telegraph's* New York correspondent added to this line of argument by claiming 'one may state with absolute certainty' that 'more than four-fifths of Irish-Americans favoured conscription' and added that from the American perspective, failure for Ireland to accept conscription would 'only be placing an unfair burden upon the others'.¹⁴⁸ Adding further evidence to American approval of conscription, the *Daily Express* shared a message from the 'Irishmen of Georgia' who endorsed compulsory conscription and challenged, 'We expect Irishmen in Ireland to fight with the Allies, as Irishmen in America are going to do'.¹⁴⁹ Lloyd George also confirmed 'American opinion supports the justice of the Man Power Bill, provided that self-government is conferred on Ireland', support which he argued was 'vital to us at the present moment'.¹⁵⁰

As these reports suggested, the challenges of the Great War were a constant concern that coincided with the need to resolve the Irish question. And, although better recognition of unionist and republican opinion was increasingly observed, much more needed to be considered. While the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines addressed the 'peril' of the Irish situation, with fear of more

¹⁴⁷ 'Ireland's Duty to Herself and the World', *The Times*, 13 April 1918, p. 5.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ 'American Advice', *Daily Express*, 22 April 1918, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ 'Home Rule Pledge', *Daily Express*, 17 April 1918, p. 3.

nationalists turning to republicanism, the Irish question was still viewed from a constitutional perspective. This, combined with the failure of the Convention and the controversy around conscription, meant that the press would continue to grapple with *how* to define and resolve the Irish question post-Convention. This included considering whether it was indeed an Irish question, an Ulster question, or a Britannic question dealing with Ireland's place within the Empire.

Continued Debate

The other day Mr. Bonar Law quoted as a truism the fact that the English were always assured that they did not understand Ireland. The Chancellor did not deny it, but he went on to make a most significant addition to the remark. He said that the Irish did not understand the English any better, and he hinted at a spirit abroad in Great Britain of which it behoved Ireland to take serious account.¹⁵¹ – *Daily Telegraph*

In the aftermath of the Convention, British press definitions and understanding of the Irish question was advancing in its recognition of the differences in Irish political opinion but more remained to be considered. As Bonar Law contended, mutual misunderstanding abounded. With the British government and press seemingly still committed to viewing the Irish question from a constitutional perspective, the instability of the future of the Anglo-Irish relationship was clear. By June 1918, the British government had reached a

¹⁵¹ 'Ireland's Crisis', *Daily Telegraph*, 30 April 1918, p. 6.

stalemate with the Irish situation and the issues of conscription and Home Rule continued to simmer away. The unresolved status of the Irish question, coupled with the ongoing war effort, meant that the British press debate and scrutiny of the British government's Irish policy would sustain.

Following the contentious 1916-18 period, the role of the press was increasingly recognised by the British government. In one Commons debate nationalist MP Arthur Lynch addressed the importance of the press in interpreting the 'waves of public opinion' arguing,

One feels the undoubted influence and force of the Press. A democratic Government must live by popular favour. Popular favour depends on the opinion, of the people. That opinion is formed not necessarily by argument, but in all sorts of subtle ways, of which the Press has the secret, so that no Government in this country can live for a month if there was a decided set of public opinion against it, or in other words, translated in more graphic form, if there was a great body of the Press opposed to it.¹⁵²

Lloyd George similarly attested to the role of the press by contending it had increased in power during the war 'largely because the platform is not occupied'.¹⁵³ He added the press was 'more sensitive' to public opinion and concluded by

¹⁵² HC Deb., 11 March 1918, vol. 104, cols. 73-146.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

suggesting MPs take heed when complaining of the press to make certain they are not 'interpreting very largely the voice of the nation'.¹⁵⁴

As Lynch and Lloyd George's contentions confirmed, the press held an important function in British society. Lloyd George solidified his belief in the power of the press by acquiring the *Daily Chronicle* in October 1918.¹⁵⁵ In this acquisition, Lloyd George assumed control over the content released, which transitioned the once settlement-focused tone of the paper to a government-loyal tone that largely put forward support of the government's Irish policy. This would become evident in the forthcoming Irish debates as scrutiny of the government's policy was continually advanced.

The colossal burden of the Great War was finally ended with the Armistice in November 1918. The Irish debates that had been so strongly tied to the British war effort were now left un-tethered. In theory, resolving the Irish question should have been made simpler by this achievement. The contested issue of conscription had now ended and there was a proposed, albeit admittedly imperfect, solution that had been generated by the Convention. However, the aftermath of the Great War saw the popular support of republicanism maintain. In the December 1918 Irish general election, Sinn Féin secured victories throughout Ireland nearly wiping out the Irish Parliamentary Party, confirming its power and vitality.¹⁵⁶ Plunkett

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ J.M. McEwen, 'Lloyd George's Acquisition of the Daily Chronicle in 1918', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Autumn 1982), 127-144 (p. 127).

¹⁵⁶ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, p. 166.

reflected that Lloyd George had 'ended his year with a triumph in every department of national and international affairs with the solitary exception of Ireland'.¹⁵⁷ Sinn Féin had manoeuvred itself into a strong position by war's end. With sustained Irish political polarisation, the lingering issue of Home Rule would be the next battle for the British government to tackle in its attempt to resolve the Irish question.

¹⁵⁷ Horace Plunkett, 'Year End Summary'. *nli.ie*. HPP, NLI. Web. 23 March 2016.

Chapter 2: 'A new Ireland surges into view' - Home Rule Reassessed, 1919-20

I am sorry to say that I cannot think of any proposals that you could put forward from this box which would be in the least degree possible or practicable or acceptable to British opinion at the present moment, which have any chance of acceptance now, in the present position of Irish affairs... Therefore, we must take our responsibility, and propose what we think is right and fair and just. Settlement will be found, not in the enactment, but in the working.¹ – PM Lloyd George, Commons debate

The period following Armistice saw the Irish question compete for the British government's attention with a new set of issues arising post-war. Lloyd George, though expressing awareness of his 'responsibility' for reaching a settlement, acknowledged the difficulty of appeasing Irish opinion arguing 'the fact remains that Ireland has never been so alienated from British rule as she is to-day'.² The Irish question remained in limbo when, in January 1919, Britain and the other allied nations focused on setting peace terms for the defeated Central powers at the Paris Peace Conference. The priorities of the government entering the Conference, as well as Lloyd George's desire for Irish settlement, were challenged by Sinn Féin's attempt to secure independent representation at the Conference and

¹ HC Deb., 22 December 1919, vol. 123, cols. 1168-233.

² Ibid.

international acknowledgement of their claim of independence. While the allied nations treated Sinn Féin's demands as a domestic issue, considering Ireland to be appropriately represented by the British delegation attending the Conference, the move inflamed the fragile Anglo-Irish relationship.

Subsequently, the immediate post-war period was marked by violence as Sinn Féin formed its own parliament, Dáil Éireann, and the Irish War of Independence began. The press response to the guerrilla war fought between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the British security forces in Ireland drew from the fear of violence put forward during the 1917-18 debates and the historic perception and categorisation of Irish terror. As the British government's Irish policy shifted to focus on restoring law and order and readdressing the outstanding issue of Home Rule, the British press continued to express interest in the political proceedings and honed their lines of opinion. And, for republicans, the traction of self-determination seen during the Great War benefitted its revolutionaries and the press coverage of the campaign in Ireland exposed tactics of colonial repression.³ Such coverage ensured that Ireland remained an international talking point as well as a scandal within Britain.⁴ Violence and the feared repercussions of violence were motivating factors for attracting and sustaining British press attention.

Despite better press acknowledgement of Sinn Féin and Ulster and detailing of crimes and violence perpetrated in Ireland, the press remained outdated in its

³ Walsh, *The News from Ireland*, pp. 18 & 101.

⁴ Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, p. 147.

commentary. The press retained its constitutional perspective and viewed these issues as something that needed to be (and could be) stopped by British constitutional politics. However, the general fear of the Irish situation spiralling out of control was stressed as Home Rule was reconsidered. The partisan press was the most sceptical of Home Rule but beyond criticism, there was no consideration of what was necessary to secure a solution. Meanwhile, the government-loyal press, through its support of the government, addressed the impact of the unresolved status of the Irish question on Britain's international relations. The settlement-focused and pragmatic press likewise addressed international opinion but each additionally acknowledged the wartime argument of the rights of small nations as well as the main issues at stake with resolution. *The Times* even dedicated a series on 'Irish Peace', which addressed key considerations and a foundation for a solution. This series was the first attempt seen within the press to outline the components necessary to reach a solution and was generally well received by its press competitors and further supported the settlement-focused desire for resolution.

Altogether, the way in which the Irish question was perceived and understood within the press continued to evolve as the implications of the simmering Irish question posed a threat to the British government's post-war agenda. Yet, the fact that Home Rule would not work on an all-Ireland basis or appease Sinn Féin was again largely overlooked. This chapter continues the analysis of the Irish question in the immediate post-war period through to the debates on

the fourth rendition of the Home Rule Bill. The main issue examined is how, if at all, did the post-war settlement talks alter the way in which the Irish question was treated by the British government and covered by the British press?

Republicanism Post-War

The Nationalist organisation in the South has for many years monopolised representation, and this fact will be aggravated, as against Unionist opinion, very much in the future, because it is well known that Mr. John Redmond exercised a very strong influence in favour of toleration in local politics—an influence which is in no way accepted by his Sinn Fein successors.⁵ - MP Lieut-Colonel Walter Guinness, Commons debate

The Irish question remained an unresolved political difficulty for the British government despite efforts to placate it and to secure a resolution during the Great War. In the post-war period, the extent to which Redmond's 'Sinn Fein successors' would operate 'toleration in local politics' coupled with the lack of resolution to the Irish question ensured that the topic of Ireland maintained a hold within the British press. Yet the overall coverage centred on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question. Moreover, for the government-loyal press, the unresolved status was deemed a threat to American and international relations. For the settlement-focused and pragmatic press, this threat supported their call for resolution. *The Times* particularly started transitioning to more overt criticism of the government's

⁵ HC Deb., 24 March 1919, vol. 114, cols. 99-183.

Irish policy. The settlement-focused press also identified unionists as the main hurdle to resolution and called on its leaders to participate in more amicable negotiation. Ultimately, the post-war period offered another opportunity to re-examine the Irish situation, to consider the Irish question in light of both the Ulster and Britannic questions, and to deliberate Home Rule in its new context.

Prior to the Paris Peace Conference's commencement in January 1919, Sir Ian Macpherson replaced Edward Shortt as Chief Secretary of Ireland.⁶ This change in leadership saw Macpherson and British Army officer Lord French united in pursuing a strong policy in Ireland, which ultimately led to them banning Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers, and nationalist institutions.⁷ Concurrently, a new Cabinet was formed within the British government, which resulted in a conservative majority.⁸ With this move, the conservative agenda shifted the aim of promoting truce and lasting unity in Ireland to preserving the status quo.⁹ Though Lloyd George was a liberal, this change meant that he increasingly had to rely on his conservative colleagues with whom the unionists were allied.¹⁰ How Ulster fit within the Irish question added to the tension between Lloyd George and his conservative colleagues. These changes inevitably altered the government's handling of the Irish situation in the post-war period.

⁶ Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), p. 31.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ O'Leary & Maume, *Controversial Issues in Anglo-Irish Relations*, p. 85.

⁹ Paul Canning, *British Policy Towards Ireland 1921-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), p. 73.

¹⁰ Walsh, *The News from Ireland*, p. 45.

Upon entering the Paris Peace Conference, the British government had many considerations and priorities to balance. Britain's relationship with America was a leading concern and was tested by U.S. President Wilson's desire for British cooperation with the formation of the League of Nations despite his simultaneously fielding calls from Irish independence supporters.¹¹ Wilson's involvement in the League clashed with the British government's interests, which were primarily focused on reparations from Germany.¹² Significantly, the persisting Irish problem was a threat to the British government's opportunity to be a moral leader in the new world order.¹³ The nagging, unresolved status of the Irish question was a mark on the government's record and posed a threat to its ability to ably pursue its post-war agenda. As the Irish Convention had ultimately revealed, the divide in Irish political opinion, especially with the rise of Sinn Féin, proved to be too great an obstacle to overcome in the changed political situation and it challenged the government's desire to categorise the problem as a domestic issue.

The disappointment of the Irish Convention to resolve the issues of Ulster and customs was accentuated in the post-war period. In January 1919, Sinn Féin officially declared the independence of Ireland and created the Dáil parliament, which called for England to recognise the new Republic of Ireland.¹⁴ Sinn Féin's progress confirmed republicanism as the dominant force in Ireland pitted against

¹¹ Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations*, p. 176.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹³ Mo Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 84.

¹⁴ Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, p. 19.

unionism. And, thereafter, Irish Volunteers looked to the future relationship with Britain through military confrontation.¹⁵ This political progression by republicans was an affront to unionist's and also a direct challenge to the British government. And, it was an unmistakable example of the government's missed opportunities to formally resolve the Irish problem at an earlier point. The use of military confrontation proved to be a key point in the progression of the British press understanding of the Irish question and greatly influenced the press debates. Yet, the debates again did not come to terms with the significance of Sinn Féin's victory and how the Irish question had changed from its pre-war iteration and instead remained focused on resolving the Irish question through constitutional politics.

In the lead-up to Sinn Féin's formal declaration of independence, some within the press exhibited a lack of surprise for the move. In one article, the *Daily Herald* contended the victory offered,

[A]n index in the political and national order of the general growth of high consciousness and faith, of idealism and activity, characteristic of New Ireland for a generation.¹⁶

An article in the *Daily Telegraph* added the Dáil's meeting at Mansion House (in Dublin) was 'just a continuation of the Sinn Fein meetings held at the Lord Mayor's official residence on several recent dates'.¹⁷ These articles confirmed Sinn Féin's

¹⁵ Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War I and Partition* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 231.

¹⁶ 'Sinn Fein', *Daily Herald*, 4 January 1919, p. 2.

¹⁷ 'Sinn Fein Parliament', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 1919, p. 9.

vitality, suggesting the official declaration of independence was not necessarily seen as an unusual step but more an affirmation of previously expressed demands. As the 1917-18 press debates demonstrated, the press had not fully acknowledged what Sinn Féin's assent meant for the Irish question. The 'New Ireland' emerging was a sign of the changing political situation post-war, which would require more reflection by the press to understand its significance and its impact on the future of Anglo-Irish relations, including Home Rule.

Following Sinn Féin's pronouncement, more developed press commentary began to emerge but the press remained inconsistent in defining the Irish question as coverage oscillated and was particularly influenced by fear of violence. During this period, criticism of the government's Irish policy was increasingly put forward. In one article, *The Times* questioned the government's allowance of Sinn Féin's 'seditious meeting' arguing that it was an example of how 'Irish events persistently defies all logic'.¹⁸ This contention suggested a desire to see a firmer commitment by the government to establish law and order within Ireland, which would be pursued in varying, sometimes contradicting ways, by some outlets of the press in the ensuing months.

The *Daily Mirror* similarly addressed the persistence of the overall Irish question proclaiming in one article that 'Ireland has been a thorn in our side for

¹⁸ 'American View on Sinn Fein', *The Times*, 23 January 1919, p. 11.

seven hundred years, defying every known means of pacification'.¹⁹ The article continued,

It is well for us to realise that the Ireland we knew – the Ireland of Home Rule and Conventions, of constitutional agitation and tragicomic spasms – has passed away, and a new Ireland surges into view, formidably united and led by men of culture and brains.²⁰

This article offered a general acknowledgement of the evolution of the Irish situation and the power that Sinn Féin wielded as it emerged in political dominance. It even accurately posited that Home Rule and conventions were not the best way to address the Irish question. Yet beyond that general recognition, greater reflection on what that meant for settlement and *how* to resolve the Irish question was again not considered.

Meanwhile, the *Daily Express* took a more pointed tone in its analysis of Sinn Féin's growth by addressing British concerns and contending in one article,

The people of England are in a serious mood just now, and are not inclined to tolerate much more Sinn Fein jocularities. They will take very good care that the harmony of the great world-concert for which they are preparing is not interfered with by any attempt to play "God Save Ireland" on a penny whistle.²¹

¹⁹ 'What Sinn Fein Really Wants', *Daily Mirror*, 23 January 1919, p. 7.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ 'The Sinn Fein "Bull"', *Daily Express*, 10 January 1919, p. 4.

This argument emphasised where the government-loyal line of the press considered the Irish question to be in relation to other government concerns. To this end, the Irish question was not to contend with the 'great world-concert' of affairs that was being attended to at the Paris Conference.

Sinn Féin's declaration of independence and creation of the Dáil added a new element and challenge to addressing the Irish question. It left the press to contemplate the consequences and to adjust their understanding of the Irish situation and its impact on the post-war world. Because of this, the press were more willing to acknowledge the growth of Sinn Féin and to critique the British government's Irish policy. While this added pressure to the government to readdress its Irish policy and also challenged the press understanding of the Irish question and resolution, more remained to be considered.

The Press Post-War

Nothing should be done to weaken the hands of the Government in the very difficult negotiations that the Prime Minister is carrying on in Paris, but what I wish to urge upon the Government, namely, that they should embark upon an attempt to arrive at a just settlement of the Irish question, cannot weaken the hands of the Prime Minister. On the contrary, its effect would be quite the reverse.²² – MP Lieut-Colonel Hon. Arthur Murray, Commons debate

²² HC Deb., 3 April 1919, vol. 114, cols. 1438-552.

Ireland continued to hold the attention of the British press even as the Paris Conference was underway because of the lingering unresolved status of the Irish question and the potential for violence. Violence did not align with the popular civilian morale discourse and also had the potential to impact Britain's international reputation. Consequently, the press generally expressed a desire to see the old conflict settled within the new world order but debates on *what* the Irish question was and *who* was responsible for its resolution continued to be viewed from a constitutional perspective. With the war's end, the summer of 1919 saw a particular increase in the number of editorial columns dedicated to the Irish situation and the expression of war-weariness. This period also saw a noticeable articulation of political stances by the press including more overt criticism for Ulster and Sinn Féin and their equal roles in bridging the gap in Irish politics in addition to scrutiny of the government's Irish policy. However, the press once more neglected to accurately define the Irish question, which was made evident in the coverage considering the foundation necessary to reach a solution via constitutional politics.

As the Irish situation simmered, the ensuing months saw the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines put forward a heightened general desire to achieve settlement to rid Britain of the Irish burden post-war. Letters to the editor in *The Times* suggested war and Irish question-weary tones. One letter argued that settlement 'may never have seemed more difficult of an achievement, but never

was it so ardently to be desired'²³ and another called for the government to 'clearly define' its policy with Ireland.²⁴ These insights rightfully recognised the changed nature of the Irish situation following Sinn Féin's pronouncement of independence and indicated that a growing appeal to reform the government's Irish policy was surfacing. The desire to see clearer policy would continue to develop and be put forward in various incarnations within all subsets the press.

The *Observer* added to the appeals for settlement through articles that featured the opinion of two nationalist MPs, Stephen Gwynn and T.P. O'Connor. Gwynn wrote a series of columns entitled 'Ireland Week by Week' for the paper that appeared regularly throughout the duration of the press debates on Ireland. In one article, Gwynn addressed the outstanding issue of Home Rule, arguing nationalists who volunteered for the war went 'on the faith of a compact embodied in the Home Rule Act which they considered themselves to be ratifying by the free offer of their lives'.²⁵ He added with 'repeal or indefinite postponement of the Act', many of the young men 'will see no choice but to say that the Separatists were right, and to join them'.²⁶ In another column he urged, 'We are all anxious of the possibility of a crisis, and painfully aware that there is no organisation for dealing with one if it comes'.²⁷ These arguments directly addressed the legacy of the Irish war experience and the still unresolved issue of Home Rule, which needed to be

²³ 'The Plight of Ireland', *The Times*, 17 March 1919, p. 8.

²⁴ 'The Settlement of Ireland', *The Times*, 24 April 1919, p. 8.

²⁵ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week by Week', *The Observer*, 9 March 1919, p. 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week by Week', *The Observer*, 23 March 1919, p. 7.

readdressed as the postponement of the Act was due to expire. As Gwynn cautioned, failure to attend to Home Rule could lead to more support for Sinn Féin.

O'Connor's *Observer* article offered further critical commentary of the Irish situation. He wrote that things were 'steadily drifting from bad to worse in Ireland' and feared it would continue 'so long as the Government maintains its policy of drift and reticence'.²⁸ He continued,

The evil of the present situation is, first, that the absorption of the Government in its Peace Conference has made it unconscious of or indifferent to the perils of the Irish situation, and, second, that Mr. Lloyd George has been unwise enough to leave the complete control of the Irish situation to reactionary politicians amongst his supporters.²⁹

These contentions from O'Connor were a direct criticism of the government's political priorities that had left the Irish situation simmering and advanced a call for a change in the government's Irish policy. Together, Gwynn and O'Connor's arguments revealed the political line of the *Observer*, which was cautious in tone. They also rightly put forward a desire for the government to recognise how the Irish question was changing with the popularity of Sinn Féin and to consider a resolution beyond Home Rule. As O'Connor perceptively argued, the situation in Ireland was unsteady and needed to be competently recognised and attended to before further conflict and potential violence erupted. However, much like previous

²⁸ T.P. O'Connor, 'Mr. T. P. O'Connor's View of Ireland', *The Observer*, 16 March 1919, p. 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

arguments from the *Observer* and other press lines, Ireland was seen through the perspective of British constitutional politics (which worked against Sinn Féin demands) and how to accomplish resolution remained undefined.

In the midst of the growing demands for clarity in the government's Irish policy, MP Alfred Davies asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, newspaper proprietor, and brother to Lord Northcliffe, Lord Rothermere, in a Commons debate whether the government intended to establish a system to inform the British public of the state of public opinion in America regarding the Irish situation.³⁰ Harmsworth responded that information could be obtained 'through the usual newspaper channels' and that it was 'not considered necessary to set up any special organisation for this purpose'.³¹ The concept of setting up a special organisation to inform the British public of outside opinion drew on the long expressed settlement-focused and pragmatic press concern of maintaining favourable international opinion. It likewise underscored the extent to which American opinion was still valued in the post-war period. While this specialised organisation could have offered the public a better conception of how the outside world perceived the Irish situation, which may have helped to inform the public's own interpretation of the Irish question, the government had historically shown no desire to educate the outside world to the intricacies of the Irish problem. It is therefore unsurprising that a similar policy was not deemed necessary for the

³⁰ HC Deb., 28 April 1920, vol. 128, col. 1216.

³¹ *Ibid.*

British public. Importantly, however, as Rothermere indicated, newspapers were considered to be a sufficient channel to inform the public without having to set-up specialised government institutions.

In late June, the demand for a new Irish policy and the need to consider outside opinion was further advanced when *The Times* began a special series of articles on 'Irish Peace'. The articles were a result of a confluence of opinion that emerged from the Paris Peace Conference. The paper's editor, Wickham Steed, had attended the Conference and had seen Sinn Féin's attempts to pressure the American delegation for Irish representation.³² Steed subsequently believed that the issue of Ireland should be resolved to avoid endangering the Anglo-American relationship.³³ Additionally, the paper's proprietor, Lord Northcliffe, had clashed with Lloyd George over the priorities of the Conference.³⁴ Northcliffe lambasted the Armistice and Conference for failing to demand the complete surrender and destruction of Prussian militarism.³⁵ This criticism of Lloyd George and the government constituted a rift between the Prime Minister and Northcliffe. Subsequently, Northcliffe became more devoted to his newspapers and, with Steed, used them to put forward criticism of the government's Irish policy.³⁶ The coverage was noticeable, leading Frances Stevenson to comment how the paper had become 'so violent' against Lloyd George.³⁷ As MP and newspaper proprietor

³² Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, p. 147.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³⁴ Thompson, *Politicians, the Press, and Propaganda*, p. 216.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

³⁷ Stevenson, *Lloyd George*, p. 178.

Lord Beaverbrook reflected, Northcliffe's influence 'was something which had constantly to be reckoned with' and 'politicians, therefore, feared and hated him'.³⁸

The Times series offered a mixture of reflection and criticism and ended with a basic proposal for the foundation for settlement. To this point the press had failed to specifically define the Irish question in its new context, instead maintaining a constitutional perspective. *The Times* devotion of significant column space not only drew attention to the importance of resolution but also challenged the press and government's understanding of the Irish question. This was enhanced by the general favourable reception the series received by the paper's press competitors and outside opinion. Northcliffe's use of his press platform is an example of the interconnectedness of the press and politics during this period and the role of the press in contributing and shaping opinion.

The government's lack of a clear policy for Ireland was addressed in one of the opening 'Irish Peace' articles, which warned that the condition of Ireland 'threatens difficulties and obstruction, not only in our immediate domestic and imperial affairs, but also in our relation to the new developments of world politics'.³⁹ The article added,

As day follows day, there grows an insistent demand for some statement on Irish policy, which shows appreciation of the fact that the present system is wholly unsatisfactory and of its nature temporary - a

³⁸ Max Aitken Beaverbrook, *Men and Power, 1917-18* (London: Hutchinson, 1956), p. 62.

³⁹ Special Correspondent, 'Irish Peace', *The Times*, 28 June 1919, p. 13.

statement that offers some substantial hope of improvement, if not a remedy.⁴⁰

As this article suggested, the concern of international relations that had been cautioned by the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines throughout the Great War remained a critical issue post-war. The lack of clarity in policy served to complicate not only the path to settlement but also favourable international opinion and, consequently, the British government's post-war agenda.

Another of the 'Irish Peace' articles reflected on the lacklustre ending to the Irish Convention. The article argued its ending had 'led a careless public to question the usefulness of the attempt' but that the 'labours of the Convention must not be in vain'.⁴¹ With this article, the paper emphasised the work of the Convention to rekindle the public's energy and apply it to a new settlement attempt. However, this viewpoint was contrasted by another article within the paper, written by an 'Irish correspondent', who wrote of the Convention's impact in America contending,

It is sad to record that the general effect of the Irish Convention has been to heighten rather than allay the suspicion. Frankly, it is universally regarded as a blind, which was used to cover the Irish sore during the critical months of American entry into the war... As far as Anglo-American relations are concerned, it is better for the Convention to be wholly forgotten, and a fresh start made.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ 'Irish Peace', *The Times*, 1 July 1919, p. 10.

⁴² Irish Correspondent, 'Ireland in America', *The Times*, 4 July 1919, ix.

These contradictory articles confronted the usefulness and after effects of the Irish Convention. For Britain, the Convention represented an attempt to have Ireland secure a solution to the Irish question. It had brought together strands of Irish political opinion and had largely placated Irish dissent during the war. For Ireland and America, the Convention was arguably not as successful and was instead considered by some to be a ruse by the British government. And, as the Convention report had revealed, the divide in Irish opinion had not been bridged by the experiment. Indeed, 'Ulster and customs' were identified as the reason for its breakdown. Consequently, the extent to which the rallying appeal of the 'Irish Peace' article to see the work of the Convention unforgotten was effective is questionable particularly in light of the wave of Sinn Féin's success and suspicions of the governments' intentions.

In another of the 'Irish Peace' articles, Ulster was considered. The article contended,

The Ulster case is a strong one. Her demand for self-determination is equally well grounded with that of the rest of Ireland... The people of Great Britain hold the scales. Ulster Unionists have the right to demand the preservation of their liberties within their own territory, but beyond it that right does not extend.⁴³

⁴³ 'Irish Peace', *The Times*, 5 July 1919, p. 10.

This argument offered recognition of Ulster opinion, which was generally absent from the press discourse with the exception of the unionist-leaning *Morning Post*. Yet despite this recognition, this contention failed to consider the significance of the Ulster question and was instead firm in how it situated Ulster's rights, positing that it did not extend beyond its 'own territory'. Therefore, this argument did not offer a pathway to bridging the gap in Irish political opinion. Additionally, what Ulster's 'own territory' encompassed was an issue that would become a bigger point of contention following the eventual signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921. To this end, how to consider Ulster in the overall Irish question remained unclear.

Another of the 'Irish Peace' articles addressed the opportunity for the British government to resolve the Irish question and to confront suspicions of its Irish policy. The article claimed,

Great Britain, so long as she approaches this question in the right spirit, will have nothing to conceal; the world must know the full condition of the problem. Once they are realised, and once her determination to do justice is understood, she will find sympathy where now she is regarded with suspicion.⁴⁴

This contention did not define the Irish question but rather addressed its storied legacy and advocated a desire to have an open and clear policy. This, in

⁴⁴ 'Irish Peace', *The Times*, 9 July 1919, p. 10.

turn, was seen to boost domestic and international knowledge, which could help with implementing a solution. This supported the view of the paper's editor Steed, who was particularly concerned with Anglo-American relations. Yet, to this point, the British government had shown little interest in 'educating' the public, both in Britain and beyond, of the Irish question. As this contention suggested, failing to do so could impede Britain's international relations.

The series ended with a measured proposal for settlement. It argued the suspended Home Rule Act had given 'no special consideration to the particular needs and claims of Ulster' and that the government had 'attempted to ignore them, and the present chaos in Ireland is a direct result of their attempt'.⁴⁵ It suggested 'a new Act, conceived on broader and more statesmanlike lines, must be substituted for a dead, unburied, and unlamented measure'.⁴⁶ It was also contested that the burden of finding a solution rested with the government.⁴⁷ The paper proposed,

[T]hat there be created in Ireland two provincial or State legislatures. They should be set up by an Act in substitution for the Home Rule Act – one Legislature for the three Southern provinces, the other for the province of Ulster.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ 'An Irish Settlement', *The Times*, 24 July 1919, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

This proposal by *The Times* offered the first concrete example by the British press to work to define, understand, and address a solution to the Irish question. While defining the question remained abstract, and was sometimes even contradicted within the same issue, this proposal was considered to be a foundation for self-government. It would 'furnish a basis of government upon lines parallel to those of a possible decentralisation of government in the United Kingdom under a scheme of general federalisation'.⁴⁹ The paper concluded by suggesting, 'the difficulty of an Irish solution lies less in the decision of details than in enunciating and securing the acceptance of main principles'.⁵⁰

The Times' 'Irish Peace' series acknowledged the Irish situation as it stood post-war and advanced the need for settlement. Though a solution was suggested, it admittedly lacked 'details' and left more to be considered, especially the persistent need to acknowledge Sinn Féin and the Ulster question. However, the series offered a foundation, which was different from what had been and was currently in place. This proposal fitted with Northcliffe's desire to challenge the government and Steed's resolve to see a solution implemented to strengthen international, and particularly Anglo-American, relations.

The general response to *The Times'* series was favourable, suggesting the popular appeal of resolving the Irish question in the post-war era. One article in the *Observer* contended that 'no newspaper has ever put its hand to a better work... in

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

working now soberly and boldly for an Irish settlement, while facing both sides of the contrasting realities'.⁵¹ Crawford Vaughan, the late Labour Premier of South Australia, expressed 'deepest thanks, not only of the people of this country, but of the people of the Empire' for the paper's 'courage in expounding a policy in regard to Ireland, when the oracles at Westminster are dumb'.⁵² Furthermore, the Lord Chancellor F.E. Smith said in a speech in the Lords that the articles 'give evidence of great industry and of a strong desire to make useful suggestions'.⁵³ Overall, the work of *The Times* throughout June and July 1919 offered much commentary, scrutiny, and reflection on the Irish question and put critical focus on the government's Irish policy. This in turn fuelled further deliberation of the Irish question by the paper's competitors as a resolution was still pending.

With the increased scrutiny from the press, Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* countered the negative commentary on the government's Irish policy. In one July article its parliamentary correspondent acknowledged,

Ireland is occupying an increasing amount of attention in the conversations of the Lobby. From whatever point of view the perennial problem of Ireland's future is discussed there is a general agreement that a fresh effort at settlement cannot be further delayed, and Unionists would be as much relieved as Nationalists and Home Rule

⁵¹ 'Ireland and the Crux', *Observer*, 27 July 1919, p. 10.

⁵² Crawford Vaughan, 'Irish Policy', *The Times*, 25 July 1919, p. 8.

⁵³ HL Deb., 15 July 1919, vol. 35, cols. 585-618.

Liberals if a new avenue to social peace in that country could be revealed.⁵⁴

While this article from the *Chronicle* confirmed the general desire for a new start to an Irish settlement, unlike *The Times* series, it did not propose the foundation for a solution. Instead, it argued that it had been 'too hastily assumed' that the government had no policy and that it had 'formed definite conclusions as to the best course to be adopted'.⁵⁵ The article concluded, 'If the Prime Minister has not thought it fit to unfold his plan when challenged to do so, it has not been because he has not got one'.⁵⁶ The extent to which this last assertion was true is difficult to corroborate. However, the general effect of the article countered that of *The Times* and suggested the government was actively engaged in resolving the Irish question and may have already had a solution to implement.

Despite better press acknowledgement of the Irish situation, much remained to be considered and overcome by way of Irish political demands and aspirations before a workable solution could be implemented. As the press commentary developed, the Ulster problem that had been identified as a concern after the Convention was increasingly considered. An Irish correspondent for the government-loyal *Daily Mail* described the Dublin view of Ulster as the 'chief stumbling block in the way of a settlement', arguing 'the question is whether

⁵⁴ Parliamentary Correspondent, 'The Government and Ireland', *Daily Chronicle*, 26 July 1919, p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Ulster's refusal to be coerced is going to mean the permanent coercion of the rest of Ireland. If it does, has Ulster no duty to all?'⁵⁷ Another editorial contended the overall Irish situation was 'slowly poisoning our relations with the Dominions and the United States'.⁵⁸ As detailed within some of the press coverage, particularly those by special correspondents and those in the editorial section of the settlement-focused and pragmatic subsets, unionists were increasingly considered to be an obstacle to settlement. As this line of argument advanced, even for the government-loyal press, unionist leadership were challenged on their political demands because of the perceived negative impact that lack of cooperation had on British international relations and, ultimately, resolution.

The annual Twelfth of July celebrations in Ulster witnessed a particularly intensified appeal by unionist leader Carson, which confirmed the firmer tone the Ulster leadership was taking in response to the changed political situation and also validated some of the press contentions concerned with Britain's international relations and reaching settlement. In his speech, Carson 'derided Dominion Home Rule, warned America not to interfere in Irish affairs, and threatened in certain contingencies to call out the Ulster Volunteers and set up again a Provisional Government'.⁵⁹ This speech suggested the potential for unionists to create a provisional government to manage its political transition, distancing itself from the Sinn Féin parliament. It likewise resurfaced the unionist

⁵⁷ Irish Correspondent, 'Irish Peace', *Daily Mail*, 7 July 1919, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Lovat Fraser, 'No Irish Peace', *Daily Mail*, 7 July 1919, p. 4.

⁵⁹ 'Sir E. Carson's Threat', *Daily Chronicle*, 14 July 1919, p. 1.

threat to engage in civil war with the proposal to 'call out the Ulster Volunteers'. This was a threat that supported historic concerns of Irish terror including that which had been successfully avoided during the Great War. Such a threat was not a desired outcome for an Irish question and war-weary press nor Britain's international relations.

The press response to Carson's speech was generally critical, especially by the settlement-focused press line. One article in the *Manchester Guardian* addressed Carson's 'no surrender' policy and argued he was,

[M]istaken if he imagines that the same tolerance will now be extended to his proceedings as he enjoyed before the war. He can no longer rely on the active sympathy of Unionists on this side of the water.⁶⁰

The article continued with an appeal to Carson to 'do something to remedy the mischief he has wrought to his own country and to ours'.⁶¹ Another article contended,

[A] statesmanlike solution of the Irish question is more urgent than perhaps ever before, we find the spirit of statesmanship equally lacking on both sides to the great controversy. One demands what is politically impossible and would be ruinous if granted; the other refuses so much as to consider any change at all.⁶²

⁶⁰ 'Sir Edward Carson as Incendiary', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 July 1919, p. 6.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² 'The 12th of July', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 July 1919, p. 6.

These arguments by the *Guardian* pointed to what was considered to be the failure of leaders to implement a more 'statesmanlike' demeanour, particularly focusing on Carson and unionist demands. They suggested that without statesmanship and compromise, any sympathy that the unionists may have enjoyed pre-war was no longer guaranteed. This again underscored how the Irish question had changed from its pre-war iteration and also how the press continued to view solution from a constitutional perspective. The paper's political stance remained rooted in focusing on settlement as fear of violence and international opinion were observed. As these articles suggested, Carson and the unionists were now seen as barricades to settlement and Carson's speech only served to exacerbate that feeling.

The *Westminster Gazette* shared in criticising Carson and unionist demands. One article mocked that Carson,

[P]rofesses to be a great Imperialist, but if we judged him by his action we should be left wondering whether he or the rival autocrat de Valera was most determined to injure the British Empire.... The failure to settle the Irish question contributed to the war, hampered us in the war, and is now affecting opinion about us all over the world, and especially in American and our own Dominions... The question, then, comes back to the British people. How much more are they going to pay for the Ulster veto, how much longer are they going to permit this greatest Imperial

interests to be sacrificed to the objections of less than a million people?⁶³

As this contention from the *Gazette* suggested, the imperial threat that had been recognised throughout the Great War remained a dominant consideration. Similar to the *Guardian*, the *Gazette* followed an anti-Carson tone during this period. Although de Valera was recognised as a 'rival autocrat', Carson was emphasised in his role in blocking solution and failing to be the 'imperialist' he claimed himself to be. These types of contentions revealed the extent to which defining and understanding the nuances and political desires of the Irish question was largely focused on the negative impact its unresolved status had on Britain. Despite better recognition by the press of both Sinn Féin and of the Ulster problem, with the goal of settlement, these press sources were narrow in their scope of how to address the Irish question and failed to consider Ulster's demands in a similar light to Sinn Féin's.

Meanwhile, the pragmatic *Daily Express* focused on the impact of the unresolved Irish question on Anglo-American relations but was more cognisant than its settlement-focused opponents of Ulster opinion. One editorial cautioned that without a solution, the Irish situation 'will remain as the menace eternal to the good understanding of England and America'.⁶⁴ In referring to Carson's speech, another article contended,

⁶³ 'The Cost of the Ulster Veto', *Westminster Gazette*, 16 July 1919, p. 7.

⁶⁴ Shaw Desmond, 'Lay the Irish Ghost!', *Daily Express*, 17 July 1919, p. 4.

American opinion is only overwhelmingly for the Sinn Feiners because it has never heard the other side. It urgently needed a reminder that Ulster exists, and that is exactly what Sir Edward Carson supplied... Americans are a clear-minded people, and after they have heard the Ulster-men talking self-determination as vigorously as the Sinn Feiners they will understand the difficulties of an Irish settlement are not purely inventions of the British people.⁶⁵

These contentions from the *Express* reconfirmed the influence and impact of Irish politics on the Anglo-American relationship. They pointed to the difficulty in halting the spread of rhetoric from Sinn Féin and unionists and unorthodoxly suggested to allow the general American public to hear both sides. This would, in turn, potentially ease criticisms against the British government and also warrant sympathy from the American public. Otherwise, arguably, criticism would be allowed to develop with one-sided unfavourable rhetoric. However, as previously indicated, the government had shown no desire to 'educate' international opinion on the Irish problem. And, the case could similarly be made that the British press and public could benefit from better awareness of the Irish situation.

Ulster and Carson's Twelfth of July speech were also debated within the Commons. Labour MP John Clynes argued there were 'very big considerations' raised by the statements of Carson that the government 'cannot ignore'.⁶⁶ Clynes

⁶⁵ 'Carson's Drum', *Daily Express*, 21 July 1919, p. 4.

⁶⁶ HC Deb., 16 July 1919, vol. 118, cols. 485-531.

reasoned the Commons was ‘impelled by a sense of public duty and by the very real consequences hinging upon the statements which have been made’ to discuss the matter.⁶⁷ He posited that Carson’s statements came at a moment when ‘at no time’ was the government of Ireland ‘more embarrassing and more troublesome’ and the law ‘more generally disregarded and flouted than it is in Ireland at the present time’.⁶⁸

These arguments, though representative of one MP, indicated the power and consequence of Carson’s rhetoric of ‘no surrender’ and the potential repercussions on the already inflamed Irish situation. The need for a fresh start to a resolution for the Irish problem, as had been put forward by *The Times*’ series, was made evident in the ‘embarrassing’ and ‘troublesome’ time that Ireland had entered. How Ulster fit in the Irish question considerations, especially in light of Carson’s firmer tone and the need to readdress Home Rule, would continue to be considered as the political situation in Ireland escalated.

The summer of 1919 saw interest for a fresh start to resolve the Irish question generally expressed within the press. However, better clarity of the main considerations for resolution and addressing both Sinn Féin’s and Ulster’s demands were needed. *The Times* series, and its generally favourable reception, helped to rekindle the conversation and offered one new way to approach the situation. And, as Carson’s July speech had indicated, Ulster would need to be addressed as well.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

The demands that had largely been put on hold during the war were resurfacing and the persistence of the Irish problem and lack of clear policy for Ireland nurtured debate and discord that would continue to develop.

Reprisals

The Prime Minister said that of all the sights he saw at the Peace Conference the one that made the deepest appeal to his emotions and to his admiration... was the spectacle of these long-oppressed little nations rising from the doom of servitude and coming to the resurrection of their liberty... and at the end of it all he made no mention of Ireland.⁶⁹ – Nationalist MP T.P. O'Connor, Commons debate

Following the 1919 summer months' general press appeals to readdress the Irish question and for clarity in the government's policy the situation in Ireland intensified with the start of reprisals. Consequently, the Anglo-Irish relationship became more hostile and common tropes of violence, conflict, and emotion that had been historically employed to explain issues related to Ireland were once more evoked. Violence was a key motivating factor for stimulating British press scrutiny.

During this period, the partisan and pragmatic press considered Ireland to be in an open state of war whereas the government-loyal and settlement-focused press were less willing to label it as such and instead focused on the impact of violence on international relations and the government's agenda. As O'Connor's

⁶⁹ HC Deb., 18 August 1919, vol. 119, cols. 2021-97.

Commons debate suggested too, the concern of connecting the Irish call for independence to that of the appeals from other small nations remained and was particularly promoted within the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines. In response to the intensified situation, the government convened a committee on Ireland, whose task was to make recommendations for the future government of Ireland.⁷⁰ The condition of Ireland and the need to restore law and order were underlying concerns in all of the press Irish question debates.

The first reprisal in Ireland occurred on 7 September 1919 when Liam Lynch's North Cork Brigade attacked British military personnel, killing one, and British soldiers retaliated by burning the town.⁷¹ *The Times* wrote the attacks were 'a searchlight upon the state of Ireland to-day' and argued the general public in Ireland seemed to receive the outrages 'with nothing but apathetic acquiescence'.⁷² The article further contended the British government 'have a heavy responsibility to bear' for the state of Ireland.⁷³ The article concluded,

But we are bound to say – having ourselves been among the sternest commentators upon the Government's failure to work out and proclaim a wise policy for Ireland – that failure cannot be taken to excuse the reluctance of responsible leaders of opinion in Ireland to condemn these outrages.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Parliamentary Correspondent, 'Irish Peace', *The Times*, 10 October 1919, p. 10.

⁷¹ Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, p. xi.

⁷² 'The State of Ireland', *The Times*, 10 September 1919, p. 11.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

These arguments acknowledged the political stance *The Times* had taken in the post-war period, which was vocal in its criticism of the government's Irish policy. It likewise promoted the desire for an Irish settlement via more government responsibility and statesmanship and, presumably, through its proposed method of two provincial or State legislatures for Ireland that was seen in its 'Irish Peace' series. This particular argument put forward cautious concern, suggesting failure to confront the Irish situation would normalise the practice of violence to the already 'apathetic acquiescence' of the Irish public. This was a prudent claim, as this reprisal marked the beginning of a violent period in Anglo-Irish relations.

The initial September reprisal fostered press commentary that initially focused on the state of affairs in Ireland. The partisan *Daily Herald* was the most condemnatory, using the opportunity to suggest British government misconduct and mistreatment of Ireland. One article declared that Ireland was in a 'state of war' and added,

The wanton stupidity, the open evil, of our handling of the Irish question pass the power of words to condemn. They poison the soul of every decent Englishman with shame, as they poison the soul of every decent Irishman with wrath.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ 'The Irish Outrage', *Daily Herald*, 12 September 1919, p. 4.

Through its criticism of the 'wanton stupidity' of the handling of the Irish question, this contention pressed the government to thoughtfully address the situation in Ireland and to begin to make up for the 'evil' of unjustly handling the question to this point. This rhetoric reflected the paper's overall political stance, which, from the beginning, was both critical and sceptical of the government's involvement in Ireland. However, it crucially again failed to offer a specific workable solution. This type of argument relied on a functioning constitutional policy within Ireland to see settlement achieved. Pulling British forces out of Ireland was not a guaranteed solution and importantly did not address the overarching divide in Irish political opinion, which, as the previous debates had confirmed, was necessary in the considerations for any solution.

The government-loyal *Daily Express* likewise asserted alarm over the state of affairs in Ireland. However, unlike the *Herald*, emphasis was focused on the role of Sinn Féin leaders and the impact of the violence on international relations. One article contended,

De Valera [president of the Dáil and Sinn Féin MP] the voice, and Arthur Griffith [founder of Sinn Féin and Sinn Féin MP] the brain, of Sinn Fein, feeling that the hour is Ireland's, the world is watching, are determined to put her fate upon one throw of the dice by declaring open rebellion, inviting with clear eyes the holocaust that must ensure, so hoping to

compel outside intervention by arousing the feeling of the world, and especially of America.⁷⁶

Another article proclaimed,

All thinking men on both sides of the Atlantic are demanding that something shall be done at once to avert a tragedy that would shock the world... Many observers see a rapidly approaching tragedy which would ruin Ireland herself, wreck Anglo-American relations, and injure the whole Empire.⁷⁷

These articles from the *Express* reflected the pragmatic tone of the paper and suggested the risk of allowing rebellion to continue and its broad-reaching negative impact, including in America. This line of argument was akin to the previous contentions made during the Great War regarding the danger of the unresolved Irish question for the empire and for Britain's world relations. This indicated that at this time, for the pragmatic press, the Irish question was primarily a Britannic question dealing with Ireland's place within the empire. Unlike the settlement-focused press contentions to this point, these articles labelled Sinn Féin as the aggressor and considered its role in settlement. Specifically, fear of violence and repercussions from violence were motivating factors to cut short the open rebellion and the 'holocaust that must ensure'. Consequently, these arguments advised that

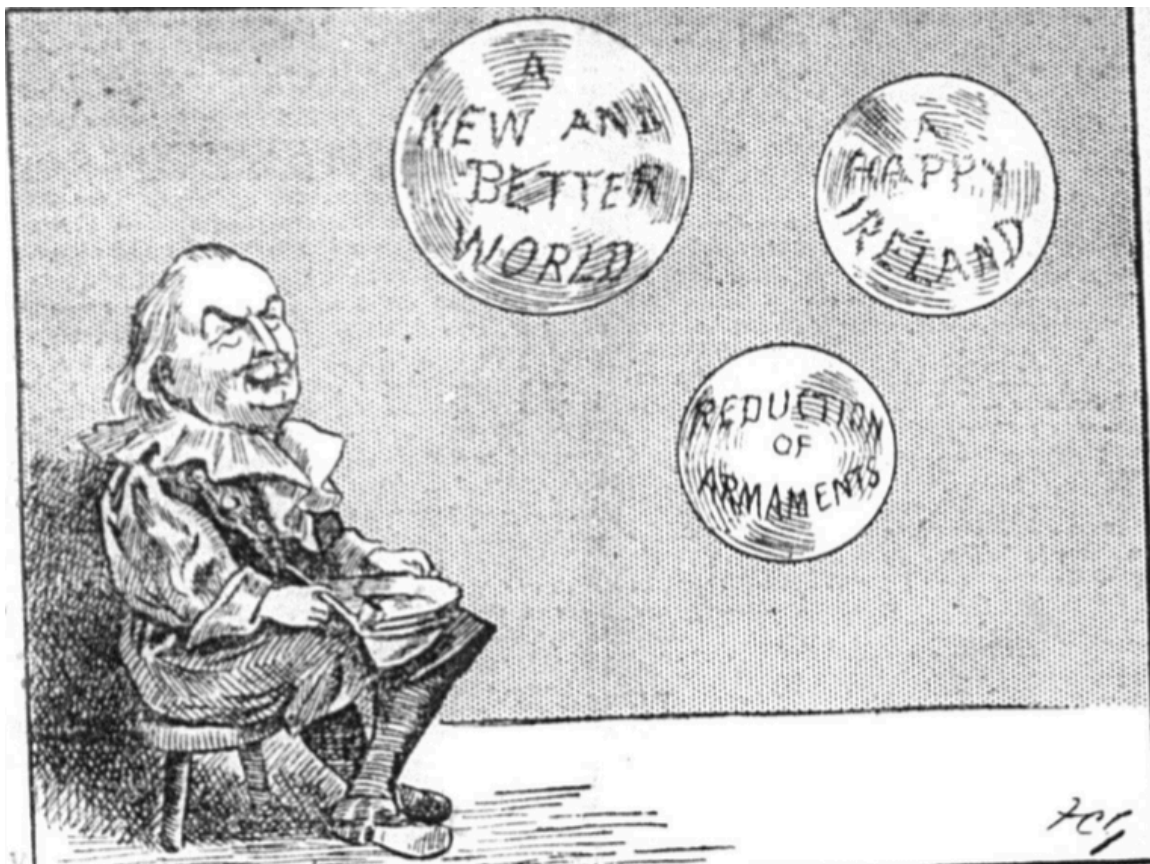
⁷⁶ An Irishman, 'The Menace of Sinn Fein', *Daily Express*, 18 September 1919, p. 4.

⁷⁷ 'Menace of Unrest in Ireland', *Daily Express*, 19 September 1919, p. 1.

it was the government's duty to act before Ireland slipped into a worse state. But, again, beyond the need that 'something shall be done', there was no clear indication of what resolution should entail.

The settlement-focused *Westminster Gazette* put forward more targeted criticism of the government's Irish policy and specifically Lloyd George's leadership. In one instance, the paper featured a cartoon that portrayed Lloyd George as a downtrodden jester, lamenting over his 'hope bubbles', which were comprised of 'a new and better world', 'reduction of armaments', and 'a happy Ireland' with the caption: '(With Apologies)'.⁷⁸ This cartoon was a direct commentary to how the paper perceived Lloyd George's effort with balancing the various post-war considerations of the government. The state of affairs in Ireland was an example of how these 'hope bubbles' had not come to fruition. Similar to the tone of the *Herald* and *Express*, a desire for positive change in Ireland was put forward. However, crucially, despite acknowledging that the post-war situation was meant to represent peace and social and political change, *what* that meant for Ireland or *how* to implement it was once more missing in all of these contentions.

⁷⁸ 'Hope-Bubbles', *Westminster Gazette*, 23 September 1919, p. 1.



'Hope-Bubbles', *Westminster Gazette*, 23 September 1919, p. 1.
Caption: '(With Apologies.)'

In another notable article, the *Westminster Gazette* offered an entirely different take on the Irish situation as felt in Ireland. The article argued within Ireland 'hotels have been crowded with English visitors, who have paid little attention to the doings of Sinn Fein or the movement of troops'.⁷⁹ It added, 'It has been possible to enjoy a holiday there without any reference to politics' and further endorsed taking a 'trip to the West Coast of Ireland' if one could not go abroad.⁸⁰ Though this article was representative of one reporters opinion, this description

⁷⁹ 'The Lure of Ireland', *Westminster Gazette*, 25 September 1919, p. 4.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

countered the more fear-based accounts of the Irish situation, which could have served to calm some of the fear felt of potential chaos in Ireland. However, the fact remained that there was a growing movement occurring in Ireland and the press as a whole had proven to be unwilling or not ready to come to terms with that reality. And, one could question how long one could continue to 'pay little attention to the doings of Sinn Fein or the movement of troops' before the movement became more widespread.

Adding to the Irish perspective, the *Observer* continued with its 'Ireland Week by Week' series by MP Gwynn. These articles aligned with the tone of the paper and supported the identified press concern of 'Irish chaos'. In one article, Gwynn argued,

The course of these last years has convinced very many people in Ireland that their only hope for redress lies in rebellion; and when that state of mind is widespread, rebellion will always find widespread support, of the passive type, which is the most difficult to deal with.⁸¹

Another article challenged the potential for the government to successfully address the Irish situation contending,

The question is whether Mr. Lloyd George, by his long delays, and Sinn Fein by its action during those delays, have not rendered it impossible

⁸¹ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week by Week', *Observer*, 14 September 1919, p. 5.

for Mr. Lloyd George and the present Government to act usefully at all in Ireland.⁸²

Gwynn's comments offered another perspective of the rebellion in Ireland, giving context for what he perceived to be its origins and cautioning against the potential for it to become more widespread. His questioning of how the government could succeed with the course of action they had driven and his open reluctance to Lloyd George's political aptitude in Ireland suggested a divide in government leadership as to best-practice solutions. The ability for an MP to write critically in a leading newspaper indicated a shift from the initial D.O.R.A. policy, which was more restrictive, and is an example of how the press could be utilised as a platform by political leaders to speak out against government policy, which inevitably helped to shape the press understanding of the Irish question.

The settlement-focused *Manchester Guardian* contributed to this debate through its series 'Letters of an Anglo-Irishman' written by journalist and literary critic Desmond McCarthy. In one article, McCarthy addressed the growth of Sinn Féin and contested its strength was 'largely derived from the young' and that an 'English official' declared the cause of the current trouble was 'that during the war emigration has stopped'.⁸³ This argument was a testament to the popularity of Sinn Féin among the youth in Ireland, who, as a consequence of the Great War,

⁸² Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week by Week', *Observer*, 21 September 1919, p. 7.

⁸³ Desmond McCarthy, 'Letters of an Anglo-Irishman', *Manchester Guardian*, 17 September 1919, p. 6.

increasingly turned to Sinn Féin. As Gwynn contended, the 'course of these last years' had moved many to look to rebellion to redress the situation. McCarthy additionally asserted that the 'Sinn Feiner' is 'indifferent to all the advantages for Ireland of a special bond between herself and England; more than that, he dreads and detests them'.⁸⁴ This argument underscored the main political aspiration of Sinn Féin to have recognition of an independent Ireland. However, it is unclear whether or not McCarthy or the *Guardian* readership connected (or was willing to connect) the fact that the government's pursuit of policy, specifically through Home Rule, did not go far enough for Sinn Féin.

In another article, McCarthy addressed England's comprehension of the Irish question. He suggested Sinn Féin knew 'that England has far more to lose than Ireland' including England's 'good name in the eyes of the world, the sympathy of her own colonies and of America'.⁸⁵ He also asserted that 'England is bored with the Irish question unless it is perpetually raised in an acute form. The moment Ireland is quiet, England self-complacently falls asleep'.⁸⁶ This was a direct criticism to the British understanding of the Irish question and perhaps represented an attempt to better recognise the implications of the rise of Sinn Féin. The storied history of the Anglo-Irish relationship and the neglect to define *what* the Irish question was and *who* was responsible for its resolution had plagued many

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Desmond McCarthy, 'Letters of an Anglo-Irishman', *Manchester Guardian*, 18 September 1919, p. 6.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

generations of government leaders. While McCarthy's contention that 'England self-complacently falls asleep' during the moments of inaction was a call to see the Irish question resolved, the threat of violence and the repercussions from violence remained a key-motivating factor for achieving settlement. The overall threat was not only a distraction and disruption but also potentially harmful for Britain's international relations and world standing. Yet, how to address that threat was again not clearly defined.

In another article, McCarthy considered Ulster. He wrote of unionist alarm from 'their realising that England cannot, in the face of opinion at home and abroad, go on ruling Ireland through military occupation'.⁸⁷ In another article he added,

If there were no Ulster question... England would grant Ireland self-government of the completest kind short of independent Republicanism.... The Irish question will never be settled till Irishmen have settled their own differences, and they never will as long as opinion in England is the deciding factor.⁸⁸

These contentions from McCarthy aptly recognised the need to address all sides of Irish political opinion particularly with the change in the Irish question from its pre-war iteration. Yet, while the need for compromise was certainly part of the

⁸⁷ Desmond McCarthy, 'Letters of an Anglo-Irishman', *Manchester Guardian*, 20 September 1919, p. 8.

⁸⁸ Desmond McCarthy, 'Letters of an Anglo-Irishman', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 September 1919, p. 6.

solution, again, more needed to be considered beyond the scope of British constitutional politics. And, the extent to which 'England would grant Ireland self-government of the completest kind' is highly debateable. *How* to bridge the divide in Irish opinion and *what* form solution should take was once again unclear and instead an amorphous solution in the most general sense was urged.

As the Irish situation continued to be debated, in late September leaders Lord French and Macpherson were rumoured to have met with Lloyd George to discuss Ireland.⁸⁹ The *Daily Mirror's* parliamentary correspondent wrote the move 'excited much interest in political circles'.⁹⁰ The article continued by endorsing full dominion status for Ireland, which would keep 'the common link of the Crown, but includes power to maintain a separate Army and Navy, complete control of customs and of finance'.⁹¹ A special correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* likewise addressed dominion Home Rule by urging that it 'is regarded as the best method of gradually sweeping away the ugly under-currents of anarchy and rebellion at present disturbing the life of the people'.⁹² The *Westminster Gazette* linked this new Home Rule opportunity to the Irish Convention, which it argued the Prime Minister had 'made a disastrous blunder' of when he 'let the opportunity go by of settling on the terms proposed by the Irish Convention'.⁹³

⁸⁹ Parliamentary Correspondent, 'Dominion Plan for Ireland?', *Daily Mirror*, 25 September 1919, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Press Association Special Correspondent, 'Ireland and Cabinet Discussions', *Manchester Guardian*, 27 September 1918, p. 6.

⁹³ 'For An Honest Irish Policy', *Westminster Gazette*, 26 September 1919, p. 7.

As these articles indicated, Home Rule was again seriously entering discussions and the general concept of the policy was considered to be the foundation for a viable solution. Although these renewed discussions of Home Rule offered the opportunity to go beyond the failure of the Irish Convention, this line of thinking again concentrated on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question and did not fully address the nuances of Irish political opinion. Home Rule's success in the changed Irish political situation was still unlikely and had no chance if better consideration of Irish political opinion continued to be overlooked.

In response to the potential new opportunity for settlement, the partisan *Morning Post* countered the positive response of its competitors and questioned the prospect of achieving a settlement. One article from a political correspondent rightly considered the changed Irish political situation by arguing, 'Whatever possibility there was a year ago of discussing problems of settlement with any degree of hope, there can be none to-day. Never has the country been in a worse condition'.⁹⁴ This critique addressed the unionist perspective of the Irish situation and the failure of the government's Irish policy to address the rise of republicanism, violence, and to differentiate Ulster opinion from Sinn Féin. While this period represented a moment for the government to seriously address the Irish question, what the best policy should be and whether it could be successful remained unclear and debateable.

⁹⁴ Our Correspondent, 'The Cabinet and Irish Chaos', *Morning Post*, 26 September 1919, p. 7.

With the potential for settlement via Home Rule re-entering the press debates, October 1919 saw increased calls for the British government to implement a replacement for the suspended Home Rule Act, which was due to expire once the Turkish Peace Treaty was signed.⁹⁵ A parliamentary correspondent for the government-loyal *Daily Chronicle* reported that Ireland was once more the 'immediate concern' of the government and that it was 'hopeless to proceed to enforce the present Act'.⁹⁶ Because of this, a new Bill was 'necessary' and would be introduced 'before the end of the month'.⁹⁷ The article concluded,

The Government are in no danger of giving way to the impatience of those (and there are numerous) among their followers who are so sick of the Irish question that they would abandon the task of reconciling the extremists and carry on the Government under military law.⁹⁸

This article from the Prime Minister's paper offered a reaffirming tone of support for the government's Irish policy. It acknowledged the need to address Home Rule but also firmly contested that the government would not hastily negotiate an unworkable solution. This offered a rebuttal to the press criticisms and suggestion of Irish question weariness that had mounted against the government in the previous months and reaffirmed the government's commitment

⁹⁵ 'Political Correspondent, '6 Weeks to Settle Ireland', *Daily Mail*, 8 October 1919, p. 5.

⁹⁶ Parliamentary Correspondent, 'Political Notes', *Daily Chronicle*, 9 October 1919, p. 4.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

to resolution. It also gave a timeframe for when to expect a new policy, which suggested that Lloyd George at least had such a timeframe in mind.

As a consequence of the government's acknowledgement and commitment to readdress the suspended, flawed Home Rule Act, Ulster's response was considered. The *Westminster Gazette's* Belfast correspondent described unionist political circles as being 'deeply stirred by the dramatic revival of the Irish problem, and the general admission that the question must be settled in the very near future'.⁹⁹ Conversely, the *Daily Express's* lobby correspondent declared,

On the general question of the urgency of this renewed effort no dissentient voice appears to have been raised... Everybody present agreed that the time had come when the policy of political stalemate in Ireland must give way to measures of statesmanship, and that it would be futile to perpetuate the government of Ireland by mere force.¹⁰⁰

These articles suggested two different reactions to the government's shortened timeframe for solution. In reflecting the political stances of their respective papers, the settlement-focused *Gazette* considered the potential problem with the government's plan whereas the government-loyal *Express* implied there was general consensus with the new plan. Although Ulster opinion was increasingly recognised, how it fit in the overall Irish question debates remained unclear and the press still largely neglected to differentiate unionism

⁹⁹ Own Correspondent, 'The Irish Problem', *Westminster Gazette*, 10 October 1919, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Lobby Correspondent, 'New Home Rule Bill', *Daily Express*, 8 October 1919, p. 1.

from republicanism. The violence in Ireland and the need to readdress Home Rule promoted a general press desire to have the government respond before Ireland slipped into a further state of rebellion and violence. Yet the press continued to view the Irish question from a constitutional perspective and detail of *what* settlement should entail was missing. The stage was therefore set for the government to formally convene a committee to address the Irish question and to propose a solution.

Readdressing Home Rule

Since I went to Ireland the only party delivering inflammatory speeches inciting to the murder of the servants of the Crown has been the Sinn Fein party, and so long as these speeches are likely to be delivered by these men I will prohibit them.¹⁰¹ – Chief Secretary for Ireland Ian Macpherson, Commons debate

The violent political situation in Ireland coupled with the government's stated commitment to readdress Home Rule saw the press scrutiny of the government's Irish policy and desire to resolve the Irish question continue to develop throughout the autumn and winter of 1919. These debates were an extension of previously expressed concerns including the importance of maintaining international opinion, the need to restore law and order in Ireland, and connecting what was happening in Ireland with the Great War generated support

¹⁰¹ HC Deb., 30 October 1919, vol. 120, cols. 863-5.

of the rights of small nations. Although differing in their respective priorities, the press continued to view the Irish question from a constitutional perspective and coalesced in the desire to see a new approach to addressing the Irish situation. This was also in-line with the popular civilian morale narrative advocating pacifism and Britain's role in that post-war. By the end of 1919, the government offered an official proposal for the future government of Ireland, which prompted further debate on whether this new approach was a viable option.

With the *Daily Chronicle's* October report of the government's intention to introduce an alternative to Home Rule, the committee for Ireland was officially convened in early October 1919. The committee consisted of ten members with unionist MP Walter Long serving as chairman.¹⁰² This committee represented a new effort by the government to address the Irish question, which, as the prior press coverage had indicated, was generally desired. However, the partisan press lines were increasingly sceptical of whether any solution could work and, more importantly, there was still the glaring need to define the Irish question and to consider Home Rule in light of the changed political situation. If these needs were taken into consideration, the committee offered a new opportunity. Otherwise, it was in danger of having a result much like that of the ill-fated Irish Convention.

With the announcement of the new committee, the press responded by addressing the perceived challenges it faced. The partisan press was most critical of

¹⁰² Parliamentary Correspondent, 'Irish Peace', *The Times*, 10 October 1919.

what it thought the committee could achieve and what its possible outcome could mean for Ireland. The *Morning Post* argued,

The true upward course... of these islands has been towards unity, and what is now intended is a backward and retrograde course, fraught with danger and confusion to the nation as a whole and to every part of that nation.¹⁰³

This argument recognised the divide in Irish political opinion and the unionist desire for unity. Fear of the unknown and of how the Irish situation could deteriorate was underscored. These implications of continued division would inevitably impact the future of the unionist cause.

Meanwhile, the *Daily Herald* disputed the justification of having a committee and whether it could be successful. In one article a political correspondent argued,

In political circles the setting up of a Cabinet Committee to “solve” the Irish problem and embody this solution in a new Home Rule Bill causes a good deal less excitement than might be expected from a perusal of certain sections of the Press... Generally speaking, the Government is credited with a desire to do something, but not with the courage to accomplish anything “definitive” in the way of a solution.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ ‘Home Rule All Round’, *Morning Post*, 18 October 1919, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ Political Correspondent, ‘No Nearer Solution of Irish Problem’, *Daily Herald*, 10 October 1919, p. 5.

This argument, and its headline, 'No Nearer Solution of Irish Problem', summarised the overall feeling of the *Herald*, implying distrust of the value of the committee and what it could achieve. This could have been a response to the more positive reporting by the government-loyal press line. However, who the 'political circles' were that the article referred to was left undefined. While undoubtedly the task of the committee was a challenge, the general consensus from the press outside of the partisan line studied within this thesis indicates there was an interest in the committee and more importantly a desire to see the Irish question seriously addressed. However, as the *Herald* noted, whether it could be a success remained debateable.

Meanwhile, the other press lines addressed the need for a new Irish policy and better recognition of Anglo-Irish relations. In one article, the *Daily Mail* called for a policy that should provide 'a real and generous offer' to 'restore confidence and good feeling in the relations between Ireland and Great Britain'.¹⁰⁵ Gwynn similarly argued in the *Observer* that,

Everybody in Ireland realises that most of the trouble here is due to want of understanding; but they do not always see that Ireland's ignorance of England is hardly less important a factor than England's ignorance of Ireland.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ 'Views on the Ten', *Daily Mail*, 10 October 1919, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week by Week', *Observer*, 19 October 1919, p. 14.

These arguments rightly emphasised mutual misunderstanding, which impaired attempts to define and address the Irish question. Yet they did not come to terms with the fact that the press still viewed Ireland from a constitutional perspective and its efforts in defining *what* the Irish question was and *who* was responsible for its resolution continued from that perspective. While violence and fear of repercussions from violence had supported a new resolve to see a resolution in place from the war and Irish question weary press, as these articles suggested, the Irish question needed to be approached in a new, though still undefined, and purposeful manner.

Another *Observer* article addressed the need for a purposeful approach by contending the undertaking of the committee 'must be a real and decisive one, for otherwise it would be far better that the attempt had never been made'.¹⁰⁷ It continued,

For the Empire as a whole, this is the most important of all our questions, and therefore critical for Great Britain no less than for Ireland... [W]e must accept no theory of irremovable deadlock as between the particular attitude of Ulster and the claims of the rest of Ireland and of the world-spread Irish race.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ 'The Cabinet and Ireland', *Observer*, 12 October 1919, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

By identifying the need to move beyond the 'deadlock', this argument acknowledged the long expressed fear of the potentially damaging impact of the unresolved Irish question on British international relations as well as the empire. This supported the paper's pragmatic tone but again relied on generalities and did not consider how to specifically solve the Irish question and to move beyond that deadlock.

The settlement-focused *Manchester Guardian* similarly addressed the impact of the unresolved Irish question on international relations but instead considered the British presence in Ireland. One article argued,

For a whole year we have, as a nation, been engaged in settling the affairs of Europe on principles which are wholly incompatible with the maintenance of the existing form of military government, in Ireland, and it is not possible for us, consistently without self-respect or with any show of regard for the principles we profess, to maintain at home a system which we are engaged in destroying everywhere else, and whose destruction was one of the principal objects for which we fought the world war.¹⁰⁹

This article expanded on the previously expressed settlement-focused and partisan *Herald's* contentions against the government's Irish policy, which was suggested to contradict the post-war peace talks. This sentiment would continue to be challenged as reprisals maintained and British military action increased in

¹⁰⁹ 'Ireland', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 October 1919, p. 6.

Ireland. As Home Rule was in need of reconsideration, the new committee would have to address this contradictory nature of the government's Irish policy to work towards an achievable settlement.

Furthermore, in a break from its normal support of the government's Irish policy, the *Daily Express* published a selection of articles that appealed to the government and British nation to see settlement achieved for the greater good of Britain. In one article it was argued,

The Irish question has festered in our body politic these many years. It is a source of weakness and irritation at home and abroad... If a settlement, just and acceptable, is possible by any means open to the Imperial Government, then, for Heaven's sake, let us have that settlement.¹¹⁰

An editorial from a Dublin correspondent further advanced,

[T]he interest of the British public in Irish affairs is just now at its lowest ebb. It has always needed some kind of shock to stimulate that interest... The British power in Ireland these dozen years past has failed to govern, and has courted discredit by action as a mere administration of caretakers – nerveless, purposeless, vacillating, and temporary.¹¹¹

Finally, yet another article contended,

¹¹⁰ 'The Irish Fester', *Daily Express*, 9 October 1919, p. 4.

¹¹¹ Dublin Special Correspondent, 'The Masters of Ireland', *Daily Express*, 27 October 1919, p. 1.

We have been living in a fool's paradise, believing that all was well - or not so bad – in Ireland... Ireland must be governed. The King's writ must be run. The law must be respected. The wrongdoer must be punished and the assassin brought to book.¹¹²

Determining why the *Express* altered its tone to focus more on a need for settlement at this particular moment is difficult to say with certainty. It could be attributed to the specific reporters, or be an example of a war and Irish question weary press, or a push to see the successful completion of the committee. At the core, these articles showed better recognition of the extent to which the Irish question had advanced since the Rising debates and its potential to continue to cause harm to the British post-war agenda. Crucially, future 'despair' was to be avoided for the greater good of Britain.

As the Irish situation became more violent through reprisals and the British presence in Ireland was confronted, a new, though still undefined, policy was required. The foundation for solution was considered to be better understanding and stronger controls within the decaying political system. Although not directly supportive of the government's Irish policy, these articles maintained the constitutional perspective and endorsed the government's capacity and 'respect' of the law and charge for the 'King's writ' to be run. However, with a firmer policy

¹¹² 'Ireland', *Daily Express*, 28 October 1919, p. 6.

came a new set of problems and achieving a balance of law and order with reprisals was another aspect that the government and press would have to consider.

As the press scrutiny progressed, the fear of violence that had been put forward was realised as the political situation in Ireland intensified in December 1919. The British presence in Ireland was targeted in one particularly brazen attempt to assassinate Lord Lieutenant French. Following the attempt, Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* addressed the prevalence of lawlessness in Ireland and in one article argued the crime represented the mere 'climax of a series of similar outrages which have taken place in Ireland at short intervals for months'.¹¹³ The article additionally charged,

We do not know how all this will affect the Government's plans for giving self-government to Ireland. But we feel sure how it ought to affect them, and that is, not at all. The real case for self-government is not touched by the outrages, either one way or the other.¹¹⁴

This argument solidified the importance of a settlement and offered a steady resolve to have the government maintain its commitment to self-government for Ireland. In this, it recalled the rhetoric used in the paper's October 1919 'Political Notes' article, which called for the government to be composed with its policy in Ireland and to not allow violence to block the path to resolution.

¹¹³ 'Phoenix Park Again', *Daily Chronicle*, 20 December 1919, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Despite this proclaimed resolve by the Prime Minister's paper for the prospect of a settlement, the settlement-focused press line put forward fear of the potential for the assassination attempt to impact resolution. The *Manchester Guardian* was critical of both the government's Irish policy and of political leaders and in one article asserted the attempt,

[W]as a blow struck equally from the wild men of Sinn Fein and of Belfast... The whole world is staring at the failure of our old Prussian experiment of Dublin Castle, now in its last decay, and wondering how much longer it will be before we practice what we preach about small nations.¹¹⁵

Another article from a special correspondent scrutinised Lord French and argued that he was 'debited with the chief responsibility for a askedly military regime'. [sic]¹¹⁶ These contentions reaffirmed the paper's political tone and recalled previous arguments made to see a new policy for Ireland. Yet, *what* the new policy should be and *how* it should function was less clear. Instead, criticism of Lord French and Macpherson's leadership, which had included banning Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers, and nationalist institutions were considered.

The *Westminster Gazette* likewise appealed to the government to commit to a revised policy and in one article professed,

¹¹⁵ 'The Attack on Lord French', *Manchester Guardian*, 20 December 1919, p. 8.

¹¹⁶ Special Correspondent, 'Ambushing the Viceroy', *Manchester Guardian*, 20 December 1919, p. 9.

She [Ireland] has been told to wait, and made to wait, while the claims of most of Europe were attended to... And while she has waited she has been subjected to a regime of coercion of ever-increasing stringency... When we remember the long series of disappointments in Irish history... can we be surprised that the Irish are more than doubtful of that Government's good intentions?¹¹⁷

This contention supported the *Guardian's* charge for the rights of small nations and addressed the worsening state of affairs in Ireland as a result of the government's ineffective Irish policy. However, differentiating Irish opinion and what changes the government's policy should take to better address the doubtful Irish community beyond moving away from a coercive policy was once again not made clear.

As the press debates indicated, despite still viewing the Irish question from a constitutional perspective and continuing to grapple with how to define and resolve the Irish question, the press had better recognition of the need to revise the government's Irish policy. Yet, *how* to do that not only remained unclear and debatable but inadequate in the changed Irish political situation unless the press offered better consideration of the opinion of both Ulster and Sinn Féin. This was made more complicated by the violent progression of the Irish political situation with the rise of separatist groups such as the 'New Invincibles' who were reported to be using 'bomb and bullet' to combat attempts to establish any form of self government in Ireland.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ 'Crime and the Irish Causes', *Westminster Gazette*, 20 December 1919, p. 7.

¹¹⁸ 'Ireland', *Daily Express*, 22 December 1919, p. 4.

The 'New Invincibles', or 'Irish Nationalist Invincibles', was a reference to a militarised group who were the first to develop techniques and policy for a protracted people's war in Ireland.¹¹⁹ The group had learned from the Rising's military tactic of occupying buildings and instead looked to approach warfare in another way. This led to the creation of a system of guerrilla warfare and targeted assassinations, which was adopted by Sinn Féin leaders.¹²⁰ The results of this effort further challenged the work of the British government. As a letter to the editor in the partisan *Morning Post* questioned,

Will not the country, the House of Commons having proved itself utterly useless, insist in strong measures being taken to make government in Ireland effective instead of making it the laughing stock of the revolutionists?¹²¹

With the general desire for new policy put forward by the press and the challenges from groups such as the 'New Invincibles' adding to the already difficult Irish situation, a new proposal for the future government of Ireland came in late December with an announcement by Lloyd George in the Commons. The proposal represented the work of the Irish committee. It included a two-parliament scheme, leaving the opportunity to merge the two into one if that were ultimately

¹¹⁹ Tom Bowden, 'The Irish Underground and the War of Independence 1919-21', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (April 1973), 3-23 (p. 8).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Somerset, 'Misrule in Ireland', *Morning Post*, 23 December 1919, p. 5.

decided.¹²² This proposition was a departure from the government's previous Irish policy and also went beyond the suggestion of the ill-fated Irish Convention, which had called for the establishment of a parliament for the whole of Ireland.¹²³ It therefore had attempted to address the changed Irish situation and offered an opportunity to resolve the Irish question in a new way.

With the announcement of the new proposal, the pragmatic and government-loyal press reported on the positive response it received in the Commons. The *Daily Mail's* parliamentary correspondent reported that the Bill had been 'received in dead silence, marking not the frigid reception of hostility but the reserve of prudence'.¹²⁴ The *Observer* similarly reported the 'outline of the fourth Home Rule Bill has been far better received in the House of Commons and Great Britain than were the three former'.¹²⁵ The *Daily Telegraph* additionally contended,

That a plan of self-government should be proposed in such circumstances by the Government of the day is something entirely new in the development of the Irish question, and is the most striking proof imaginable of the change which has taken place in British opinion on this subject.¹²⁶

¹²² 'Prime Minister's Scheme for Home Rule', *Daily Chronicle*, 23 December 1919, p. 1.

¹²³ TNA, CAB 24/47, Report of the Proceedings of the Irish Convention, 1918, p. 6.

¹²⁴ Our Parliamentary Correspondent, 'The Premier', *Daily Mail*, 23 December 1919, p. 5.

¹²⁵ 'Ireland and the New Way', *Observer*, 28 December 1919, p. 10.

¹²⁶ 'The Offer to Ireland', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 December 1919, p. 8.

These reports were an indication of the progression of the Irish debates, which now saw Home Rule making progress through more hopeful reception than had been previously seen. Yet, despite the change in the government's approach to the Irish question and the potential of the new proposal, more remained to be considered. The *Telegraph* added to its reflection and cautioned against the 'tragic irony' of the fact that British politics were becoming more favourable to Home Rule while 'Irish politics were being forced on to essentially revolutionary lines'.¹²⁷ Another article from a special correspondent scrutinising the extent to which the new proposal would work argued,

If there is no great enthusiasm kindled here it is because everyone knows that neither side in Ireland will be quite satisfied, but England is at least credited by most people, except by the rankest partisans, with what the *New York Globes* calls "an honest attempt to create local autonomy without interfering with Imperial control."¹²⁸

As these contentions suggested, some within the press were rightly willing to consider that the Home Rule proposal was not perfect. Yet, overall the press still viewed the Irish question from a constitutional perspective and clung to the possibility for Home Rule to work. Ultimately, the government's proposal marked the beginning of another attempt to see the Irish question resolved, which was the main concern consistently put forward within the press. As the autumn and winter

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Own Correspondent, 'American Views on the HR Plan', *Daily Telegraph*, 27 December 1919, p. 9.

debates had underscored, the press understanding of the Irish question was greatly influenced by both violence and the impact of the unresolved status on international relations. These threats spurred debate and fostered a general desire for a change in the government's Irish policy. Consequently, the fate of the future government of Ireland would continue to be debated.

A New Home Rule Proposal

There is Home Rule, and when Home Rule is within her grasp we are puzzled by a section of the Irish people who say that they do not want Home Rule but that they want an Irish Republic. But is there not some lack of sympathy in Ireland if they fail to understand the bewilderment of the ordinary Englishman?¹²⁹ – Conservative MP Lieut-Colonel Hon. Sidney Peel, Commons debate

1920 began with the prospect of a solution for the age-old Irish question by means of a revised version of Home Rule. The intensifying violent political situation in Ireland and the expiration of Home Rule's wartime deferral had warranted a new approach by the government. But, as the concluding debates of 1919 had revealed, the press continued to view the Irish question from a constitutional perspective, which impacted its consideration of what solution should be implemented. And, the 'bewilderment of the ordinary Englishman' persisted.

¹²⁹ HC Deb., 10 February 1920, vol. 125, cols. 9-64.

With the new debates, the scepticism of the partisan press was countered by the support of the government's proposal put forward within the government-loyal press. Meanwhile, the settlement-focused press remained committed to settlement and since Home Rule was in reach and offered the potential for resolution it was promoted the most. However, there was some acknowledgement of the paradox of Ulster's position with regard to accepting Home Rule. Concurrently, the pragmatic press considered the toll of the Irish question on international relations and promoted better recognition of both unionist and republican opinion (though how to do that was not clearly defined). While overall there was more press scrutiny of the government's Irish policy put forward, including the extent to which the new plan could be successful, the press did not fully come to terms with the fact that Home Rule was an inadequate solution for Sinn Féin and was also unlikely to work on an all-Ireland basis. Instead, an amorphous solution in light of other concerns was advocated.

With the start of the New Year, the press continued to address the perceived challenges to the revised version of Home Rule. In part of his series in the *Observer*, Gwynn addressed the impact of the Irish situation on internal British government relations contending,

The one hopeful aspect in the Irish situation was that under a Coalition there seemed some chance of getting a proposal which represented

Great Britain as a whole. Now, however, Ireland is once more likely to provide the best dividing line between British parties.¹³⁰

This argument offered a critical assessment of the problems that plagued Lloyd George's coalition from a member of parliament who was well connected to the Irish question debates. Lloyd George's leadership, along with the persistent challenges of the Irish question, and the political commitments of Britain post-war had strained the coalition. As Gwynn suggested, the sustained divergence in Irish political opinion threatened to split British political opinion as well, making finding compromise more difficult and leaving settlement uncertain.

The partisan press were, unsurprisingly, the most severe in their critical questioning of the government's ability to achieve settlement. An editorial in the *Daily Herald* challenged the 'insincerity' of the new effort in one article and argued it should be entitled, "A Bill for the less misgovernment of Ireland" and added that Lloyd George's 'attitude towards the separation of Ireland from England is disingenuous'.¹³¹ The editorial concluded by criticising the Prime Minister for associating England's safety with the subjugation of Ireland, calling his tactics 'Prussianism, pure and simple'.¹³² This editorial supported previous contentions by the paper of the mismanagement of Ireland. It channelled the rhetoric against the government for supporting the rights of small nations post-war but neglecting to

¹³⁰ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week by Week', *Observer*, 1 February 1920, p. 14.

¹³¹ Epsilon, 'Coalition Fatuity and the Irish Question', *Daily Herald*, 11 February 1920, p. 6.

¹³² *Ibid.*

apply similar freedoms with Ireland and, subsequently, did not indicate belief in a government-sanctioned settlement.

Meanwhile, the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* challenged the British government in a different way by calling for better management of Ireland, repeating claims that had been put forward throughout 1919. In one article it was argued,

Ireland needs first of all a British Government which will fulfil their elementary duty of restoring order and keeping order, without fear or favour. Until that is done, nothing can be done.¹³³

This argument addressed a desire to have law and order restored, which advanced the unionist frustration with Sinn Féin's perceived freedom to thwart British rule. This theme would continue to be advanced by the paper as violent outrages persisted and became more pronounced in the Ulster territories in the coming months.

In spite of the lingering criticism and debate of the revised version of Home Rule to successfully address the Irish situation, the official text of the Government of Ireland Bill was unveiled in the Commons on 25 February 1920.¹³⁴ In its general concept, the Bill represented a two-parliament system for the North and South of Ireland respectively, with a council of Ireland and the power to establish a

¹³³ 'The Government and Ireland', *Morning Post*, 3 February 1920, p. 6.

¹³⁴ Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, p. xiii.

parliament for the whole of Ireland in the future.¹³⁵ This release confirmed what Lloyd George had announced in the Commons in October. With the text of the Bill completed, the press continued to evaluate the Irish situation and the merits of the government's new plan with a mix of critical scepticism and the desire for a hopeful outcome.

With the text of the Bill announced, the settlement-focused press addressed the difficulty of implementing the new proposal but unlike its partisan competitors, remained focused on achieving settlement via constitutional politics. In one article, the *Manchester Guardian* contended the newest version of the Home Rule Bill was,

[I]ntroduced under conditions incomparably more difficult and less hopeful than any of its predecessors... The omens are not favourable, and much depends on the willingness of the Government to amend its handiwork.¹³⁶

Another article described that within Ireland most men were 'so near to despair that only unmistakable evidence of English sincerity and truthfulness can give promise to success'.¹³⁷ These articles acknowledged the strained historic Anglo-Irish relationship and recalled the calls for clarity in policy by suggesting the government would need to be tactful and clear with implementing this, or any other, policy. Yet,

¹³⁵ 'Home Rule', *The Times*, 28 February 1920, p. 9.

¹³⁶ 'The Irish Government Bill', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 February 1920, p. 10.

¹³⁷ 'Ireland and the Bill', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 February 1920, p. 12.

beyond 'English sincerity', there was no consideration of Irish opinion and how it considered the new attempt.

The *Daily Mail* added to the contention for sincerity and, in a break from its typical government-loyal tone, followed the announcement of the Bill by contending it contained 'no surprises and no improvements'.¹³⁸ It added,

We believe the British public is ready to go far towards the Dominion status for Ireland, and that between the governed peoples of the two counties there is a better understanding as to the makings of Irish peace than Dublin Castle and Downing-street have any conception of. The voice of the people may not be the voice of God, but it usually stands for good common sense.¹³⁹

Why the *Mail* altered its tone in this particular article is difficult to know. At its core, the article echoed weariness against the historic failure to resolve the Irish question. And, when considered in relation to the *Manchester Guardian* article, there was an overall call for clarity and better understanding for the benefit of settlement. However, the suggested ability for the public to have a better understanding of what was needed for settlement than the government and Irish administration required public participation and more importantly public understanding of the Irish situation. Yet, as seen in the previous press debates,

¹³⁸ 'The Irish Peace', *Daily Mail*, 28 February 1920, p. 4.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

more education and active participation was needed to better comprehend and acknowledge the nuances of opinion before solution could be broached.

Amidst this call for better understanding, the Home Rule debates also prompted a re-examination of Ulster's position. The debates saw more acknowledgement of the need to consider Ulster for the benefit of settlement. Within the pragmatic press, the folly of attempting to coerce Ulster and the negative impact it could have on settlement was recognised. In one article the *Observer* extended hope that 'nothing whatever' would deter the government from passing Home Rule adding,

We do not despair of the Irish question even in its present chaotic phase... The fourth Home Rule Bill is the first which frankly faces the Ulster question – as it ought to have been faced decades ago – and recognizes that since the coercion and crushing of North-East Ulster is impossible, its parallel autonomy is at present the only alternative... Ireland is going through a violent illness, but the patient will not die, the fever cannot last, and there will be cleared, calmer sanity afterwards.¹⁴⁰

While this article recognised the strained historic Anglo-Irish relationship and admitted to the difficulty of implementing a policy, it also emphasised the potentially harmful alternative and the ability for the Irish question to thwart 'the best hopes of peace'. In this, Ulster was likewise significantly observed and it was

¹⁴⁰ 'Ireland and the Bill', *Observer*, 29 February 1920, p. 12.

suggested that unity could not be achieved unless there was some form of autonomy for Ulster. Yet the extent to which the paper considered whether that autonomy could work within a Home Rule settlement was not made clear. Instead, it notably prefaced that patience with *any* solution was necessary and that there could and would be no quick fix to the Irish situation, which history had proven.

The *Daily Telegraph* added to the recognition of Ulster and in one article a correspondent contended, 'Ulster has not asked for the Bill, and if it involves loyal people in suffering, loss, outrage, and misery, all that must lie at the door of the Government'.¹⁴¹ This argument aligned less with the pragmatic press line and more with the contentions set forth by the *Morning Post* by placing onus on the British government in seeing better recognition of Ulster's rights. Yet how to bridge the divide between Ulster opinion and Sinn Féin beyond Home Rule, which the paper declared to be flawed, remained unclear.

The settlement-focused press increasingly offered more consideration of how Ulster was to be treated within the Irish question debates. For *The Times*, the British public had an important role to play in accepting the new proposal, which it maintained Ulster had to acknowledge. One article argued for the 'right' of the British public to require unity by contending,

The peace of Ireland depends ultimately upon union within that country; and the people of Great Britain are entitled to demand, in their

¹⁴¹ Own Correspondent, 'Ulster and Home Rule', *Daily Telegraph*, 9 March 1920, p. 14.

turn, from Ulster that, secure as to her own liberties, she should make, to the utmost of her ability, direct contribution to the establishment of a united Ireland... The British people is wary of Irish bickering at home and of Irish intrigue abroad, and the whole trend of political feeling in this country is set irrevocable towards Irish peace.¹⁴²

This argument put forward a tone of weariness to the Irish question and its sustained unsettled status with its potential to impact Britain's international relations. It likewise matched previous contentions from the paper, which was critical of partition. Yet, the paper did not appear to recognise that Home Rule was unlikely to work on an all-Ireland basis. In the paper's July 1919 solution proposal, two state legislatures under an all-Ireland parliament were endorsed. Similarly, with this new contention, Irish unity was emphasised to make peace workable. However, Lloyd George had promised not to coerce Ulster. As the *Observer* suggested, Ulster had a part to play in the peace process, whether by cooperation or by being granted a level of autonomy in a settlement.

The *Manchester Guardian* addressed a different aspect and considered the irony of the Irish situation with the new Bill. One article from a special correspondent contended,

It will be one of the supreme paradoxes if Ulster should accept Home Rule, which she has never wanted and vowed she would never take,

¹⁴² 'The Fourth Home Rule Bill', *The Times*, 28 February 1920, p. 17.

and if England should have to impose it by force on Southern Ireland, which has always virtually asked for it.¹⁴³

This line of argument once more addressed the historic Anglo-Irish relationship and offered better general recognition of how the Irish question had changed from its pre-war iteration as a result of the rise of republicanism. This argument was rightly able to recognise the challenges of implementing the proposal within the changed political situation. Yet beyond that general recognition *how* to resolve the Irish question outside of Home Rule was left unclear.

The partisan *Morning Post* further considered Ulster's conundrum with accepting Home Rule. In general, the paper supported the Bill but was not persuaded it could secure a lasting settlement. One article called the Bill an 'ingenious' document, adding, 'It is constructed so as to please everybody and to make a bridge between every position'.¹⁴⁴ However, the article further argued,

If we believed that solutions which were perfect on paper were also perfect in practice... we might find in this Bill a satisfactory solution of what is called the Irish problem... Ireland at present groans under a rule of terror, conducted by people who hate England and have sworn never to accept anything but an Irish Republic.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Special Correspondent, 'The Home Rule Bill', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 March 1920, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ 'Home Rule Without Tears', *Morning Post*, 28 February 1920, p. 6.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Similarly, another article by a political correspondent for the *Post* contended that if the Bill was to become law, Ulster would follow it but 'she would not have abated in the least her rooted objection to separation'.¹⁴⁶ Another article from a correspondent added that Home Rule was considered to be 'a step in advance' but contended the 'measure is full of perplexities' and that 'what it gives with one hand it takes away with the other, since it deprives Loyalists of the right of demanding the continuance of the precise form of government under which they have thrived'.¹⁴⁷

These articles from the *Post* offered insight into the unionist perspective of the Bill. Though supportive of the new measure, the paper continued to condemn the rise of Sinn Féin, the guerrilla warfare in Ireland, and the government's inability, whether by failure or choice, to stop the spread of violence. Scepticism of bridging the divide within Irish political opinion remained as the unionist desire to preserve union with Britain was not overtly resolved by the new proposal. Because of this, unionist's would continue to find their role in settlement scrutinised as the press still viewed the Irish question from a constitutional perspective and grappled with defining *what* the Irish question was and *how* best to solve it.

As the debates progressed, Ulster's role in settlement was further addressed by a change of opinion within some press outlets. This was seen in the pragmatic press who became more critical in pinning blame on Ulster leaders for

¹⁴⁶ Political Correspondent, 'Rushing Home Rule', *Morning Post*, 3 March 1920, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ Our Correspondent, 'Ulster and Home Rule', *Morning Post*, 4 March 1920, p. 8.

hindering settlement. In one article, the *Observer* reversed its previous call that 'nothing whatever' would deter the government from passing Home Rule and in later article contended,

The Irish embroilment... is an Empire question and a world question, and no single body of men can do more at one stroke to help it than the representatives of Ulster.¹⁴⁸

Another article further asserted,

We cannot but regret the decision of Ulster to define herself as the "six-counties," and the grudging tone of her acceptance of the Bill. Ulster... had within her grasp an opportunity, never to be repeated, of silencing for ever her detractors in this country and in America, by the courageous expression of her will to build a new political structure in Ireland on the basis of her guaranteed security.¹⁴⁹

Similarly, the *Daily Telegraph* switched from its earlier focus on outlining the faults of the Bill by instead concentrating on the role of 'Irishmen' contending,

Great Britain will leave the solution of the Irish problem to Irishmen. If they want a united Ireland, they can have it as soon as they agree to have confidence in each other... Hitherto Irishmen have upbraided

¹⁴⁸ 'Ulster and the Bill', *Observer*, 7 March 1920, p. 12.

¹⁴⁹ 'Ulster's Reply', *Observer*, 14 March 1920, p. 12.

England for their political wretchedness; henceforth, if they continue divided, the fault will be theirs alone.¹⁵⁰

Why this change in opinion from the pragmatic press is difficult to know conclusively. It is likely to be a response to, or influenced by, the unionist leaderships' sustained desire to be defined as a separate entity, not to be confused with the republican call for independence. With this affirmation, the pragmatic press could consider unionists to be the key component to attaining settlement. This revised argument reinforced the long-expressed fear of the Irish situation impacting the empire and Britain's international relations. It likewise aided in exposing the potential faults with the new Bill as well as the existing challenges of resolving the Irish question.

The partisan *Morning Post* also reversed its previous assessment of the Bill and in a later article more boldly approached how unionists should respond. While the paper had initially suggested that Unionists would 'undoubtedly do all that is possible to make the best of' the proposal, a new article challenged this position by instead asserting,

It seems to us that for Unionists there is but one logical and honest course of action, and this is to demand the repeal of the existing Act, and to reject the new measure. This may be a counsel of perfection, but at any rate, it is obvious that Unionism cannot do otherwise.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ 'Home Rule in the House of Commons', *Daily Telegraph*, 30 March 1920, p. 11.

¹⁵¹ 'A Word to Unionists', *Morning Post*, 29 March 1920, p. 6.

Why such a change of opinion occurred is again difficult to determine with certainty. Yet, given the context of events, it can likely be attributed to the response of unionist leadership affirming its desire for a separate six counties. This confirmation further underscored the reality that Home Rule was not likely to work on an all-Ireland basis, which the press was still slow to acknowledge. As the debates had indicated, the press concentrated on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question and its efforts in defining *what* it was and *who* was responsible from its resolution was from that perspective. And with Home Rule some within the press, including the settlement-focused and government-loyal lines, were willing to overlook dissenting Irish opinion with the greater goal to see settlement achieved. Yet, that type of thinking was short sighted and did not consider the longer-term impact of how such a policy would play out. As these reversals in press opinion signified, the changing nature of the Irish question confronted the war and Irish question weary press with a challenge to reconsider the Irish situation within that change.

As the Home Rule Bill proposal had indicated, the issue of *how* to resolve the Irish question upheld as the press debates continued to advance and culpability for resolving the Irish question remained unresolved. Despite the acknowledged challenges and divide in press opinion, leaders such as Bonar Law insisted on support of the proposal. In one Commons debate Law contended,

I venture to think that the more our Bill is examined the more public opinion will come to the view that we are right. We made this proposal because we thought it would help to make the union of Ireland possible. There is no other object.¹⁵²

As Law's speech suggested, the object of Irish union was promoted. However, as the press debates on Ulster's role had indicated, Irish unity would not be easily achieved. As ever, debate on defining *what* the Irish question was and *who* was most responsible for its resolution sustained as settlement continued to be considered.

Chasing Settlement

At no time in the history of Ireland has the policy of repression been a success, and I think that no particular time has it been a more miserable failure than it is at the present moment.¹⁵³ – Labour MP
William Adamson, Commons debate

Violent acts within Ireland intensified as the unresolved status of the Irish question and the divergence of opinion continued. Because of this, the need to restore law and order and to move away from the 'miserable failure' of the current situation was increasingly acknowledged. Two prominent murders took place in March adding to the desire to see law and order restored. The first murder was of

¹⁵² HC Deb., 30 March 1920, vol. 127, cols. 1107-218.

¹⁵³ HC Deb., 31 March 1920, vol. 127, cols. 1287-339.

Tomás MacCurtain, the Lord Mayor of Cork, who was shot in his house by disguised members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) special reserves force.¹⁵⁴ With news of the murder, the *Daily Telegraph* declared, 'the very soul of Ireland is poisoned and her mind diseased'.¹⁵⁵ Soon after MacCurtain's death, Alan Bell, a resident magistrate, was removed from a Dublin tramcar and shot dead in public view by masked IRA men.¹⁵⁶ Bell had been investigating recent outrages in Ireland and Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* indicated that connection showed 'that he was regarded as a marked man'.¹⁵⁷

The sense of there being an Irish crisis was manifest. And, as violence intensified, the need for the government to pursue a solution to combat disorder was generally agreed. The solution identified by the government was the deployment of a military group, known as the 'Black and Tans', to support the RIC. The Black and Tans' presence precipitated more changes and violence within Ireland. However, the British government lacked a clear plan for combating the violence and unsuccessfully suppressed uprisings by instead adopting a repressive policy.¹⁵⁸ This was a symptom of the government's failure to come to terms with the Irish rebellion's increased tempo, as the government was preoccupied with attempting to forge a plan for addressing the Irish question.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ 'Ireland Lord Mayor Shot Dead', *Observer*, 21 March 1920, p. 13.

¹⁵⁵ 'The Cork Murder', *Daily Telegraph*, 29 March 1920, p. 12.

¹⁵⁶ 'Magistrate Murdered in Dublin', *Daily Chronicle*, 27 March 1920, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 12.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

As a result of the Black and Tans' deployment, press commentary began to shift particularly with the debates on the Bill for the Restoration of Ireland. The retaliatory response by the government influenced the British press understanding of the Irish question and saw greater focus on the government and its role in settlement considered. In particular, the public distaste for violence saw more scrutiny of the government and Lloyd George's leadership put forward as the morality of the British presence in Ireland was considered. This was especially seen within the partisan *Daily Herald*, settlement-focused, and pragmatic press lines. Conversely, the government-loyal press and partisan *Morning Post* countered by putting forward general support of the need to restore law and order for settlement to be achieved. The events leading to the passing of the Government of Ireland Bill of 1920 proved to be the next significant chapter in addressing Irish settlement.

Chapter 3: A ‘nightmare to the mind and a laceration to the soul’ - The Irish Question, 1920-21

Is it too late to appeal to the sober people of Ireland to stop the shooting?... They leave it entirely to the Irish Government, and then they say it is all the fault of Great Britain. I do not think that that is the way to induce the people of Great Britain to help Ireland.¹ –
Conservative MP Robert Williams, Commons debate

The period following the British government’s initial proposal for the Government of Ireland Bill saw reprisals in Ireland persist. The fear of continued violence nurtured an overall desire within the British press to achieve a timely settlement and to not allow the Irish question to go unresolved. As the guerrilla warfare within Ireland grew more intense, the government’s response was rooted in matching reprisals through the reinforcement of law and order and the deployment of a special auxiliary force to support the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). This force was comprised of ex-servicemen from the First World War who were recruited to the RIC Special Reserve force, popularly nicknamed the Black and Tans, which was a reference to their bi-coloured uniforms.² The origins of the decision to assemble the force followed the attempt on Lord French’s life in

¹ HC Deb., 29 March 1920, vol. 127, cols. 925-1036.

² D.M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British Police and Auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence, 1920-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 24 & 1.

December 1919, with the first troops appearing in Ireland on 25 March 1920.³ The Black and Tans were a gamble by the government to use battle-hardened recruits to break the power of Sinn Féin as a way to avoid all-out war in Ireland, which it did not think the public would support.⁴ What is revealed within government documents and diaries is that there was concern expressed regarding the need to halt the spread of rebellion in Ireland, to safeguard the security of Britain, and to quell negative opinion both in Britain and internationally.

The deployment of the Black and Tans, and more specifically their actions, developed into a controversial topic within the British press throughout 1920-21. Knowledge of the Black and Tans' exploits in Ireland, especially following the passage of the Restoration of Ireland Act, drew pronounced press attention. While the move to restore law and order garnered general support by the government-loyal press and the partisan *Morning Post*, for the other press outlets, violence and the knowledge of the Black and Tans' counter insurgency tactics prompted criticism of the morality of the situation, the effectiveness of the effort, and the impact on the United Kingdom's world standing. This scrutiny was in line with the civilian moral debates and can be attributed to reluctance of the Black and Tans' role in supporting Britain's narrative of pacifism post-war. Yet even with this divergence in

³ Ibid., p. 15; Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, p. xiii.

⁴ Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (September 2003), 557-589 (p. 576).

opinion, the press continued to concentrate on the constitutional aspect of Anglo-Irish relations suggesting that Home Rule was still considered to be viable solution.

This chapter continues the analysis of the progression of the Irish situation with the government's attempt to hold a stronger presence in Ireland via a commitment to the restoration of law and order through to the passing of the Government of Ireland Act in 1920. The following research questions guided the analysis: how did the press respond to the guerrilla warfare in Ireland? How did the government manage the 'Irish crisis'? How, if at all, did international opinion factor into the considerations of the press?

Home Rule Debate Continued

The difficulty of this problem... is that no proposals which would be acceptable to any party in this country will be accepted by any party in Ireland. I think the Government have every reason to be gratified with the course of the discussion, because it demonstrates quite clearly that the Government plan is the only one that holds the field.⁵ – PM Lloyd George, Commons debate

Following the violent reprisals of March 1920, in April the press focused on debating the Home Rule Bill and detailing the Irish crisis. For the settlement-focused and pragmatic press and the partisan *Daily Herald*, Ulster and specifically Carson's leadership were criticised as barriers to Home Rule's success.

⁵ HC Deb., 31 March 1920, vol. 127, cols. 1287-339.

Alternatively, the *Morning Post* set itself apart from its press opponents with its allegiance to Ulster and desire for the restoration of law and order. Additionally, although the government-loyal press generally addressed the positive aspects of the Bill, with the sustained debates, that endorsement was tested. The *Daily Express* had a public controversy with Lord French, which cast doubt on the British government's intentions in Ireland. Despite Lloyd George's assertion that Home Rule was the only plan that 'holds the field', the persistent violence and political action within Ireland saw the press interest in Irish affairs sustain. Yet these debates again suggest that the press remained committed to the constitutional aspect of the debate. As a result, the main press debates were primarily centred on securing tangible improvements to the domestic situation post-war and addressing the government's ability to manage violence with the greater goal of achieving a settlement via constitutional politics.

At the start of April, British leaderships' commitment to Home Rule was evident in the Commons debates for the second reading of the Bill. The *Daily Mirror* reported that Lloyd George focused on the opportunity the Bill offered when he contended 'the bitterness of centuries... would not be removed in a year or two, but, with tolerance, the Bill would lay the foundation of a lasting partnership'.⁶ The paper argued the discussion within the Commons showed that 'further opposition will not have power seriously to impede the progress of the Bill' and instead found the expressed objections 'too vague, too academic, to carry weight in face of the

⁶ 'Big Commons Majority for Home Rule Bill', *Daily Mirror*, 1 April 1920, p. 3.

grave situation of Ireland'.⁷ The *Daily Mail* similarly argued, 'The debate produced a marked change of opinion among MPs in favour of the Bill. The speeches of opponents were ineffective and sterile'.⁸

On the surface, the press reporting from these Commons debates suggested the newest version of Home Rule found support amongst MPs who were actively seeking a way to respond to the deteriorating situation in Ireland. Yet the records of the debates reveal there is more to be considered from the opinion of Irish representatives who objected to Home Rule. Carson said that he did 'not believe in it [Home Rule] now' and that it would be 'fraught with disaster' to both Britain and Ireland.⁹ Unionist MP William Jellett likewise asserted that MPs were being asked to 'vote for a Bill which the House does not approve of in order to prevent another measure coming into operation of which it does not approve either'.¹⁰ These objections, whether 'too vague' or 'too academic' as the *Mirror* contended, rightly confirmed the unpopularity of the Bill in Ireland, which hindered its ability to achieve a lasting settlement. This concept was largely missing from the press debates, which was another indication of its commitment to British constitutional politics and neglect to recognise that Home Rule did not satisfy either Ulster or Sinn Féin opinion.

⁷ 'The Bill's Progress', *Daily Mirror*, 1 April 1920, p. 5.

⁸ Political Correspondent, 'Home Rule Bill', *Daily Mail*, 1 April 1920, p. 5.

⁹ HC Deb., 31 March 1920, vol. 127, cols. 1287-339.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The *Daily Chronicle* promoted comments made by the Prime Minister in the Commons of allowing Ireland to 'learn from the mistakes we have made with regard to Ireland as a whole, and not repeat the mistake when they come to deal with Ulster'¹¹ and addressed the value of Home Rule. One article argued,

[T]he Bill can do solid good for two reasons. First (and this is no slight merit, when one realises how much past mischief in Ireland has been motivated by the belief in British pledge-breaking), because it is scrupulously in accord with the pledges given by British statesmen. Secondly (and here too it meets a cry, which has been for generations on Irish lips), because it transfers absolutely from British to Irish hands the power to unite Ireland and to achieve full autonomy for her when united.¹²

This tone from the Prime Minister's paper countered criticisms against the government's Irish policy and pressed for support of the Bill by turning the opportunity for settlement to the people of Ireland. Yet, the article added that the 'true obstacle' to peace was Sinn Féin and contested 'the sooner that is recognised by Irishmen generally – in America as well as in Dublin – the sooner will Irish unity and settlement be achieved'.¹³ The government's promise that Ulster would not be coerced was re-established with this pinning of Sinn Féin as the obstacle to peace, countering the arguments against Ulster blocking the way. However, once again,

¹¹ 'Home Rule', *Daily Chronicle*, 1 April 1920, p. 4.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

the extent to which Home Rule could actually address the divide in Irish political opinion was overlooked in these contentions.

The settlement-focused *Manchester Guardian* likewise addressed the role of the Irish people in achieving settlement but unlike the *Chronicle* was less flattering in its reporting on the 'solid good' of the Bill. In one article it asserted,

The Bill will be carried, but it is not loved, and it will be carried... because the alternative to it, the Act on the Statute-book, is loved less as from any great hopes which the present Bill excites... For a generation Ireland has been the plaything of party war in this country, and every effort to solve her problem has been frustrated by this means... The present Bill may be good or bad, but it has at least this merit: that it throws Ireland – both Irelands – on to her own resources and leaves her, in the main at least to work out her own problem.¹⁴

This article from the *Guardian* matched the *Chronicle's* argument that Ireland was not only responsible for seeing settlement achieved but had the ability to do so. However, it likewise put forward criticism of the inability or indifference of the government in solving the Irish question and ridiculed their efforts in making Ireland a 'plaything' in their own party war, reflecting its interest in securing settlement. As these contentions indicate, the proposal for the Bill revived the conversation on Irish settlement and kindled a re-examination of the steps necessary to see a more permanent resolution enacted.

¹⁴ 'The Second Reading', *Manchester Guardian*, 1 April 1920, p. 6.

Within this re-examination, other press lines focused on the opportunity for the new proposal to address the war and Irish question-weary civilian morale objective of securing tangible improvements to the domestic situation post-war. In one article, the government-loyal *Daily Express* contented, 'When the present madness has spent itself we believe that this Bill may be the basis of an overthrow of unreason, hatred, and despair'.¹⁵ An article in the settlement-focused *Times* argued, 'English opinion will naturally support the Government of Ireland in all measures necessary to maintain law and order' and, with an argument similar to the *Chronicle*, concluded the Home Rule Bill 'will put it in the power of Irishmen to achieve a large measure of self-government and ultimately of national unity'.¹⁶ These tones expressed weariness with the longevity of the Irish question and offered hopeful encouragement for the future of Anglo-Irish relations with the new Bill. Yet, while Ireland's role in determining peace was emphasised, these contentions again neglected to recognise the inability for Home Rule to bridge the gap in opinion.

The pragmatic press differed in its reporting and focused primarily on Britain's international relations. In one article, the *Daily Telegraph* suggested the Bill offered 'an imperative challenge' to the government,

[T]o give a concrete shape to the now practically unanimous desire in Great Britain to see self-government established in Ireland, in the fullest

¹⁵ 'Ireland's Chance', *Daily Express*, 1 April 1920, p. 4.

¹⁶ 'The Disorders in Ireland', *The Times*, 5 April 1920, p. 9.

sense that it is compatible with the security and integrity of the Kingdom.¹⁷

This argument put more onus on the government to establish a workable foundation with defined intentions for the new Bill. This tone matched the paper's previous contentions, which had called for clarity in the government's Irish policy. Additionally, it recognised the need to maintain the 'security and integrity' of the United Kingdom. As the Great War had emphasised, a key consideration for the government was its ability to maintain a favourable geopolitical field in which Britain could exercise its power.¹⁸

Offering another viewpoint, the *Observer* reflected on the American perspective of the Bill. In one article it posited,

[N]o news from Europe in the past week has been printed so widely or read with so much interest in the United States as that concerning the Home Rule Bill... America as a whole was deeply desirous of Home Rule for Ireland, but that the continued absence of Home Rule was a block in the road of cordial feelings towards this country.¹⁹

This *Observer* report revealed the extent to which American opinion and maintaining Britain's connection with America was still valued. The article indicated

¹⁷ 'The Irish Bill', *Daily Telegraph*, 1 April 1920, p. 10.

¹⁸ G.R. Sloan, *The Geopolitics of Anglo-Irish Relations in the Twentieth Century* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), p. 167.

¹⁹ Frank Dilnot, 'The Irish Bill in America', *Observer*, 4 April 1920, p. 7.

the new proposal appeared to be seen as a means of inspiring better relations with Britain's ally. It too recalled previous press debates from the settlement-focused and pragmatic lines that had considered the Irish question to be more than a domestic question but one that had international implications as well.

Another *Observer* article addressed the impact of the Bill on Irish citizens arguing,

We do not conceal from ourselves that it will mean much of courage and self-sacrifice on the part of Irishmen who take the steadier and longer view to accept in the Bill that can make their first step easier without endangering the Bill's main principle in a change to be made.²⁰

While this article endorsed the government's proposal, it also reflected the paper's cautious tone through its recognition of the 'longer view' necessary for implementing the Bill. This was an example of how the paper had come to view the Irish situation with better recognition of challenges and the need for tactical application with any settlement proposal. Yet, similar to other contentions made, this article concentrated on the constitutional aspect and put forward a general appeal to Irish people to be receptive to the potential of the Bill. This ultimately again failed to recognise that the Bill was not likely to work for either Sinn Féin or unionists and that a fresh approach was necessary.

²⁰ 'The Irish Debate', *Observer*, 4 April 1920, p. 10.

Despite general recognition from the main press lines to consider the opportunities of the Bill and for Ireland to 'work out her own problem', as the Commons debate had affirmed, the divide in Irish political life remained and was not something that could be repaired with an unpopular policy that risked Britain's international reputation and post-war aims. The partisan *Daily Herald* tackled the challenge in a cartoon entitled, 'Forbearance – Ulster Type', which depicted a towering masked figure of Carson holding a limp Home Rule Bill and an axe.²¹ The caption reads: 'Carson: "Well, why should I kill this – this won't bring peace to Ireland!"'²² The cartoon suggests that Carson did not support the call for peace in Ireland, signifying his objection to compromising with Sinn Féin who were considered to be unlawful rebels. While this cartoon importantly considered Ulster in the wider Irish question debates and suggested that Home Rule would not work for Ulster, the extent to which the paper drew a similar connection with Sinn Féin opinion was not made. And, similar to the papers' previous contentions, this criticism did not come to terms with the wider historical implication of Anglo-Irish relations or how to better address the Irish question.

²¹ 'Forbearance – Ulster Type', *Daily Herald*, 3 April 1920, p. 8.

²² *Ibid.*



‘Forbearance – Ulster Type’, *Daily Herald*, 3 April 1920, p. 8.
Caption: “Well, why should I kill this – this won’t bring peace to Ireland!”

As the press continued to consider Home Rule, early April saw a change in the government’s Irish leadership when Macpherson resigned from his position as Chief Secretary of Ireland and Canadian-born Sir Hamar Greenwood took over.²³ The *Daily Telegraph* proclaimed Macpherson had ‘accepted without reserve the necessity of providing an alternative for Ireland in the shape of the best scheme of

²³ ‘Cabinet Changes: New Secretary for Ireland’, *Daily Mirror*, 3 April 1920, p. 3.

self-government that they could devise in the circumstances'.²⁴ This argument acknowledged the desire for a solution to the Irish question that would involve a mechanism of self-government, which preserved constitutional politics. Macpherson's strong policy and banning of nationalist organisations had proven to be largely ineffective and arguably counterproductive. Greenwood's appointment came at a time when the Home Rule debate was flourishing and violence in Ireland was on the rise. Because of this, he would be immediately tested in his new position.

Following Greenwood's appointment, widespread rebel attacks on official property in Ireland were undertaken in early April. The attacks resulted in ninety public outrages on one single night. In response, the settlement-focused press addressed the impact of violence and the prospect of settlement. This recognition differed from the *Herald's* focus on Ulster and instead identified the Crown forces and Sinn Féin and their role in seeing settlement achieved. *The Times* argued the attacks represented 'far more than lawlessness and disorder' but rather 'a state of war'.²⁵ The *Manchester Guardian* similarly contended that 'Ireland realises what England cannot realise, namely, that the country is in a genuine state of war'.²⁶ The article added that 'opinion has hardened against the police since they have been so exclusively engaged on political as opposed to criminal work'.²⁷ Meanwhile, the

²⁴ 'The Irish Secretaryship', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 April 1920, p. 8.

²⁵ 'Guerrilla War in Ireland', *The Times*, 6 April 1920, p. 10.

²⁶ 'Ireland's Guerrilla Warfare', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 April 1920, p. 6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Daily Telegraph argued the attacks exhibited Sinn Féin's policy of 'making "British government impossible"'.²⁸ Reprisals such as these again underscored how violence influenced the press interpretation of the Irish question and the prospect for settlement, which in turn impacted its coverage of settlement.

Ultimately, quelling violence within Ireland and securing British and Irish support were key considerations for the ability of the Home Rule Bill to succeed. An early April White Paper detailing crime in Ireland for the first quarter of the year reported outrages totalling 1,089, including 36 murders.²⁹ Despite the grim totals, *The Times* argued violence would not 'have the effect of killing' the Bill but instead contended it would 'bring home to the British people the urgent necessity for dealing radically with the Irish situation'.³⁰ Similarly, the *Morning Post* featured a letter to the editor that promoted 'the stern enforcement of law and order', which was 'an old-fashioned remedy, but the only one'.³¹ Although the 'old-fashioned' remedy of restoring law and order and the 'necessity of dealing radically' with the Irish situation were acknowledged, as these articles indicated, the press continued to view Ireland from a constitutional perspective. Therefore, *how* to best address the Irish question beyond Home Rule remained unclear.

Adding to the complication of addressing the Irish situation, the *Manchester Guardian* featured an interview with Sinn Féin leader Arthur Griffith who argued

²⁸ 'Sinn Fein and Guerilla Warfare', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 April 1920, p. 9.

²⁹ 'Irish Crime', *Morning Post*, 9 April 1920, p. 5.

³⁰ 'The Outbreak in Ireland', *The Times*, 6 April 1920, p. 11.

³¹ Henry Hugh, 'Crime and Home Rule', *Morning Post*, 8 April 1920, p. 4.

American opinion was 'swinging in favour of Ireland, and in time England would see the folly of giving the world such an excellent stick to hit her with'.³² He further contended that 'Sinn Fein was determined to put President Wilson's principles to the test'.³³ Whether American, or any other opinion, was actually 'swinging' in Sinn Féin's favour is difficult to measure. Yet a key aim and feature of success for Sinn Féin was its ability to become newsworthy or receive favourable treatment in the news.³⁴ This interview revealed the intention of Sinn Féin's political campaign and determination to obtain international recognition of its claim of independence. It likewise suggested the negative implications of the political situation on Britain's world standing. This type of action by Sinn Féin represented a constant underlying threat to the government's Irish policy and, like violence, impacted the press understanding of the Irish question. It likewise supported Ulster's claims against Sinn Féin's freedom to operate uninhibited, as expressed in the *Morning Post*.

The impact of the government's Irish policy in America was further addressed in an article in *The Times*, written by American writer D. Thomas Curtin, who contended,

Whatever belief may have existed in America that the British Government made an honest attempt in 1917 in the Convention plan has been greatly weakened by the publicity campaign of de Valera and

³² 'Policy and Aims of Sinn Fein', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 April 1920, p. 8.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Walsh, *The News from Ireland*, p. 185.

his co-workers... I find America farther from England to-day (and I advisedly say England and not the British Empire) than before the war.³⁵

Curtin's argument corroborated the sentiments expressed by Griffith. It conveyed a general lack of confidence in American opinion with the British government's ability to solve the Irish question. How much Curtin represented popular opinion in America is, once again, difficult to measure. However, his statements can be seen as a general indicator of how the government's Irish policy was received by some in America and pointed to the challenge and need for the government to create an effective policy that would address the Irish situation and appease international opinion. It also revealed the successful rhetoric employed by Sinn Féin in America, which would have been critical of the British presence in Ireland and supportive of Irish independence.

The *Daily Herald* also addressed American and international opinion in one article contending the Home Rule Bill may have been a way to 'ally the intense antagonism to Great Britain' growing within America and Australia but that Lloyd George could not 'explain away the continued presence... of the Army of Occupation'.³⁶ This line of argument was comparable to Curtin's *Times* article with its criticism of the British presence in Ireland and the subsequent impact of that presence on international opinion. These arguments advanced the desire to have the government recognise and address international opinion, which, as these

³⁵ D. Thomas Curtin, 'The Irish Peril in America', *The Times*, 10 April 1920, p. 10.

³⁶ 'Easter in Ireland', *Daily Herald*, 5 April 1920, p. 4.

articles suggested, remained a significant consideration for the press. However, to this point the British government had shown no interest in 'educating' international opinion on the Irish problem, instead wishing to see it as a domestic issue with domestic implications. As the Irish situation persisted, violence increased, and Sinn Féin made use of its international connections, the press was open to question the government's judgement with their lack of effort in this area.

The impact of the unresolved Irish question on international opinion and the policy of Home Rule was further addressed by the *Morning Post* in a letter to the editor written by unionist MP Henry Page Croft. In it, Croft argued the Home Rule Bill was introduced as a way to 'show the world and particularly the United States that our readiness to give self-government to Ireland was genuine'.³⁷ This claim corroborated arguments made by some of the press, such as the *Herald* and *Times*, of prioritising Irish policy to appease international opinion. However, Croft contended appeasement was 'stupid' since 'Irish opinion in the United States was in no way placated by the 1914 Act' and furthermore could not be satisfied by the current Bill.³⁸ Croft's arguments emphasised the troubled aspects of the Home Rule solution and the failure of the government to adequately address the Irish question. He therefore pressed for a solution that would situate Ireland within the union. These sentiments from a conservative MP who supported Ulster against Home Rule are perhaps not surprising. However, they did expose, once more, the

³⁷ Henry Page Croft, 'The Home Rule Bill', *Morning Post*, 12 April 1920, p. 4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

divide in political opinion, the historic lack of understanding, and the failure to commit to a resolution for the Irish question. The Home Rule Bill remained a source of contention and its ability to be successful was left open to questioning by all political parties.

Adding another perspective from a British political leader, the *Daily Express* featured an interview with Lord French reflecting on the Irish situation. The interview ended up being a source of controversy after its publication when Lord French denied its validity. Within its original publication, French was credited with saying,

There is a lot the matter with Ireland... There is a certain section of... the London Press..., which is wilfully exaggerating matters... England does not understand Ireland one bit. The section of the Press to which I have referred is full of misleading statements and destructive criticism.³⁹

This sentiment from French addressed the power of the press as well as the theme of misunderstanding between Britain and Ireland. The article further detailed that French approved of the government's Irish policy, but 'is convinced that British opinion is being misled by exaggerating reports of what is happening in the country'.⁴⁰ It added that French 'believes that the Sinn Fein leaders are behind all

³⁹ H.J. Greenwall, 'What is Wrong with Ireland?', *Daily Express*, 7 April 1920, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the murders that are taking place in Ireland, and he is convinced that the split in their ranks will eventually lead to their undoing'.⁴¹

After its release, this article by the *Express* spurred a debate when French denied his comments, particularly with regard to Sinn Féin's involvement with murders in Ireland. French reportedly argued the article was 'a misrepresentation of what passed on the occasion'.⁴² In response to his criticism, the *Express* supported the interview and further suggested that French had said more that was not made public.⁴³ The paper additionally stated that French had 'failed to foresee the storm' of his comments and 'now attempts to evade it by reflecting on the professional honour and veracity of a capable and experienced journalist'.⁴⁴ The article concluded,

We are in the midst of the gravest crisis that Irish history has experienced, and at the head of the Irish Government stands a man who makes grave statements for publication, and then, finding them to be charged with explosive material, calmly denies having made them. Is this the type of man to be entrusted with a task that involves not only judgment and tact and breadth of vision, but the possession of the ordinary attributes of truth?⁴⁵

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² 'Lord French's Denial', *Daily Express*, 9 April 1920, p. 4.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

The Lord French controversy is a testament to and an example of the power of the press and rhetoric, especially during a time of upheaval. The newspaper, which had been consistently loyal to the government in this instance supported its journalist over the rhetoric of a high-ranking political leader. It is a compelling example of how press and politics can combine and the potential controversial repercussions of interviews. Though French had expressed support of the government's Irish policy, which was arguably needed at this time, his endorsement was likely lost in the controversy. Any support of the British agenda that may have been achieved by this interview was instead overshadowed by another controversy that called into question the motivations of British leadership and their Irish policy.

How to resolve the Irish question was further complicated when another form of protest occurred in early April during which IRA prisoners began a mass hunger strike in Mountjoy prison. The object of the hunger strike was two-fold, with some strikers demanding to be treated as political prisoners and others for the right to be tried.⁴⁶ In response to the strike, the settlement-focused press again addressed the potential impact of the strike on the prospect of settlement. The *Manchester Guardian* argued that the 'British public as a whole seems to have very inadequate conception of the way the situation is being handled'.⁴⁷ It added that opinion would stiffen against the use of coercive measures and that settlement

⁴⁶ Special Correspondent, 'Tension in Ireland', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 April 1920, p. 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

could not be achieved 'until the law has been put in order, and the whole question of the political prisoners reviewed in a spirit of humane statesmanship'.⁴⁸ The *Westminster Gazette* added there was 'strong evidence afforded in the newspapers that British opinion as well as Irish is revolted by the idea of allowing untried suspects to succumb to the hunger-strike' and that the Irish government had 'no right' to treat detained suspects as convicted criminals.⁴⁹ Additionally, the *Guardian* recalled the failure of the 1917 Thomas Ashe hunger strike, which it argued 'did so much to promote the ruin of the constitutional party in Ireland and to establish the power of Sinn Fein'.⁵⁰

These contentions from the settlement-focused press line reaffirmed its focus to seeing settlement achieved and considered the role of public opinion in supporting the government's Irish policy. While it endorsed the growing calls for the restoration of law and order in Ireland it additionally addressed the contentions also made by the pragmatic press to be tactful with this to avoid escalating the situation and engaging in unjustified violence. The hunger strike represented another powerful form of political protest against the government and had the ability to foster negative British opinion. Loss of life was a strong motivating factor and tapped into the moral barometer of the press and public. To this end, the settlement-focused press appealed to the government to learn from the failures of previous events and to be clear with its policy.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ 'The Mountjoy Crisis', *Westminster Gazette*, 14 April 1920, p. 7.

⁵⁰ 'From Bad to Worse in Ireland', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 April 1920, p. 8.

In reply to criticism against the hunger strike, Bonar Law told the Commons that government weakness in response to the strike would only make the situation worse, and that he therefore saw no alternative to freeing the hunger strikers.⁵¹ Following this, the government decided to free the prisoners, ending the strike on 14 April.⁵² The *Manchester Guardian* offered its support of the government's move of shrinking 'from the extreme folly of allowing the hunger strikers in Mountjoy Prison to die'.⁵³ However, the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* countered by instead arguing 'the release of the hunger strikers appears in no way to have placated the enemy'.⁵⁴ Another article further argued, 'The policy of concession and the immunity from punishment which law-breakers in Ireland enjoy is bearing fruit abundantly'.⁵⁵ The fear of the potential political repercussions and criticism from the press was an underlying reason for the government to end the strike. Nonetheless, the move did not bode well for Ulster, who saw it as another example of how nationalists were allowed to evade political crimes. Therefore, this hunger strike, though relatively small in scale, revealed the widening divide of Irish political opinion.

The volatility of the Irish situation was further detailed in a letter to the editor featured in *The Times*, written by Edward Thompson, former MP for Omagh. Thompson contended,

⁵¹ 'Sinn Fein Ireland is Paralysed by Strike', *Daily Mirror*, 14 April 1920, p. 3.

⁵² 'Irish Prisoners Released: Strike Called Off', *Daily Mirror*, 15 April 1920, p. 3.

⁵³ 'The Mountjoy Hunger Strike', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 April 1920, p. 8.

⁵⁴ 'Ireland's Reply', *Morning Post*, 17 April 1920, p. 7.

⁵⁵ 'New Irish Menace', *Morning Post*, 20 April 1920, p. 7.

A great deal of the unrest now so seriously disturbing our country is due to the widespread belief that the British Government do not intend to pass any reforming measure, and that the Home Rule Bill is a blind, intended merely to please America and the Colonies and hoodwink both the Irish and British peoples.⁵⁶

This line of argument was akin to the sentiments made by Croft in the *Morning Post*. As a former MP of an Ulster county, Thompson may have been revealing his support of Ulster against Home Rule as well. However, he differed from Croft in that he concluded the Home Rule Bill was ‘the only practical solution of the Irish question as it exists to-day’.⁵⁷ Like some of the more positive arguments made by the government-loyal and pragmatic press lines, this argument put forward appeals to recognise the potential and opportunity of the new Bill. As the overall press debates had indicated, the violence and political protests within Ireland exacerbated an already volatile situation. The pathway to settlement for the government remained strained and there was no consensus by the press or political leaders for how to best address the situation. However, as this letter argued, the Bill represented a chance for a new policy in Ireland.

As the debate over Home Rule persisted, and reports from Irish outbreaks of violence revealed the extent of the Irish situation, Lloyd George’s *Daily Chronicle* featured a plan for a ‘new policy’ for Ireland. The article reported there would be an end to police raids and arrests for seditious activities, with raids instead being

⁵⁶ Edward Thompson, ‘The Irish Bill’, *The Times*, 14 April 1920, p. 10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

reserved for crimes of murder.⁵⁸ Likewise, the paper reported, ‘The Cabinet have the intention of making important concessions on the Home Rule Bill’.⁵⁹ This ‘new policy’ seemed to address the press criticisms that were mounting, particularly the settlement-focused and partisan *Herald’s* contentions against the government’s military presence in Ireland. It also suggested a willingness to re-work the proposed Home Rule Bill to be more accommodating to Irish demands. However, what those accommodations were, how they would be implemented, and in what timeframe were left unclear. Additionally, Ulster remained a critical aspect that was unrecognised in this report. Therefore, the extent to which this ‘new policy’ could and would address the deteriorating Irish situation was disputable.

Despite the announcement of the government’s new policy, the condition of Ireland continued to be a source of concern for certain government leaders and the press. In response to the announcement, the pragmatic *Daily Mirror* argued the policy was not new but rather a continuation of the government’s policy that had,

[W]obbed between the iron hand and the soft touch... Always we have first hit out, then applied a hasty ointment to the bruise... If the new-old policy has come, let it be pursued logically – and humanely – to an issue.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Political Correspondent, ‘Government’s New Irish Plans’, *Daily Chronicle*, 23 April 1920, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ ‘A “New Policy” in Ireland’, *Daily Mirror*, 24 April 1920, p. 5.

As the events and press debates had indicated, the violent political situation in Ireland incited mixed reaction and the path to solution remained unclear. If the government was going to be successful, a more prudent and 'logical' application was necessary. Ultimately, more time and debate were necessary for the successful implementation of a solution.

Mitigating Violence

I agree that up to the present the Government has failed, and those whom the Government have placed in authority, to whom they gave their confidence and to whom they still extend their confidence, have failed to deal with this problem.⁶¹ – Lord Chancellor F.E. Smith, Lords debate

The summer months of 1920 saw the violent situation in Ireland persist. The continual violence, coupled with the more prominent counter-insurgency tactics from the Black and Tans, prompted further press and government debate on finding a workable solution for Ireland. The government-loyal and pragmatic press lines concentrated on the impact of violence on Anglo-Irish relations and the prospect of settlement. Meanwhile, the settlement-focused press put forward criticism of anything that it considered to be a threat to settlement. This included recalling previous debates on Home Rule's ability to address violence, Lloyd George's leadership, and criticism of Ulster leaders for what it considered to be

⁶¹ HL Deb., 19 May 1920, vol. 40, cols. 426-39.

impeding settlement. Alternatively, the partisan *Morning Post* continued to distance itself from its press competitors through its loyalty to Ulster. The sustained concentration on the constitutional aspect of Anglo-Irish relations by the press meant that understanding of the Irish question was again influenced by the potential breakdown of the prospect of settlement. Consequently, the issue of how to define and resolve the Irish question remained as the government moved ahead with the Home Rule Bill.

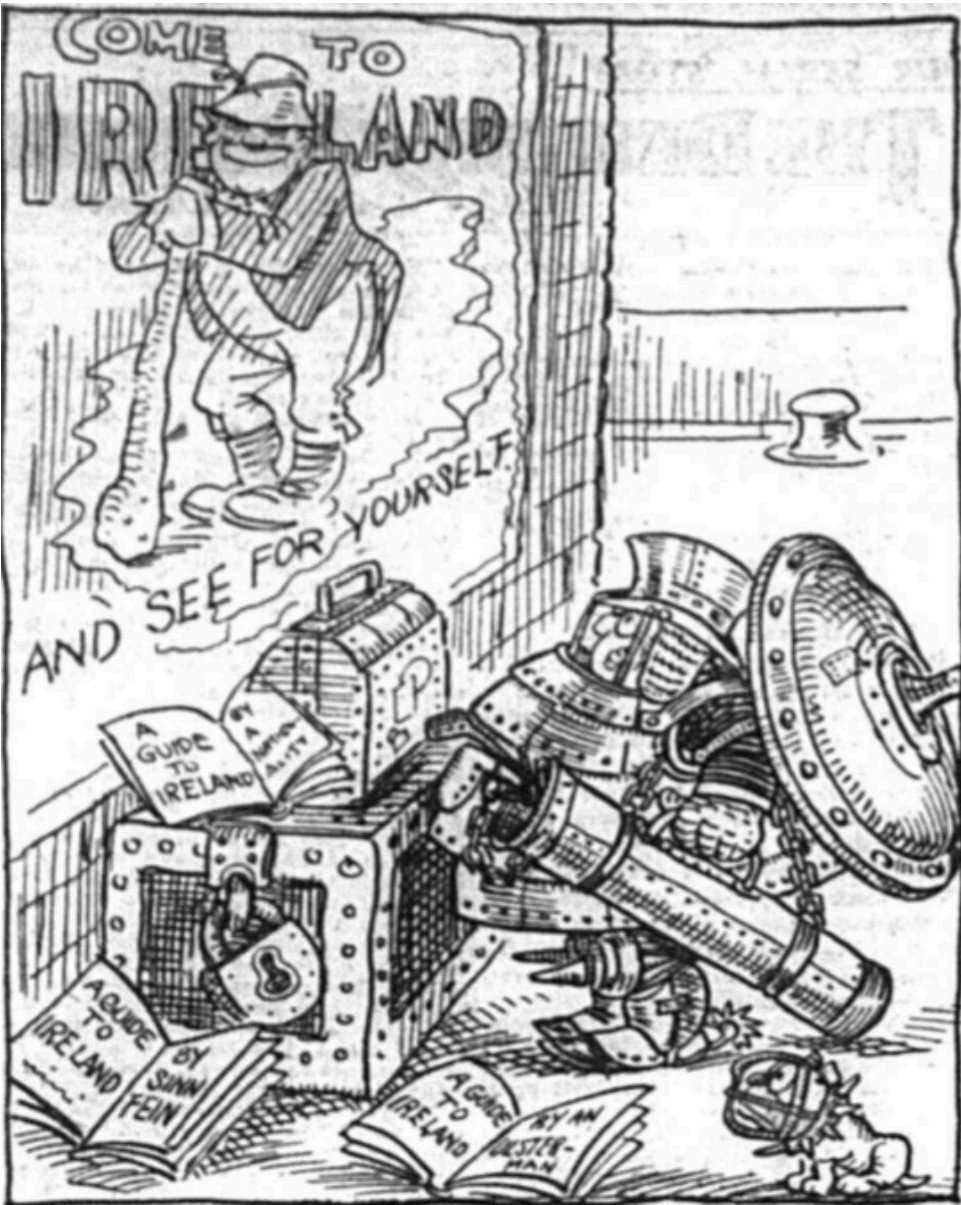
As June began, the government-loyal *Daily Express* featured a cartoon that illustrated the volatile situation in Ireland. The cartoon depicted a heavily armoured man and dog standing in front of a poster that stated: 'Come to Ireland and See for Yourself', along with a collection of Irish guides written by 'A Nationalist', 'Sinn Fein,' and 'An Ulsterman'.⁶² The cartoon title reads: 'The Holiday Season Begins'.⁶³ The cartoon offered a stark commentary on the political situation in Ireland. It did not endorse visiting the island but rather observed the persistent violence that was consistently covered in the press and recalled historic tropes of violence, conflict, and emotion. This cartoon contradicted sentiments expressed in the *Westminster Gazette's* September 1919 article, 'The Lure of Ireland', which suggested it was possible to enjoy a holiday in Ireland without politics getting in the way.⁶⁴ This reversal was evidence of the change in the Irish situation by June 1920, which increasingly saw more political upheaval. It could be considered as a warning

⁶² 'The Holiday Season Begins', *Daily Express*, 4 June 1920, p. 5.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ 'The Lure of Ireland', *Westminster Gazette*, 25 September 1919, p. 4.

against avoiding addressing the situation and missing an opportunity to see settlement achieved. The Ireland in this cartoon was no place to holiday; it was a conflicted and dangerous place.



'The Holiday Season Begins', *Daily Express*, 4 June 1920, p. 5.

The desire for the British government to mitigate violence in Ireland and to focus on the Home Rule Bill was addressed in mid-June with the government's decision to set up a special commission of judges in Ireland.⁶⁵ Yet the settlement-focused press responded with doubt over whether the commission would be successful. In one article, the *Manchester Guardian* argued the move 'marks a new stage in the conflict between the administration and its assailants' but added,

No mere punishments... can really strike at the root of Irish disturbance and crime. That can be done only by measures of reform of far wider scope than at present enter into the conceptions of the Government. Only when reasonable satisfaction has been given to the national spirit of Ireland will Irish discontent and crime that dogs it disappear.⁶⁶

These contentions sustained the settlement-focused press determination for resolution while also appealing to the post-war civilian morale desire for an end to conflict. However, this reasoning perpetuated the constitutional perspective held by the press and, significantly, did not identify how to best to accomplish settlement beyond the confines of Home Rule.

Meanwhile, *The Times* featured a letter to the editor from an Ulsterman responding to the new commission that emphasised the inherent challenge of addressing Irish demands with any policy, which was missing from the *Guardian's* assessment. It argued,

⁶⁵ 'Crime and Its Remedy in Ireland', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 June 1920, p. 6.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

I doubt very much whether the average Ulsterman, like myself, is sufficiently grateful to those who are so anxious to teach him his duty towards his neighbours in spite of the fact that they (his teachers) live in a different country and are often quite ignorant of the problems which confront him daily and hourly.⁶⁷

The sarcastic and pointed tone of this letter implied reluctance to support a policy determined by London-based leaders who were not as attuned to the intricacies of the Irish problem including how Ulster fit in the overall considerations. As this letter indicated, for some in Ulster, the attempt to combat crime with a new commission alienated unionists who saw themselves as loyal to the British Crown. While this line of argument cannot be read as necessarily indicative of overall Ulster opinion, it did expose the difficulty of applying any policy in Ireland and the divided nature of the political situation. It also reflected some of the criticisms made in previous letters to the editor by people connected to Ulster, including Thompson and Croft, both of whom endorsed a tone of Ulster against Home Rule. The extent to which *The Times* understood these contentions is less clear. As indicated, the press had concentrated on the constitutional aspect of the debate and its efforts to define *what* the Irish question was and *who* was responsible for its resolution were from that perspective. That meant that emphasis on the responsible party shifted

⁶⁷ 'The Irish Bill', *The Times*, 15 June 1920, p. 12.

particularly with regards to violence (real or threatened), international opinion, and the potential failure to reach settlement.

Bridging Irish demands and resolving the Irish question was a hurdle that Lloyd George had to contend with and would ultimately reflect his ability as a statesman. One political cartoon in the *Westminster Gazette* suggested that the Home Rule Bill was another political game played by the Prime Minister. The cartoon, titled 'Irish Croquet', portrayed a familiar scene from *Alice in Wonderland* in which Alice plays croquet with the Queen; only Alice was Lloyd George and his flamingo mallet represented the Home Rule Bill and the hedgehog ball Ireland.⁶⁸ The cartoon recalled and expanded on earlier expressed sentiments by the settlement-focused press line, including that of the *Manchester Guardian*, which had described Ireland as a 'plaything' of party politics in Britain.⁶⁹ The depiction of the Prime Minister as a juvenile attempting to solve a complex problem by use of a child's game was another way to interpret that argument. In turn, this likewise supported previous contentions against the government's ability to apply a successful policy in Ireland and called into question the capacity of British government leaders. However, beyond criticising the government's ability to solve the Irish question, what policy should be implemented was less clear.

⁶⁸ FCG, 'Irish Croquet', *Westminster Gazette*, 21 June 1920, p. 1.

⁶⁹ 'The Second Reading', *Manchester Guardian*, 1 April 1920, p. 6.



'Irish Croquet', *Westminster Gazette*, 21 June 1920, p. 1.

As the debate on Home Rule and scrutiny of the government's policy continued, hostilities in Ireland intensified throughout the summer prompting further critical analysis by the press, including of the retaliation efforts from the British forces. In late June, a particularly bad outbreak of violence occurred in Londonderry. The *Daily Mirror* reported of 'civil war' in the streets of Londonderry as armed men took possession of the city and attacked troops and bands of unionists.⁷⁰ Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* described the situation as 'desperate'.⁷¹

⁷⁰ "'Civil War' in the Streets of Derry", *Daily Mirror*, 22 June 1920, p. 3.

⁷¹ '5 Killed by Machine Gun in Derry', *Daily Chronicle*, 24 June 1920, p. 1.

Upon appeals for backup, the Prime Minister called for troops and a destroyer to be dispatched to the city where the heavy fighting continued.⁷² In the aftermath, five Sinn Féin members were reported killed with another 100 casualties.⁷³

Following news of the attack, the government-loyal *Daily Express* declared the war in Ireland had 'entered a new phase' and that attacks were not confined merely to the British administration but that the Irish were increasingly fighting amongst themselves 'in deadly earnest'.⁷⁴ The article contended that pursuing a policy of 'peace, order and respect for the law must be re-established at any cost' and that Home Rule 'must be passed and the North and South accept it'.⁷⁵ This reflection was in-line with the contingent of the government-loyal press whose primary focus was the restoration of law and order. As the example from Londonderry illustrated, the violence within Ireland was not relegated to Irish rebels versus British soldiers; it had advanced to internal fighting amongst the Irish political factions as well, giving more urgency to the need for resolution. However, once more, this rather simplified argument for the North and South to 'accept' Home Rule did not address the larger issue at stake with resolving the Irish question, namely bridging the divide in Irish political opinion between unionism and republicanism.

⁷² 'Derry's S.O.S. to Premier for Troops and Ships', *Daily Mirror*, 24 June 1920, p. 3.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ 'Ireland vs. Ireland', *Daily Express*, 22 June 1920, p. 4.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

In the wake of increased violence, the settlement-focused press countered the government-loyal tone of endorsing the need to restore law and order by instead reflecting on the worsening Irish situation and questioning the government's ability to combat violence. One article from the *Manchester Guardian* argued that the 'revelation of our failure in Ireland drifts on, day by day, from one mortifying chapter to another'.⁷⁶ The *Westminster Gazette* similarly contended that the 'history of Ireland is a history of lost opportunities'.⁷⁷ Another of its articles further posited that 'peace and unity can only come if both sides will moderate their attitude'.⁷⁸

As these articles suggested, the need and desire for a peaceful resolution in Ireland was promoted as missed opportunities and failures were lamented. However, unlike the *Daily Express*' stance, the *Gazette* did not see the prospect of the newest Home Rule Bill as the right answer. Instead, the paper argued that Lloyd George,

[M]ust know as well as any man living that that Bill is the crowning disaster for a policy of conciliation... it represented from the beginning a Coalition compromise to dress the shop-window rather than an honest attempt to settle the Irish question.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ 'Our Future in Ireland', *Manchester Guardian*, 29 June 1920, p. 8.

⁷⁷ 'A Final Alternative', *Westminster Gazette*, 29 June 1920, p. 7.

⁷⁸ 'Fighting in Ireland', *Westminster Gazette*, 22 June 1920, p. 9.

⁷⁹ 'A Final Alternative', *Westminster Gazette*.

While this acknowledgment of the failure of Home Rule to address Irish opinion represented a progression of understanding by the paper, how to resolve the Irish question and to think beyond constitutional politics remained less clear. The persistence of the unresolved status of the Irish question fed into press weariness of the situation and continued questioning of the success of the government's Irish policy.

During this period, the topic of Ulster progressed as well as Carson took a stronger tone in his public rhetoric. Carson wrote a letter to the Ulster Unionist Council detailing plans to 'organise our people for defence against those whose crimes are ruining Ireland' should the British government be unable to stifle the situation in Ireland.⁸⁰ These sentiments spilled over in the Twelfth of July celebrations where Carson publically advanced the Ulster cause. At the celebration, Carson described the nature of 'unity' in Ireland and the 'disrepute' of the country by criminals and assassins who were blocking the path to unity.⁸¹ In reflecting on the celebration, the partisan *Morning Post* addressed the 'Province's loyalty and devotion to the Crown',⁸² supporting the Ulster argument of being a loyal and contributing member of the empire. These events and contentions matched the sentiments expressed in the preceding months by unionist supporters and further hardened the Ulster political stance.

⁸⁰ 'Second Carson Army for Ulster?' *Daily Mirror*, 30 June 1920, p. 3.

⁸¹ 'Protection from Sinn Fein', *Morning Post*, 18 July 1920, p. 8.

⁸² *Ibid.*

While the *Post* expressed the allegiance of Ulster, the settlement-focused press considered the annual Ulster event differently and Carson's pronouncement to defend against the crimes in Ireland prompted a critical response. The *Westminster Gazette* argued the Ulster Volunteers had 'set the example of organising armed resistance to the Government which Sinn Fein has been quick to follow'.⁸³ The article further contended 'the law must be enforced against both' Sinn Féin and the Volunteers for peace to be achieved.⁸⁴ *The Times* added,

[T]he British people is not prepared to endorse any counter provocation from the Ulster Volunteers. What is illegal in Connaught is equally illegal in Ulster; and whatever the loyalty of Ulster Unionist sentiment, that party enjoys no prerogative which entitles it to defy the law.⁸⁵

Meanwhile, the *Manchester Guardian* questioned whether the time had come for Ulster to help make peace possible for the land of which 'it forms an integral part and for whose good it can do far more than anybody outside its borders, or perhaps than anybody else inside them?'⁸⁶ The article continued by arguing that Carson,

[M]ust know... that the time has gone by for a policy of mere antagonism or oppression, that Home Rule is no longer a rallying cry of

⁸³ 'Ulster's Day', *Westminster Gazette*, 13 July 1920, p. 7.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ 'The "Twelfth" in Ulster', *The Times*, 13 July 1920, p. 13.

⁸⁶ 'The Twelfth in Ireland', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 July 1920, p. 8.

parties, that great changes are of necessity impending in the relations of Great Britain and Ireland, and that the present abortive Home Rule Bill cannot for a moment be regarded as a settlement of this great question.⁸⁷

These contentions from the settlement-focused press line indicated a basic awareness of the implication of Ulster defending itself and cautioned against tit-for-tat retribution and further violence in Ireland. The coverage concentrated on settlement and the need for the government to be tactful in applying policy. Since Carson's firm stance threatened these priorities consideration of Ulster's culpability returned. Yet the same analysis was not offered for Carson's Sinn Féin counterparts, whom the partisan *Morning Post* was particularly critical of. This was again an outcome of the overall neglect of the press to understand the emotiveness of questions of nationhood, which impacted how it interpreted settlement. In this case, Carson was urged to help make peace by going beyond a policy of 'mere antagonism and oppression'.

As the summer events and debates dictated, the British government began to more earnestly recognise that the state of affairs in Ireland required a prompt response. The need was accentuated when, in mid-July, a series of violent events took place including the brazen murder of Colonel Smith, V.C. by Sinn Féin rebels.⁸⁸ The government-loyal and pragmatic press responded with condemnation against

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ 'Irish Terror', *Daily Chronicle*, 19 July 1920, p. 4.

the violence. The *Daily Chronicle* argued the main objection of the murder was to 'destroy the morale of the R.I.C.'⁸⁹ Another 'night of terror' in Belfast was reported on 24 July, which the *Daily Telegraph* contended, 'not since the 1886 riots had there been such a bloody night's work in the city'.⁹⁰ The event resulted in ten deaths and over 100 injuries mainly from gunshot wounds.⁹¹ Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* wrote of the new criminal laws being contemplated by the government detailing that 'sterner measures dealing with Irish lawlessness are being considered by the Government'.⁹² The article also mentioned preparations for strengthening courts martial.⁹³ The *Telegraph* argued this step by the government was 'welcomed by Parliamentary circles'.⁹⁴

Conversely, the settlement-focused press responded to the violence by critiquing the government's Irish policy and its failure to address violence. The *Westminster Gazette* warned if the guerrilla war being waged by the government was complicated by a civil war between the Irish factions, 'the anarchy in Ireland will be well-nigh complete'.⁹⁵ Although the government continued to assess new measures to address the Irish situation, the question itself and the press understanding of it continued to evolve. Because of this and the threat that violence brought, the sense of Irish chaos sustained.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ 'Night of Terror', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 July 1920, p. 11.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² 'New Criminal Law for Ireland', *Daily Chronicle*, 20 July 1920, p. 1.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ 'Trials Without Juries', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 July 1920, p. 11.

⁹⁵ 'The Vendetta in Ireland', *Westminster Gazette*, 22 July 1920, p. 7.

By the end of July, Lloyd George announced in the Commons new plans to address the Irish question, offering to work more closely with the Irish political parties. The Prime Minister declared his willingness to 'speak with Irish people and "deliver the goods"'.⁹⁶ The offer was made with two conditions: first, that there would be no secession, and second, that the self-determination for the North-East would be granted'.⁹⁷ In response, the *Observer* declared, 'If he [Lloyd George] found a Sinn Feiner on the bridge between the extremists of both sides he would discuss the position with him'.⁹⁸

Following Lloyd George's announcement, the partisan *Daily Herald* continued with its condemnation of the government's presence in Ireland. In one article, it criticised the inability to set up an Irish Republic as 'a foolish limitation'.⁹⁹ It further declared Lloyd George had made the offer 'to ensure that the Irish leaders shall refuse, and that he shall be able then to denounce them as men with whom it is impossible to deal'.¹⁰⁰ These contentions came the closest to realising that the version of Home Rule now on the table did not address the Republic that Sinn Féin demanded but it significantly did not consider Ulster opinion. How sincere Lloyd George was in his offer is debatable but his declaration did indicate willingness by the government to open the lines of communication, which was a departure from previous policy. The move was also an indication of how the

⁹⁶ 'Premier's Offer to Ireland', *Observer*, 25 July 1920, p. 11.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ 'Premier and Sinn Fein', *Daily Herald*, 26 July 1920, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ 'Premier's Offer to Ireland', *Observer*, 25 July 1920, p. 11.

government was re-framing the Irish question, with better recognition of working with Irish leaders.

Lloyd George's offer came at a time when a change of policy was needed and desired. Yet how to best address the Irish situation was still not clear and continued to be debated by the press. As a special correspondent for the government-loyal *Daily Mail* argued, 'Ireland is at the eleventh hour' and there was widespread feeling 'that the Government must do something'.¹⁰¹ However, the settlement-focused *Westminster Gazette* argued that there were 'conflicting streams of opinion' within Lloyd George's Coalition and claimed the Prime Minister was 'endeavouring to swim with both'.¹⁰² The paper contended that it was the 'imperative duty' of the Prime Minister to bring the Irish question to an end 'even if he risks breaking the Government in doing so'.¹⁰³ The urgency of addressing lawlessness was made further evident in an article by the paper, which detailed seventeen policemen had been killed and another thirty-nine injured along with nine civilian deaths and twenty injuries in the previous two months.¹⁰⁴ These were in addition to tremendous destruction of property.¹⁰⁵ The paper argued these figures were evidence of the real difficulty of bringing anybody to justice for the crimes.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Special Correspondent, 'Ireland at the 11th Hour', *Daily Mail*, 27 July 1920, p. 7.

¹⁰² 'Coalition Politics and Ireland', *Westminster Gazette*, 30 July 1920, p. 7.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ 'Irish Crimes', *Westminster Gazette*, 7 August 1920, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

These press contentions and crime totals were indicative of the violence that was persisting in Ireland and the difficulty with bringing perpetrators to justice. Subsequently, Lloyd George gave a speech requesting assistance, calling on recruits 'to put down this conspiracy of lawlessness'.¹⁰⁷ The tide of the government's response to the Irish situation was slowly turning as reports of violence were compelling evidence for the argument to restore law and order and to re-approach its Irish policy with the goal of reaching settlement. Yet this approach remained within the confines of constitutional politics and how to define the Irish question and address settlement beyond the unworkable Home Rule solution remained elusive. This sustained the state of unrest in Ireland.

August began with yet another attempt by the British government to address the situation in Ireland, this time with the passing of the Bill for the Restoration and Maintenance of Order in Ireland in the Commons.¹⁰⁸ The Bill empowered the government to set-up emergency courts for trials, which were previously handled by the Defence of the Realm Act.¹⁰⁹ The new Bill was meant to support the government's presence in Ireland while the debates over the Home Rule Bill were postponed for two months.¹¹⁰ The *Daily Herald* described the impetus for the move originated from the difficulty the government found with 'enforcing what they claim to be justice in Ireland', which had been the

¹⁰⁷ 'Irish Conspiracy', *Morning Post*, 31 July 1920, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ 'Coercion', *Daily Herald*, 1 August 1920, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ 'Government and Irish Criminals', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 August 1920, p. 9.

¹¹⁰ 'Coercion Once More', *Manchester Guardian*, 4 August 1920, p. 6.

'impossibility' of getting jurors and evidence.¹¹¹ This contention backed that of the *Westminster Gazette*, which had likewise addressed the difficulty of bringing anybody to justice for the crimes seen in the early summer months.

Greenwood remarked that with the Bill, one must 'remember that the British Empire is not at war with Ireland, but that certain extremists in that country have declared themselves at war with the British Empire'.¹¹² Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* described the Bill as 'an emergency measure' that did not offer a solution to the Irish problem, which could only be solved by legislation.¹¹³ This move by the government was a step to addressing the calls for improving law and order in Ireland. It was a way to address the decaying Irish situation and gave more power to leaders in dealing with crime and punishment while the Home Rule Bill worked its way through government channels.

With the new Bill's release, the press remained split in its assessment of the Irish situation and whether the Bill could assist with settlement. The settlement-focused press followed in its general tone of criticism against the government's Irish policy. In one article, the *Manchester Guardian* was particularly biting in its commentary arguing of the 'bad opinion' of 'our own colonies and friendly neutral nations' that had been made worse by the 'Coercion Bill'.¹¹⁴ It argued that the government's wavering policy with Ireland 'can only sharpen the on looking

¹¹¹ 'Coercion', *Daily Herald*.

¹¹² 'Ireland's New Bill', *Morning Post*, 9 August 1920, p. 6.

¹¹³ 'Crime in Ireland', *Daily Chronicle*, 6 August 1920, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ 'The Irish Failure', *Manchester Guardian*, 6 August 1920, p. 6.

nation's sense of the further contrast between all our war-time preaching about self-determination abroad and our peace-time practice on our own promises'.¹¹⁵ This reflected the paper's tone throughout 1919-20, condemning the contradiction of the British wartime effort at addressing the needs of small nations but neglecting to do so with Ireland. The challenges to the Bill were clear, but the situation in Ireland also warranted a new way of dealing with insurgencies. As ever, *how* best to address the Irish situation remained unclear and debatable.

Contradicting the disapproval of the *Guardian*, the pragmatic *Daily Telegraph* argued against criticism contending,

Those who have no alternative to offer to the Government's proposals ought to hold their peace. They are only fanning a furnace and stiffening the resolution of Sinn Fein to hold out for its impossible demand of an Irish Republic. To oppose these new proposals for the sake of party politics is criminal.¹¹⁶

This contention addressed the volatility of the Irish situation and credited the new measure for its potential to help restore order in Ireland. This line of argument offered a medium between the press divide and addressed the growing calls for the need to restore law and order that had mounted in the previous months and indicated that a true settlement offer for Ireland had still to be worked out.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ 'The New Irish Bill', *Daily Telegraph*, 4 August 1920, p. 8.

Ultimately, the Bill for the Restoration and Maintenance Order in Ireland was officially passed in August.¹¹⁷ However, the Cabinet remained cognisant of the political situation and of criticism against the government's Irish policy after its passing. One Cabinet meeting expressed concern over the importance of favourable British opinion stating that there would be no success with policy 'unless the opinion of the country was behind it'.¹¹⁸ The meeting also expressed fear of 'a point when public opinion would desert the Government'.¹¹⁹ This contention emphasised how British opinion remained an important consideration for British decision-makers and its policy pursued in Ireland, especially as violence persisted. Yet the path to solution to the Irish question remained full of challenges.

Home Rule Bill Challenges

With the evidence of the intensified coercion campaign before us, we cannot resist the conclusion that the acts of the Government agents must be described as a factor, as a provocation which has resulted in some of the outrages, and that they are responsible for what are called the reprisals on the other side.¹²⁰ – Labour MP Arthur Henderson, Commons debate

Despite the passing of the Bill for the Restoration and Maintenance Order, the political situation in Ireland continued to pose a challenge to the aims of the

¹¹⁷ 'The Irish Bill Passed', *The Times*, 10 August 1920, p. 15.

¹¹⁸ TNA, CAB 23/22, 'Conclusion', 13 August 1920, p. 7.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ HC Deb., 20 October 1920, vol. 133, cols. 925-1039.

Home Rule Bill and, consequently, the government's standing in Ireland. The autumn 1920 Irish question press coverage increasingly considered the role of British opinion, particularly in response to Black and Tan offenses, which many saw as a 'factor' and 'provocation' to the reprisals occurring in Ireland. The partisan *Daily Herald*, the settlement-focused, and the pragmatic press lines coalesced in their questioning of the government's ability to achieve success in Ireland, though each differed in their main contentions. Meanwhile, the partisan *Morning Post* and the government-loyal press remained critical of lawlessness in Ireland. While crimes and violence perpetrated in Ireland were covered, such violence continued to be considered as marginal to mainstream constitutional politics and something that could be stopped by constitutional politics. That influenced the press coverage and understanding of the Irish question and suggested that the press had still not understood the emotiveness of questions of nationhood, instead focusing on a need to restore law and order and secure an amorphous solution.

The Restoration Bill was debated in tandem with Home Rule throughout August and September 1920. These debates saw the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines advance scepticism as to the ability for the Restoration Bill to address the Irish situation. One article from a lobby correspondent for the *Daily Mirror* argued that Ministers had begun to 'recognize the truth of what was so often said during the debate on the Restoration of Order Bill – that a policy of mere

coercion is impossible'.¹²¹ Additionally, Desmond McCarthy contended in one *Manchester Guardian* article,

The effect of the Government Bill "to make provision for the restoration and maintenance of order in Ireland" will be to justify acts of violence in the eyes of still more Irishmen, to silence the moderates and intensify the action of extremists.¹²²

The Conservative *Times* added, 'The sands are running out quickly in Ireland, and if the Government hesitates much longer it may decide to act too late'.¹²³

These contentions indicated fear of the government's authority losing further ground with the active guerrilla war as it augmented its presence in Ireland with Black and Tan recruits. These sentiments advanced the political tones of these subsets of the press, which had continually warned against the negative impact of coercion particularly from a war and Irish question weary British public. This was an argument that would continue to advance as Black and Tan reprisals became more frequent, contradicting the civilian morale narrative, and fuelling criticism of the government's ability to manage its military operations. As one article in the *Times* argued, the government was attempting to apply coercion 'to a problem which such methods cannot solve'.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Lobby Correspondent, 'Dominion Home Rule with Limitations', *Daily Mirror*, 14 August 1920, p. 3.

¹²² Desmond McCarthy, 'Ireland To-Day', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 August 1920, p. 6.

¹²³ 'Fading Irish Hopes', *The Times*, 18 August 1920, p. 12.

¹²⁴ 'Fading Irish Hopes', *The Times*.

The government-loyal *Daily Mail* addressed the impact of violence further in one article that aligned with the recent contentions of the settlement-focused and pragmatic press. It argued the British public were 'bored' with Irish politics but warned, 'you can't be bored with an earthquake'.¹²⁵ The article also contended that resolving the Irish problem would result in saving the British Empire and preserve resources used to combat the current situation.¹²⁶ It concluded, 'Things are happening in Ireland that the people of Britain do not know. It is time they knew that to be bored with Irish politics is to be ignorant of their own well being'.¹²⁷ Gwynn similarly cautioned in the pragmatic *Observer* that English people 'do not realise what is being done in their name, or, ... when the campaign of murder against the police was started, they disliked what is happening, and so shut their eyes to the full facts'.¹²⁸ He added, 'That attitude has not saved Ireland from rapidly accumulating disaster'.¹²⁹

These lines of argument added to the settlement-focused press contentions and also recalled earlier criticism made against the ignorance or lack of interest from the British public with regard to the Irish situation. Yet, these articles are too harsh in their criticism. Violence (real or threatened) was a proven instigator to mobilising opinion and the popular civilian morale narrative of pacifism supported the desired prospect to end conflict through constitutional politics. As the previous

¹²⁵ James Dunn, 'Ireland – A Warning', *Daily Mail*, 14 August 1920, p. 4.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week By Week', *Observer*, 26 September 1920, p. 9.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

months' press debates had indicated, there was general acknowledgement of the Irish situation that had seen criticism of violence put forward. The Mountjoy hunger strike is one example, as well as the responses to violent crimes, including those in Londonderry. In response, the need to restore law and order was pursued, though, much like with the debates on how to resolve the Irish question, the press differed on its application. Therefore, the *Mail* and *Observer* articles can be considered both a criticism against the government's failure to educate the public on the Irish situation and likewise a call to the public to be more active. With the summer months' violent outrages in mind, and the Restoration Bill in place, the potential strength of British opinion was once more considered.

As the debate over the Restoration Bill's role in addressing the Irish problem developed, Terrence MacSwiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork, initiated another high-profile hunger strike. MacSwiney had been arrested on 12 August and found guilty of possessing a copy of a police cipher as well as two seditious documents for which he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.¹³⁰ As details of his arrest and strike made news, the government's decision against releasing him sparked a political debate, which resulted in split opinion from the settlement-focused and pragmatic press and the government-loyal and partisan *Morning Post*. The government-loyal *Daily Express* argued his protest presented 'a complex case to the world' and detailed how his release could be seen as an example of weakness to Sinn Fein.¹³¹

¹³⁰ 'Ireland And Dead Lord Mayor', *The Times*, 26 October 1920, p. 10.

¹³¹ 'The Hunger Striker', *Daily Express*, 3 September 1920, p. 4.

However, the article urged not to let MacSwiney 'make a martyr of himself' and 'give the opponent of order in Ireland the chance to make things worse'.¹³² On 4 September, Lloyd George sent Bonar Law a letter in which he said MacSwiney's detention was due to 'high policy' from which 'we cannot depart... without sacrificing supreme interests of the British Empire'.¹³³ MacSwiney's case would continue to unfold throughout the ensuing months as he remained committed to his hunger strike and the press debated the merits of his efforts. The timing of the hunger strike challenged the government's new Bill at addressing the violence in Ireland.

Another challenge for the government surfaced with the stronger measures implemented by the Black and Tans as part of the powers granted by the Restoration Bill. One example included the murder of District-Inspector Burke on 20 September in Balbriggan by the IRA, which was preceded by several hours of shooting and destruction by a group of Black and Tans.¹³⁴ The retaliation resulted in two civilian deaths, the destruction of an important factory, and the burning of many houses.¹³⁵ In response, the settlement-focused press again concentrated on the state of war in Ireland and its subsequent impact on other outside factors, including popular opinion in Britain and internationally. Gwynn argued in the

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Lawlor, *Britain and Ireland 1914-23*, p. 68.

¹³⁴ 'Police Reprisals in Ireland', *The Times*, 23 September 1920, p. 9.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Observer that the 'sack' of Balbriggan 'was only one amongst others in a ghastly list'.¹³⁶ *The Times* additionally contended,

Without any consultation as to its opinion, this country has been committed to an unprecedented type of warfare in Ireland... The public are in doubt whether the Government have connived at excesses on the part of their agents, or whether those agents have abused their position to impose their will upon the Government.¹³⁷

These reports and contentions addressed the results of the implementation of the Restoration Bill in Ireland and suggested it had left some to question the benefit of its application. As reprisals remained rampant, they were increasingly matched with firm force from the Black and Tans. The violence perpetrated was a motivating factor to spur commentary and demands for change in the government's Irish policy. However, the press remained unclear in *how* to resolve the Irish question beyond the confines of British constitutional politics.

Opposition to the government's Irish policy, as well as the impact of reprisals and the Black and Tans' conduct, kept the Irish question a relevant topic for the press. One letter to the editor featured in *The Times* argued the Irish question was the 'most important' in all British world-policy and it was the government's duty to attempt a 'permanent cure of Ireland's long disease, instead

¹³⁶ Colin Reid, 'Stephen Gwynn and the Failure of Constitutional Nationalism in Ireland, 1919-1921', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (September 2010), 723-745 (p. 741).

¹³⁷ 'Administrative Anarchy', *The Times*, 27 September 1921, p. 11.

of an alternating series of concession and repression, proposals and withdrawals, promises and punishments'.¹³⁸ Similarly, an article in the *Manchester Guardian* argued the government followed a 'shifting policy' in its attempt to 'restore law and order' and this policy was 'the logical outcome of repression without a political party behind it'.¹³⁹ These articles recalled the previous contentions of the *Daily Mirror's* 'A "New Policy"' article, which likewise criticised the government's 'shifting' Irish policy. They also offered a direct critique of the coalition government and reflected the settlement-focused and pragmatic press desire for more structure and clarity of the government's Irish policy.

The *Morning Post* likewise addressed the negative impact of the violence but unlike the settlement-focused and pragmatic press, argued against the ability for rebels to operate uninhibited. In one article it contended,

That the civil arm is completely paralyzed is placidly ignored by the unassuming friends of the assassin... Under a weak or a corrupt administration situations sooner or later invariably occur in which it is almost impossible to do right.¹⁴⁰

This line of argument followed the paper's unionist support and was critical of the government's Irish policy through a different way of considering the Irish situation.

Such press examples exhibit the types of criticism advanced against the

¹³⁸ Nowell Smith, 'State of Ireland', *The Times*, 8 September 1920, p. 6.

¹³⁹ 'Terror of the Black-And-Tans', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 September 1920, p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ 'The Moral of Reprisals', *Morning Post*, 27 September 1920, p. 6.

government's rotating policy by urging a desire to see a more comprehensive policy pursued. However, beyond the criticism, the press retained its constitutional perspective of Anglo-Irish relations and what form new policy should take and how to implement it remained unclear.

Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* acknowledged some of the criticisms against the government and outlined roadblocks faced in the pursuit of restoring law and order in Ireland. One article from a special correspondent contended provocations had been 'far greater than has been realised by the British public'.¹⁴¹ It also said that it was difficult to collect evidence from an Irish public that was 'terrorized' and expressed the need to continue with the Home Rule Bill in the hope that 'moderate Irish opinions may coalesce'.¹⁴² A later article addressed reprisals and contended that terrorists in Ireland were favoured by their 'publicity department', which it argued was helped by the Sinn Féin's position in 'postal and telegraph services'.¹⁴³ As a result, it said,

[W]e conceive that the attempt to excite special odium against the "Black and Tans" is mainly due to their undoubted efficiency, which is giving the Irish Republican Army an unprecedented amount of trouble.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Special Correspondent, 'Irish Policy of the Government', *Daily Chronicle*, 29 September 1920, p. 1.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ "'Reprisals'", *Daily Chronicle*, 29 September 1920, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

This government-friendly tone from the Prime Minister's newspaper confronted the challenges of implementing law and order and suggested the situation in Ireland was more complex than the press and public were perhaps aware of. It also wrote positively of the Black and Tans' efforts, which were argued to be so good they disrupted Sinn Féin's own aims. This type of rhetoric was a means of rationalising the government's policy and mitigating some of the criticism. However, it also represents an example of how better communication about the Irish situation was necessary. This was a consistent consideration and challenge for the government and was a concern that had been advocated throughout the different press lines. The extent to which this type of reporting assisted the government is therefore disputable.

Despite efforts from the government and government-friendly news sources, the criticism of the government's Irish policy, and specifically of the Black and Tans, persisted throughout October. The partisan, settlement-focused, and pragmatic press lines were particularly condemning. The papers built on their previous contentions, including considering the 'iron hand and the soft touch'¹⁴⁵ of the government's policy and seriously called into question the morality of the government's undertaking. The *Daily Herald* argued reprisals were not, and had never been, spontaneous but were rather 'deliberately connived at by people in the highest official positions, directly in touch with, and responsible to, the Cabinet'.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ 'A "New Policy" in Ireland', *Daily Mirror*, 24 April 1920, p. 5.

¹⁴⁶ 'Reprisals', *Daily Herald*, 1 October 1920, p. 4.

The article contended that if the government could not 'prevent its paid servants from committing murder and outrage... then the Government is morally bankrupt before the whole world'.¹⁴⁷ As part of his series in the *Observer*, Gwynn similarly argued, 'The indiscipline which occurs is in truth really and justly chargeable not upon the men but upon their superiors in authority'.¹⁴⁸ The *Westminster Gazette* struck a similar chord in one article arguing, 'It is the Government's duty to stop them [reprisals] immediately, even if the total withdrawal of the Black and Tans from Ireland be necessary'.¹⁴⁹

Though the Black and Tans were meant to supplement the official British presence in Ireland and be a response to calls for stronger law and order, they were increasingly viewed as a terrorist group. With criticism against the government's policy growing, the settlement-focused press again urged for clarity in policy. In one article, the *Manchester Guardian* posited 'the facts of the situation must be faced and the truth be told about them... The government of Ireland at the present time is a government of terror'.¹⁵⁰ The article likened the treatment of Ireland to how the 'Germans treated the Belgians', which the British had 'justly condemned'.¹⁵¹ The need for transparency was further addressed in a letter to the editor featured in *The Times* that argued, 'the British public do not realise that they are rushing into perdition – the disruption of the Empire and the rot of European civilization'.¹⁵² An

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week by Week', *Observer*, 24 October 1920, p. 9.

¹⁴⁹ 'More Reprisals', *Westminster Gazette*, 6 October 1920, p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ 'The Road to Peace', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 October 1920, p. 8.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² West Ridgeway, 'Ireland', *The Times*, 8 October 1920, p. 6.

additional *Guardian* article argued, 'All men ought to unite in condemning' the situation in Ireland and criticised the British government for saying 'scarcely a word' in its 'denunciation'.¹⁵³

As these contentions suggest, for the settlement-focused press, the government needed to first address these controversies before settlement could be achieved. Failure to do so was considered to be a form of 'Prussianism', which, as seen during the Great War, was popularly condemned. The tone suggested a crisis had emerged that required public comment and government action. This was, in some ways, similar to the commentary from the government-loyal press from earlier in the month, which had urged the British public to wake up to the Irish situation and become more active participants in its resolution. As the *Daily Express* had argued, the British public needed a 'shock to stimulate' interest in Irish affairs.¹⁵⁴ The sustained violence in Ireland and the conduct of the Black and Tans was that shock. Yet, importantly, similar reflection on the press ability to understand the Irish question and what it entailed was not considered. If the public needed a 'shock', the press needed to consider the change in the Irish question from its pre-war iteration and think outside the confines of British constitutional politics.

In addition to the settlement-focused call for clarity in policy, the press also considered the impact of the Irish situation on international relations. In one article

¹⁵³ 'Breaking the Murder Gang in Ireland', *Manchester Guardian*, 18 October 1920, p. 11.

¹⁵⁴ Dublin Special Correspondent, 'The Masters of Ireland', *Daily Express*, 27 October 1919, p. 1.

the government-loyal *Daily Mail* wrote of the 'woeful effect on public opinion, not only at home but abroad' that reprisals were causing.¹⁵⁵ Another article in the settlement-focused *Times* pushed this line further contending,

The suspicion that the Government does not entirely discountenance the policy of retaliation for Sinn Fein atrocities... do much to prejudice once again the American purview of the Irish problem.¹⁵⁶

However, countering this, the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* advised, 'American opinion in regard to Ireland should be clearly understood for the guidance of Anglo-American relations'.¹⁵⁷

As evidenced by these articles, the press valued the relevance of international opinion, even if it was seen as mere guidance as the *Post* suggested. This coverage suggests press weariness of the escalating violence in Ireland and fear of losing the opportunity to secure settlement. The impact and the 'woeful effect' of retaliation reprisals was a threat to the British reputation and to friendly international relations. The Cabinet acknowledged this concern in one October Conference of Ministers when it was argued any new schemes would need 'all the strength and backing it could obtain from public opinion in breaking up the murder gang'.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ 'A Reprisals Inquiry', *Daily Mail*, 11 October 1920, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ 'British Methods In Ireland', *The Times*, 4 October 1920, p. 11.

¹⁵⁷ 'American Feeling On Ireland', *Morning Post*, 13 October 1920, p. 9.

¹⁵⁸ TNA, CAB 23/38, 'Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers', 13 October 1920, p. 3.

The challenge to the government's Irish policy and concern of negative opinion continued when Terence MacSwiney's hunger strike reached its deadly end in late October after 74 days, prompting feedback and reflection by the press. Some newspapers focused on the potential impact of his death on Britain's international relations and maintaining law and order in Ireland. The government-loyal *Daily Express* argued MacSwiney's hunger strike was a 'test case' and had the government surrendered, 'law would have been mocked and order undone'.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, *The Times* argued the government could not 'allow the smallest suspicion to lie upon their honour of their sincerity'.¹⁶⁰ These arguments emphasised the importance for the government to publically confront the challenge that the strike presented in a constructive manner. Failure to prudently address the strike and publicity of MacSwiney's death could further exacerbate an already contentious and volatile situation in Ireland. It could also impeded international relations and provoke dissenting opinion in Britain.

Conversely, other newspapers reflected on the waste of a human life. The settlement-focused *Westminster Gazette* argued of the 'tragic waste' that such a man would 'find no outlet except rebels and outlaws'.¹⁶¹ It added Irish people, like MacSwiney, turned to such ends because 'every aspect of Irish politics is now enveloped in falsity'.¹⁶² These arguments were a criticism of the political situation

¹⁵⁹ 'A Wasted Life', *Daily Express*, 26 October 1920, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ 'Ireland And Dead Lord Mayor', *The Times*, 26 October 1920, p. 10.

¹⁶¹ 'A Plea for Honesty', *Westminster Gazette*, 26 October 1920, p. 7.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

and its 'falsity' in Ireland but more importantly suggested MacSwiney's strike was a challenge that demanded reflection by both the British government and the public.

The partisan *Daily Herald* added to the *Gazette's* line of argument and was the most condemning of all of the newspapers, calling MacSwiney's death 'murder'.¹⁶³ Another article argued that his sacrifice could not 'be wasted' and further added the British public had the 'urgent duty' to 'overthrow, by any means... the Government that dishonours the British race'.¹⁶⁴ This line of argument clearly condemned the allowance of the hunger strike and sought better policy. However, what that policy should be was not clearly defined. What was clear was the necessity for change. The paper published a cartoon that summarised its feeling of MacSwiney's hunger strike. The cartoon featured a cross with MacSwiney's name and a halo of light projecting from it with Lloyd George looking over it holding a crown. The caption reads: "You are not the winner, Lloyd George – you are only the survivor."¹⁶⁵ This cartoon offered a definitive protest against the government's Irish policy and further supported the demand for the government and public to thoughtfully reflect on MacSwiney's protest and the overall Irish situation.

¹⁶³ 'Lord Mayor Murdered', *Daily Herald*, 26 October 1920, p. 1.

¹⁶⁴ 'The Martyrs Sacrifice', *Daily Herald*, 26 October 1920, p. 4.

¹⁶⁵ Untitled Cartoon, *Daily Herald*, 30 October 1920, p. 4.



Untitled Cartoon, *Daily Herald*, 30 October 1920, p. 4.
Caption: 'You are not the winner, Lloyd George – you are only the survivor.'

MacSwiney's death was a grim reminder of the formidable political situation that remained in Ireland. It likewise reflected the extent to which the Irish question had evolved. The government's Restoration Bill saw a firmer resolve by the government to address the Irish situation but the feeling of an Irish crisis was bolstered by protests such as MacSwiney's. The divide within Irish political opinion remained and the press, despite being split in their approach, continued to scrutinise the government's Irish policy. The press also retained a constitutional perspective of Anglo-Irish relations, which would sustain as the debates on the

effort to reach an Irish settlement, the Restoration Bill, and the still outstanding Home Rule Bill continued.

Home Rule Bill Success

Throughout the whole of Ireland the "Black and Tans" are terrorising the people, and no man knows when his house is going to be raided, or when he is going to be treated with violence.¹⁶⁶ – Conservative MP John Jones, Commons debate

The Irish question press debates progressed throughout the autumn and winter of 1920. With sustained violence, the press coalesced in reporting on its ill-effects and promoted the need for a resolution. Yet, the press continued to view the Anglo-Irish relationship from a constitutional perspective and advocated an amorphous solution. After the subsequent passage of the Home Rule Bill, the press split in its reception to the new plan as the partisan and settlement-focused press lines put forward different criticisms (mainly in response to sustained violence) and the government-loyal and pragmatic press endorsed the policy of Home Rule. This split in opinion reveals once more the press focus on resolution through British constitutional politics and also suggests that the press still valued the popular civilian morale debates of pacifism and were influenced by maintaining international opinion.

¹⁶⁶ HC Deb., 20 October 1920, vol. 133, cols. 925-1039.

As November began, the desire for transparency of the government's Irish policy continued to be put forward by the settlement-focused press. The *Westminster Gazette* sustained its call for open policy by arguing,

To make the public understand what is happening and to organise opinion in protest is now the sole important question in Irish affairs, and until we succeed in that it is useless to discuss further the lines of any subsequent settlement.¹⁶⁷

The Times similarly argued the British presence in Ireland 'must profoundly affect this country in its relations to the Empire and to the world'.¹⁶⁸ Another article contended 'nothing save knowledge of the truth can enable the English public to form a just and sure judgment upon British policy in Ireland'.¹⁶⁹ A later article in the *Gazette* further advanced that the time had come for,

British people to make it clear by emphatic protest... that they will not endorse a policy which commands no support in Ireland except from the Ulster extremists, which holds out only a prospect of the government of the South without even the pretence of representative institutions, and which has already led to the adoption by the Government's forces of methods we in Great Britain have consistently declared abominable in other countries.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ "'Great Extremes'", *Westminster Gazette*, 3 November 1920, p. 7.

¹⁶⁸ 'Irish Crime and British Reprisals', *The Times*, 3 November 1920, p. 13.

¹⁶⁹ 'Irish Reprisals and the Press', *The Times*, 4 November 1920, p. 13.

¹⁷⁰ 'The Responsibility of the British People', *Westminster Gazette*, 8 November 1920, p. 9.

These articles from the settlement-focused press maintained the constitutional perspective but advanced criticism against the violence perpetrated in Ireland and suggested negative British and international opinion necessitated that a new attempt be made. The desire to 'organise opinion' and to make an 'emphatic protest' against unpopular government policy suggested that a wavering, weak, and reactionary policy could not address the discord in Ireland. The government would need to implement a policy that more closely matched the desires of the divided political opinion in Ireland. However, again, what that policy should be and how to implement it was not made clear.

The government's presence in Ireland was also addressed in a November memorandum from Winston Churchill in his position as Secretary of State for War in the War Office. The memorandum acknowledged some of the criticisms against the violence attributed to the British troops in Ireland and exposed the challenge of redressing troop behaviour. In the memorandum Churchill wrote,

I cannot feel it right to punish the troops when, goaded in the most brutal manner and finding no redress, they take action on their own account. If they were to remain absolutely passive, they would become completely demoralized and the effectiveness of the military force would be destroyed. On the other hand, when these responsibilities are thrown upon privates, sergeants and lieutenants, many foolish and wrong things will be done which cannot be passed over by higher authority.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ TNA, CAB 23/23, 'Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War', 3 November 1920, p. 4.

This account from Churchill directly addressed the realities of troop life in Ireland under the Restoration Bill. It argued that it was difficult to match guerrilla violence in an effective and responsible manner and also conceded that 'wrong things' needed to be addressed by higher forms of government. When placed in the context of Irish events and of the contentions put forward by the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines during this period, this memorandum offered insight into the government's considerations and gave further support to the need to find a permanent solution to the Irish question. The situation in Ireland could not sustain under the ineffective system that was critically observed in Britain and internationally.

Despite such ardent calls for transparency, the government committed to its current plan when the Home Rule Bill passed its third reading in the Commons on 11 November by a vote of 183 to 52.¹⁷² After its passing, the Prime Minister struck a steadfast tone by stating the government's conditions for peace were 'quite immovable' and that the government could not agree to 'anything which tears up the United Kingdom'.¹⁷³ Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* also suggested the Commons debate on the Bill had given 'a clearer vista to the anxious eyes of the seekers for peace than any Parliamentary discussion that has yet been heard'.¹⁷⁴ This line of argument confirmed the government's resolve to uphold its Irish policy in the hopes of maintaining balance within the United Kingdom but also suggested

¹⁷² 'Home Rule Bill', *Morning Post*, 12 November 1920, p. 6.

¹⁷³ 'Premier's Defence of the Irish Bill', *Manchester Guardian*, 12 November 1920, p. 6.

¹⁷⁴ 'Home Rule Bill Carried by 131', *Daily Chronicle*, 12 November 1920, p. 4.

the opportunity for better understanding following the 'clearer vista' achieved by the debate. In turn, the *Manchester Guardian* put forward hope that Lloyd George would now 'be more ready to turn his mind to some practical remedy' for Ireland.¹⁷⁵

Following the Bill's third reading, more press debate surfaced as to the ability of Home Rule to effectively address the Irish situation. *The Times* apprehensively argued, 'We need not now enumerate its serious defects... We have regretted and regret, the necessity for any partition of Ireland'.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, Gwynn, writing in his column in the *Observer*, argued the Bill's passing 'impresses nobody in Ireland' and further contended, 'I am for taking any form of self government that we can get. Self government is a plant that grows'.¹⁷⁷ The unionist-leaning *Morning Post* likewise shared in the lacklustre feeling of the Bill, revealing Ulster's concerns, contending it was something 'which nobody wants' and that Carson 'has given up the struggle for the Union as hopeless, and hope only to save the remnant of Ulster from an Irish domination, grudgingly accepted the Bill'.¹⁷⁸ While this important hurdle in the Bill's progress was a step toward a possible settlement in Ireland, as the press reports and debates had indicated, there was more to be considered before a final settlement could be achieved. Yet while some within the press recognised the fact that Home Rule 'impresses nobody

¹⁷⁵ 'Mr. George's Irish Policy', *Manchester Guardian*, 12 November 1920, p. 8.

¹⁷⁶ 'An Armistice for Ireland', *The Times*, 12 November 1920, p. 13.

¹⁷⁷ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week by Week', *Observer*, 14 November 1920, p. 5.

¹⁷⁸ 'The Reign of Unrealities', *Morning Post*, 12 November 1920, p. 6.

in Ireland', there was little to no effort made to understand why that was or to consider alternatives and instead, general criticism of the policy was once more put forward.

Opinion of the Irish situation and of the British presence in Ireland further advanced when, on 21 November, the IRA operated a deadly attack on twelve British officers and two Black and Tans in Dublin.¹⁷⁹ It was reported that many of the men were killed in their bedrooms, one in the presence of his wife, and were targeted for their work in the army's legal and secret intelligence.¹⁸⁰ Following the attack, British forces retaliated by firing on a crowd of supporters at a Gaelic football match in Croke Park, killing twelve and injuring sixty.¹⁸¹ This event would become known as 'Bloody Sunday'.

Following the attack, Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* set to ease possible fears of the advancement of violence by arguing,

[T]here seems no reason to infer from it that the I.R.A. is gaining power. It bears much more the stamp of a desperate stroke by hunted men, around whom the toils are closing.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ '12 British Officers Killed in Dublin Murder Raid', *Daily Mirror*, 22 November 1920, p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ 'Republican Outrages in Dublin', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 November 1920, p. 7.

¹⁸¹ Anne Dolan, 'Killing and Bloody Sunday, November 1920', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 49, No. 3 (September 2006) 789-810 (p. 789).

¹⁸² 'Tragic Dublin', *Daily Chronicle*, 22 November 1920, p. 6.

Another article addressed hope that the coalition would ‘muster enough peers... to neutralize such extremists’.¹⁸³ The timing of the attack coincided with the Home Rule Bill’s reading in the Lords and, in turn, brought about further questioning of its capacity to bring resolve the Irish question. To this end, the *Chronicle* used its press platform to bring the conversation back to Home Rule to rally support.

The pragmatic *Daily Telegraph* likewise addressed the significance and timing of the attack and the impact on Home Rule contending,

There could be no harder test of the Government’s resolution to persevere in the policy of offering a scheme of self-government at the same time that it is pursuing the perpetrators of murder and outrage with every resource at its disposal... If any Bill is to be passed it must be this Bill; and if no Bill be passed the Coalition will lie under an imputation of failure which it would not survive.¹⁸⁴

This line of argument from the *Telegraph* matched its established cautious tone and supported the current plan for the practical reason that there was no alternative. Similar to the contention made by the *Guardian* in April, the Bill would be carried but ‘not loved’ because the alternative to the Act was an even less loved alternative.¹⁸⁵ In taking this sentiment a step further, the *Telegraph’s* article suggested that failure to pass the Bill would result in the collapse of the coalition,

¹⁸³ ‘Irish Crime’, *Daily Chronicle*, 23 November 1920, p. 4.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Ireland and the Bill’, *Daily Telegraph*, 22 November 1921, p. 12.

¹⁸⁵ ‘The Second Reading’, *Manchester Guardian*, 1 April 1920, p. 6.

which could impact the government's ability to manage the Irish situation. Such a collapse could also effect some of the other considerations that had been consistently put forward by the press, including straining international relations and harming the empire.

Not all within the press were willing to endorse the Bill. Instead, the attack spurred further debate about the Bill's merits. The rest of the press coalesced in their overall disapproval of violence, which supported the popular civilian morale narrative of pacifism. This coalescence marked a turning point in the categories used to differentiate press opinion in this thesis. From here, the main subsets of the press, with the exception of the partisan *Morning Post*, more consistently championed settlement and an end to violence (though still via constitutional politics) and there was significant cross over between categories in the reporting of Irish affairs.

For the settlement-focused press, the criticism of the Bill centred on disapproval of partition and the British presence in Ireland. The *Manchester Guardian* argued,

How can one part of Ireland be happy and secure if the rest, divided from it by purely artificial line, is something with discontent, full of violence, and miserable?... A wholly different effort of statesmanship is needed, and the Bill as it stands does but mock its hopes.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ 'The Government of Ireland Bill', *Manchester Guardian*, 24 November 1920, p. 6.

This line of argument once more struck against the ability of the Bill to be successful in Ireland and instead called for a new effort to be made. However, beyond 'statesmanship' and refraining from implementing a 'purely artificial line', what form the new effort should take and how to implement it was not made clear.

Meanwhile, the *Westminster Gazette* contended the IRA attack apparently left 'the supporters of the Government unruffled in their belief that their policy is succeeding in Ireland'.¹⁸⁷ The article pointed to the neglect of properly protecting officers from assassins, calling the military standards 'incompetent and inefficient'.¹⁸⁸ The article concluded by arguing the alternative was to 'withdraw the troops and special police and leave the Irish to settle their own affairs'.¹⁸⁹ This line of argument revealed weariness to the Irish situation and built upon the sentiments made by the *Guardian* by further addressing the ability of the government to control and protect its own troops.

The partisan *Morning Post* likewise put forward criticism of the violence but differed from the settlement-focused press contentions and instead focused on the need to better address the situation. One article recalled previous contentions against the ability of Irish rebels to use 'murder and outrages as normal weapons of political agitation'.¹⁹⁰ The article urged the government 'to crush this campaign of cowardly murder with all the forces at their disposal in the interest not only of

¹⁸⁷ 'The Alternatives in Ireland', *Westminster Gazette*, 22 November 1920, p. 7.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ 'What is at Stake in Ireland', *Morning Post*, 22 November 1920, p. 6.

Great Britain and Ireland, but of civilization itself'.¹⁹¹ The *Daily Mail* added the violence was the 'result of a policy of illegal violence to which the Government has for months past turned a blind eye'.¹⁹² It further contended that 'this shifty policy cannot succeed. It is not honest, it is not British, and it does not deserve to succeed. It has brought chaos upon Ireland and shame upon this country'.¹⁹³ Similarly, the *Daily Express* urged,

It is time for this madness to be stopped. The sanity of the British people will not submit to it... It is intolerable to them that, in the heart of the Empire, savagery should be allowed to set an example in every personal and racial ambition, to every footpad, criminal, and highway robber.¹⁹⁴

These lines of argument from the typically government-loyal and unionist-leaning press lines were critical of the government's failure, either by choice or inability, to address the violence in Ireland. However, much like their press counterparts, these arguments crucially did not put forward support for a specific solution and instead advanced that the government had a responsibility to address the Irish situation. This suggested that constitutional politics were still valued despite the fact that Home Rule did not appease unionist or republican opinion and that violence within Ireland persisted. How best to address the Irish question

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² 'Murder Begets Murder', *Daily Mail*, 22 November 1920, p. 8.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ 'Orgy of Murder in Dublin', *Daily Express*, 22 November 1920, p. 1.

remained an important unsolved question as the government sought to better manage the situation in Ireland.

With the various strands of criticism mounting, *The Times* reflected on the government's challenge to address the 'division of public opinion among the mass of the people' concerning Ireland, but offered hope that 'the mingled tears of the English and Irish people might do what legislation and violence have failed to achieve'.¹⁹⁵ This appeal supported the general desire by the war and Irish question weary press to not engage in tit-for-tat battles with Irish rebels. With the Great War ended and a violent guerrilla war in Ireland underway, a general appeal for the government to embrace policy that would not lead to further conflict and would instead work to achieve a settlement with Ireland was advocated.

As the Irish situation warranted, the press desire for pursuing permanent settlement took firmer shape in the winter months. The *Observer* argued,

However sternly we may differ amongst ourselves about relative responsibilities and the things to be done, the state of the Irish question is a nightmare to the mind and a laceration to the soul of every thinking man.¹⁹⁶

The article further contended that the government must proceed with 'the main lines of their Bill and on that stake their fortunes'.¹⁹⁷ This article gave recognition to

¹⁹⁵ 'Dublin Victims Buried', *The Times*, 27 November 1920, p. 10.

¹⁹⁶ 'The Irish Terror', *Observer*, 5 December 1920, p. 12.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

the general desire to see a change in the Irish situation despite the still present failure for the press to align to one proposed solution. It likewise reflected the contentions put forward by the *Telegraph*, which had similarly maintained that the Home Rule Bill must be pursued in the greater goal of peace.¹⁹⁸ As the *Observer* contended, the Irish question was ‘a nightmare to the mind and a laceration to the soul’ and settlement was needed to transcend this difficult situation.

The desire for a change in the troubled Irish situation was further pressed when Father Michael O’Flanagan, the acting president of Sinn Féin following the arrest of leaders in connection to Bloody Sunday, sent Lloyd George a letter. The letter read: ‘You state that you are willing to make peace at once without waiting for Christmas. Ireland also is willing. What first step do you propose?’¹⁹⁹ O’Flanagan’s letter acknowledged the general weariness of the Irish situation and the desire to implement a workable solution. It likewise suggested the possibility for a truce, which would temporarily address the contentions made against the ill effects of violence.

Following the release of the letter, the settlement-focused press was unsurprisingly supportive of the opportunity. A letter to the editor in the *Manchester Guardian* argued the rumours of a possible truce brought ‘joyful tidings’ last seen with the Armistice.²⁰⁰ Similarly, *The Times* asserted,

¹⁹⁸ ‘Ireland and the Bill’, *Daily Telegraph*, 22 November 1921, p. 12.

¹⁹⁹ ‘Peace at Once’, *Westminster Gazette*, 6 December 1920, p. 1.

²⁰⁰ Basil Williams, ‘Ireland’, *Manchester Guardian*, 9 December 1920, p. 8.

No responsible statesman, knowing the facts and tendencies of the present situation, could hesitate between the possibility of concluding an honourable truce and the continuance of the present warfare.²⁰¹

As O'Flanagan's letter and the supportive press reports indicated, there was a willingness and desire by some in the press, and possibly even within Sinn Féin, to recognise the opportunity for a truce as a means of addressing the Irish question. As the previous months' violence and press contentions had exposed, the Irish situation was not improving. The very real fear of further deterioration was a motivating factor to see a respite from the violence and to re-approach the question of solution.

In response to the rumours of the possibility for truce, a political correspondent for Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* responded by suggesting,

[M]uch depends upon whether Father O'Flanagan and other peace seekers will be allowed by the "murder gang" to pursue the path of negotiation. These efforts have already provoked threats by the extremists.²⁰²

Greenwood outlined the government's stipulations to meet with Sinn Féin in a Commons debate, which included the 'cessation of the campaign of murder' as well

²⁰¹ 'An Irish Truce', *The Times*, 6 December 1920, p. 13.

²⁰² Political Correspondent, 'Cabinet to Consider Sinn Fein Offer', *Daily Chronicle*, 7 December 1920, p. 1.

as ‘negotiations with accredited representatives of Sinn Fein’.²⁰³ Meanwhile, the *Daily Express* contended a truce was something ‘everybody wants’ and urged ‘it is for the Government to find a way’.²⁰⁴ The *Westminster Gazette* similarly outlined the importance of ‘moderate opinion’ to join with ‘the forces of law and order against extremists’.²⁰⁵ With the prospect of a truce on the table, the discourse on the Irish situation developed as the proposal was considered.

Amid the truce debate, the government advanced a new policy for Ireland, which proposed an effort to secure ‘peace by negotiation’ and more rigorous repression of crime by implementing martial law in counties deemed necessary.²⁰⁶ Lloyd George was reported to say,

The majority of people in Ireland... were anxious for a fair settlement; but the party of outrage and murder were not yet ready for a real peace which would involve the unbroken unity of the United Kingdom.²⁰⁷

This move by the government came on the heels of increased calls for a truce and an open invitation by a leader of Sinn Féin to negotiate. It is an example of how the Irish situation had changed, as violence remained, and the press criticism reflecting weariness of the Irish situation sustained. It also laid out clearer policy, which was perhaps a response to the concerns expressed by the settlement-focused and

²⁰³ ‘Nation’s Demand for an Irish Peace’, *Daily Express*, 8 December 1920, p. 1.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ ‘The Irish Cross Currencies’, *Westminster Gazette*, 8 December 1920, p. 7.

²⁰⁶ ‘New Path to an Irish Peace’, *Daily Chronicle*, 11 December 1920, p. 1.

²⁰⁷ ‘New Irish Policy’, *Morning Post*, 11 December 1920, p. 7.

pragmatic press lines for more transparency with the government's plans. As a result, a potential new way of addressing the Irish question was in progress.

The new move by the government was not without debate. In particular, the prospect of martial law proved to be a point of interest and a division of opinion within the press. The government-loyal press supported the move, which matched its previous calls for restoring law and order in Ireland. In one article the *Daily Express* argued martial law was 'not antagonistic to the Irish peace negotiations' but rather 'evidence of the Government's determination to end the reign of terrorism'.²⁰⁸ Alternatively, the partisan, labour-leaning *Daily Herald* countered and called the move a 'violation of the principle of justice' and further argued the policy showed 'because Great Britain is big and strong and Ireland is small and weak Ireland shall be crushed into submission'.²⁰⁹ As ever, how to best address the violent situation in Ireland remained a debateable topic. Perhaps in response to the harder line drawn by the British government, the government's new policy would be put to the test immediately as another violent attack in Ireland was perpetrated.

The weekend of 11-12 December witnessed a new round of violence in Ireland. The weekend's events included tit-for-tat reprisals, which resulted in the destruction of Cork's city centre and left many questions in its wake. The violence began when twelve British officers were wounded and one killed in an attack on a

²⁰⁸ 'Martial Law in Ireland', *Daily Express*, 10 December 1920, p. 1.

²⁰⁹ 'Coercion', *Daily Herald*, 11 December 1920, p. 4.

lorry in the outskirts of Cork.²¹⁰ This attack was followed by retaliation from British forces that set fire to such sites as the Cork City Hall, the Carnegie Library, and the Corn Exchange.²¹¹ In the wake of the attack, General Macready issued the first proclamation under martial law in which he ordered the surrender of all arms, ammunition, and explosives unlawfully held by 27 December.²¹² The penalty for non-compliance with the order was death.²¹³ Death was also prescribed for any unauthorised persons wearing a British uniform or who assisted persons in armed insurrection.²¹⁴

Following the Cork incident, the *Daily Herald* advanced its scrutiny of the government's Irish policy and in one article questioned if the Cork City burning was 'the first dispensation of martial law? If so, how much of Ireland will be left when "order" has been restored?'²¹⁵ Meanwhile, the settlement-focused *Westminster Gazette* argued that it was time for the government to,

[R]ealise that the plan of giving *carte blanche* to a peculiarly undisciplined force and leading it to suppose that it will be backed and shielded in whatever it does is leading to cruel and anarchic results.²¹⁶

²¹⁰ 'City Of Cork In Flames', *The Times*, 13 December 1920, p. 12.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² 'Surrender of Arms in Ireland Within 14 Days', *Daily Mirror*, 14 December 1920, p. 3.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ 'Cork', *Daily Herald*, 13 November 1920, p. 4.

²¹⁶ 'Reprisals Must Cease', *Westminster Gazette*, 13 December 1920, p. 7.

With martial law in place, and the Home Rule debate still underway, the opportunity to readdress the Irish question and to see an end to reprisals was considered in another *Gazette* article that argued though the Home Rule Bill 'comes too late and falls too short of what is necessary to satisfy Ireland', it could be regarded as 'an opening move in a new and happier phase of our relations with Ireland'.²¹⁷ This line of argument was an indication of weariness with the situation and the desire to see an end to violence but was, again, too simplistic in assuming that Home Rule would provide the answer needed to address the Irish situation as it currently stood.

The Irish question entered yet another phase when Home Rule was passed under the Government of Ireland Act, which received Royal Assent on 23 December.²¹⁸ Under the Act, Ireland was partitioned with six Ulster counties comprising Northern Ireland and the remaining 26 counties creating Southern Ireland.²¹⁹ This partition marked the end to the long battle over implementing a Home Rule measure and was the first significant step taken in the process to attain an Irish settlement. The persistent desire (in its various incarnations) put forward within the press for an end to violence appeared to have been a significant consideration for the government. Upon the Act's passing, the King gave a speech in which he declared his sincere 'hope that this Act, the fruit of more than 30 years

²¹⁷ 'Home Rule and the Next Step', *Westminster Gazette*, 20 December 1920, p. 7.

²¹⁸ 'The Irish Act', *The Times*, 24 December 1920, p. 11.

²¹⁹ Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience Volume One: The Durham Report to the Anglo-Irish Treaty second edition* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1982), p. 230.

of ceaseless controversy, will finally bring about unity and friendship between all the peoples of My Kingdom'.²²⁰ Carson also addressed the Act and argued the two-parliament system represented 'the best chance of ultimate unity'.²²¹ Churchill reflected in his memoir though the Bill was 'accepted under bitter protest by the Protestant North' it 'was a decisive turning point in the history of the two islands'.²²²

Following the Act's passing, the press were cautious in their assessment and correctly, perhaps learning from previous experiences, recognised that the Irish situation required patience. *The Times* summarised the feeling surrounding the Act in one article in which it argued that few 'believed or believe that this Bill will prove in itself a final settlement to the Irish question'.²²³ However, the paper acknowledged the Act would 'radically and irrevocably affect the constitution of these two islands'.²²⁴ Another article argued the government was 'staking everything on the Home Rule Act' and that 'Ministers firmly believe that they have found the key to the Irish question'.²²⁵ Though, the *Westminster Gazette* boldly contended, 'We cannot as a nation pretend that we are giving self-government to Ireland while the present situation continues'.²²⁶ As these articles suggested, more remained to be considered beyond the Act, especially as despair over the

²²⁰ 'The King's Speech', *The Times*, 24 December 1920, p. 14.

²²¹ 'Ireland's Future', *Morning Post*, 24 December 1920, p. 5.

²²² Churchill, *The World Crisis*, p. 286.

²²³ 'The Irish Act', *The Times*, 24 December 1920, p. 11.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ 'Irish Elections Soon', *The Times*, 5 January 1921, p. 10.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

government's use of military law and order in a country for which it was claiming to give independence continued. Nevertheless, Home Rule represented the first step to a concrete opportunity for settlement that had yet to be seen.

With the progress of the new Act, preparations were made in early January to speak with members of Sinn Féin. De Valera was reported to be working on a 'manifesto on the question of Irish peace' which would detail his desire for the 'recognition of Ireland as an independent nation' and for Irish representatives to be 'treated as equals'.²²⁷ Gwynn, as part of his series in the *Observer*, addressed the opportunity and contended any agreement between the government and de Valera 'must be sought along lines which do not antagonize Ulster but rather lessen its hostility'.²²⁸ He further cautioned against assuming that 'Sinn Fein wants war or hates England with insane passion'.²²⁹ Gwynn's contentions pointed to a diplomatic way of thinking and to capitalise on the opportunity for settlement. This was perhaps a reflection of the Irish situation as a whole. As had been seen, the opportunities for constructive talk had, to this point, been scarce. The 1917 Irish Convention represented one such opportunity and, for many, was considered to have been squandered as resolution was not reached and the Irish situation had intensified. This new momentum offered another chance.

The prospect presented with the passing of the Act and the government's handling of past opportunities for peace was summarised in a cartoon from the

²²⁷ 'Forecast of De Valera's "Terms" for Irish Peace', *Daily Mirror*, 7 January 1921, p. 3.

²²⁸ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week by Week', *Observer*, 9 January 1921, p. 9.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

Westminster Gazette entitled 'The Hunting of the Hare'.²³⁰ The cartoon depicted Lloyd George as a hunter dangling an olive branch to de Valera. De Valera is depicted wearing a rabbit-eared 'Republic' hat and a 'Sinn Fein' shirt while positioned amongst a bouquet of shamrocks. There are a number of possible interpretations here including first, that Lloyd George and the British administration were trying to lure Sinn Féin, representing Britain as a strong power appealing to a meagre Ireland. Second, framing Lloyd George as playing a game, not taking the care needed with the opportunity. This matched previous works from the paper, including its Alice in Wonderland cartoon, which depicted the Prime Minister as a juvenile attempting to solve a complex problem by use of a child's game.²³¹ The overall tone of the cartoon generally indicated a failure by the government to effectively manage the Irish situation. Time would tell if this new opportunity would lead to a resolution to the Irish question.

²³⁰ 'The Hunting of the Hare', *Westminster Gazette*, 11 January 1921, p. 1.

²³¹ FCG, 'Irish Croquet', *Westminster Gazette*, 21 June 1920, p. 1.



'The Hunting of the Hare', *Westminster Gazette*, 11 January 1921, p. 1.

'The Dawn of a New Era'

[T]he responsibility for the commencement of this orgy of murder is not upon any Government on these Benches. It is not upon soldiers or police. It is upon these Sinn Fein conspirators, following on the rebellion of 1916, who have never ceased, and are not ceasing now, to murder.²³²

– Chief Secretary Sir Hamar Greenwood, Commons debate

As the commentary and debate of the Government of Ireland Act and the Irish question remained, the Act had its first major development when Ulster

²³² HC Deb., 21 February 1921, vol. 138, cols. 624-723.

elected a new leader, Sir James Craig, in the Ulster parliament on 5 February 1921.²³³ The *Morning Post's* special correspondent argued Carson had accomplished saving Ulster 'from the domination of a Dublin Parliament' and contented he would 'continue to inspire the men and women of Ulster'.²³⁴ They further declared 'the dawn of a new era' in Ulster's history with the election.²³⁵ This tone was likewise reflected in a statement from Craig in which he said Ulster 'now found themselves in the position of managing their own affairs, and they might look forward optimistically to the future'.²³⁶ However, how Ulster fit into the overall Irish question remained unclear, which was further exacerbated by the challenge of reconciling the devolved Ulster administration into the current government system. Because of this, Ulster became a bigger consideration for the government as the work of the Government of Ireland Act commenced.

Once more the Irish question was transitioning as new considerations and complications emerged. The passing of the Government of Ireland Act represented a victory for a measure of Home Rule, which had been debated throughout many British administrations. However, implementing the Act and seeing it in practice added stress to the already agitated Irish situation. For the Act to be effective, and for the government to be able to exert a measure of management in Ireland, violence needed to be better controlled. Yet, questions remained as to whether

²³³ 'Sir J. Craig As New Ulster Leader', *The Times*, 5 February 1921, p. 10.

²³⁴ Belfast Correspondent, 'Ulster Under the New Regime', *Morning Post*, 5 February 1921, p. 5.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

such efforts could be effective. Instead, the partition granted in the Government of Ireland Act only deepened unrest and further fuelled the guerrilla warfare campaign between the IRA and the British security forces from January to July 1921. A drive to see a truce enacted proved to be the next significant juncture in Anglo-Irish relations.

Chapter 4: 'A first practical step towards peace' - Truce, 1921

I believe in compromises, and I believe it would be better that there should be an honest and peaceful arrangement between your nation and ours by which we could in this condition of affairs in Ireland join with the great masses of the British people in a war, not of hatred, but a war of peace and goodwill. Go to the Sinn Feiners and invite them to meet you.¹ – Irish Parliamentary Party MP Joseph Devlin, Commons debate

The passing of the Government of Ireland Act represented a new attempt by the British government to address the Irish question. However, the simultaneous transfer of power to the North and South of Ireland stipulated by the Act proved to be another source of friction for the Anglo-Irish relationship as delays in Dublin drove delays in the North too.² Friction was manifested with the required transfer of police, which, by 1921, was of vital interest in the North as border attacks by the IRA increased, resulting in renewed enrolment in the UVF.³ This, combined with the controversial presence of the Black and Tans, sustained British press interest. Eventually, the escalating situation prompted more concrete efforts by the government to negotiate with Irish leaders.

¹ HC Deb., 21 February 1921, vol. 138, cols. 624-723.

² David Harkness, *Northern Ireland Since 1920* (Dublin: Helicon, 1983), p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

The press understanding of how the Act impacted Ulster and Sinn Féin suggests once more a neglect to thoughtfully differentiate Irish political opinion, the emotiveness of questions of nationhood, and to consider settlement beyond the confines of British constitutional politics. Instead, the press oscillated blame of *who* was responsible for resolving the Irish question and tended to back the general intent to 'join with the great masses of the British people in a war, not of hatred, but a war of peace and goodwill' to resolve it. As more efforts were made by the government to negotiate with Irish leaders, the press generally converged in its overall approval of that effort, which saw a reversal in the blame on the British government and more emphasis on the Irish leaders' role, particularly within Sinn Féin, in seeing settlement achieved. The *Daily Herald* and *Morning Post* once more were the exception to this, with the *Herald* remaining staunchly against the British presence in Ireland and the *Post* in favour of maintaining law and order in Ireland.

The pressure to resolve the Irish question and to address implementing the stipulations of the Government of Ireland Act coalesced in 1921 and helped to set the stage for a new way of approaching a possible settlement. The contrasting desires of the North and South of Ireland could not both be met under the failing Irish policy and condemning press opinion necessitated a better solution. The initial step taken in passing the Government of Ireland Act helped to nurture an overall change and to loosen the government's attachments to its long-held policy leading to the opportunity of negotiation through concessions. This chapter investigates the progression of the Irish question and how the political leaders in both Britain

and Ireland focused attention on the potential for settlement. It continues the analysis of the evolution of British press opinion and understanding of the Irish question. The following question guided the analysis: how did sustained violence impact the ways in which the British press and government viewed the Irish situation?

Sustained Violence in Ireland

Do the Government yet realise that force alone will not settle this question, and are they trying any other method?⁴ – Liberal MP
Commander Hon. Joseph Kenworthy, Commons debate

Following the passage of the Government of Ireland Act, the press commentary and debate on the Irish situation maintained throughout the winter and spring of 1921. The continued political action within Ireland saw the press question how long the Irish situation could sustain, kindling a general hope for statesmanship. This reporting included more cross over between press lines matching in the overall desire for settlement. The settlement-focused and pragmatic press were particularly critical of government's role and lack of success in addressing violence whereas the government-loyal line and partisan *Morning Post* remained critical of Irish-based offenses. The persistence of violence and negative opinion triggered the beginning of a new openness exhibited by the British

⁴ HC Deb., 4 April 1921, vol. 140, cols. 13-5.

government to re-approach solutions to the Irish question through negotiation. With this new approach, there was some questioning, especially by the pragmatic press, of Irish leaders' willingness to compromise. Yet distinguishing between Irish political opinion was still largely lacking despite an increase of reports and cartoons targeting specific Irish leaders. The challenge of defining *what* the Irish question was and *how* to resolve it sustained.

Following Craig's transition to leader of Ulster in February 1921, reservations of reprisals and outrages continued to plague the British administration in Ireland as the Government of Ireland Act struggled to take root and violence persisted. *The Times* contended the solution to the Irish question was a concern of the United Kingdom alone but conceded it was 'in a very real sense, a world-problem'.⁵ The paper further argued Britain could not 'afford to face the uncertainties of world and Imperial politics with our own house divided against itself, and the Irish race abroad our embittered enemy'.⁶ This article conveyed the settlement-focused and pragmatic press concern with Britain's international reputation and the overriding desire to settlement achieved. It was also an indication of the extent to which violence within Ireland remained a danger and retained its disruptive potential.

⁵ 'The Irish Deadlock', *The Times*, 11 February 1921, p. 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*

One way to control the situation in Ireland for the government was the continued application of martial law. Yet a letter to editor in the partisan *Daily Herald* questioned this policy arguing,

[A]nybody, Prime Minister or otherwise, who thinks that this proud small nation that we have stung into rebellion will be the first to cry "Halt!" has tragically miscalculated... the real strength of Ireland's rebels.⁷

The settlement-focused *Westminster Gazette* took a different, though still condemning, tone arguing of the impact of living within an area under martial law positing,

It is difficult for the public to imagine what life in Ireland is like under present conditions, but it is beginning to understand... When the horror and the futility of the present policy of the Government is fully realized in this country, we believe sufficiently in the British people to believe also in their certainty of a day of reckoning for those responsible.⁸

Both of these articles discredited the government's policy by exposing the perceived weakness and potential liability with the application of martial law. This was a continuation of both newspapers' stances of disapproval of the government's

⁷ Evelyn Sharp, 'Terrorising Ireland', *Daily Herald*, 14 February 1921, p. 4.

⁸ 'The Siege of Dublin', *Westminster Gazette*, 19 February 1921, p. 7.

suppressive measures, implying an overall need for change in policy. Although, what that new policy should be was once more not clearly defined.

However, not all were critical of the policy of martial law. MP Lord Hugh Cecil assessed the Irish situation in a letter to the editor featured in *The Times*. Cecil, who was vocal in his contempt for nationalism and later played an important role in the unionist Die Hard resistance,⁹ argued against the 'incompetence' of the British government's policy and 'the advent of Sir Hamar Greenwood', who had 'blemished' the administration with 'horrible stains'.¹⁰ He endorsed the application of martial law, calling it 'far better than lawless violence'.¹¹ Significantly, he offered a caveat contending, 'the justification for that application depends both morally and legally upon the impossibility of enforcing the ordinary law'.¹² He further argued, 'the Government must firmly and justly restore throughout Ireland the reign of law'.¹³

The tone of Cecil's letter reflected his history with Anglo-Irish relations and could have been a response to the criticism like those from other newspapers, testifying to the need to have a system in place to address reprisals. His caveat is important to consider as it preserved the need for justified application of law and addressed the moral issue of coercive measures. This fitted with the prevailing

⁹ Richard A. Rempel, 'Lord Hugh Cecil's Parliamentary Career, 1900-1914: Promise Unfulfilled', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 11, No. 2 (May 1972), 104-130 (pp. 105 & 129).

¹⁰ Lord H. Cecil, 'Irish Crime', *The Times*, 14 February 1921, p. 6.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

public narrative that was increasingly expressed as a concern and was especially detailed within the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines.

The government's system was further called into question when the head of the Auxiliary Division of the RIC, Brigadier-General Crozier, resigned in late February.¹⁴ His resignation followed an event in which a group of cadets he had dismissed for alleged looting were allowed to return to their unit.¹⁵ The event took place on 9 February when Crozier ordered a party of 31 auxiliaries to carry out a raid on a farm and those involved were later charged with looting.¹⁶ Five of the leaders were arrested and the other 26 involved were dismissed, subject to the approval of General Tudor, the police advisor to Chief Secretary Hamar Greenwood.¹⁷ While Tudor initially agreed with Crozier's disciplinary action, he subsequently reneged on his approval once he arrived in England to meet with other British leaders and immediately suspended the dismissals.¹⁸

The Crozier incident offered further evidence for scrutiny of the British government's Irish policy and the failure, either by accident or by choice, in the system to reconcile the disciplinary strategies of two leading figures in the British system in Ireland. As articles within all press lines had indicated, the government's policing policy and Greenwood's leadership were critically observed in some way. The settlement-focused press were particularly disparaging of the incident, with

¹⁴ 'The Irish War', *Daily Mail*, 23 February 1921, p. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Parliamentary Correspondent, 'The Reinstated Cadets', *The Times*, 23 February 1921, p. 10.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

The Times arguing it represent ‘a definite refusal by the Executive to endorse the disciplinary acts of the commander of the force against men who had no defence to the charge of looting that was made against them’.¹⁹ A subsequent article argued the errors of the government’s Irish policy were ‘appearing in their true light’ and it was time for Ministers to either ‘struggle against the tide of public indignation’ or ‘seek to atone for their misdeeds and provocations by straight dealing and sincerity of purpose’.²⁰ The *Westminster Gazette* echoed these sentiments arguing the ‘consistently bad Press in the matter of its Irish administration’ was a clear indication that ‘this state of things cannot be allowed to endure’.²¹ These articles advanced the settlement-focused subsets’ weariness of the incessant violence in Ireland and morality of the British presence there.

The *Daily Herald* added to the debate with a cartoon that mocked the incident. The cartoon depicted Lloyd George against a towering Black and Tan figure arguing, “Don’t make things hard for us – stick to shooting – robbery is such a serious matter!”²² As this derisive cartoon suggested, the Crozier incident was one that addressed the priorities of the government and tested the moral compass of Britain. This commentary, while reflective of the paper’s general animosity against the government’s Irish policy, also challenged the British press, public, and government leaders to reassess the Irish situation and the British presence in

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ ‘Ireland and the Public Conscience’, *The Times*, 23 February 1921, p. 11.

²¹ ‘The Government and Ireland’, *Westminster Gazette*, 28 February 1921, p. 7.

²² ‘The Government and Black-and-Tan Looting’, *Daily Herald*, 24 February 1921, p. 5.

Ireland. The Crozier incident added to the press debate on the government's role in Ireland and supported the general desire to see a change in the current policy. Yet, again, what that policy should be and how to implement it was not identified.



'The Government and Black-and-Tan Looting', *Daily Herald*, 24 February 1921, p. 5.
Caption: "Don't make things hard for us – stick to shooting – robbery is such a serious matter!"

Despite some calls for a change in policy, the state of affairs in Ireland endured as reprisals and trials against crimes continued. In early March, the publicity of six Irish prisoners shot in Cork made news. One of the prisoners had been found guilty of possessing a revolver and the other five for levying war against the King.²³ Following the executions, armed civilians attacked unarmed soldiers in Cork, killing five soldiers and wounding eleven others.²⁴ The *Daily Herald* condemned the executions of the prisoners and in one article argued that 'no decent person can look upon [the executions] as anything but cold-blooded murder'.²⁵ The article further questioned the justice of trial by a military court in an invaded country and the 'degrading' nature of the orders to the 'soldiers who are compelled to carry them out'.²⁶ This article held to the paper's overall political stance of condemnation against the British presence in Ireland yet it also revealed a different facet of the morality question by condemning the 'degrading' impact of the sentences on the British soldiers involved. This offered another way with which to view the repercussions of the British military orders and further supported the growing chorus of blame against the government's Irish policy.

Further criticism of the government's policy, and particularly of Greenwood, advanced in the wake of these high-profile March events within the settlement-focused press. *The Times* argued the 'tragedy of the Irish situation' was the result of

²³ 'Six Prisoners Shot in Cork', *Manchester Guardian*, 1 March 1921, p. 7.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ 'More Murder', *Daily Herald*, 1 March 1921, p. 4.

²⁶ Ibid.

Greenwood's policy that united 'all classes in Southern Ireland in the bitter hatred of the Government'.²⁷ The *Westminster Gazette* contented that 'Ministers have not been slow to deny the truth of ascertains made about their Irish policy by their critics' but rather offered excuses, including Greenwood, who said 'he is bound by the law' to which the paper argued, 'his critics will reply that this is almost the first time they have noticed'.²⁸ As these contentions suggested, the current Irish policy could not be sustained and was instead turning Irish opinion against the government. Because of this, implementing any solution in Ireland would be made more difficult unless a new strategy was employed that better addressed the decaying situation and halted the advancement of negative opinion.

Despite increasing criticism, violence in Ireland continued throughout the month with more high-profile events, including the murders of the mayor and ex-mayor of Limerick in front of their wives by members of the Crown Forces.²⁹ The government-loyal press were particularly critical of the attack, calling the killings 'one of the most horrible crimes in the Irish war'³⁰ and naming it 'one of the most cold-blooded crimes of the reign of terror in Ireland'.³¹ The murders prompted a Commons debate to consider if the British forces in Ireland should be placed under one commander-in-chief to better address crimes.³² They were soon followed by more executions sanctioned by the British authorities in Ireland, as six more men

²⁷ 'Where Are We Going?', *The Times*, 3 March 1921, p. 11.

²⁸ 'Reprisals and Compensation', *Westminster Gazette*, 4 March 1921, p. 7.

²⁹ 'Irish War', *Daily Mail*, 8 March 1921, p. 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ 'Mayor and Councillor Shot Dead', *Daily Express*, 8 March 1921, p. 1.

³² 'Irish War', *Daily Mail*, 8 March 1921.

were executed at Mountjoy with a reported crowd of 30,000 men and women gathered outside the prison walls.³³ These high-profile events tested the resolve of the government's Irish policy and suggested a need to better address the situation, yet how to do so was not identified.

The strain of the Irish situation further revealed itself when Bonar Law resigned from his leadership positions in the Commons and with the Unionist Party on 18 March for health reasons.³⁴ In a statement Law asserted: 'public life in these days is almost an intolerable strain'.³⁵ *The Times* argued the Irish problem had 'certainly added to his mental distress'.³⁶ Law's resignation emphasised the longevity and burden of the prolonged Irish question. It likewise underscored the glaring fact that no clear policy for how to resolve the Irish question was in place.

Following Law's resignation, Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* reported on the 'necessity for the continuance of the Coalition'.³⁷ However, the partisan and pragmatic press lines were dubious of the coalition. In one article, the *Morning Post* contended the union was 'the corner-stone of Unionist policy', had been abandoned and left the country in a state of 'strife, hatred, and weakness'.³⁸ Meanwhile, the *Daily Herald* looked to Law's resignation as a new opportunity in addressing failed British policy. In one article it argued his resignation might be a

³³ 'Men Hanged While Crowds Pray', *Daily Express*, 15 March 1921, p. 1.

³⁴ 'Mr. Bonar Law', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 March 1921, p. 10.

³⁵ 'Mr. Bonar Law Resigns', *Daily Mail*, 18 March 1921, p. 7.

³⁶ 'Mr. Bonar Law', *The Times*, 18 March 1921, p. 11.

³⁷ 'Lloyd George and the Coalition', *Daily Chronicle*, 18 March 1921, p. 1.

³⁸ 'A Change in the Coalition', *Morning Post*, 18 March 1921, p. 6.

step toward 'that straight fight' between Toryism and Labour policy.³⁹ Gwynn, as part of his series in the *Observer*, challenged this notion and instead argued Law's resignation would 'add courage to Sinn Fein, because it is held to be a sign that the Prime Minister must either be broken or come more under the control of reactionary Toryism'.⁴⁰ As these articles representing different strands of press opinion suggested, Law's resignation left an obvious hole in the British leadership chain that needed to be filled as its Irish policy remained under scrutiny. However, it also offered a new opportunity to assess and address the Irish question.

Austen Chamberlain, the son of liberal unionist leader Joseph Chamberlain, was voted with 'complete unanimity' as Law's replacement, filling the vacuum left by the surprise departure.⁴¹ The *Daily Telegraph* contended Chamberlain's 'directness of mind, sincerity of conviction, and high sense of public duty have never been questioned by any opponent'.⁴² Although his father opposed Gladstone's 1886 push for Home Rule, Austen did not have strong ties with Ulster but instead questioned the practicality of coercion and supported the coalition's policy of conciliation in Ireland.⁴³ With Law's departure, Chamberlain stepped into a politically charged situation with compounding demands by the press to readdress the Irish situation, which was exacerbated by the wake of high profile events. His leadership skills would be put to the test with the still unresolved Irish question.

³⁹ 'Law and Carson', *Daily Herald*, 18 March 1921, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week by Week', *Observer*, 20 March 1921, p. 8.

⁴¹ 'Mr. Chamberlain Succeeds', *Daily Telegraph*, 22 March 1921, p. 10.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ John D. Fair, 'The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921: Unionist Aspects of the Peace', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 12, No. 1 (November 1972), 132-149 (p. 135).

As the situation in Ireland progressed, the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines increasingly put forward scrutiny of the Irish leaders (generally) and their role in peace. *The Times* condemned the ‘criminal insanity of the present leaders of the Irish people’ and contended the time had come ‘for reasonable and patriotic men in both countries to call a halt’.⁴⁴ The *Westminster Gazette* likewise argued that British opinion was ‘rightly indignant of the behaviour of the auxiliaries on innumerable occasions’ but also acknowledged Sinn Féin leaders were responsible for some outrages that were ‘horrible in the extreme and can in no way be defended by pointing to the state of war that Sinn Fein claims’.⁴⁵ These arguments reflected a firmer desire to see settlement achieved especially following the high-profile events and leadership changes in March. However, the claims against Irish leaders were vague and did not identify a resolution. Instead, the longevity of the Irish situation kindled a generic amorphous desire to see elected leaders on both sides work toward a settlement.

Soon after Chamberlain took up his position, another change in the British political structure in Ireland occurred when Lord Edmund Talbot replaced Viscount French as the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.⁴⁶ French’s replacement was a condition of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, which stipulated the appointment of a new Lord Lieutenant whose first function was to call together the parliaments of the

⁴⁴ ‘The Madness of Sinn Fein’, *The Times*, 23 March 1921, p. 11.

⁴⁵ ‘Sinn Fein Callousness’, *Westminster Gazette*, 20 March 1921, p. 7.

⁴⁶ ‘Ireland and its New Viceroy’, *Morning Post*, 4 April 1921, p. 7.

North and South of Ireland.⁴⁷ This change marked an end to French's strong and sometimes controversial policy, which had over the years drawn press attention, as seen in the *Daily Express* controversy. Like Law's departure, it too offered a new opportunity to assess and address the Irish question.

With the change in leadership, the *Morning Post* wrote that Ulster's interest was focused on gauging 'what the Government's purpose is in the selection rather than in any great hopes from Lord Edmund Talbot individually'.⁴⁸ This remote interest could have been an example of unionist apprehension to potentially unwanted political changes and the still present concern of violence. Conversely, *The Times* featured a report from a Dublin correspondent who wrote of the South's response and the 'definite hope' of the new appointment, which was argued implied 'some change in the Government's attitude to Irish affairs'.⁴⁹ The article further contended,

A truce of even a week's duration would break the vicious circle of crime and repression, and would give statesmanship its long-sought opportunity. If... Talbot's appointment means a truce, it means everything. If it does not mean a truce, it means nothing at all.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Special Correspondent, 'The New Viceroy', *The Times*, 4 April 1921, p. 12.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The divide in Irish political opinion was once more revealed with this leadership change. However, it did offer the potential to readdress the government's Irish policy, which would linger as Talbot, Chamberlain, and the British government continued to respond to the Irish situation.

Despite the potential for new policy with fresh leadership, as the press reports indicated, *how* to resolve the Irish question remained unclear. This was underscored in the press commentary, which saw the partisan *Morning Post* sustain its distance from its press competitors with its endorsement of the British presence in Ireland as the new leaders took their positions. In one article the *Post* stuck to its supportive tone of the government's policy to restore law and order by arguing the Black and Tans' 'ill-repute exists more in the columns of certain English papers than in actual fact'.⁵¹ Another article by a special correspondent contended,

[T]he "reprisals" which have been most discussed in England are the cases where, following a Sinn Fein crime, Sinn Fein properties have been burned or destroyed. When this has been done on the order of a competent military or police authority it is surely justifiable.⁵²

These arguments from the *Post* represented the general unionist desire to have more culpability for Sinn Féin outrages. In turn, these contentions helped to further set the paper apart from its press competitors by suggesting its press

⁵¹ 'Ireland To-Day', *Morning Post*, 8 April 1921, p. 7.

⁵² Special Correspondent, 'Ireland To-Day', *Morning Post*, 13 April 1921, p. 7.

opponents had exaggerated the facts of the Irish situation. It likewise emphasised the unionist fear of new policy potentially threatening or failing to acknowledge its own political desires.

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Birkenhead, similarly endorsed the government's current Irish policy by telling his colleagues in the Commons that 'the Opposition Press have made a great point that executions... increases recruiting for the rebel forces' but argued,

Executions... may at the time intensify the feeling of bitterness against the Government on the part of those what are already disaffected, but there can be little doubt as to their deterrent effect; and, from the point of view of the ultimate settlement of the country, a firm and consistent policy is far more likely to be effectual than one of weakness and vacillation. It is believed that this is fully recognised by that section of public opinion which is most worthy of consideration.⁵³

With this contention, Birkenhead addressed the critical response from the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines against the government's policy of restoring law and order and justified its effectiveness. Who he meant by the 'most worthy of consideration' from the general public was not made clear. It can be inferred that he was likely referring to a section of the population that accepted the general premise that the government should be free to create policy and would

⁵³ TNA, CAB 24/122, 'Deputation to the Right Hon. The Lord Chancellor', 15 April 1921, p. 3.

recognise that implementation took time. Although this argument was perhaps short-sighted in neglecting to consider the dominating civilian morale narrative of pacifism, this recognition of the 'opposition press' and public opinion gave further evidence of the extent to which British opinion remained a consideration for the government as it evaluated and defended its Irish policy.

Despite support of the government's Irish policy from sources like the *Post* as well as from some British political leaders, the impact of violence and of the government's response remained a general source of conflict and criticism, particularly within the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines. The *Westminster Gazette* argued 'violence is not defeating violence, it is only breeding it apace'.⁵⁴ It also published a cartoon entitled 'Round and Round About', which featured Lloyd George, Greenwood, and a masked Sinn Féin villain.⁵⁵ The three figures are riding a merry-go-round with the Sinn Féin figure in the lead, chased by Greenwood, and Lloyd George sitting in a carriage in the back.⁵⁶ The caption reads: 'Mr. Lloyd George: Stick to him, Hamar!; Sir Hamar Greenwood: I've got him on the run!'⁵⁷ This cartoon reflected the political stance of the paper through its reservation of the effectiveness of the government's insistence on maintaining the status quo with its Irish policy. The cartoon recalled the work of previous cartoons, such as *Alice and Wonderland*, by depicting the political leaders as immature.

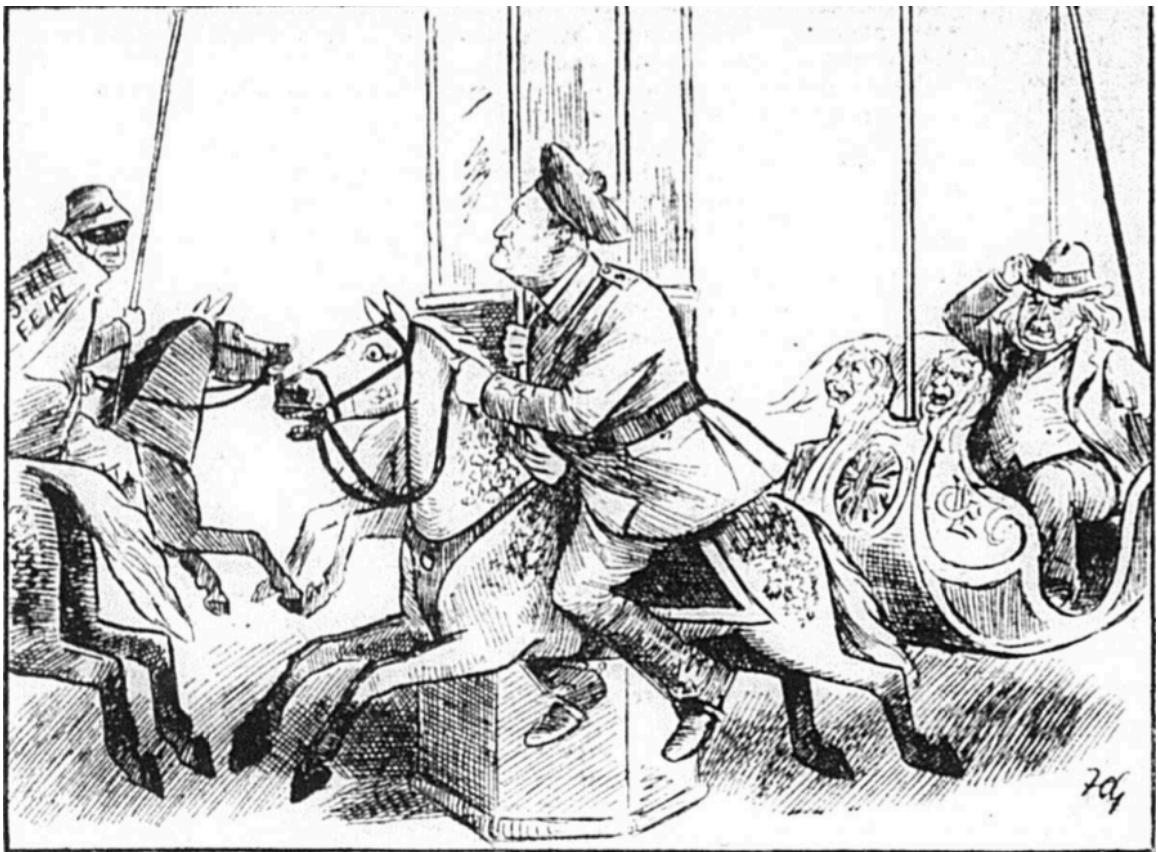
⁵⁴ 'More Irish Fighting', *Westminster Gazette*, 12 April 1921, p. 7.

⁵⁵ 'Round and Round About', *Westminster Gazette*, 25 April 1921, p. 6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Significantly, Sinn Féin is seen critically too, being just as guilty in participating in the merry-go-round of absurd politics. This recognition of Sinn Féin reflected the established tone of the settlement-focused press, who oscillated about who was responsible for resolving the Irish question, and advanced the vague demand for a new Irish policy and open statesmanship.



'Round and Round About', *Westminster Gazette*, 25 April 1921, p. 6.

Caption: 'Mr. Lloyd George: Stick to him, Hamar!; Sir Hamar Greenwood: I've got him on the run!'

The Irish situation was further scrutinised by Gwynn in part of his series in the *Observer* when he argued citizens in the South had a 'dangerous illusion' and did not believe in the possibility of an Irish Republic, but did believe in the

possibility of preventing Ulster from becoming a self-governing State.⁵⁸ This argument offered further proof of the aversion to the Government of Ireland Act in the South and gave credence to the expressed unionist fear of the South blocking the path to self-government. This contention could be applied to the advancing calls for culpability of the Sinn Féin leaders for, as similarly represented in the above cartoon, leading the chase of British leaders and Irish citizens with their demands. It also supported the press arguments against the ineffectiveness of the government's Irish policy, which complimented the civilian morale narrative of pacifism and securing tangible improvements to the domestic situation. Yet, again, how to respond to this challenge was not made clear.

An article in the pragmatic *Daily Mirror* further advanced the debate by asking, 'Will de Valera, pocketing his ambition to become President of an Irish Republic, consent to be first Prime Minister of Southern Ireland?'⁵⁹ This argument revealed once more the press progression to begin to hold Irish leaders accountable for their role in resolving the Irish question. From this, better characterisation of leaders, including the identification of de Valera as leader of Southern Ireland, emerged. This call for greater culpability of Sinn Féin leaders could have been a natural response to the recent changes in the British leadership and the impending implementation of the Act. Or, it could have been a consequence of overall weariness to the Irish situation and suggestive of an effort

⁵⁸ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland Week by Week', *Observer*, 24 April 1921, p. 9.

⁵⁹ 'De Valera – Premier or President?', *Daily Mirror*, 28 April 1921, p. 3.

to back policy that supported settlement. In either case, there was a desire to see leaders from both Britain and Ireland work to implement the Act and to pursue a path to truce and settlement advanced. Subsequently, Irish leaders were increasingly observed and challenged along with their British counterparts as a resolution to the Irish question remained elusive.

As April came to a close and the debate over the government's Irish policy continued, in the Commons, Greenwood 'poignantly expressed regret that he had not been more successful in repressing murder' but that he and the Prime Minister 'meant to put the Home Rule Act into operation at once, both in the North and in the South and West of Ireland'.⁶⁰ For now, the British policy for Ireland was to remain. However, Lloyd George once more 'repeated his offer to meet any representative Irishmen – except anyone convicted of murder – who had authority to discuss remedies for the present disturbed state of the country'.⁶¹ Although resolution for the Irish question remained uncertain, the press recognition of Irish leaders and their role in settlement added to the overriding general desire to find a means of 'repressing murder' and to transcend the violent situation that had plagued the Anglo-Irish relationship. This triggered a response by British and Irish leaders that saw more effort to negotiate.

⁶⁰ 'Prime Minister on Irish Home Rule', *Daily Telegraph*, 28 April 1921, p. 11.

⁶¹ 'Mr. Lloyd George and Ireland', *Daily Chronicle*, 29 April 1921, p. 1.

Toward Peace

Does not the Right Hon. Gentleman think that the increasing lawlessness in Ireland demands some more useful policy than that of pure drift, which is the policy adopted by the Government?⁶² –
Conservative MP Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, Commons debate

The process of implementing the Government of Ireland Act coupled with the preceding months' violence, leadership changes, and demand for 'more useful policy' saw the press focus on the necessity for change in the government's Irish policy, though still undefined, particularly with the lingering impact of the unresolved Irish question on outside opinion. This marked the beginning of a period that saw an opening of the lines of communication and more concerted efforts by Irish and British leaders to negotiate. On the Irish side, this resulted in a conference between leaders de Valera and Craig. On this British side, this saw leadership at last looking beyond Home Rule and seeking counsel from dominion leaders.

With these advancements the press, with the exclusion of the partisan line, coalesced in approval of the government's pursuit, which was a reversal of the previous criticisms against the government's Irish policy. This was a progression of the more consistent cross over within the press reporting advocating settlement and an end to violence. Consequently, Irish leaders were subject to more scrutiny for their role in achieving settlement. The King's speech opening the Ulster parliament offered another significant sign of the potential for compromise and

⁶² HC Deb., 26 May 1921, vol. 142, cols. 294-5.

unity and saw a positive response from all press lines, with the exception once more of the partisan press. During this period, a majority of the Irish question weary press demanded a resolution. Yet, despite this general desire, the press continued to concentrate on the constitutional aspect of Anglo-Irish relations and neglected to come to terms with the emotiveness of questions of nationhood.

As the Irish situation continued to be debated, de Valera and Craig held a momentous meeting in Dublin in early May.⁶³ The press, with the exception of the partisan line, generally approved of the meeting. The *Daily Express* called it 'the most important event in Ireland since the 1916 rebellion' and further contended 'it is hoped that the meeting... may prove to be a first practical step towards peace'.⁶⁴ *The Times* argued it 'indicated a genuine desire for peace'.⁶⁵ Similarly, the *Westminster Gazette* argued 'the fact that a meeting has taken place... rekindles the dying hopes of an early return to peace in Ireland'.⁶⁶ It added a 'hopeful aspect of the affair is revealed in the comments of Irish newspapers, unionist and nationalist, in which the meeting is welcomed as a sign of approaching peace'.⁶⁷ The meeting between the two leaders did indeed mark the beginning of a new phase in Irish negotiations and saw the effective recognition of de Valera as the Southern Irish leader. The hope of truce that was fostered with Talbot's assignment as Lord Lieutenant was further advanced with news of the Irish leaders' meeting.

⁶³ 'Dramatic Irish Peace Move', *Daily Express*, 6 May 1921, p. 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ 'Good News From Ireland', *The Times*, 6 May 1921, p. 10.

⁶⁶ 'The Craig-De Valera Meeting', *Westminster Gazette*, 6 May 1921, p. 1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Despite the expression of general approval for de Valera and Craig's meeting within most press lines, the partisan *Morning Post* questioned the overall intention. A political correspondent claimed de Valera was probably after 'some modified sort of Dominion Home Rule, with full autonomy for the Loyalists of the Six counties' and that 'any attempt to curtail their [unionist] powers under the Act would be resented to the utmost of their strength'.⁶⁸ This speculation and firm resolve of the unionist stance was an indication of the forthcoming battle with the settlement negotiations. After the meeting, Craig validated this line of contention in a statement in which he underscored his desire 'to be clearly understood that what had happened in no way modified Ulster's determination to go on'.⁶⁹ Craig's disposition offered yet another glimpse into Ulster's priorities, making clear that Ulster, at this point, did not intend to alter its demands and would continue with the implementation of the Government of Ireland Act.

Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* confirmed that the meeting between Craig and de Valera was to consult on the 'situation which will arise after the elections' and further reported 'this implies that the elections are to proceed, and the Ulster Parliament will come into existence'.⁷⁰ This article verified the intent to implement the Act and to establish the two-parliament system. Meanwhile, the partisan *Daily Herald* contended de Valera and Craig's meeting had 'shaken Ulster Unionists to its

⁶⁸ Political Correspondent, 'De Valera Wants Terms', *Morning Post*, 6 May 1921, p. 7.

⁶⁹ 'Irish Peace Steps', *Daily Mirror*, 6 May 1921, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Special Correspondent, 'Ulster Leader and Sinn Fein Chief', *Daily Chronicle*, 7 May 1921, p. 1.

foundation'.⁷¹ Whether that statement was true or not is difficult to prove.

However, upon Craig's return to Belfast, he met with the Ulster Unionist Party after which a statement was released that declared the acceptance of the provisions of the Act represented 'the limit of concession, no further discussion will be entered into',⁷² which the *Daily Telegraph* reported was 'generally approved'.⁷³ Craig's statement affirmed Ulster's priorities at this time, which were focused on implementing the provisions of the Act and not engaging in speculative talk regarding the Southern Irish leaders' demands.

However, the door to negotiation was not altogether closed with Ulster's pronouncement that no further discussion was needed. *The Times'* Dublin correspondent reported the meeting was 'welcomed by the Press and people of all Ireland' and that 'it is hoped that the new turn of affairs will create a good atmosphere for the elections, and perhaps may put some check on the present state of disorder'.⁷⁴ This argument addressed the unpopularity of the Act and forthcoming elections in the South. It fitted with the settlement-focused press contentions that suggested the meeting between the two Irish leaders could garner more support for the elections, which might in turn deter anti-Home Rule agitations.

⁷¹ 'Ulster Unyielding', *Daily Herald*, 7 May 1921, p. 1.

⁷² 'Sir James Craig and Irish Peace Moves', *Daily Herald*, 7 May 1921, p. 9.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ 'Ireland's Relief And Hope', *The Times*, 7 May 1921, p. 1.

A subsequent *Times* article argued,

[T]here can be no effective truce and no lasting settlement unless the two great parties in Ireland are resolved to secure them, and unless the Government are prepared whole-heartedly to further those ends.⁷⁵

This argument gave further support to the need for the Irish factions to work together. Similarly, the *Westminster Gazette* gave credit to de Valera who 'made the first move' to meet, which it argued established 'that an opportunity has been created which should be turned to the best advantage by British statesmanship'.⁷⁶ The opportunity for negotiation was still present but, as the settlement-focused press suggested, more was needed to make it work. And, at this point, the settlement-focused press line did not seem aware of or concerned with the need to consider options outside of British constitutional politics to appease Irish political opinion (particularly republican).

Amid the continued debate on Irish affairs, Churchill argued of the 'great public importance to get a respite in Ireland'.⁷⁷ He contended the 'very unpleasant regard of Britain worldwide and the 'odious reputation' was 'poisoning our own relations with the United States'.⁷⁸ He suggested the government 'should do everything to get a way to a settlement', which 'would have considerable effect on

⁷⁵ 'An Irish Truce', *The Times*, 12 May 1921, p. 11.

⁷⁶ 'Sir James Craig and De Valera', *Westminster Gazette*, 7 May 1921, p. 1.

⁷⁷ Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, p. 69.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

British public opinion and on British Liberal opinion'.⁷⁹ Churchill was mindful of the timeline of obtaining such a truce and said it was a 'matter of psychology', but that an earlier resolution would 'allow a gentler mood to prevail'.⁸⁰ Churchill's sentiments provided insight to the perceived coercive effect of the unresolved status of the Irish question on Britain's reputation and specifically British opinion. They also reflected the fractured nature of the Irish question, in this instance focusing on the Britannic question and Ireland's role in empire. Yet, much like the press contentions, Churchill did not address Irish political opinion specifically. Instead, he made a vague appeal for settlement making him part of a growing trend among leaders to be more receptive to opportunities that could lead to settlement. Yet what that offer should entail was not specified, which remained a problem as the Irish elections produced results.

The nominations for the Irish general elections for the parliaments of the North and South closed on 13 May.⁸¹ The Southern Irish election saw an overwhelming victory by Sinn Féin candidates with the unopposed return of 124 out of 128 candidates.⁸² *The Times* reported the election in the South took place 'without the slightest disturbance' with a 'sweeping victory from Sinn Fein, and a virtually unanimous repudiation of the Government of Ireland Act'.⁸³ This victory by Sinn Féin confirmed the popular appeal and dominance of the party as well as the

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

⁸¹ Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, pp. xvii-xviii.

⁸² 'Irish Elections', *Daily Telegraph*, 14 May 1921, p. 9.

⁸³ 'First Home Rule Election', *The Times*, 14 May 1921, p. 10.

broad disapproval of the Act in the South. The victory also marked the beginning of a new challenge to the government with the refusal of the Southern parliament candidates to take the oath of allegiance to the King.⁸⁴ This refusal would prove to be a primary point of contention between Sinn Féin leaders and their British and Ulster counterparts, which would further unfurl in the coming months.

Meanwhile, the general election in the North exposed the intensified political activity in Ulster. The *Westminster Gazette* reported,

Whereas the elections, if such they can be called, in the South of Ireland passed off in the peace of unanimity, those in Ulster are giving rise to much more violence and disturbance.⁸⁵

Another article reported the election saw ‘intimidation of the most disgraceful nature’ carried outside of the polling-booths in Belfast, ‘preventing Nationalist and Sinn Fein electors from voting’.⁸⁶ Despite this, the *Daily Telegraph* reported the polling in Belfast saw ‘scenes unprecedented in a land where politics are always taken seriously’ and ‘in most districts over 90 per cent of voters polled’.⁸⁷ These accounts are evidence of the fractured political atmosphere in the North.

Ultimately, the Northern elections resulted in unionists winning 40 seats and Sinn Féin and nationalists six each respectively.⁸⁸ This outcome was similar to the South

⁸⁴ ‘Sinn Fein M.P.s to Refuse Oath’, *Daily Mirror*, 21 May 1921, p. 3.

⁸⁵ ‘The Ulster Elections’, *Westminster Gazette*, 19 May 1921, p. 7.

⁸⁶ ‘Irish Elections’, *Westminster Gazette*, 25 May 1921, p. 2.

⁸⁷ ‘Heavy Polling in Ulster Elections’, *Daily Telegraph*, 25 May 1921, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, p. xviii.

in that those elected largely favoured the popular Ulster Unionist Party, confirming the broad appeal of unionism in the North. It was also a confirmation of the elected leaders' political resolve with regard to implementing the Act. As the *Manchester Guardian* summarised, 'In the South Parliament will never meet... In the North the Parliament will no doubt meet and act, but it will be a forlorn and partisan assembly'.⁸⁹ The combined election results of the North and South confirmed the divide in Irish political opinion and were further evidence of the need to consider these political desires in any solution, which the press and British political leaders had largely neglected to do in a consistent and conscientious manner.

Following the elections, another violent political act with symbolic significance occurred in the South, which was largely condemned by the British press and government leaders. On 25 May, IRA rebels occupied and burned the Dublin Custom House.⁹⁰ In the battle between the rebels and the Crown forces four auxiliaries were wounded, seven civilians were killed, eleven wounded, and 111 captured.⁹¹ A special correspondent for the *Morning Post* likened the events to the 1916 Easter Rebellion.⁹² In one article the *Manchester Guardian* argued not 'since the burning of central Cork by the Black-and-Tans there has been no single act of arson so destructive as the systematic burning of the great Dublin Custom House by

⁸⁹ 'The Irish Elections', *Manchester Guardian*, 24 May 1921, p. 6.

⁹⁰ 'Battle in Dublin', *Daily Herald*, 26 May 1921, p. 1.

⁹¹ 'Battle in Blazing Custom House', *Daily Mirror*, 26 May 1921, p. 2.

⁹² Special Correspondent, 'Day of Terror in Dublin', *Morning Post*, 26 May 1921, p. 7.

Sinn Feiners'.⁹³ An article in the *Daily Telegraph* called the act 'the criminal folly of Sinn Fein'⁹⁴ and the *Westminster Gazette* questioned the aims of the move asking,

What exactly the Irish Republican Army think themselves to have gained by destroying the Dublin Custom House we cannot guess, but to all reasonable people, especially in Ireland, their action yesterday must seem one of the maddest folly... it is the people of Ireland who suffer because of its destruction.⁹⁵

These arguments from all facets of the British press lines expressed a general disapproval of the brazen act. They challenged the aims and motives of the IRA and its recklessness in perpetrating a violent act on the headquarters of the Local Government Board, which was an agency of the British administration in Ireland. This challenge was in line with the increasing press criticism that recognised and addressed Irish leaders and their role in achieving settlement. Yet, the crime confirmed the still active contingent against the British presence in Ireland. As Plunkett detailed in his diary, Sinn Féin described the act 'as a "sacrifice" demanded by "Military necessity" in the war against English government in Ireland'.⁹⁶ The timing of the act came when the political atmosphere in Ireland was shifting as the stipulations of the Government of Ireland Act were beginning to be implemented. This action, therefore, did not assist with bridging the divide within

⁹³ 'The Irish Scene', *Manchester Guardian*, 26 May 1921, p. 6.

⁹⁴ 'Dublin Custom House', *Daily Telegraph*, 27 May 1921, p. 9.

⁹⁵ 'Arson in Dublin', *Westminster Gazette*, 26 May 1921, p. 7.

⁹⁶ Horace Plunkett, '28 May 1921'. *nli.ie.*, HPP, NLI. Web. 23 March 2016.

Irish political opinion, which had been confirmed by the election results, but instead cast a negative shadow over the settlement process.

The only newspaper to offer a less condemning view of the Custom House burning was the partisan, labour-leaning *Daily Herald*. The paper differentiated itself from its counterparts by instead maintaining its political stance of denouncing the British presence in Ireland. The paper called the act 'one of those pitiable vandalisms that are inseparable from war'.⁹⁷ It further argued,

That a great Government building can be burned in broad daylight, in the midst of a city occupied by a big garrison and ceaselessly patrolled by armed motor patrols, is an eloquent comment on the failure of the Government to carry out even the one grim task of terrorism which is now its chief preoccupation.⁹⁸

This argument addressed what the paper considered was the failure of the British government to operate an effective military presence in Ireland. It once more emphasised the perceived 'terrorism' of the British presence and its inability to stop reprisals in Ireland. The burning of the Custom House was another reminder that, although steps were being taken to implement new approaches to settlement, serious challenges remained.

Amid the persistent opposition and active challenges in Ireland, the Government of Ireland Act reached a significant milestone when the Ulster

⁹⁷ 'Dublin', *Daily Herald*, 27 May 1921, p. 4.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

parliament officially opened on 7 June. Significantly, its opening was not attended by the nationalist or Sinn Fein members.⁹⁹ This fact validated the *Manchester Guardian's* 'The Irish Elections' article, which had argued that the Northern parliament would be a 'forlorn and partisan assembly'.¹⁰⁰ Despite this, *The Times* contended the establishment of the parliament was 'a long and irretaceable step in the right direction'.¹⁰¹ Yet, contrarily, the *Daily Herald* cautioned,

It is vain to imagine that peace will be re-established in Ireland because of the creation of this Ulster House of Commons. Peace can only come when the majority of the people of Ireland are allowed the free right to choose their own destiny.¹⁰²

As the press reports indicated, the opening of the Northern Irish parliament saw one stage of the Government of Ireland Act realised. It offered the prospect for autonomy to some within the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines who were dedicated to securing Irish settlement. However, as the *Daily Herald* rightly contended, settlement would not be achieved by the parliament's mere existence; it would take more than the stipulations that the Act set out.

One outcome of the creation of the Ulster parliament was the announcement that the King would formally open the parliament with a dedicated

⁹⁹ 'The Ulster Parliament', *The Times*, 8 June 1921, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ 'The Irish Elections', *Manchester Guardian*, 24 May 1921, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ 'The Ulster Parliament', *The Times*.

¹⁰² 'Crime and Can't', *Daily Herald*, 8 June 1921, p. 4.

ceremony on 22 June.¹⁰³ Following this news, the pragmatic *Daily Telegraph* contended,

In honouring the State opening with his presence, King George will not only be giving outward expression to his own hearty goodwill towards Ireland, but also that of the entire wide-world people of whom he is the head and supreme representative.¹⁰⁴

This move by the King was evidence of his and the government's desire to formally recognise Ulster's commitment to the Government of Ireland Act. It was a show of goodwill between the government and the North of Ireland and validated Ulster's election process.

Following the announcement of the ceremony, British government leaders and the King met with South African Prime Minister General Smuts throughout mid-June to discuss the Irish political situation. Smuts offered the perspective of a leader from the empire and of a country that had recently achieved independence, which confronted the Britannic aspects of the Irish question. Significantly, he was the only dominion leader who could say, 'The British promised us, who are not British and who fought them, complete self-government, and they have kept their promise'.¹⁰⁵ Thomas Jones recorded in his diary that Smuts informed Lloyd George

¹⁰³ 'The King and Ulster', *Daily Telegraph*, 8 June 1921, p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Charles H. Sherrill, 'The British Empire after the War', *The North American Review*, Vol. 214, No. 792 (November 1921), 594-602 (p. 594).

of 'the importance of the Irish question for the Empire as a whole'.¹⁰⁶ He further argued the King's speech at the Northern parliament should 'foreshadow the grant of Dominion status' and suggested such a promise 'would create a new and definite situation which would crystallise opinion favourably both in Ireland and elsewhere'.¹⁰⁷

Smuts' promotion of dominion Home Rule status could be placed in the context of the need for resolution that Churchill had advocated in May. It was an offer that could be made in goodwill and could help to placate the Irish situation and appease opinion in Britain, Ireland, and the dominions. Such a proposal would go beyond previous British government offers and would require approval and backing by all involved, including the coalition and the Irish leaders. Consequently, Smuts' desire to see peace brought a new urgency to the idea of dominion status.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, the groundwork was being laid for settlement beyond the stipulations set forth in the Government of Ireland Act.

Following this more concerted effort by the government to pursue settlement, a special correspondent for *Daily Chronicle* suggested the newly elected leaders of the Irish parliaments 'should be permitted to meet under a "truce" and appoint delegates with a view to an agreed settlement'.¹⁰⁹ How much this desire reflected the opinion of Lloyd George or the government is difficult to say with

¹⁰⁶ Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, p. 75.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience*, p. 238.

¹⁰⁹ Special Correspondent, 'Proposal Towards and Irish Peace', *Daily Chronicle*, 13 June 1921, p. 1.

certainty but the fact that it was printed in the Prime Minister's newspaper may have been an indication of his willingness to approach the Irish question in such a manner. During this same period, the *Manchester Guardian* reported that Greenwood was asked 'whether the Government had decided to abandon the policy of reprisals, but,... he failed to give a clear and direct reply'.¹¹⁰ The article also argued it was 'pretty evident that there is strong pressure for the abandonment of reprisals and for the frank recognition that they have failed'.¹¹¹ The appeal to see an end to the government's policy of reprisals was once again addressed within major outlets of the press as a desire to see more opportunities for frank conversation between the Irish leaders via a truce was advanced. This appeal coincided with the British leaders' discussions and supported an overall intention to see statesmanship pursued.

As the government considered its options with Ireland, the partisan *Morning Post* further addressed the impact of the Irish question abroad in a mid-June article on a private visit to the United Kingdom by Rear-Admiral William S. Sims of the United States Navy. In his visit, Sims commented on the impact of the Irish question on Anglo-American relations.¹¹² Because his visit was of a personal nature the paper could not substantiate whether the Navy sanctioned his comments. However, Sims' remarks merit reflection due to his position and unique American perspective. The paper reported Sims said Sinn Féin were 'trying to sap

¹¹⁰ 'Irish Policy', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 June 1921, p. 6.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² 'America and Sinn Fein', *Morning Post*, 14 June 1921, p. 6.

the good relations between the two nations, which has been established while they were cooperating at sea'.¹¹³ The paper argued,

We believe that the great mass of Americans, like the people of this country, are heartily resolved upon the maintenance and confirmation of the friendship between the two nations, upon which their own peace and welfare, and the peace and welfare of the world, depend.¹¹⁴

This article from the *Post* recalled previous arguments made by the papers' press competitors regarding the value and importance of favourable American opinion for resolving the Irish question. Sims' statement supported the general political stance of the *Post* by denouncing Sinn Féin. However, the paper had historically offered mixed opinion on the merit of considering outside opinion. Previous articles by the paper, including its October 1920 article 'American Feeling on Ireland', considered outside opinion as 'guidance' rather than something that should strongly influence the direction of British policy.¹¹⁵ This new argument by the paper offered more support to the importance of maintaining beneficial relationships and therefore validated the contentions of leaders like Churchill and Smuts. This shift in opinion could have been a reflection of the changes seen following the Government of Ireland Act and the general desire to readdress the Irish problem.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ 'American Feeling On Ireland', *Morning Post*, 13 October 1920, p. 9.

The role of outside opinion was further advanced during the Imperial Conference in June. At the Conference, dominion leaders, including General Smuts, discussed the Irish situation and its impact on the empire. Nationalist MP T.P. O'Connor argued there was not a single representative that had not publically committed himself to the principle of Home Rule, 'not merely for the sake of Ireland, but in the interests of the Empire'.¹¹⁶ The Conference added another layer of consideration for the British government's pursuit of resolution to the Irish question. It called attention to one of the main facets of consideration for the Irish question through emphasising the importance of resolution for the empire.

Amidst the flourishing discussions on Irish affairs, the subject of *how* to best resolve the Irish question continued throughout June. The *Daily Express* reported on a 'sensation' in the Lords when Southern unionist peer Lord Donoughmore suggested fiscal autonomy for Southern Ireland.¹¹⁷ The paper reported, 'So great was the surprise caused by the turn the debate took that there was a sudden and unexpected adjournment'.¹¹⁸ The records of the debate reveal that Donoughmore saw the suggestion for Southern fiscal autonomy as a means to end unpopular reprisals, bring the disliked Southern parliament into being, and create a united parliament. Donoughmore argued 'reprisals are a detestable and degrading policy, and public opinion is right in refusing to associate itself with you as long as they go

¹¹⁶ HC Deb., 17 June 1921, vol. 143, cols. 783-860.

¹¹⁷ 'Fiscal Autonomy for Ireland', *Daily Express*, 17 June 1921, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

on'.¹¹⁹ His solution to quell the situation was to revise the unpopular Act via a fiscal solution to better address the needs of Southern Ireland, which 'were considered of secondary importance to those of the British Treasury and the British tax collector'.¹²⁰

In response to Donoughmore's proposal, the *Daily Express* reported it was understood the British government would consider the concession if it was received as a joint request by the North and South.¹²¹ A subsequent article argued the debate was 'likely to be a sudden change in the attitude of the Government towards Irish policy'.¹²² It contended 'nearly all the Coalition Liberals are in favour of financial concessions to Ireland as an alternative to the present idea of intensified coercion', which the paper suggested was also supported by 'a considerable number of Unionist Cabinet Ministers'.¹²³

This Lords debate offered a concrete suggestion for readdressing the Irish question and importantly considered the fiscal question for Ireland. The financial undertaking of the two-parliament system was undoubtedly an important consideration for the government. As the British press debates indicated, the Act was unpopular in the South and would likely remain so if revisions were not made. The Act likewise had an uneasy acceptance in the North. Deciding how to revise the Act was no simple task and, as is evidence by this Lords debate, remained a divisive

¹¹⁹ HL Deb., 16 June 1921, vol. 45, cols. 606-43.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ 'Fiscal Autonomy for Ireland', *Daily Express*, 17 June 1921.

¹²² 'Conciliation of Coercion?', *Daily Express*, 20 June 1921, p. 1.

¹²³ Ibid.

topic. Lord Donoughmore's suggestion was ultimately defeated by a vote of 66 to 57 and it was instead decided to send more troops to Ireland, which the *Daily Express* argued constituted 'a state of real war in Ireland'.¹²⁴ Despite the failure of Donoughmore's proposed revisions and the commitment of the government to stand firm in its current Irish policy, the debate on finances would continue as the Northern parliament was set to open.

Amid the continued debate, the settlement-focused *Manchester Guardian* addressed the paradox of the Irish situation in one article that argued,

The opening of an Irish Parliament has been the hope and the ambition of every Irish patriot since the Act of the Union. Now it has come, but in how mocking and intolerable a form. Ulster, which has successfully thwarted every effort to establish a Parliament for Ireland as a whole, now receives one, for which it has never asked, all to itself; the rest of Ireland, Nationalist Ireland, which sought a United Parliament, is offered a separate one, and the offer has been utterly rejected.¹²⁵

This line of argument from the *Guardian* recalled the rhetoric used in the paper's March 1920 article 'The Home Rule Bill', in which the 'supreme paradox' of Ulster accepting Home Rule was considered.¹²⁶ As the debates in the press and Lords had revealed, the government's solution of a two-parliament system

¹²⁴ 'War to Finish in Ireland', *Daily Express*, 22 June 1921, p. 1.

¹²⁵ 'A Turning Point in Ireland', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 June 1921, p. 6.

¹²⁶ Special Correspondent, 'The Home Rule Bill', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 March 1920, p. 2.

continued to be a disputed topic. What remained to be seen is if the government's Irish policy could result in a settlement.

Despite sustained debate, the Northern parliament received Royal Assent on 22 June with an official celebration by the King and Queen in Belfast.¹²⁷ A special correspondent for the settlement-focused *Times* wrote of the hope that the Royal visit 'may have in promoting peace in a distracted and unhappy island'.¹²⁸ This hope was invoked in the King's visit and speech, which marked a significant point in the Anglo-Irish relationship and the implementation of the troubled Act. In his speech, the King rebuffed the historic terrorist narrative for Ireland and offered emotional rhetoric to appeal to his subjects in Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the empire. He expressed,

Few things are more earnestly desired throughout the English-speaking world than a satisfactory solution of the age-long Irish problems, which for generations embarrassed our forefathers, as they now weigh heavily upon us.¹²⁹

The King further asked "all Irishmen to pause, to stretch out the hand of forbearance and conciliation, to forgive and forget".¹³⁰ Perhaps most notable was the King's compassion and "sympathy" expressed to Irish people, for whom he felt

¹²⁷ Special Correspondent, 'Ulster's Great Day', *The Times*, 23 June 1921, p. 11.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ TNA, CAB 24/128, 'The King's Speech', 22 June 1921, p. 3.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

“affection”.¹³¹ This affection yearned for the Irish to join the United Kingdom in “a new era of peace”.¹³²

The King’s recognition of the desire to solve the Irish question complimented the main emergent press commentary, which looked to the new opportunities for negotiation to lead to settlement. In reflecting on the speech, the *Daily Telegraph* addressed the deep-rooted legacy of the Irish situation and argued,

For the Irish problem is far more than a sore in the body politic of the people of the British Isles. It is an Imperial problem, as we have long since learnt, owing to the wide dispersion over the Dominions of men and women of Irish kin; it is also a world problem, and universal peace depends on its solution more, possibly, than on any other factor.¹³³

This contention from the *Telegraph* added to previous press arguments of the impact of the Irish problem on British relations (both politically and for security purposes). The article extended that contention and boldly took the need for resolution further by suggesting Irish peace was a key to ‘universal peace’. The extent to which Irish peace was considered ‘universal peace’ is debatable but this article and the King’s speech indicated a new willingness to readdress the Irish question. Yet, how to do that remained, as ever, unclear.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ ‘The King’s Appeal’, *Daily Telegraph*, 24 June 1921, p. 8.

With the potential for 'universal peace' following the momentum gathered by the King's appeal, the pragmatic *Daily Mirror* questioned: 'Just at the right moment, the King's message comes to persuade all Irishmen to work together. Will they hear?'¹³⁴ The government-loyal *Daily Mail* likewise asked: 'Is it too much to hope that the King's moving appeal to the Irish people in his speech opening the Ulster Parliament will meet with a fitting response from those to whom it is addressed?'¹³⁵ These questions backed the general desire to see settlement achieved that was similarly pursued by the *Telegraph*. Yet they also significantly reconfirmed the historic neglect of the British press and government to define, understand, and address the divide in Irish political opinion. This was underscored in the generic desire to simply 'forgive and forget', which was unreasonable and also unlikely since Home Rule and the Government and Ireland Act were unsatisfactory to many Irish people.

The partisan press added to the debate with its disapproval of the new effort and the ability for it to lead to a lasting settlement. The *Daily Herald* countered the general press approval of the King's speech and in one article contended there was nothing 'more revolting' than the 'verbal profession of goodwill from a Government which is engaged in the filthy infamy of holding down an unwilling people by the sword is impossible to conceive'.¹³⁶ Conversely, the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* argued, 'the future of a united and peaceful Ireland

¹³⁴ 'The King and Ireland', *Daily Mirror*, 23 June 1921, p. 5.

¹³⁵ 'Well Done', *Daily Mail*, 23 June 1921, p. 6.

¹³⁶ 'Ulster', *Daily Herald*, 23 June 1921, p. 4.

can never be fulfilled until the country is delivered from the murderous conspirators who now hold it in thrall'.¹³⁷ These contentions confirmed the established political stances of the respective newspapers, underscoring the fact that much remained to be considered before the divide in political opinion could be bridged. Unlike their press competitors, the partisan press addressed the historic failure to define and confront the Irish question. Yet, significantly, resolution was not made clear.

As the press contentions indicated, more remained to be considered before settlement could be achieved. However, the King's speech was a starting point to reconsidering *how* to address the Irish question and proved to be a watershed moment that helped to boost the momentum of implementing a truce and enabling wider negotiations. In his message to the King, Lloyd George stated, 'None but the King could have made that personal appeal; none but the King could have evoked so instantaneous a response'.¹³⁸ This was further emphasised in a report from the government-loyal *Daily Mail* of the 'popular approval' of the King's speech throughout the dominions, which it argued 'has shown that they represented the true feeling of Great Britain and the Empire'.¹³⁹ The King subsequently appealed to the government 'not to miss the psychological moment' by failing to act upon his words, which he believed, based on press reports, were 'generally well received'.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ 'The King and Ireland', *Morning Post*, 23 June 1921, p. 6.

¹³⁸ TNA, CAB 24/128, 'The Prime Minister's Message to the King', 22 June 1921, p. 4.

¹³⁹ 'The Better Way', *Daily Mail*, 27 June 1921, p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ Harold Nicolson, *King George the Fifth: His Life and Reign* (London: Constable & Co, 1952), p. 354.

Heeding the King's advice, Lloyd George invited de Valera and Craig to attend a conference in London for the purpose of creating a settlement.¹⁴¹ This invitation officially recognised de Valera as leader of the South, which Plunkett privately described as 'a sensational new departure'.¹⁴² In his letter, Lloyd George wrote that it was time to 'make a final appeal in the spirit of the King's words'.¹⁴³ Subsequently, Smuts told de Valera the invitation from the Prime Minister was 'unconditional' and a refusal from him would have 'the worst possible effect and would turn public opinion against him'.¹⁴⁴ Once again, the importance of maintaining favourable opinion was emphasised and was an indication of the extent to which supportive opinion remained a concern for both the British and Irish leaders as each saw their political desires tied to public response. Smuts' assertion also hinted at the general popular support both in England and Ireland for the government's new attempt to broker settlement. The Prime Minister's invitation was proof of the power of the King's speech and the momentum that it helped to propel.

Despite the new progress with addressing the Irish question, more concerted efforts to incorporate perspectives beyond the confines of British constitutional politics was needed before settlement could be reached. Soon after the King's appeal and Lloyd George's invitation to Irish leaders, IRA rebels set a

¹⁴¹ Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, p. 20.

¹⁴² Horace Plunkett, '26 June 1921'. *nli.ie*. HPP, NLI. Web. 23 March 2016.

¹⁴³ TNA, CAB 24/128, 'The King's Speech', 22 June 1921, p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ Nicolson, *King George the Fifth*, p. 355.

landmine on a train that destroyed fifteen wagons, killed four soldiers, and injured both soldiers and horses.¹⁴⁵ The train wreck devastated a troop train that was transporting a detachment of the 10th Hussars, which had formed part of the King's escort to Belfast.¹⁴⁶ This outrage following the increased goodwill generated by the King's speech was another example of the active ban of dissent in Ireland unwilling to compromise despite the King's call for peace. In one article, the *Westminster Gazette* condemn the violence arguing,

Sinn Fein leaders constantly assert that their methods are those of warfare. These outrages, with their cruel disregard of the danger to which innocent civilians are exposed, are not warfare. Nor do they do anything whatever to assist the cause of Ireland, but only embitter the anger which is felt in England, and make incomparably more difficult the task everyone who is working for settlement.¹⁴⁷

The brazen act and the *Gazette's* argument underscored the importance of addressing the Irish situation with the momentum garnered. It was indicative of an overall desire to see Sinn Féin leaders exert more prudence and thoughtfulness in promoting diplomacy. This reflected some of the commentary made after the Custom House burning in May, including the paper's own questioning of what the rebels hoped to achieve with such activities. The bold reprisals by bans of rebels

¹⁴⁵ 'Troop Train Wrecked by a Land Mine', *Daily Express*, 25 June 1921, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ 'Train-wrecking in Ireland', *Westminster Gazette*, 25 June 1921, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

were a constant threat but the prospect generated by the King's appeal and Lloyd George's invitation to Irish leaders was the beginning of a new process that made a solution seem closer than ever. The press understanding of the Irish question was necessarily impacted by the debates and events. Although *how* to resolve the Irish question remained unclear, the tide was shifting once more in Anglo-Irish relations and the opportunity presented by the King's speech left many to hope for the possibility of settlement.

Opening the Lines of Communication

We are faced, if we do not take care, with two unalterably hard determinations on the opposite sides of the Channel—on one side a determination to have absolute independence, and on the other a determination that it shall never be given.¹⁴⁸ – Liberal politician Sir Francis Acland, Commons debate

The momentum garnered from the King's speech propelled a general desire within all forms of the press, with the exception of the partisan line, for the government to open the lines of communication and to administer a truce with the ultimate goal of achieving a resolution to the Irish question. This coalescence saw continued cross over in press reporting as the press sustained its constitutional perspective and backed this popular appeal to prioritise settlement. Along with this desire for resolution, the 'unalterably hard determinations' to prevent the

¹⁴⁸ HC Deb., 24 June 1921, vol. 143, cols. 1753-63.

hardening out of opinion was increasingly recognised. Overall, this period saw the press largely focused on the prospect of negotiation and the Irish situation was considered to be entering a new phase with the potential for resolution. Ultimately, bridging the divide in Irish political opinion was an unavoidable barrier that the British and Irish leaders had to contend with.

Lloyd George's invitation to meet de Valera and Craig in London added to the press commentary on the political situation in Ireland, which all of the press lines, with the exception of the partisan, were largely supportive of. *The Times* argued the invitation was 'a direct outcome of the King's speech' and that 'it has changed the whole face of the political situation'.¹⁴⁹ A political correspondent for the *Observer* similarly argued Lloyd George's letter was 'a welcome and hopeful surprise' and was a move that represented 'a counterpart and explanation of the Cabinet's decision to increase the purely military pressure of Sinn Fein',¹⁵⁰ which was a result of Lord Donoughmore's failed June attempt in the Lords to secure fiscal autonomy for Southern Ireland. They further contended,

Nothing in the Irish situation can rule out a conference. Whether Ireland be at war, as Sinn Fein claims, or not, there can be no such thing as being too proud to negotiate. War cannot be a permanent state.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ 'Belief And Hope In Ireland', *The Times*, 27 June 1921, p. 10.

¹⁵⁰ Political Correspondent, 'A New Hope for Irish People', *Observer*, 26 June 1921, p. 13.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

These arguments revealed the extent to which the political situation in Ireland had shifted as a result of the King's speech, with the general desire by many to see the Irish conflict promptly resolved. It also confirmed the government's effort to pursue more diplomatic lines with Irish leaders, working beyond the policy of coercion that had been fiercely criticised especially within the settlement-focused press and the partisan *Daily Herald*. Despite this desire, the extent to which the press was willing to consider options outside of the confines of British constitutional politics (as demanded by republican leaders) was less clear.

Concurrently, the *Daily Mirror* advanced that the King's speech 'made the difference' and 'made us hope against hope' that the Prime Minister's call to de Valera and Craig 'may be heard by Northern and Southern Ireland, and lead, even so late as this, to peace on a basis of collaboration'.¹⁵² Another article matched Smut's advice to de Valera by contending de Valera 'must be well aware that refusal to come would put him in the wrong with the opinion of the civilised world'.¹⁵³ The article further commented on Craig's preference 'to keep on the right side of British opinion' and the ability of the meeting to allow him 'to keep in touch with developments so that nothing prejudicial to the interest of Ulster may be sanctioned without his knowledge'.¹⁵⁴ These arguments supported the popular appeal and hope that the King's speech had produced. They likewise addressed the burden on the Irish leaders to thoughtfully consider the appeal, particularly in the

¹⁵² 'Will There Be Peace?', *Daily Mirror*, 27 June 1921, p. 5.

¹⁵³ 'De Valera Expected to Come to London', *Daily Mirror*, 28 June 1921, p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

wake of negative opinion. However, they did not address what settlement should entail outside of the need to generally appease both Sinn Féin and Ulster offering no recognition that doing both at the same time would be difficult.

Despite general press support, the partisan *Morning Post* countered the hopeful commentary from its competitors and instead expressed suspicion of the meeting. One article condemned the influence of enthusiasm from the 'government newspapers and of the Northcliffe press' for suggesting 'it were well to settle the Irish question, no matter on what terms'.¹⁵⁵ This argument indicated the vital role of the press at this time and its influence in shaping opinion and understanding, which had historically neglected to differentiate the nuances of Irish political opinion. The article further contended 'even if a Conference be held, it is as little likely to come to an agreement as the Dublin Convention'.¹⁵⁶ This line of argument underscored the paper's overall scepticism of the ability of a meeting to be productive and to succeed and further separated the paper from its press competitors.

Amidst the press commentary on Lloyd George's invitation to Irish leaders, the Southern Irish parliament opened on 28 June. The opening session lacked the fanfare of the Northern parliament and only four of the 128 elected members and 15 of the 64 senators attended.¹⁵⁷ Much like the scepticism expressed by the *Post*, the absence of the Sinn Féin members cemented their belief against the legitimacy

¹⁵⁵ Political Correspondent, 'De Valera's Vanity', *Morning Post*, 28 June 1921, p. 7.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ 'Southern Irish Parliament', *Morning Post*, 29 June 1921, p. 8.

of the British established partitioned institution. This scepticism and poor showing was arguably an indication of why open negotiations were important to supplement the Act and to address the divide in Irish political opinion between Sinn Féin and Ulster.

Furthermore, 28 June also saw the Ulster Cabinet accept Lloyd George's invitation to a London conference.¹⁵⁸ In his response to the Prime Minister, Craig told Lloyd George 'we cannot refuse to accept your invitation to a conference to discuss how best this [peace] can be accomplished'.¹⁵⁹ Craig's response was in line with the appeals seen within the press and by political leaders such as Smuts. Conversely, his counterpart de Valera proved to be less willing to commence with discussions. He instead demanded an Irish conference in Dublin before agreeing to a peace parley in London.¹⁶⁰ De Valera approached Craig with this suggestion but Craig refused, citing his acceptance to the Prime Minister's invitation.¹⁶¹ De Valera responded that 'Irish political differences should be adjusted, and can, I believe, be adjusted, on Irish soil'.¹⁶² He further contended 'it is obvious that in negotiating peace with Great Britain the Irish delegation ought not to be divided, but should act as a unit on some common principle'.¹⁶³ This exchange underscored the divide in the Irish political opinion and the scepticism each side had for the other. For the negotiations to be successful, the long expressed contention from the settlement-

¹⁵⁸ 'Ulster Accepts', *Morning Post*, 29 June 1921, p. 7.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ 'De Valera's Condition for Peace Conference', *Daily Mirror*, 30 June 1921, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ TNA, CAB 24/128, 'Telegram from Sir James Craig to Mr. de Valera', 28 June 1921, p. 7.

¹⁶² 'De Valera on LI. G's Proposal', *Daily Herald*, 30 June 1921, p. 1.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

focused and pragmatic press lines of the necessity for concessions remained relevant. Yet how to specifically do that was unclear.

Despite differences, the path to negotiation was not ended with de Valera's refusal to come to London or for Craig to meet in Dublin. A Dublin correspondent for Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* reported de Valera's response to the Prime Minister stated his desire to bring about a 'lasting peace' but that he saw 'no avenue by which it can be reached if you deny Ireland's essential unity, and set aside the principle national self-determination'.¹⁶⁴ De Valera's response was an indication of the battle that the government would need to face in order to satisfy the desire of the Southern leaders. However, it failed to offer a recommendation for how the government could tangibly work with him and his colleagues to achieve settlement. Subsequently, the *Daily Mail* argued de Valera's reply could 'only be made clear by the Government pursuing its effort to negotiation in the spirit of the King's Speech and of Mr. Lloyd George's letter'.¹⁶⁵ This argument reflected the general prevailing mood within the press that looked to maximise the opportunity that the King's speech had presented. It also again prioritised settlement and called on the government to uphold its current policy of negotiation rather than employing its ineffective policy of coercion.

This appeal for statesmanship was also promoted within the government-loyal *Daily Mail* in a cartoon that appealed to British and Irish leaders to

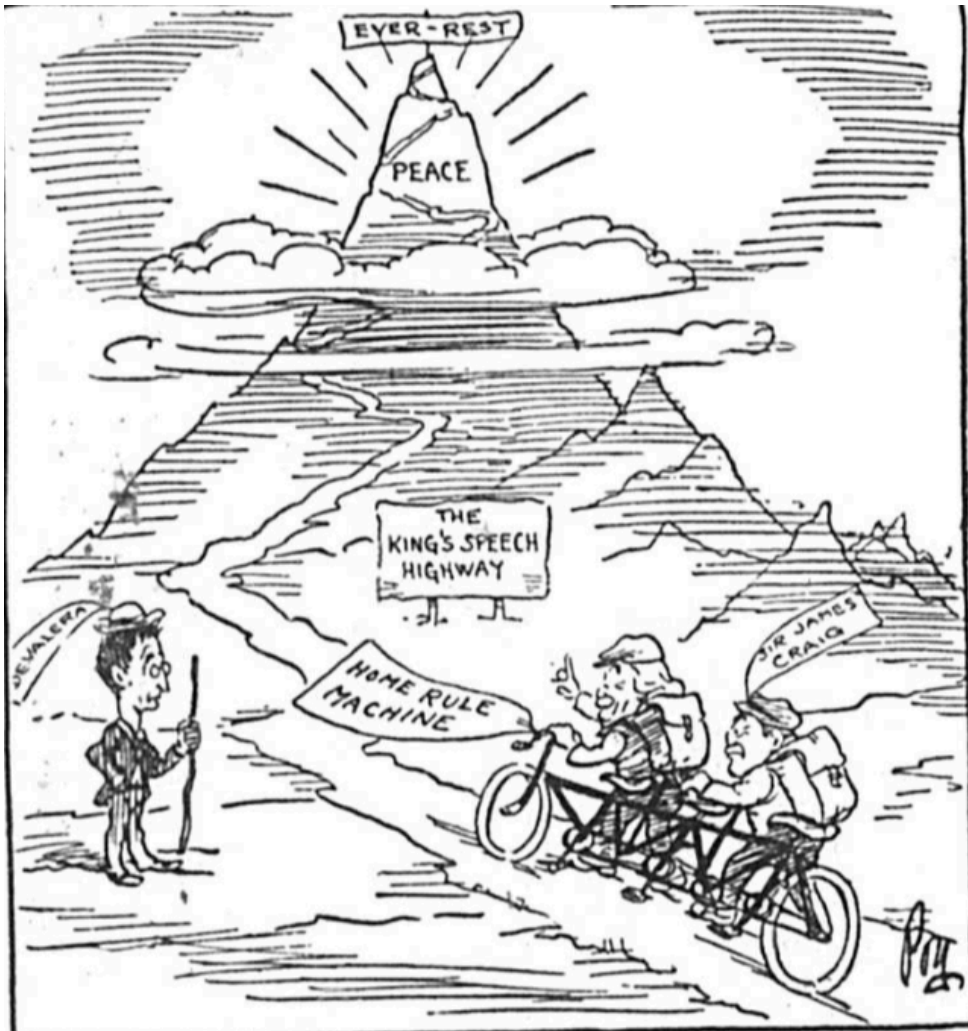
¹⁶⁴ Dublin Correspondent, 'De Valera's Reply to the Premier', *Daily Chronicle*, 29 June 1921, p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ 'Does De Valera Want Peace?', *Daily Mail*, 30 June 1921, p. 6.

compromise. The cartoon depicted Lloyd George and Craig riding on a tandem bicycle labelled the 'Home Rule Machine' passing a lone de Valera on 'The King's Speech Highway' to 'Peace' mountain and its 'Ever-Rest' summit.¹⁶⁶ The cartoon caption reads: 'David: "Come on, join the expedition. It will take three to pedal this bike to the top!"'¹⁶⁷ This cartoon offered a simplified visual for appreciating the compromise and cooperation that was required to see an Irish settlement achieved. While the path to compromise would not be easy, this cartoon suggested it was possible if all leaders involved worked more closely together. This line of argument could have been a response to the general press appeal for more statesmanship and was in line with the tone the government was currently pursuing. Yet, significantly, it also reflected the neglect of the press to consistently define and accurately come to terms the Irish question and to understand what was necessary to make settlement last. This idealised cartoon was too simplified in the political climate that the leaders had now found themselves in.

¹⁶⁶ 'The Approach to "Ever-Rest"', *Daily Mail*, 1 July 1921, p. 8.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*



'The Approach to "Ever-Rest"', *Daily Mail*, 1 July 1921, p. 8.
Caption: 'David: "Come on, join the expedition. It will take three to pedal this bike to the top!"'

Others within the pragmatic press addressed the role of Irish leaders specifically. In one article the *Observer* argued the responsibility of settlement 'weighs upon North and South alike'.¹⁶⁸ It further contended,

¹⁶⁸ 'Ireland's Hour of Destiny', *Observer*, 3 July 1921, p. 12.

The British Government is a third party, no doubt. But the British Government has now done all it can pending further agreement between the two hostile races and sects in Ireland itself.¹⁶⁹

The *Daily Telegraph* similarly asserted,

Our anxiety is that the North and South may find a common agreement as a united country, or, if that be at present impossible, that they may find terms on which the two Governments can work side by side without friction.¹⁷⁰

As these contentions revealed, the divide in Irish political opinion remained a key consideration for achieving settlement. The partition established by the Government of Ireland Act had magnified that divide and Lloyd George's invitation to conference offered a new opportunity to address that division and to potentially reach compromise and a permanent settlement. As these articles suggested, the Irish leaders were key players in the creation and maintenance of a solution. Yet, significantly, there was no recognition of the historic mismanagement and misunderstanding of what the Irish question was nor any indication of willingness to consider it outside of the confines of British constitutional politics.

The first step to negotiation began on 4 July with a series of meetings held in Dublin that involved de Valera and intermediaries, the first of which included

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ 'Ireland and the Empire', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 July 1921, p. 10.

Lord Midleton and the Southern unionists.¹⁷¹ *The Times* reported the meeting represented ‘the future of Ireland and of Irish relations with Great Britain’.¹⁷² The *Daily Express* argued the Irish situation had ‘undergone a remarkable change in consequence’ with the meeting and that ‘a new atmosphere has been reached, and prospects of peace have considerably improved’.¹⁷³ The mere fact that de Valera was meeting with leaders to discuss the Irish situation signified the potential for Sinn Féin concessions that could lead to further negotiations.

Subsequently, on 5 July, General Smuts met with de Valera as an ‘unofficial’ intermediary.¹⁷⁴ The *Daily Chronicle* reported Smuts’ visit, though private, was ‘likely to be an influence for peace, and has raised hopes in all quarters of a happy settlement’.¹⁷⁵ The *Daily Mirror* reported that ‘Dublin believes that General Smuts’ presence will have fateful results during the coming peace deliberations’.¹⁷⁶ It further suggested the potential for Sinn Féin leaders to ‘abandon their demand for the “independence” of Ireland in return for a Parliament for a United Ireland’.¹⁷⁷ The *Daily Mail* reported of similar potential concessions by the government that would ‘go to considerable fiscal lengths towards satisfying Sinn Fein if the independence of Ulster is acknowledged and the plea for a Republic is dropped’.¹⁷⁸ These speculative suggestions conveyed the extent to which the government-loyal

¹⁷¹ Kenneally, *The Paper Wall*, pp. xviii-xix.

¹⁷² ‘The Dublin Conference’, *The Times*, 4 July 1921, p. 13.

¹⁷³ ‘Historic Meeting in Dublin’, *Daily Express*, 5 July 1921, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ Fanning, *Fatal Path*, p. 261.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Why General Smuts is in Ireland’, *Daily Chronicle*, 6 July 1921, p. 1.

¹⁷⁶ ‘General Smuts Confers with De Valera To-Day’, *Daily Mirror*, 5 July 1921, p. 3.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ ‘Peace-Making in Ireland’, *Daily Mail*, 5 July 1921, p. 7.

and pragmatic press lines were generally supportive of the prospect of the negotiations. Yet they again failed to consider the overarching political demands of Irish leaders and their unwillingness to simply 'drop' the desire for a Republic and to 'acknowledge' Ulster's independence.

Following his meeting, Smuts reported to Lloyd George there were two questions to attend to for Sinn Féin: first, whether the Prime Minister would agree to meet de Valera without Craig, and second, whether de Valera's demand for a truce as a precondition to a conference was acceptable.¹⁷⁹ Lloyd George corresponded with Lord Midleton, who had met with de Valera the day prior, and wrote of the government's willingness to 'suspend active operations' in Ireland as soon as de Valera 'is prepared to enter into conference' and 'to give instructions to those under his control to cease from all acts of violence'.¹⁸⁰ *The Times* reported Smuts considered the Irish problem 'was solvable because he has seen it solved in his own country in circumstances not so embittered as in Ireland but certainly difficult'.¹⁸¹

As the Dublin meetings continued, the press reported on general opinion about the proceedings. The *Daily Mirror* reported,

¹⁷⁹ Fanning, *Fatal Path*, p. 261.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, CAB 24/128, 'The Primer Minister's Letter to Lord Midleton', 7 July 1921, p. 8.

¹⁸¹ 'Gen. Smuts On The Irish Problem', *The Times*, 7 July 1921, p. 9.

The Ulster Unionists remain firm in their belief that the conversations, both in Downing-street and in Dublin will come to nothing, but hope of better things is not extinguished.¹⁸²

The *Daily Chronicle* similarly reported,

Peace in Ireland still hangs in the balance, and nothing has yet happened to diminish hopes which gained in strength by the visit of General Smuts to Dublin.¹⁸³

The Times added, 'everywhere men are looking for a sign that a better day for Ireland is about to dawn'.¹⁸⁴ As these articles suggested, the opportunity for the Dublin meetings to lead to wider negotiations was generally approved of by opinion in both Britain and Ireland despite persistent reluctance over its successful outcome.

A firm sign of peace did result from the Dublin meetings when, on 9 July, a truce was signed between the Dáil and the British government to end hostilities on 11 July.¹⁸⁵ This cessation of the guerrilla war was an action that was welcomed overall by press who, through their war and Irish question weariness, were largely supportive of the effort being made by the government and Irish leaders to negotiate. Though the press often differed in its main contentions and priorities,

¹⁸² 'Minsters Confer on Irish Peace', *Daily Mirror*, 7 July 1921, p. 3.

¹⁸³ 'Irish Peace Hangs in the Balance', *Daily Chronicle*, 7 July 1921, p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ 'Irish Peace Efforts', *The Times*, 8 July 1921, p. 10.

¹⁸⁵ 'A Truce in Ireland', *Daily Chronicle*, 9 July 1921, p. 1.

the backlash from Black and Tans' reprisals had brought opinion together against the ill effects of violence and coercion. The failure of the government's Irish policy dictated a new approach, which this truce could help to generate.

With the truce established, de Valera agreed to confer with the Prime Minister on the basis of the proposed Peace Conference.¹⁸⁶ In response, the main press lines put forward general approval of the progress made. The *Manchester Guardian* argued the truce was the 'first solid fruit, and a most valuable one, of the Dublin Conference'.¹⁸⁷ The *Daily Express* contended that 'nothing could be more gratifying to the British people than peace with Ireland'.¹⁸⁸ The *Westminster Gazette* asserted the truce was 'an immense gain' and that 'the hope of success lies in the necessity of it. It has become imperative both for Ireland and for Great Britain that this quarrel shall cease'.¹⁸⁹ Meanwhile, Plunkett confided in his diary that he had 'no fear of the renewal of hostilities' and though there would be 'bickering' between England and Ireland, the storm 'shall pass out'.¹⁹⁰ As these press responses and sentiments from a leader who oversaw the 1917 Irish Convention reflected, the truce offered a hopeful opportunity to see settlement achieved beyond what had been previously attempted. Yet, again, the specifics of what settlement should entail were less clear.

¹⁸⁶ 'Armistice in Ireland from noon on Monday', *Daily Mirror*, 9 July 1921, p. 3.

¹⁸⁷ 'A Truce in Ireland', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 July 1921, p. 8.

¹⁸⁸ 'Is It Peace?', *Daily Express*, 9 July 1921, p. 4.

¹⁸⁹ 'The Necessity of It', *Westminster Gazette*, 9 July 1921, p. 7.

¹⁹⁰ Horace Plunkett, '11 July 1921'. *nli.ie*. HPP, NLI. 23 March 2016.

However, not all within the press approved of the truce and its implications. The partisan press once again countered its press opponents. In one article, the labour-leaning *Daily Herald* cautioned that 'a truce is not peace. And it would be a folly to rejoice prematurely'.¹⁹¹ Conversely, the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* argued that the government was 'negotiating terms at the point of a loaded pistol'.¹⁹² A subsequent article contended,

A peace is only to be desired if it secures those great ends for which Englishmen have always been ready to die... If we give the rebels anything even approximating to what they demand, how are we to prevent them from using them to our further injury?¹⁹³

These lines of argument from the government's two most vocal press opponents exposed the extent to which more remained to be considered for settlement to be achieved. The *Post's* contentions were clear in detailing the unionist aversion to engaging in *any* form of negotiation with Sinn Féin. The paper appealed to the British public's sense of national pride and questioned how peace could be achieved with rebels. It also suggested the extent to which Ulster was willing to continue to battle in the name of peace without undermining the principles of the nation. Once again, this foreshadowed the larger considerations

¹⁹¹ 'Truce', *Daily Herald*, 9 July 1921, p. 4.

¹⁹² 'Why Not?', *Morning Post*, 9 July 1921, p. 6.

¹⁹³ 'The Principles of Peace', *Morning Post*, 10 July 1921, p. 6.

for settlement. As the *Herald* had contended, it was a 'folly to rejoice prematurely' without first acknowledging these other considerations.

Meanwhile, the pragmatic *Daily Telegraph* added another element of the need for prudence with truce and argued while it offered a 'new hope... it is the manifest duty of everyone to say nothing and to do nothing which shall militate in any shape or form against its early and complete fruition'.¹⁹⁴ This argument addressed the uncertainty of the Irish situation and appealed to the general public to be considerate and mindful with its commentary to allow an atmosphere of statesmanship to prevail. The article further contended,

British people will be prepared to go far beyond what British statesmen would have thought of giving ten years ago, or even what Irish statesmen would have thought of asking. But there must be no playing with the strategic security of Great Britain, and there can be no thought of abandoning the people of the Northern Parliament of Ireland.¹⁹⁵

This argument from the *Telegraph* considered the extent to which the Irish question had evolved. It is evidence of the overall press weariness to the Irish question and the desire to see a resolution reached during the moment that had presented itself following the King's speech and the openness by both British and Irish leaders to negotiate. However, it retained the prevailing constitutional perspective of the British press by remaining firm in its tone with how far the

¹⁹⁴ 'The Irish Truce', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 July 1921, p. 10.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

concessions to Sinn Féin could go before compromising the security of the United Kingdom and the desires of the North of Ireland. The London Conference would be a test to see how far discussions could advance and what kind of concessions would be considered for settlement.

London Conference

The Irish question has, as we know, reached a more hopeful phase during the last week or two than most people would have ventured to believe during the past months... On the other hand, take the darker view, and assume that, after prolonged negotiations, no agreement can be reached, and a return has to be made to the system of arbitrary government which is foreshadowed in the Government of Ireland Act as it stands. That would mean, not merely a renewal of outrage and crime, but it would mean a definite renewal of civil war.¹⁹⁶ – Liberal politician Robert Crewe-Milnes, Lords debate

The first phase of negotiations between British and Irish leaders began at the London Conference in July 1921. Despite the Irish question having ‘reached a more hopeful phase’, as the prior press debates had indicated, questions and complications for settlement remained. This tested the limits of both the British and Irish leaders. The issues of how to bridge the divide in Irish political opinion as well as defining *what* the Irish question was and *how* to resolve it persisted. During this period the main press analysis considered the potential for the negotiations to

¹⁹⁶ HL Deb., 21 July 1921, vol., 45 cols. 1193-1211.

lead to settlement and what a successful resolution would entail with the question of Ulster dominating debate. For the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines, Ulster was again identified as the main hurdle to peace. Additionally, the British government, and particularly Lloyd George, were criticised too, including a public battle in *The Times*. The general press weariness of the Irish question required a solution and for the government to capitalise on the momentum, though solution was still undefined, and the partisan contentions remained condemning of the effort. Consequently, the press constitutional perspective and focus on achieving an amorphous settlement sustained.

In July, de Valera and the Southern envoy arrived in London to commence with negotiations to 'a demonstration of Irish national enthusiasm not previously equalled in London'.¹⁹⁷ Frances Stevenson emphasised the potential for the meeting in a diary entry in which she confided that she had never seen the Prime Minister 'so excited as he was before De Valera arrived' and that 'he had a big map of the British Empire hung up on the wall in the Cabinet room' which was meant to impress de Valera and to 'get him to recognise it and the King'.¹⁹⁸ With the meeting, the *Daily Mail* argued,

Separately, neither Ulster nor Southern Ireland can get all their own way. But let them only pool their differences and they will find the British people disposed to treat them in the most generous manner.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ 'Irish Peace Envoy in London', *Daily Chronicle*, 13 July 1921, p. 1.

¹⁹⁸ Stevenson, *Lloyd George*, pp. 227-228.

¹⁹⁹ 'Sinn Fein and Ulster', *Daily Mail*, 13 July 1921, p. 6.

Similarly, *The Times* reflected Englishmen's 'eyes are turned towards the larger hope of the future'.²⁰⁰ As these reports and contentions indicated, the stage was set for negotiations to commence. The general weariness of the Irish situation and the potential for a fresh attempt at settlement was recognised. What remained to be seen was if the 'larger hope for the future' could be achieved in this Conference.

Following the formal implementation of the truce and the start of the Conference, the issue of how to reconcile Ulster within the larger Irish question debates was made further evident in a night of violence in Belfast. The violence resulted in fourteen deaths and over 60 wounded.²⁰¹ *The Times* described the events as 'the most disastrous in the history of Belfast' for the extent of the casualties and for the area affected.²⁰² Hostilities had begun in the morning when the IRA attacked a police party, killing one constable, and wounding two others.²⁰³ The police returned fire and carried out a manhunt that extended into the evening and included fierce rioting between police and a crowd.²⁰⁴ This storm of violence differed from the relative peace that had prevailed in the South of Ireland where no shootings were reported after the truce came into operation.²⁰⁵ This violence underscored the prevalence of the divide in Irish political opinion and the still active violent dissention occurring in Ireland, particularly in or near Ulster.

²⁰⁰ 'The Path to Peace', *The Times*, 12 July 1921, p. 11.

²⁰¹ 'Big Belfast Fire', *The Times*, 12 July 1921, p. 12.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ 'Many Killed in Belfast', *The Times*, 11 July 1921, p. 12.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ 'Mr. De Valera', *Daily Mail*, 12 July 1921, p. 7.

The annual Orange celebration in Belfast on 12 July further added to the Ulster debate. At the event, Craig responded to criticism against his meeting with Lloyd George by offering a 'trilogy of reasons' including the potential for Ulster to be 'misrepresented and prejudiced', fear of foreign countries and dominions misconstruing a refusal to meet, and fear that refusal could leave the impression that Ulster had something to give away.²⁰⁶ Craig's explanation was evidence of the concerns that Ulster leadership had to contend with as negotiations and settlement were prioritised. This again underscored the need to accurately and consistently define the Irish question and to acknowledge its intricacies. The London Conference would be a test to see how far discussions could advance and what kind of concessions would be considered for the benefit of settlement and to bridge the 'differences' between Ulster and Southern Ireland that those like the *Mail* sought to overcome.

Subsequently, Ulster Cabinet leaders made their way to London in mid-July to meet with their British and Southern Irish counterparts. Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* reported 'on both sides there is a natural anxiety that the negotiations should not be endangered by premature disclosures as to the course of the conversations'.²⁰⁷ This anxiety reflected similar concerns seen during the 1917 Irish Convention where press reports were relegated to official releases from the Convention leader. Following the meeting, the pragmatic press addressed the

²⁰⁶ Special Correspondent, 'Orange Celebrations at Belfast', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 July 1921, p. 7.

²⁰⁷ 'New Turn in Irish Peace Talk', *Daily Chronicle*, 16 July 1921, p. 1.

challenges of the Conference. The *Observer* reported that the 'general feeling in political circles' was that 'the preliminaries, whilst giving rise to hope, have not yet advanced sufficiently far for immediate conference of the three parties together'.²⁰⁸ The *Daily Mirror* argued, 'The issue turns upon whether the Ulster Government will insist upon driving its powers from the Imperial parliament or from an Irish parliament sitting in Dublin'.²⁰⁹ These sentiments were reflected in the Ulster envoy's quick departure on 18 July, when the leaders defined their terms as follows: for Ulster to retain her own parliament and for Southern Ireland to come to terms with the British people.²¹⁰ The division between the Northern leaders' desires and those of the Conference were demonstrated through this brief exchange. Ulster's defined terms, much like de Valera's communication prior to the Conference, offered little by way of contributing to workable suggestions for compromise.

Following this, the *Morning Post* reported the Conference continued with Lloyd George and de Valera negotiating on the basis that Ulster be left out.²¹¹ For the unionist-leaning *Post*, this move represented a danger. The paper argued 'the only way of reaching peace with rebels and murderers is by defeating them and reducing them to submission'.²¹² This line of argument reflected the paper's overall political stance against negotiating with rebels. However, it failed to take into

²⁰⁸ 'Irish Chiefs in London', *Observer*, 17 July 1921, p. 11.

²⁰⁹ 'To-Day's Fateful Conferences on Irish Peace', *Daily Mirror*, 18 July 1921, p. 3.

²¹⁰ 'Sir J. Craig States Ulster's Terms for Peace', *Daily Mirror*, 19 July 1921, p. 3.

²¹¹ 'The True Road to Peace', *Morning Post*, 20 July 1921, p. 6.

²¹² *Ibid.*

account that by departing the Conference, Ulster leaders left the British government to deal with Sinn Féin leaders singularly. It also neglected to acknowledge the general press sentiment against the government's use of coercion and the desire for more statesmanship. Once again, the divide in Irish political opinion was underscored but no clear resolution was offered.

After these initial meetings, Lloyd George told a 20 July Cabinet meeting that after three interviews with de Valera, 'he found it difficult to say exactly where the Irish leader stood'.²¹³ Despite this, it was suggested that both de Valera and Craig would like a settlement 'but they were afraid of their supporters'.²¹⁴ The Prime Minister also discussed his warning to de Valera of the possibility of a civil war in Ireland should compromise fail with 'each part of Ireland drawing supporters from its kindred in the Dominions, so that eventually the whole Empire would be implicated'.²¹⁵ Frances Stevenson recorded the same day in her diary that Lloyd George said 'if he settles Ireland, he is prepared to go out of office... if he settles Ireland, he can go no higher, and the rest would do him good'.²¹⁶ As these reports suggested, the Irish question remained a main focus for the government, and particularly for Lloyd George. Additionally, its resolution had implications for the empire as a whole. However, the historic lack of understanding remained and threatened the prospect of settlement.

²¹³ TNA, CAB 23/26, 'Conclusions', 20 July 1921, p. 3.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²¹⁶ Stevenson, *Lloyd George*, p. 270.

On 20 July, Lloyd George personally handed de Valera the British proposal for settlement with Ireland, which established a plan to grant Ireland dominion status.²¹⁷ This proposal acknowledged the contentions made by leaders like Smuts and Churchill and marked a vast reversal in the government's Irish policy, which only a month prior had rejected such a plan. Lloyd George's new proposal expressed a 'deep desire' throughout the empire that 'violence should pass' and 'a solution should be found', allowing Ireland to be a 'willing partner in the British Commonwealth'.²¹⁸ The offer invited 'Ireland to take her place in the great association of free nations over which His Majesty-reigns'.²¹⁹ Safety and imperial initiatives were a driving force as the government sought to find a solution that would have Ireland contentedly fit within the empire. Though the press, to a small extent, had considered dominion status, including in a July 1920 article by the *Daily Mail*, how it could be implemented was overlooked in the debates. With this new proposal, the government made a plain statement to their desire to work a permanent settlement with Ireland.

The London Conference came to a close on 22 July when the Sinn Féin leaders returned to Ireland with the British proposal in hand.²²⁰ A political correspondent for Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* reported,

²¹⁷ TNA, CAB 24/128, 'Proposals of the British Government for an Irish Settlement', 20 July 1921, p. 8.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²²⁰ Political Correspondent, 'Cabinet's Plan for Irish Peace', *Daily Chronicle*, 22 July 1921, p. 1.

No “offer” has been made; but if South and North Ireland make the same request, through the machinery of the existing Act, the Government, by means of an amending Act, will grant Dominion Government (on the South African plan) to both North and South. There is one restriction: Owing to the close position of Ireland geographically and additional Imperial safeguard is required. All military establishments in Ireland must be Imperial (following the Canadian plan after 1817). The police would be under Irish control.²²¹

This report from the Prime Minister’s paper provided the public evidence of the potential settlement with Ireland, which situated Ireland among the other British dominions. Since the Conference left little by way of official reports, this article would have presented the general public with a report of the progress of the first round of negotiations and the opportunities being considered. It marked a determined effort by the government to consider a new approach to resolving the Irish question and to attempt to address and appease the political divide in Irish opinion.

Following the news of the proposal, the settlement-focused press put forward general approval of the opportunity. In one article, a political correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* argued the Conference represented ‘a much farther stage on the way to peace in Ireland than has yet been supposed’.²²² Similarly, one article in *The Times* argued that while the opposition to the

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Political Correspondent, ‘Government’s Offer of Dominion Status to Ireland’, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 July 1921, p. 7.

government was 'not to be underestimated', the relief of a settlement with Sinn Féin 'would sweep the opposition aside and give the Government overwhelming authority to conclude the arrangement'.²²³ Nonetheless, the pragmatic *Observer* reminded, 'Ireland remains the question of all questions'.²²⁴ Although the new proposal offered the potential for settlement to be achieved, as the previous press reports and prevailing constitutional perspective of the press had indicated, *how* to best resolve the Irish question was not clear.

One of the main debates that continued to be a divisive topic for the press after the London Conference's conclusion was the role of Irish leaders in seeing settlement achieved. For the settlement-focused press, Ulster continued to hold a defining role. In one article *The Times* contended, 'If the new hope of peace be shattered upon the Ulster question, an appalling situation may arise'.²²⁵ Conversely, the pragmatic *Observer* focused on the role of Sinn Féin leaders and in one article asserted de Valera had the terms from the government and,

With them lies the solemn responsibility of determining whether Ireland shall continue to be a disrupted and anarchic country... or whether its warring sections shall be firmly linked at last in the only manner that can lead gradually from equal co-operation to full national unity... The less Ulster feels constrained or dominated, the more it will actually give.²²⁶

²²³ 'New Offer To Sinn Fein', *The Times*, 22 July 1922, p. 10.

²²⁴ 'Firm Hope for Irish Peace', *Observer*, 24 July 1921, p. 10.

²²⁵ 'Ireland's Hour', *The Times*, 23 July 1921, p. 11.

²²⁶ 'Firm Hope for Irish Peace', *Observer*.

As these articles indicated, the constitutional perspective and determination to secure settlement sustained despite the fact that defining the Irish question remained debatable. What was apparent was that settlement would ultimately require compromise. This had been generally touched on by the press and was developed further with the cross over in reporting seen as the main press lines more consistently backed popular appeals (particularly following the King's speech) championing settlement and an end to violence.

With the proposal offer extended, the *Westminster Gazette* summarised the Irish situation with a cartoon that familiarly featured Lloyd George as Alice from Alice in Wonderland. The cartoon featured the Prime Minister in a game of croquet with de Valera and Sinn Féin as a flamingo mallet and Craig and Ulster as a hedgehog ball.²²⁷ This cartoon was a direct link to the paper's June 1920 cartoon, which had then depicted Lloyd George with an Ireland mallet and a Home Rule ball.²²⁸ This revised version offered a similar commentary on the Irish situation and once again put forward criticism of the juvenile manner in which the government attempted to solve the complex Irish problem. The addition of the Irish leaders exhibited the advancement of the Irish question debates and offered a satirical visual of the negotiations process but remained unclear in identifying who was most responsible for seeing resolution made possible. Instead, the split in Irish political opinion was emphasised.

²²⁷ FCG, 'The Irish Problem', *Westminster Gazette*, 25 July 1921, p. 1.

²²⁸ FCG, 'Irish Croquet', *Westminster Gazette*, 21 June 1920, p. 1.



'The Irish Problem', *Westminster Gazette*, 25 July 1921, p. 1.
Caption: '(With apologies to Alice.)'

As the press debates sustained, the *Times*' proprietor Lord Northcliffe was involved in a couple of public quarrels with the government including a potentially serious accusation that involved the King. Northcliffe's outward expression of criticism via his papers, which had been on the rise since 1920, came to a head when in late July *The Times* featured an open letter from Northcliffe in which he lamented his frustration with the government and the 'monthly attacks on *The*

Times' by Lloyd George.²²⁹ He additionally criticised the Foreign Office's communication to the press, which he argued 'as a rule shows singular lack of accuracy'.²³⁰ These arguments could have been an indication of the government attempting to control the information released to the public, whether to safeguard the negotiations process, or to attempt to popularly sway the public in support of their proposal. Keeping in mind the growing power of the press and the influence it had in shaping opinion and understanding, it would not be surprising for the government to desire to maintain a positive image, especially during the formative Irish negotiations.

Not long after the release of his critical letter, Northcliffe also found himself in the middle of a scandal that was reported on in all newspapers when, in late July, Lloyd George accused him of misrepresenting the King's words in an interview featured in an American news source.²³¹ Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* reported Northcliffe disclosed a supposed conversation between the Prime Minister and the King in which the King asked:

"Are you going to shoot all the people in Ireland?"

"No, your Majesty," the Premier replied.

"Well, then," said King George, "you must come to some agreement with them. This thing cannot go on. I cannot have my people killed in this manner."²³²

²²⁹ 'The Government and 'The Times'', *The Times*, 20 July 1921, p. 10.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ 'The King and Ireland', *The Times*, 30 July 1921, p. 10.

²³² 'The King's Denial of a Grave Statement', *Daily Chronicle*, 30 July 1921, p. 1.

Following the article's release, the King described the statements as 'a complete fabrication' and Lord Northcliffe claimed he 'gave no such interview'.²³³ In the Commons, Lloyd George declared the statements could 'prejudice seriously the chances of an Irish settlement'.²³⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* questioned whether the interview was 'an invention and that Lord Northcliffe is the victim of a wicked newspaper hoax?'²³⁵ The controversy was swiftly resolved, as the King accepted Northcliffe's denial of having given the interview and news of it quickly dissipated from headlines. Despite this, the incident offers a glimpse into the importance of the government's concern with avoiding obstacles that could hinder the settlement prospect with Ireland. The incident was reminiscent of the interview Lord French gave in April 1920, in which he quickly denied comments attributed to him with regard to Sinn Féin. Once more, the power of the press and of rhetoric was confirmed and a potentially harmful situation diffused.

As the previous month's press debates had exhibited, the continued endeavour to understand the Irish situation and the general desire to see a resolution achieved despite the hurdles that complicated the efforts remained. However, once again, what resolution should entail or how it should be implemented remained unclear. To this end, the government's proposal to the Irish leaders would continue to be debated as the press, public, and government awaited the Irish responses.

²³³ 'The King and Ireland', *The Times*, 30 July 1921, p. 10.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ 'The Northcliffe Interview', *Manchester Guardian*, 30 July 1921, p. 8.

Transitioning

I cannot see that there is any valid reason why any noble Lord should grudge the days which are given to the attempt to see whether a solution can be reached—days which are, happily, free from those outrages which have distressed your Lordships and alarmed and distressed the whole country.²³⁶ – Conservative MP and newspaper proprietor Lord Birkenhead, Lords debate

July ended with the Irish leaders considering their options and determining their responses to the British government's proposed offer. In a letter to Lloyd George on 29 July, Craig wrote the proposal for an Irish settlement had been 'exhaustively examined' by the Ulster leadership and that 'much against our wish, but in the interest of peace, we accept this as a final settlement of the long-outstanding difficulty with which Great Britain has been confronted'.²³⁷ He further added that in the interest of peace, Ulster 'decline to determine or interfere with the set terms of settlement between Great Britain and Southern Ireland'.²³⁸ To this he added, 'It cannot then be said, "Ulster blocks the way"'.²³⁹

With his response, Craig confirmed Ulster's willingness to participate in the government's proposal. He likewise confronted the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines' arguments that had accused Ulster of blocking the way to solution. Rather, the potential for moving beyond the outrages that had 'distressed

²³⁶ HL Deb., 27 July 1921, vol. 43, cols. 33-9.

²³⁷ TNA, CAB 24/128, 'Letter from Sir James Craig to the Prime Minister', 29 July 1921, p. 11.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

the whole country' was suggested. Yet, despite this concession by the Northern leaders, Thomas Jones recorded in his diary a letter by former unionist leader Bonar Law who argued,

The real difficulty of the Irish business will prove now as always in the past, to be Ulster. I greatly fear that De Valera will find it impossible to treat Ulster as entirely outside his sphere and on the other hand I am sure that no settlement can be carried in England which imposes anything on the new Ulster Parliament which they do not freely accept.²⁴⁰

Law's reflection encapsulated the main issues at stake with an Irish settlement. As the progression of the Irish question debates had indicated, much remained to be negotiated before settlement could be achieved. However, the desire put forward within the settlement-focused, pragmatic, and government-loyal press lines to see a resolution enacted prevailed. This was particularly true as outside considerations, including the threat of violence, the impact of negative international opinion, and the fear of failure were considered. Yet with this, the partisan press sustained their individual contentions against the negotiations and the historic misunderstanding and difficulty of defining and understanding the Irish question was still very much present. Therefore, the Irish problem remained on the precipice of resolution as a new set of negotiations commenced. The press

²⁴⁰ Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, p. 91.

understanding and debate on the Irish question would continue to develop when negotiations resumed in August.

Chapter 5: The ‘elements of a solution are there’ - Treaty, 1921-22

One thing we can always say about Irish affairs is that the unexpected is what happens.¹ – The Marquess of Crewe, Lords debate

By July 1921, an advancement of a potential settlement to the Irish question that surpassed previous British government efforts was in process. The general compliance with the truce terms outside of Belfast coupled with the Ulster leadership’s acceptance of the government’s proposal left a resolution to the age-old Irish question within reach. Despite this and the generally expressed desire for settlement, more remained to be negotiated and accomplished before final agreement was achieved. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1921 a second round of negotiations began in which the issues of understanding and acknowledging the priorities and aspirations of the divided Irish political opinion were again confronted.

During this period, the press commentary developed as fear of failing to achieve resolution was considered. Yet this critical analysis once more reflected an overall pressing desire for settlement, though still undefined, and sustained weariness of violence. The partisan press remained the exception to this, further underscoring how the Irish question was understood in conflicting manners with a

¹ HL Deb., 2 August 1921, vol. 43, cols. 89-126.

large majority desiring a settlement at any cost and willing to consider half measures and the partisan press unwilling to sacrifice the causes for which they stood, unionism and nationalism respectively.

As a result of the autumn negotiations, settlement was officially achieved in December 1921 with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. From the British perspective, the Irish question was considered to be resolved though there admittedly remained some formidable obstacles to be addressed. Following the Treaty's signing, the British press, with the exception of the *Morning Post*, expressed general satisfaction with the resolution but remained cognisant of the challenges that Ireland faced as the two parliaments transitioned into their working roles. With transition, subsequent press reporting and critical analysis of the Irish situation steadily lessened. The exception was the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* who remained active in its criticism and reporting, particularly with the Treaty's ambiguous treatment of the Ulster border.

This chapter examines the progression of the Irish question from the resumed negotiations, to the Treaty, and the immediate post-Treaty period. It continues the analysis of the evolution of British press opinion and understanding of the Anglo-Irish relationship. The chapter examines what information from the negotiations was conveyed to the press and how the commentary and critical analysis developed. The main question it explores is whether the Irish question was considered to be resolved with the Treaty?

Negotiations Resumed

[O]ne may say truthfully that we sit, so to speak, in a theatre, in which, in the stalls and in the pit, are ranged the whole of the subjects of His Majesty the King, in every part of the world.² – Conservative MP George Curzon, Lords debate

The July 1921 truce was crucial for promoting a second round of negotiations between British and Irish leaders in the summer and autumn of 1921. During this period, the unresolved status of the Irish question continued to be a source of concern for the press and government. The divide in Irish political opinion was viewed critically but from a constitutional political perspective, underscoring once more the neglect to differentiate and understand Irish opinion. The period saw critical assessment of the negotiations process persist within the press with debate primarily centred on the opportunity for settlement. The exception was the unionist-leaning *Morning Post*, which sustained its criticism against negotiating with Sinn Féin. The ‘theatre’ in which ‘the whole of the subjects of His Majesty the King, in every part of the world’ were arranged meant the Irish question remained an international topic that had repercussions for Britain beyond the domestic issue the government had long categorised it as.

As August began, Chief Secretary Greenwood wrote a memorandum that detailed the truce arrangements were ‘working smoothly and satisfactorily’ and allegations from London press ‘to the effect that the occasion is being seized by

² HL Deb., 19 August 1921, vol. 43, cols. 999-1024.

Sinn Fein... are not borne out by the reports of responsible police officers'.³ This recognition and denouncement of negative press from, what can be assumed from prior news reports included the unionist-leaning *Morning Post*, was evidence of how the government observed the press and was aware of its potential to negatively influence the negotiations. As a parliamentary correspondent for *The Times* argued, the respite from the 'military era' in Ireland encouraged a 'peaceful spirit' favourable to 'making a lasting settlement'.⁴

While Sinn Féin leaders considered the government's proposal for settlement, in early August General Smuts wrote to de Valera promoting the need for compromise. He cautioned against Sinn Féin's demand for Ulster to come into the Free State (the proposed dominion that would join the British Commonwealth of Nations) arguing that 'Ulster will not agree, she cannot be forced, and any solution on those lines is at present foredoomed to failure'.⁵ This argument was perceptive of Ulster's priorities and addressed one of the main hurdles of settlement. Smuts likewise acknowledged international opinion by positing,

For Irishmen to say to the world that they will not be satisfied with the status of the great British Dominions would be to alienate all that sympathy which has so far been the main support of the Irish cause.⁶

³ TNA, CAB 24/127, 'Weekly Survey of the State of Ireland', 6 August 1921, p. 2.

⁴ Parliamentary Correspondent, 'Sinn Fein Parley With Ulster', *The Times*, 3 August 1921, p. 8.

⁵ TNA, CAB 24/128, 'Letter from General Smuts to Mr. de Valera', 4 August 1921, p. 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

A dominion solution was preferred by Smuts and his colleagues, as evidence in the June 1921 Imperial Conference, as well as through Smuts' meetings with Lloyd George. At that time, Lloyd George had been reluctant to proceed on such a line but the Irish situation had changed following truce. As Smuts concluded, the truce had assisted with creating 'a new political situation' and it was time for a 'fresh start'.⁷

One example of the shift in the government's Irish policy was how it handled Sinn Féin's request to release imprisoned members of the Dáil. Though the government did not officially recognise the Dáil as a political entity, the release of thirty-four Sinn Féin prisoners was granted with the exception of Seán Mac Eoin who had been convicted of murder.⁸ This release addressed one of the top considerations for Sinn Féin leaders for entering settlement negotiations. Lord Chancellor Birkenhead justified the decision in a Lords debate in which he argued the release had been sanctioned to allow discussions to begin between the government 'and the men who derive their strength from the only body of representatives who can claim any constitutional contact with the electors of Southern Ireland'.⁹ Mac Eoin was subsequently released as well following 'a most difficult situation' of public outcry.¹⁰ Greenwood said the move resulted in better 'text for more amicable reference to Britain and to its conduct of Irish affairs'.¹¹

⁷ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁸ 'Irish Truce in Peril', *Daily Herald*, 8 August 1921, p. 1.

⁹ HL Deb., 10 August 1921, vol. 43, cols. 356-68.

¹⁰ TNA, CAB 21/127, 'Weekly Survey of the State of Ireland', 12 August 1921, p. 2.

¹¹ Ibid.

These concessions from the government prioritised negotiation, acknowledged a Sinn Féin demand, and gave credence to the general desire to pursue an Irish settlement. It likewise recognised the role of the press in promoting ‘amicable reference to Britain’ in reporting on the negotiations.

However, not all were supportive of the government’s gesture. The unionist-leaning *Morning Post* was unsurprisingly critical of the move. In one article it argued,

[A]t a stroke they have forfeited all such advantages of the position as they could still command. In releasing unconditionally the incarcerated members of Dail Eireann... they have undone the work of two years of fighting and contriving.¹²

This argument reflected the well-developed tone of the newspaper, finding fault with compromising and negotiating with Sinn Féin. The extent to which the move was advantageous for the government could be further scrutinised after de Valera rejected the government’s offer of dominion status and demanded a complete separation of Ireland from the empire.¹³ To this, Lloyd George responded: ‘No British Government can compromise on the claim that we should acknowledge the right of Ireland to secede from her allegiance to the King’.¹⁴ Ultimately, the decision

¹² ‘Eating Dirt’, *Morning Post*, 9 August 1921, p. 4.

¹³ ‘De Valera Rejects Government Peace Terms’, *Daily Mirror*, 15 August 1921, p. 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

to continue to negotiate was up to the Dáil, which the *Daily Mirror* suggested meant 'hope is not abandoned'.¹⁵

As a result of the prisoner release and de Valera's response, the press reflected on the significance of the Dáil's decision to continue with negotiations. The settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines were particularly cognisant of the turn the negotiations had taken. In one article the *Observer* contended,

It is no exaggeration to say that the whole worlds affairs, as well as the future of the United Kingdom and the British Empire, may be profoundly and irrevocably influenced by the decisions in Dublin... From the beginning, and week after week, we have warned our readers that the Irish negotiations were bound to come to the very edge of shipwreck before they could have a real chance to succeed.¹⁶

This contention was in line with the paper's established cautious tone, reassuring the public that hardships in the negotiation were natural. However, as the overall argument suggested, the significance of the negotiations and the impact of the Dáil's decision had ramifications beyond Britain.

The *Westminster Gazette* also reflected on the wider implications of the Dáil's decision. In one article it contended the 'strength of the Irish cause has been in the wide sympathy which is has gathered to itself in all parts of the world' and to

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 'Ireland's Peril and Hope', *Observer*, 14 August 1921, p. 8.

‘alienate that sympathy... would be a supreme folly’.¹⁷ Another article advanced this argument further contending,

English newspapers trying to instruct Sinn Fein what it shall do are likely to do far more harm than good, but they may at least try to explain to Irishmen certain very material facts about the state of opinion in England. The first of these is that a refusal to deal on the terms now offered would absolutely disarm the friends of Ireland in Great Britain.¹⁸

Similar to the article from the *Observer*, these arguments from the *Gazette* addressed the perceived importance of resolving the Irish question. They emphasised the Dáil’s decision as well as the potential repercussions from their ruling. They also supported Smuts’ advice to de Valera and served as a warning to the Irish leaders to carefully consider the opportunity and the value of maintaining favourable opinion in Britain and beyond. Combined, these arguments indicated a desire to see the negotiations process maintained despite adversity. They also revealed a better understanding of the divide in Irish political opinion between Sinn Féin demands and Ulster.

Despite the general desire for settlement put forward, the press remained split in who was most responsible for seeing compromise achieved. The *Daily Express* pinned blame on de Valera in one cartoon entitled ‘chasing the shadow and

¹⁷ ‘Ireland and the Crisis’, *Westminster Gazette*, 15 August 1921, p. 7.

¹⁸ ‘Some Facts for the Irish’, *Westminster Gazette*, 16 August 1921, p. 7.

missing the substance'.¹⁹ The cartoon depicted de Valera pursuing the shadow of 'separation' with Lloyd George looking on in disbelief next to his 'dominion status' cart with 'peace', 'prosperity', and '£.s.d' cargo.²⁰ The cartoon characterised de Valera's demand of 'separation' as elusive. It reflected the paper's government-loyal tone, suggesting the government's offer of dominion status entailed many benefits for Ireland. To this end, blame was focused on de Valera's idealised terms, which arguably jeopardised settlement.

¹⁹ 'Chasing the Shadow of the Missing Substance', *Daily Express*, 16 August 1921, p. 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*



'Chasing the Shadow of the Missing Substance', *Daily Express*, 16 August 1921, p. 4.

The settlement-focused *Manchester Guardian* offered a different perspective of the Irish situation by instead considering the Irish psyche. In one article it argued the country was 'haunted by shadows that make minds suspicious and bitter' and by 'the horrific memories of the martyrs of yesterday'.²¹ This contention recalled the events of the Rising and the contentions made then by *The Times* who had argued that a 'legend' had developed in Ireland of 'harmless

²¹ 'Ireland's Opportunity', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 August 1921, p. 6.

idealists' who were 'butchered in cold blood'.²² The *Guardian's* article further contended Sinn Féin was 'wrong in believing that Ulster will come to terms with an independent Ireland' but that partition 'was an act of violence' that could be undone 'by an act of magnanimity'.²³ These contentions acknowledged the historic context of the Anglo-Irish relationship and gave emphasis, much like the *Express* had, to Sinn Féin leaders to secure a resolution through compromise. It likewise revealed the extent to which understanding of Ulster's demands had advanced as settlement for the Irish question was debated and more culpability for Sinn Féin was once more put forward as fear of failing to achieve settlement was considered.

Conversely, the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* maintained its criticism of the perceived liberty of Sinn Féin to engage in acts of war against British forces in Ireland and of the failure of the press and public to condemn them. One article argued,

The facts of the murder campaign have been suppressed or glossed over, and the impression has been carefully produced that the English people are really on the side of Sinn Fein. At the same time the forces of the Crown in Ireland have been cruelly and systematically slandered. We ourselves are of the opinion that at no other time has the truth been so systematically suppressed and the public so wantonly deceived since the Press gained its freedom.²⁴

²² 'Mr. Asquith's Task in Ireland', *The Times*, 22 May 1916, p. 9.

²³ 'Ireland's Opportunity', *Manchester Guardian*.

²⁴ 'What Next?', *Morning Post*, 15 August 1921, p. 4.

Another article from the *Post* took this line further contending that although the press 'has so unflinchingly played the game of Sinn Féin, Sinn Féin refuses to play the game' of the press.²⁵ The article added despite the government's generous proposal that had 'stunned the civilized world', the offer was 'flung back contemptuously'.²⁶ This sentiment recalled the arguments made in the paper's July article 'Eating Dirt', in which Sinn Féin's rejection of an offer to meet for negotiations with British leaders was condemned.²⁷ These articles supported the paper's overall tone of criticism against Sinn Féin as well as British leaders for failing to acknowledge the perceived folly of negotiating with rebels. It likewise emphasised that more awareness of Ulster's demands and considerations was needed. The press ability, whether perceived or real, to potentially draw sympathy for Sinn Féin and its role in shaping opinion and the British understanding of the Irish question was underscored, giving further support to the role that the press played in British society.

As the press debates exhibited, defining *what* the Irish question was and *how* to resolve it remained unclear. However, the press did coalesce with acknowledging concern of maintaining favourable international opinion, which had been put forward during the period after the First World War. The reports revealed the extent to which international opinion desired for Sinn Féin leaders to accept the government's proposal. As the *Daily Mail* reported,

²⁵ 'The End of Illusion', *Morning Post*, 17 August 1921, p. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ 'Eating Dirt', *Morning Post*, 5 July 1921, p. 6.

[I]n a week external opinion on the relations of Ireland and England has completely changed. This single act has won the world's approval... America's succinct advice to Sinn Fein is "settle."²⁸

The *Daily Herald* likewise added that dominion feeling was 'in favour of an immediate settlement'.²⁹ It argued though Sinn Féin had 'always appealed to the verdict of the world', failure to see settlement reached would mean the loss of support 'by a point-blank negative to the British Government'.³⁰ The *Daily Telegraph* similarly argued that 'the Dominions and the United States are convinced that Ireland can ask no more'.³¹ These concerns were also supported by the argument that Smuts had made to de Valera earlier in the month by addressing the global impact of the unresolved Irish situation.

Even with the press reports of international opinion desiring settlement, in late August, the Dáil reaffirmed de Valera's tone by rejecting the government's proposal. The *Daily Express* reported the response had raised the 'clear-cut issue of the "essential unity" of Ireland, and seeks to throw on the Government the responsibility of bringing Ulster into an All Ireland scheme'.³² It argued, 'although the reply makes the situation more difficult, it does not blot the door against

²⁸ 'Ireland', *Daily Mail*, 20 August 1921, p. 4.

²⁹ 'Crucial Day for Ireland', *Daily Herald*, 22 August 1921, p. 1.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² 'De Valera Wants Ulster', *Daily Express*, 26 August 1921, p. 1.

further negotiation'.³³ Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* validated this statement by detailing de Valera's apparent willingness to 'negotiate on the basis of an independent Ireland owning no allegiance to Britain'.³⁴ Lloyd George responded: 'the civilised world has approved of the proposals as the utmost the Empire can reasonably offer or Ireland reasonably expect'.³⁵ The *Express* contended that both responses appeared to 'suggest further negotiations' and that there was 'still hope that means will be found of reconciling what appear at present to be entirely contrary views'.³⁶ The *Westminster Gazette* similarly argued the situation was 'not unhopeful' and if 'rightly handled' could lead to peace.³⁷ As these articles indicated, the press remained committed to the possibility of resolving the Irish question via British constitutional politics despite the fact that more needed to be considered and negotiated.

Following the Dáil's decision, the press generally put forward more criticism of de Valera and his role in reaching settlement. The *Manchester Guardian* contended that de Valera needed 'the sense of responsibility proper to the statesman who has to deal with a great historical problem going down the roots of the national life of two neighbouring States'.³⁸ The paper also featured a letter to the editor that appealed to the leaders of Sinn Féin reminding them of 'British loyalties' and urging them to not insist on policy that would 'alienate ninety per

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ 'Premier's Answer to De Valera', *Daily Chronicle*, 27 August 1921, p. 1.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ 'Premier's Reply to Sinn Fein "No."', *Daily Express*, 27 August 1921, p. 1.

³⁷ 'No Insuperable Difficulty', *Westminster Gazette*, 27 August 1921, p. 1.

³⁸ 'A Fresh Start Needed', *Manchester Guardian*, 29 August 1921, p. 4.

cent of the British people' and make settlement 'impossible'.³⁹ Similarly, the *Observer* argued, 'Without reciprocity from Sinn Fein there will never in all the years be reciprocity from Ulster'.⁴⁰

While focused on resolution, these arguments progressed the increased criticism for Irish leaders' role in settlement seen in the 1920 Home Rule debates. Yet, unlike previous debates, they focused on de Valera rather than Ulster. This shift in blame was a symptom of the press focus on the constitutional aspects of the Anglo-Irish relationship and overwhelming desire for settlement despite conflicting Irish political opinion. It was also representative of the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines' backing of popular policy and sentiments that supported settlement efforts.

With the press debates in mind, September began with a sign of compromise with the Dáil's agreement to a further conference in London.⁴¹ However, the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* advanced its criticism against its press competitors by arguing to how Sinn Féin's 'position is eagerly swallowed by some British newspapers'.⁴² It further warned the British public,

[T]hat the wild, murderous doings in Belfast are no more than an indication of what will happen – what the rebels have resolved shall happen – if the Government continue to pander to them.⁴³

³⁹ 'The Irish Problem', *Manchester Guardian*, 1 September 1921, p. 6.

⁴⁰ 'The Crux of the Irish Problem', *Observer*, 28 August 1921, p. 10.

⁴¹ TNA, CAB 24/128, 'Reply Received from Mr. de Valera', 30 August 1921, p. 21.

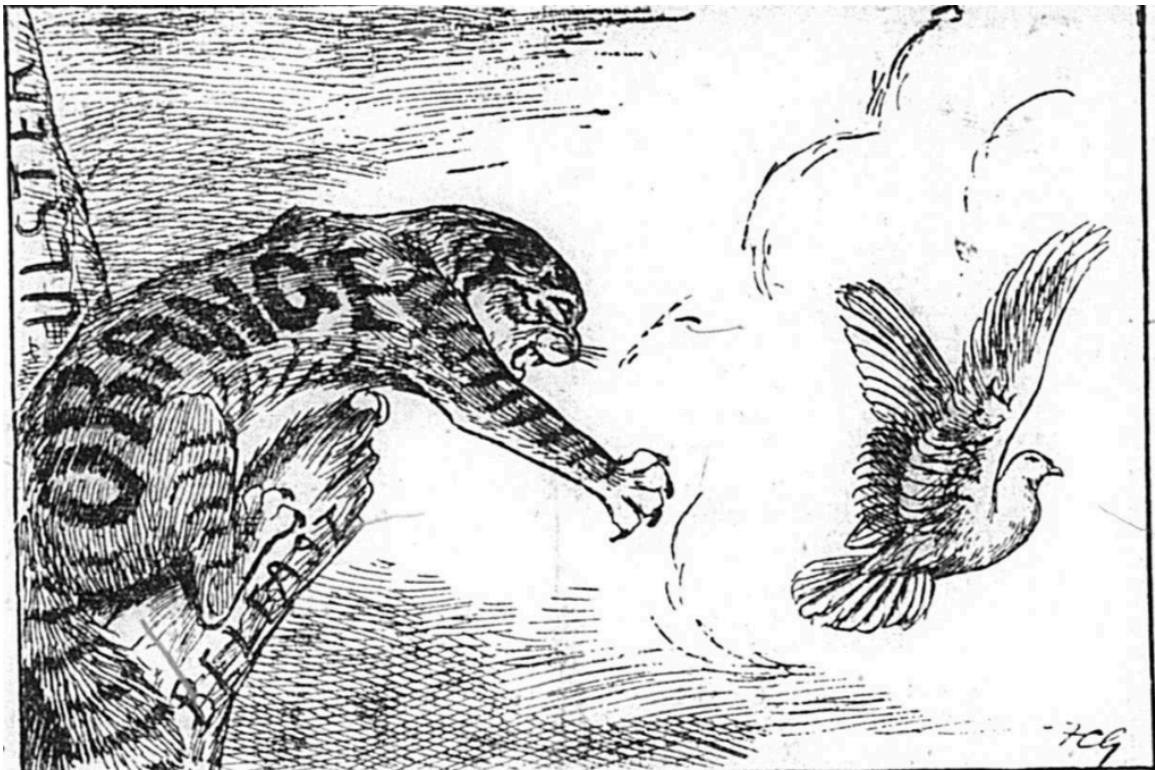
⁴² 'The Attack on Ulster', *Morning Post*, 1 September 1921, p. 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

These arguments from the *Post* disputed, once more, the consequences of Sinn Féin's freedom and the government's willingness to negotiate with them. They also suggest the extent to which reprisals were still a concern for Ulster. Although the truce had seen Ireland in a relative state of peace during the negotiations, the exception was Belfast and the North, which witnessed more consistent violence. To this end, it could be argued that the persistent violence in the North necessitated a need for settlement. The Dáil's acceptance to further conference was a step to potential settlement but also meant that the conflicting desires of Ulster and of Sinn Féin would continue to be scrutinised.

The divide in Irish political opinion was further addressed in a cartoon from the *Westminster Gazette*. The cartoon contrasted the views of the *Morning Post* and instead abided by the oft-cited settlement-focused criticism against the perceived reluctance of Northern statesmen to pursue peace. The cartoon depicted unionists as a fierce tiger sitting on a tree with 'Belfast' and 'Ulster' branches, swatting away the peace dove with its claws out and teeth snarled.⁴⁴ The cartoon's title, 'The Wild Cat and the Dove', suggested unionists were unruly and adverse to peace. This cartoon represented a reversal of the blame placed on de Valera seen by other settlement-focused and pragmatic press outlets following the Dáil's decision and re-focused on Ulster's role in settlement, emphasising the overall desire for compromise.

⁴⁴ 'The Wild Cat and the Dove', *Westminster Gazette*, 5 September 1921, p. 1.



'The Wild Cat and the Dove', *Westminster Gazette*, 5 September 1921, p. 1.

Conversely, the government-loyal *Daily Mail* addressed a different barrier to peace in a cartoon of its own. The cartoon featured de Valera standing next to the open door to 'government by consent of the governed' leading to 'freedom's path'.⁴⁵ The cartoon's caption argued the principle of 'Government by consent of the governed' had 'already been abundantly granted by the Government's offer'.⁴⁶ This depiction of de Valera portrayed reluctance to pursue resolution and suggested an ability to reject peace. Comparatively, both this and the *Gazette's* cartoon featured characterisations of influential Irish groups or leaders who were perceived to be obstacles to peace. These cartoons exemplified the divide in Irish

⁴⁵ 'Ha! Locked!!!', *Daily Mail*, 6 September 1921, p. 8.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

political opinion as well as the still present press neglect to consistently define *what* the Irish question was, and its nuances, and *who* was responsible for its resolution. The two examples were in line with the political stances of their respective newspapers and, though differing in tone, promoted the similar cause of an Irish settlement as the main goal.



'Ha! Locked!!!', *Daily Mail*, 6 September 1921, p. 8.

Caption: 'De Valera contends for "Government by consent of the governed," although this principle has already been abundantly granted in the Government's offer.'

As the press, with the exception of the *Morning Post*, continued to promote the desire for further negotiation, the British government extended an invitation to the Dáil to appoint plenipotentiaries to meet in London on 20 September with 'the essential condition being that Ireland must remain within the Empire'.⁴⁷ De Valera responded the Dáil had 'no hesitation' in entering a conference.⁴⁸ Following news of the conference, the *Daily Herald* argued, 'The business of English people is to insist that England shall recognise the principles of liberty and justice'.⁴⁹ The article further argued 'to try to force Ireland in is to force Ireland out' and the alternative would signify the continuation of 'a nation dominating another by physical force'.⁵⁰ The article boldly concluded,

Every single man and woman who fails to raise a voice in these critical hours against the British attitude and the implied British threat will be guilty of murder – deliberate, cold-blooded murder.⁵¹

These contentions from the *Herald* were reflective of the paper's overall political stance, which was critical of the British presence in Ireland. It also acknowledged the folly of applying force in Ireland, which was proven to be unsustainable and unpopular. Instead, a call to 'English people' to advocate peace and to support settlement was made. Yet, what form the settlement should take

⁴⁷ 'Cabinet's Reply to Sinn Fein', *Daily Chronicle*, 8 September 1921, p. 1.

⁴⁸ TNA, CAB 24/128, 'Reply Received from Mr. de Valera', 12 September 1921, p. 23.

⁴⁹ 'Ireland', *Daily Herald*, 9 September 1921, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

was again not clearly defined, which was representative of the overall press commitment to a constitutional perspective and neglect to suggest tangible recommendations or alternatives to the government's Irish policy.

In contrast, *The Times* took a less acrimonious tone and instead defended the British position arguing,

Once this country is satisfied that its own safety and the safety of the Empire have been secured, it will not stand upon points of punctilio. Irishmen may not yet appreciate the underlying reason of this generous mood. It is not the result of weariness at the prolongation of conflict in Ireland, nor of any sudden conversion to the justice of the Sinn Fein cause. It arises rather from the fact that the political instinct of Englishmen has told them that there is a real possibility of friendship and understanding between the two countries.⁵²

This tone from *The Times* struck against the criticism expressed by the *Herald* by instead attributing the offer of peace as a natural outcome of a judicious society. However, this argument did not accurately represent the current situation in Ireland or the historic Anglo-Irish relationship. As indicated, British press opinion evolved with the advancement of the political situation in Ireland, with criticism spiking in response to violence. The opinions expressed post-war and through the surges of violence suggest there was weariness of the Irish situation and the press understanding of the Irish question was unclear and fluctuated. Therefore, this

⁵² 'The Offer to Ireland', *The Times*, 9 September 1921, p. 9.

argument was too idealised and perhaps an example of England's 'short term memory' with the Irish situation that had been suggested by the *Manchester Guardian* in August.

The complications of settlement were once more addressed when Lloyd George cancelled the September conference after de Valera published a letter that stated he could only negotiate as 'the representative of an independent and sovereign State'.⁵³ The cancellation was followed by a series of telegram exchanges between Lloyd George and de Valera. In one telegram Lloyd George wrote the concessions made by the government had not been met by de Valera.⁵⁴ Another telegram argued the government could not 'consent to any abandonment, however informal, of the principle of allegiance to the King, upon which the whole fabric of the Empire and every Constitution within it are based'.⁵⁵ A subsequent telegram by de Valera argued the exchanges made 'it clear that misunderstandings are more likely to increase than to diminish, and the cause of peace more likely to be retarded than advanced by a continuance of the present correspondence'.⁵⁶ These exchanges were an indication of the main considerations and issues for the government and for Sinn Féin as resolution was contemplated and negotiations were left in a state of uncertainty.

⁵³ 'Premier Cancels the Irish Peace Conference', *Daily Mirror*, 16 September 1921, p. 3.

⁵⁴ TNA, 24/128, 'The Prime Minister's Reply to de Valera's Letter', 15 September 1921, p. 24.

⁵⁵ TNA, 24/128. 'The Prime Minister's Reply to Mr. de Valera's letter', 17 September 1921, p. 25.

⁵⁶ TNA, 24/128, 'Reply Received from Mr. de Valera', 19 September 1921, p. 26.

The exchange of telegrams prompted two strands of questioning within the press. The first, led by the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines, questioned de Valera and his colleagues' intentions. The *Westminster Gazette* contended 'the cause of Ireland transcends in importance the dignity of an individual, and should not be sacrificed by inept negotiation'.⁵⁷ The *Daily Mirror* argued 'these telegrams backwards and forwards across the Irish Sea cannot go on forever' and added 'the sands are running out. Will the Sinn Fein amateur politicians pause while there is yet time?'⁵⁸ These sentiments suggested weariness of the Irish question and desire to see more effort pursued for a conference. They once more put specific emphasis on Sinn Féin to take advantage of the offer by the government to negotiate, reversing the *Gazette's* earlier September focus on Ulster. This indicates, once more, the overwhelming commitment to seeing settlement achieved pursued by the press and a neglect to consistently define the Irish question.

The second strand of press questioning resulting from the telegrams addressed the government's intentions and scrutinised its actions in negotiating. In one article the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* contended that unionists,

[M]ust insist upon a return to the old and true policy in Ireland, and must choose for themselves leaders who will be faithful to that cause. Otherwise we are only winning a move in a losing game.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ 'Reopening the Door to Conference', *Westminster Gazette*, 17 September 1921, p. 7.

⁵⁸ 'On the Brink', *Daily Mirror*, 19 September 1921, p. 5.

⁵⁹ 'Moves in the Game', *Morning Post*, 19 September 1921, p. 6.

This sentiment suggested a reluctance to see the Ulster cause represented properly in the negotiations process and pushed for the restoration of the policy to pursue law and order in Ireland.

Conversely, the labour-leaning *Daily Herald* countered the *Post's* sentiment with its own criticism of the government's actions. In one article it asked: 'Are the British people prepared to embark on that bloody warfare against a nation, for the sake of the mere tawdry symbol of Empire?'⁶⁰ This argument questioned the importance of maintaining the status of empire if it meant the infliction of further violence in Ireland on behalf of the British nation, which was a proven unpopular policy. It is perhaps unsurprising that the government's two most vocal press critics took to questioning how the government was managing the situation. However, these arguments expressed some of the hindrances to peace and illustrated the sustained divide in political opinion as defining *what* the Irish question was and *who* was most responsible for its resolution continued to be assessed by the press.

The disagreement between de Valera and Lloyd George ended in late September when, following de Valera's call to pursue negotiation beyond the medium of telegrams, Lloyd George invited him and his colleagues to a conference in London on 11 October, which de Valera accepted.⁶¹ The *Westminster Gazette* contended de Valera's acceptance signified,

⁶⁰ 'The Tragic Answer', *Daily Herald*, 16 September 1921, p. 4.

⁶¹ TNA, 24/28, 'The Prime Minister's Reply to Mr. de Valera', 29 September 1921, p. 27; TNA, 24/28, 'Reply Received from Mr. de Valera', 30 September 1921, p. 27.

[N]othing more to the British public at this stage than that he considers it possible that “the association of Ireland with the community of nations known as the British Empire” *can* be “reconciled with Irish Nationalist aspirations.”⁶²

This argument tempered thoughts by recognising that important negotiations remained. The *Manchester Guardian* added ‘what is certain is that the Irish no less than the English people actively desire not only a conference but a successful one’.⁶³ The stage was set once more for Irish and British leaders to negotiate settlement terms and to address the impediments to settlement outlined by the press. Despite the sustained divide in Irish political opinion and the difficulty of defining the Irish question, October offered yet another opportunity to see settlement achieved.

London Conference

[A]ll Members of the House and people all over the whole country, are not only deeply concerned in the negotiations proceeding in respect of the Irish question, but are anxious for them to have a happy issue.⁶⁴ – Labour MP John Clynes, Commons debate

The second phase of negotiations between British and Irish leaders advanced the prospect of securing a resolution for the Irish question but, as the

⁶² “A Fresh Conference”, *Westminster Gazette*, 30 September 1921, p. 7.

⁶³ ‘The Government’s Reply’, *Manchester Guardian*, 30 September 1921, p. 6.

⁶⁴ HC Deb., 9 November 1921, vol. 148, cols. 406-8.

previous months' press debates had indicated, many factors remained to be reconciled. Because of this uncertainty of resolution, a flurry of telegrams, meetings, and formal conferences were utilised by British and Irish leaders in an attempt to reach consensus. During this period, the press reported on the events and there was a general convergence to support the London Conference. The exception to this, once more, was the pragmatic *Morning Post* who remained critical of any recognition of Sinn Féin. Overall, the press sustained its commitment to constitutional politics and achieving settlement and continued to shift criticisms in response to perceived challenges from unionists and republicans. The desire for the Irish question 'to have a happy issue' remained as another round of negotiations commenced.

October began with a continuation of debate regarding the potential that the London Conference offered for Irish settlement. The settlement-focused press maintained focus on the prospect for resolution. *The Times* reflected that the time elapsed since the truce had 'given an opportunity for calm thought which the old conditions precluded'.⁶⁵ The article added 'the peace of these islands will expend upon the clearness of vision with which this Conference looks outward towards the future'.⁶⁶ The *Westminster Gazette* similarly argued 'the cooperation of the military with the Sinn Feiners in keeping the peace has already done something to heal the memory of what went before'.⁶⁷ The paper proposed an 'appeal' be made to Ulster

⁶⁵ 'The Task of Statesmanship', *The Times*, 1 October 1921, p. 11.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ 'The Acceptance', *Westminster Gazette*, 1 October 1921, p. 7.

'to keep the peace' and further suggested the 'savage vendetta which has been proceeding in Belfast is a disgrace to any community'.⁶⁸ Though this argument supported the work of the truce, it also reaffirmed the oft-cited settlement-focused criticism of Ulster's role in the settlement negotiations. These contentions mirrored the historic neglect of the press to come to terms with the emotiveness of questions of nationhood and to endorse an amorphous settlement.

The *Observer* likewise addressed the situation but with a more comprehensive view of the Irish question. In one article the paper acknowledged the historic Anglo-Irish relationship as well as the Irish psyche and reflected that 'after 700 years a truce of three months gives little time in Ireland to soften inveterate and inherited prejudice or to alter settled life views of Britain and the British'.⁶⁹ Another article contrasted the line of its press opponents and instead contended that 'Ulster is nobody's either to take or give away she is her own, and her heart must be won along with her hand'.⁷⁰ This contradiction from the settlement-focused line supported the cautious tone of the paper but also underscored the challenge of defining *what* the Irish question was and *how* to resolve it.

The London Conference offered the potential to reach settlement with a delegation that was comprised of key political figures representing the British government and Sinn Féin. The British were represented by Prime Minister Lloyd

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ 'Sinn Fein's Acceptance', *Observer*, 2 October 1921, p. 12.

⁷⁰ 'The Conference', *Observer*, 9 October 1921, p. 12.

George, Lord Privy Seal Austen Chamberlain, Lord Chancellor Birkenhead, Secretary of State for the Colonies Winston Churchill, Secretary for War Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, and Chief Secretary for Ireland Greenwood.⁷¹ Sinn Féin were represented by Minister of Foreign Affairs Arthur Griffith, Minister of Finance Michael Collins, Minister of Economic Affairs R.C. Barton, liaison officer Éamonn Duggan, and barrister Gavan Duffy.⁷² De Valera was notably missing but he did issue a proclamation to the Irish people in which he stated the Irish plenipotentiaries were ‘well aware’ of their responsibilities and that ‘they must be made to feel that a united nation has confidence in them, and will support them unflinchingly’.⁷³ This proclamation indicated recognition of Irish support that de Valera had arguably overlooked in his previous dealings, suggesting the possibility for settlement despite the overriding divide in Irish political opinion with Sinn Féin demanding independence and unionists wanting to maintain union with the United Kingdom. As the *Daily Mirror* had observed in April 1921, the question was whether de Valera was willing to pocket his ambition to become President of an Irish Republic or instead work to negotiate on dominion terms.⁷⁴ This delegation of British and Irish plenipotentiaries offered a new opportunity to discuss the possibility for solution.

⁷¹ Parliamentary Correspondent, ‘Conference With Sinn Fein’, *The Times*, 11 October 1921, p. 10.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ ‘Proclamation By Sinn Fein’, *Daily Chronicle*, 11 October 1921, p. 1.

⁷⁴ ‘De Valera – Premier or President?’, *Daily Mirror*, 28 April 1921, p. 3.

With regard to the Irish delegation, the *Manchester Guardian* reported each of the plenipotentiaries had 'pledged by oath to support and defend an Irish Republic' and were therefore coming to London 'to see how much less than that they can recommend the majority of their fellow-countrymen to accept'.⁷⁵ This report supported the proclamation made by de Valera and indicated the Irish plenipotentiaries were cognisant of Irish public opinion. The Irish plenipotentiaries, much like their British counterparts, had to tread the line of public opinion to ensure that the chosen solution would be supported for a resolution to work. The paper further contended that the British government's consent to meet the Irish representatives on 'a footing of equality' was 'of great significance' and was made greater by 'the almost unanimous approval and support of the British people'.⁷⁶ This concluding argument emphasised the significance of the Conference, the advancement of the Irish question from its pre-war iteration, and the role of opinion in both Britain and Ireland in supporting settlement.

As the Conference was set to commence, the press reflected on its potential to lead to settlement. The settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines continued to be particularly cognisant of the potential the opportunity offered. The *Manchester Guardian* argued the negotiations would only succeed if conducted in an 'atmosphere of friendship' and further contended the 'elements of a solution are there' but time was 'needed to develop and establish them'.⁷⁷ The *Daily Mail*

⁷⁵ 'The Fateful Conference', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 October 1921, p. 6.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ 'Nations in Conference', *Manchester Guardian*, 12 October 1921, p. 6.

similarly argued 'the country looks for a settlement' and 'fair-minded people' in both Britain and Ireland acknowledged 'the materials for making it' were present but that they needed to be 'shaped by enlightened statesmanship with a single eye to enduring interests of both nations'.⁷⁸ These sentiments maintained focus on settlement, suggesting that no solution generated from the Conference would be easily applied. This was made further evident in an article from the pragmatic *Morning Post* who departed from its opponents and the 'chorus of congratulations' for the Conference by instead contending 'between the two parties there is a gulf that cannot be bridged: one side has taken the oath to a Republic, the other to a Monarchy'.⁷⁹ The Conference offered an opportunity for the plenipotentiaries to decide to pursue the materials for making peace or to preserve the gulf.

Following the initial Conference meeting on 11 October, it was decided that only authorised statements and communications relating to the Conference agreed upon by the representatives of the two countries should be given.⁸⁰ This decision mimicked that of the 1917-18 Irish Convention and the June-July 1921 Conference that had likewise sought to control the communications released. This recognition of the press validated its role in detailing the events of the Conference and also meant that authorised statements would again supplement the press reports.

Following the first meeting, the issue of Ulster was again considered. The *Morning Post* reported on the sustained violence in the North 'upon which a rebel

⁷⁸ 'Ireland at Downing-Street', *Daily Mail*, 11 October 1921, p. 6.

⁷⁹ 'Peace Where There is No Peace', *Morning Post*, 11 October 1921, p. 6.

⁸⁰ 'First Meeting of the Irish Conference', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 October 1921, p. 11.

concentration has been going on ever since the opening of the Truce'.⁸¹ The paper also pointedly asked the British public and government: 'Which side are they going to take, the side of the rebels or the side of the Loyal men of Ulster?'⁸² A subsequent article asked: 'Does this so-called Truce apply to Ulster?'⁸³ While these arguments were reflective of the paper's overall Ulster-loyal tone, they also revealed the extent to which violence and repercussions from violence remained a valid threat, particularly in the North, despite the truce. These claims were validated in a speech from Craig in which he argued,

[T]he way of peace is not by coming up to Ulster and attempting to take away our liberties and our rights. The way to peace is to make it up between yourselves.⁸⁴

Ulster was not the only question to be considered, de Valera likewise remained a factor. In late October, de Valera caused a stir when he petitioned the Pope in a telegram that reaffirmed Sinn Féin's declaration of independence for Ireland. In it, he argued the British government had 'sought to impose their will upon Ireland, and by British force have endeavoured to rob her people of the liberty which is their natural right and their ancient heritage'.⁸⁵ This bold move by

⁸¹ 'As in 1914', *Morning Post*, 19 October 1921, p. 6.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ 'When Is a Truce Not a Truce?', *Morning Post*, 27 October 1921, p. 6.

⁸⁴ 'Sir J. Craig On Irish Conference', *The Times*, 17 October 1921, p. 12.

⁸⁵ 'Independent' Ireland', *The Times*, 21 October 1921, p. 10.

de Valera not only irritated British opinion but also some of the Irish plenipotentiaries, which further challenged the work of the Conference.⁸⁶

Following the release of de Valera's telegram, the press coalesced in condemning the move and its potential for negatively impacting the Conference. Parliamentary correspondents for *The Times* reported that it had 'burst like a bomb'⁸⁷ and suggested the government should 'address opposition and meet it with a statement of the grounds which justify the Conference in its eyes and in the eyes of the world'.⁸⁸ A political correspondent for the *Daily Chronicle* argued the telegram 'creates a situation that the Government cannot ignore, and the continuation of the Conference is imperilled'.⁸⁹ The *Daily Mirror* similarly argued the telegram 'increased the difficulties of a very delicate situation' at a time 'when a powerful section of the Unionist Party has decided to move a vote of censure on the Government for negotiating with delegates who disown the King's authority'.⁹⁰

As a consequence of the telegram, the *Daily Mail* reported that the British government 'felt it impossible to proceed with the negotiations without coming to an understanding with the Sinn Fein delegates' regarding Ireland's position with the empire.⁹¹ Despite this, Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* reported that Sinn Féin plenipotentiaries were 'anxious that the Conference should not be ended' but on

⁸⁶ 'The Dove Still Perches in Ireland', *Advocate of Peace Through Justice*, Vol. 83, No. 11 (November 1921), 394 (p. 394).

⁸⁷ Parliamentary Correspondent, 'De Valera's Folly', *The Times*, 22 October 1921, p. 8.

⁸⁸ Parliamentary Correspondent, 'Powerless Ulster Parliament', *The Times*, 21 October 1921, p. 10.

⁸⁹ Political Correspondent, 'Irish Conference Imperilled', *Daily Chronicle*, 22 October 1921, p. 1.

⁹⁰ 'De Valera Creates Anxious Situation', *Daily Mirror*, 22 October 1921, p. 3.

⁹¹ Political Correspondent, 'Irish Peace in Danger', *Daily Mail*, 22 October 1921, p. 5.

the unionist side 'it was doubtful whether an agreement could be come to'.⁹² As evidenced by the press reports and contentions, de Valera's telegram challenged the work of the Conference while simultaneously eliciting threats from the unionist Die Hard contingent. These challenges represented some of the main considerations that the British and Irish plenipotentiaries needed to reconcile to achieve settlement.

Despite a general desire expressed to maintain the Conference, unionist doubt manifested in late October after Lloyd George invited a vote of confidence in the Commons against a unionist Die Hard contingent motion to censure the government for negotiating with Sinn Féin.⁹³ Lloyd George was reported to have held the vote to 'get a definite expression of opinion on a complex situation'.⁹⁴ The press generally put forward support of the Prime Minister's move. *The Times* reported it was 'unanimously agreed' that Lloyd George 'took the right course in accepting the challenge'.⁹⁵ The *Daily Herald* likewise endorsed the move arguing while it was 'a queer thing' for labour to support Lloyd George, he was 'clearly in the right'.⁹⁶ The *Observer* argued the 'Irish crisis... is a tripartite question involving Ulster issues at every turn' and contended 'autonomous Ulster cannot escape its share of responsibility'.⁹⁷ The *Daily Mirror* contended, 'on the Ulster question

⁹² 'Irish Conference Crisis', *Daily Chronicle*, 25 October 1921, p. 1.

⁹³ Political Correspondent, 'Premier Invites Vote of Confidence', *Daily Chronicle*, 28 October 1921, p. 1.

⁹⁴ 'Lloyd George and Die-Hards', *Daily Herald*, 1 November 1921, p. 1.

⁹⁵ 'The Unionist Revolt', *The Times*, 28 October 1921, p. 10.

⁹⁶ 'Die-Hardihood', *Daily Herald*, 29 October 1921, p. 4.

⁹⁷ 'How to Save the Conference', *Observer*, 30 October 1921, p. 12.

practically everything depends... failure of the negotiations will precipitate a crisis in the very near future'.⁹⁸

The censure motion was ultimately defeated by a vote of 439 to 43.⁹⁹ This defeat indicated a desire by British leaders to continue with the negotiations, which was likewise largely endorsed by the press. It also suggested commitment to address Craig's earlier challenge for the Conference plenipotentiaries to make peace 'up between yourselves'. However, as evidenced by challenges from both de Valera and the Die Hard's, more remained to be accomplished as the threat of failure to reach settlement loomed.

Following these challenges, the press continued to reflect on the prospect of the Conference and debated the priorities for achieving settlement. In one article, the *Westminster Gazette* argued the government could not consider the Irish question in a 'vacuum' and further contended there was 'nothing that the Empire so much needs as an end of the Irish quarrel, and nothing that will be so damaging to all its interests as the further exacerbation of this quarrel'.¹⁰⁰ The paper added, 'We would say... to Sinn Feiners that they are never likely to get a better moment for settlement, and to Ulstermen that this country looks to them to make a patriotic effort to help'.¹⁰¹ The *Daily Mirror* similarly argued,

⁹⁸ 'Irish Debate To-Day May Force Political Crisis', *Daily Mirror*, 31 October 1921, p. 3.

⁹⁹ 'Confidence Vote for the Government', *Daily Chronicle*, 1 November 1921, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ 'The Prime Minister and Ireland', *Westminster Gazette*, 1 November 1921, p. 7.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

In view of the dreadful alternative to agreement, it is surely right... to say and do all we can to restrain extremists, to encourage moderate men, to urge all who hate war – as all thinking men *must now* hate it – to unite in a last effort for the good of both countries.¹⁰²

With the Die Hard threat abated many within the press pushed for the leaders to accept the challenge to pursue peace through compromise and to seize the opportunity for settlement. War and Irish question weariness remained key factors for this push. Yet, significantly, this desire was not reflective of the differences in Irish opinion, revealing the continued press neglect to understand the emotiveness of questions of nationhood and the extent to which Irish people were questioning their status in the United Kingdom. Instead, once again, the press simply advocated an amorphous solution.

With the general desire for settlement promoted, the *Daily Express* reported on a 'growing belief' that the Sinn Féin plenipotentiaries would be favourable to a new proposal for establishing an all-Ireland dominion and for the government to negotiate to that end with Ulster, which the paper argued marked an advance towards settlement.¹⁰³ The paper posited that if Ulster refused, Lloyd George 'would resign' and England would face 'the possibility of having to raise a vast sum of money and new army' and there would arise 'a political crisis of the gravest character'.¹⁰⁴ This contention publicised an alternative to what Frances

¹⁰² 'Waiting', *Daily Mirror*, 2 November 1921, p. 5.

¹⁰³ 'Ireland A Real Dominion', *Daily Express*, 3 November 1921, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Stevenson had recorded in her diary in July when she asserted that Lloyd George was 'prepared to go out of office' if he settled Ireland.¹⁰⁵ This contention also identified a 'political crisis' that would add to the strain on a war and Irish question weary press. With such endorsements, Stevenson privately reflected that the 'worthwhile' support of the Conference from Beaverbrook's papers, which included the *Daily Express*, was needed.¹⁰⁶

In early November, Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* confirmed that the Sinn Féin plenipotentiaries had agreed to consider the terms of an all-Ireland settlement, which would include Southern allegiance to the Crown and also reported that Craig and Lloyd George had met to ascertain Ulster's attitude with settlement.¹⁰⁷ With this confirmation, *The Times* argued the offer was 'beyond the dreams of the older generation of Irishmen' but retained its settlement-focus stance that the move had not 'served to render an early solution of the Ulster problem easier' and, furthermore, that a new Ulster boundary 'would not affect the deeper issues involved'.¹⁰⁸ This argument addressed partition and reflected the paper's 'regret' for any partition of Ireland, which it had put forward with regard to Home Rule in November 1920.¹⁰⁹ This tone also indicated a better recognition of the still strained divide in Irish political opinion and advocated for the Conference

¹⁰⁵ Stevenson, *Lloyd George*, p. 270.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁰⁷ A.P.N., 'An All-Ireland Proposal', *Daily Chronicle*, 7 November 1921, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ 'Ulster', *The Times*, 4 November 1921, p. 11.

¹⁰⁹ 'An Armistice for Ireland', *The Times*, 12 November 1920, p. 13.

proceedings to address the more technical issues at stake with self-government. This foreshadowed what was to come when partition was formally implemented.

With the all-Ireland proposal on the table, the Conference was temporally ceased to give Ulster time to consider the proposal.¹¹⁰ Following this, Ulster's part in settlement remained a topic of discussion within the press, although the fact that Home Rule was not likely to work on an all-Ireland basis was once more overlooked. Instead, the new prospect saw the press generally converge in its opinion on Ulster's role in seeing settlement achieved. And, much like had been seen in the debates over the Dáil's decision earlier in the month, the press reversed its focus to Ulster. A lobby correspondent for the *Daily Mirror* argued that Ulster's 'inflexible attitude' made the tentative proposals 'unworkable'.¹¹¹ Additionally, the *Westminster Gazette* recalled its July appeal to Ulstermen to 'heal the quarrel with South Ireland'¹¹² and contended,

We have given Ulster a pledge that she shall not be coerced, but if the negotiations break down for the lack of reasonable concessions on her part, we shall refuse to resume the coercion of the rest of Ireland.¹¹³

Similarly, the *Daily Herald* argued that Ulster had 'wrecked settlement before and now it can wreck another. But this time it has the knowledge that the results will be

¹¹⁰ 'Irish Conference', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 November 1921, p. 11.

¹¹¹ Lobby Correspondent, 'Waiting for Ulster Peace Move', *Daily Mirror*, 7 November 1921, p. 3.

¹¹² 'The Necessity of It', *Westminster Gazette*, 9 July 1921, p. 7.

¹¹³ 'Ireland and Ulster', *Westminster Gazette*, 4 November 1921, p. 7.

far more disastrous than ever before'.¹¹⁴ *The Times* added 'the old situation, in which one British party stood in alliance with the Ulster Unionists, could scarcely recur'.¹¹⁵ However, it further argued that while 'Englishmen long for a settlement' it had to be 'just' and 'the claims of Ulster and the claims of Sinn Fein will be subjected to the same test'.¹¹⁶

Together, these contentions from the pragmatic, settlement-focused, and partisan press lines addressed the potential repercussion of failure and indicated settlement was not to be jeopardised. They built on previous contentions of the 'political crisis' in Ireland, suggesting failure to reach compromise would lead to a worse and more violent situation. In a speech at the Lord Mayor's banquet, Lloyd George added to the call for compromise and observed that the Conference was at a 'critical state' and that 'all parties must be prepared to give and take. A determination not to budge an inch from old positions would not lead to peace'.¹¹⁷ The Irish situation was once again on the verge of noteworthy potential change if compromise could be reached. Yet the press commitment to viewing the Irish question from a constitutional perspective and evading the significance of the rise of republicanism and the sustained violence in the North effected the press understanding of how those important factors impacted the potential for compromise and settlement.

¹¹⁴ 'Ulster', *Daily Herald*, 7 November 1921, p. 4.

¹¹⁵ 'Ulster's Opportunity', *The Times*, 8 November 1921, p. 13.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ 'Premier's "Give and Take" Call in Irish Crisis', *Daily Mirror*, 10 November 1921, p. 3.

Despite the general calls for compromise put forward in the press, unionist leaders confirmed their scepticism of the new proposal and ultimately decided against participating in the Conference on the terms of the proposed offer.¹¹⁸ Following this decision, a speech from the King was read in both Houses conveying the Irish situation still caused him 'great anxiety' and appealing to the leaders of all parties in Ireland 'to exercise patience and moderation with the object of establishing friendship and loyal co-operation'.¹¹⁹ Following this, the *Westminster Gazette* argued the King's appeal would 'no doubt have weight in the deliberations' between the Prime Minister and Ulster leaders.¹²⁰ The *Daily Mail* added that 'Ulster leaders are common-sense diplomatists and that they stand to gain far more by voluntary compromise than by parochial isolation'.¹²¹ While this decision asserted the unionist stance against an all-Ireland parliament, as these press contentions suggested, the concern of finding a workable solution had not ended. And, as the King's appeal reconfirmed and encouraged, cooperation remained a key element to settlement.

Following Lloyd George's meeting with the Ulster leaders, his paper, the *Daily Chronicle*, reported Craig's counter suggestion for settlement was to have two dominion parliaments for Ireland.¹²² A political correspondent for the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* contended Ulster's 'only safeguard' against administrative

¹¹⁸ 'Ulster Cabinet Says "No Surrender"', *Daily Herald*, 10 November 1921, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ 'King and Ireland', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 November 1921, p. 9.

¹²⁰ 'Ulster Leaders Meet Premier To-Day', *Westminster Gazette*, 11 November 1921, p. 1.

¹²¹ 'Cabinet Note to Ulster Leaders', *Daily Mail*, 11 November 1921, p. 9.

¹²² A.P.N., 'Ulster Asks for Two Dominion Parliaments', *Daily Chronicle*, 14 November 1921, p. 1.

and financial ‘oppression’ was a preference to dominion Home Rule as a separate entity.¹²³ Another article from a Dublin correspondent argued that other press lines had reported that,

Sinn Fein delegates have consented to terms which will be satisfactory from the British point of view, and that Ulster is now the only obstacle to a good settlement. The facts are very different. As might be expected, the British public are being unscrupulously hoodwinked. Whatever assurances are *supposed* to have been given by the Sinn Fein delegates, this is certain – *that on their side nothing has been reduced to writing.*¹²⁴

The two-dominion parliament suggestion by Craig confirmed that Home Rule could not work on an all-Ireland basis for Ulster. And, the subsequent arguments from the *Post* advanced scepticism of Sinn Féin’s commitment to applying the proposed settlement terms. The paper additionally challenged the endorsements put forward by its press competitors and addressed the responsibility of press reporting as well as the function of British opinion. These contentions retained the paper’s overall tone against Sinn Féin’s freedom and its frustration with the government for negotiating with them. Combined, Craig’s proposal and the *Post*’s contentions challenged the press desire for an amorphous solution and re-emphasised Ulster’s role in the Irish question.

¹²³ Political Correspondent, ‘Ulster’s Conditions’, *Morning Post*, 12 November 1921, p. 7.

¹²⁴ Dublin Correspondent, ‘Sinn Fein Demand’, *Morning Post*, 16 November 1921, p. 7.

Following this, the pragmatic *Daily Mirror* endorsed some of the contentions of the *Post* by advocating for Ulster's position. One article argued every 'sensible Briton' must hope the Conference would not end in deadlock but that 'any attempt at settlement which involves the sacrifice of the Ulster Loyalists will be no settlement at all'.¹²⁵ It further argued,

We can be no party to any scheme which implies a bargain for Sinn Fein's allegiance to the Crown, nor can we countenance the payment of a humiliating price, or any price at all, for that allegiance.... *When Britons understand the price demanded, they will repudiate any such bargain, as the Ulster leaders have already done.*¹²⁶

These contentions from the *Mirror* endorsed the paper's long-standing commitment to settlement but added a new element with its firm stand against compromising with Sinn Féin to Britain's detriment. This recognition went beyond the papers' previous contentions and that of the other settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines by emphasising the importance of understanding what the outcome of the negotiations entailed and the potential 'humiliating price' by bargaining with Sinn Féin. This line of argument in turn challenged the British government, press, and public to recognise the principles at stake with settlement. Much like the debates put forward throughout 1919-20, the British public had a responsibility to engage in the Irish debates because it had implications beyond

¹²⁵ 'Stand By Ulster?', *Daily Mirror*, 18 November 1921, p. 5.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Ireland. However, as ever, defining the Irish question and committing to a resolution remained unclear.

Meanwhile, the government-loyal *Daily Mail* contested contentions like those of the *Post* and *Mirror* by endorsing the work of the Conference and arguing there 'must' be a settlement and stating 'Ulster has no longer a shred of reason to doubt that its interests are being guarded at every step'.¹²⁷ It added that Ulster faced two alternatives: 'separation, civil war, and commercial stagnation' or 'real unity, peace, and prosperity'.¹²⁸ The pragmatic *Observer* similarly endorsed the Conference and suggested Ulster should be invited to participate too, adding,

It is sheer deficiency of political brain to assert that Ulster's complete autonomy must be betrayed or even weakened by any plan whatever for the efficient working of the six counties with the twenty-six under an All-Irish System.¹²⁹

Additionally, a political correspondent for the *Daily Mail* reported that Sinn Féin was willing to compromise and to agree to a system of safeguards for Ulster, including fiscal autonomy and the right to veto over legislation, which the paper argued went 'beyond any plan in the Home Rule Act now on the Statute-book'.¹³⁰ The *Daily Telegraph* argued the Ulster leaders' refusal to join the conference had

¹²⁷ 'Irish Peace', *Daily Mail*, 18 November 1921, p. 8.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ 'Ulster and Its Veto', *Observer*, 20 November 1921, p. 12.

¹³⁰ Political Correspondent, 'Sinn Fein's Offer to Ulster', *Daily Mail*, 25 November 1921, p. 9.

been 'deplored by every section of British opinion except that which looks to the Die-Hards' and asked the Ulster leaders to consider what a desperate situation they are creating 'by refusing to meet'.¹³¹

These contentions from the government-loyal and pragmatic press lines made a case for including Ulster in the Conference proceedings. They also suggested that compromise not only could but should be reached. However, these arguments failed to acknowledge that Ulster did not and had never wanted to be part of an all-Ireland system, which fundamentally affected the chances of that type of solution succeeding. This was a symptom of the press retaining a constitutional perspective of the Irish situation and neglecting to come to terms with the differences of Ulster and Sinn Féin opinion. Instead, an amorphous solution was continually advanced on an all-Ireland basis.

Ultimately, the meeting between Craig and Lloyd George ended in what was described by many newspapers as 'deadlock'. The *Morning Post* reported the meeting had ended because 'no terms could reconcile the irreconcilable'.¹³² It added the paper had protested the Conference because it 'knew it could not succeed'.¹³³ These contentions reinforced Ulster's attitude against the offer because it still saw Sinn Féin as a dividing entity that could not be negotiated with. Meanwhile, the *Daily Herald* argued 'the Irish situation is more menacing than it

¹³¹ 'Ulster and the Negotiations', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 November 1921, p. 8.

¹³² 'The Failure of the Conference', *Morning Post*, 25 November 1921, p. 6.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

has been at any time since the beginning of the Conference'.¹³⁴ The *Westminster Gazette* addressed the 'serious difficulty' of the Irish settlement and argued 'a very great deal depends upon the Government's view of what Ulster ought to concede'.¹³⁵ The *Observer* contended,

Ulster... can win Irish as she has won British assent to the special powers and guarantees she enjoys, or she can throw the whole Irish question, and with it inseparable her own internal questions, back into the melting pot of the future.¹³⁶

These arguments from the partisan, settlement-focused, and pragmatic press lines, through their varying viewpoints, addressed the potential breakdown of negotiations and Ulster's vital role in seeing settlement achieved. As one *Westminster Gazette* article concluded,

The state of Ireland in the past has been so deplorable, and it will remain so deplorable in the future, until peace is made not only between Ireland and Britain but also between the Irish factions themselves.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ "'Deadlock'", *Daily Herald*, 26 November 1921, p. 4.

¹³⁵ 'The One Thing Certain', *Westminster Gazette*, 26 November 1921, p. 6.

¹³⁶ 'The Irish Crisis', *Observer*, 27 November 1921, p. 12.

¹³⁷ 'The One Thing Certain', *Westminster Gazette*.

What these contentions emphasised was that Ulster needed to be brought into the considerations for any solution to work. However, how to best accomplish that was still not made clear.

With 'deadlock' reached, Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* reported it was now a matter of seeing if the Sinn Féin plenipotentiaries would 'agree to any other form of settlement'.¹³⁸ Therefore, the negotiations had re-entered a period of deliberation. Following this, the *Daily Mirror* questioned how the government could avert a 'disastrously wasteful civil war in Ireland... or the coercion of Ulster' and called for the avoidance of 'all violence and bloodshed'.¹³⁹ It continued with its recent alignment with Ulster opinion and argued that the government should 'let the South experience the "economic consequences" of its desire to separate from the country on which it depends for its economic existence'.¹⁴⁰ This tone indicated weariness with the Irish situation and threat of violence and in turn challenged the Sinn Féin leaders' desires, emphasising the repercussions of cutting connection from the United Kingdom.

As November drew to a close, Craig delivered a speech in the Northern parliament that confirmed Ulster's refusal to consider the government's all-Ireland proposal.¹⁴¹ The *Manchester Guardian* reported Craig 'advised Sinn Fein to work the Act, and said that Ulster must be won, she would not be coerced'.¹⁴² For a

¹³⁸ A.P.N., 'Sinn Fein and Ulster', *Daily Chronicle*, 28 November 1921, p. 1.

¹³⁹ "'Ourselves Alone.'", *Daily Mirror*, 28 November 1921, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ 'The Refusal of Ulster', *The Times*, 30 November 1921, p. 11.

¹⁴² 'New Plan for Irish Peace', *Manchester Guardian*, 30 November 1921, p. 7.

majority of the press, with the exception of the *Morning Post* and *Daily Mirror*, Craig's speech represented a threat to the potential for compromise. The *Daily Mail* argued his speech was 'regrettable' and that 'the position of the Ulster Government is now the vital point, as there appears to be no doubt that this is the only obstacle to a peaceful solution'.¹⁴³ The *Daily Herald* added his speech indicated 'the "Die-Hards" are prepared for war'.¹⁴⁴ The *Daily Express* argued,

Now is the time for all the friends of a peaceful settlement to make their influence felt in every possible way. The alternative to such a settlement must be civil war in some form or another – a prospect which the sane citizens of the United Kingdom contemplate with horror.¹⁴⁵

The Times similarly contended that 'the great majority of Englishmen earnestly desire that Ulster should come to terms with the rest of Ireland' and added,

[S]afeguards are theirs for the asking; but England requires from them something more than static loyalty. The peace of these islands and the strength of the British Empire are to a very real extent in their keeping.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ 'Unbending Ulster', *Daily Mail*, 30 November 1921, p. 8.

¹⁴⁴ 'Ulster's Plunge for New War', *Daily Herald*, 30 November 1921, p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ 'New Order By Sinn Fein', *Daily Express*, 30 November 1921, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ 'The Refusal of Ulster', *The Times*, 30 November 1921, p. 11.

As the overall press debates indicated, the urgency for settlement was upon the British and Irish leaders. The Conference between those leaders had promoted needed debate and discussion on the Irish question but had also clearly proven that Home Rule could not work on an all-Ireland basis in the changed political situation. The press understanding of the Irish question and commitment to constitutional politics would continue to be challenged as settlement once more hung in the balance, the divide in Irish political opinion remained firm, and resolution elusive.

Treaty

There are innumerable letters, resolutions and speeches which have all said: "Try Dominion Home Rule!" They had all one defect in common. They ignored all the obstacles and, therefore, they gave us no counsel as to how we were to overcome them. It is no use giving a general prescription in complicated cases... You have to deal with the complications, and you have to deal with the complications in Ireland, attributable to its history and to the imprudences of statesmen... Yes, of both sides.¹⁴⁷ – Lloyd George, Commons debate

December began with the opportunity for Irish settlement on the verge of collapse. The commentary from the press, with the exception of the *Morning Post*, continued to put forward general concern of the potential failure to reach settlement. Lloyd George's assertion that criticism 'ignored all the obstacles' and gave the government 'no counsel as to how we were to overcome them' was

¹⁴⁷ HC Deb., 14 December 1921, vol. 149, cols. 31-231.

indicative of the prevailing constitutional perspective of Anglo-Irish relations and the historic neglect to consistently define *what* the Irish question and *how* to resolve it. With the potential for collapse looming, the press focus largely remained on the negotiations process.

The fear of the negotiations breaking down was threatened in early December when the Conference mandate against reporting beyond 'authorised statements' was defied when a parliamentary correspondent for *The Times* leaked the contents of the settlement proposal given to the Sinn Féin plenipotentiaries by the government. The article filled in 'some of the important details' on the scope of the government's new proposal, including information on 'Ulster's Option', 'Northern Financial Autonomy', 'The Oath', and the 'Boundary Commission'.¹⁴⁸ The correspondent argued the government had been mindful to frame a 'scheme which will bear examination in Ulster' and although 'unable to go as far as Irishmen insistently desired' would give 'partial gratification to the Sinn Feiners'.¹⁴⁹ A subsequent Cabinet meeting argued the account of the proposals 'must have been given to the newspaper by some person in possession of the actual document' but it was decided that it had 'not been revealed by the Irish Representatives who had been scrupulously honest in this respect throughout the negotiations' and was eventually given to the Attorney General to investigate.¹⁵⁰ This breach recalled the controversy the paper had incited in July when its proprietor, Lord Northcliffe, was

¹⁴⁸ Parliamentary Correspondent, 'New Terms to Sinn Fein', *The Times*, 3 December 1921, p. 10.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ TNA, CAB 23/27, Conclusions, 5 December 1921, p. 6.

accused of misrepresenting the King's words in an interview featured in an American news source¹⁵¹ and represented a direct threat to the negotiations.

The timing of *The Times'* leak came at a pivotal moment for the negotiations and reaffirmed the necessity of the government's wish to maintain control of the information released. How much this incident impacted the government is difficult to measure; however, Lloyd George did appear to accelerate the negotiations after this breach. On 5 December, the Prime Minister met with the Irish plenipotentiaries and issued an ultimatum.¹⁵² Churchill described Lloyd George's communication as 'blunt' when he told the Irish leaders that he 'could concede no more and debate no further'.¹⁵³ This action by Lloyd George could have been an indication of his fearing losing the opportunity for settlement, which would suggest the power and potential burden of the press as well as his overriding concern with reaching a resolution.

During this period others, particularly within the settlement-focused press, concentrated reporting on the critical stage that the negotiations had reached. The *Manchester Guardian* argued the nation was behind the government because 'it is the nation which will have to bear the cost of failure and of whatever consequences failure may entail'.¹⁵⁴ This sentiment brought perspective to how Britain would be impacted with failure to reach settlement and addressed the settlement-focused

¹⁵¹ 'The King and Ireland', *The Times*, 30 July 1921, p. 10.

¹⁵² Churchill, *The World Crisis*, p. 305.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ 'What Next in Ireland?', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 December 1921, p. 6.

contention of fearing to miss the opportunity for resolution. Another article requested that proposals from both sides be 'published and the opinion of the nation and of the outside world invited' to find a 'reasonable compromise'.¹⁵⁵ This argument addressed the paper's long-held desire for transparency in the government's policy and additionally petitioned for the opinion of the British public and the 'outside world'.

This emphasis on outside opinion to assist with finding a 'reasonable compromise' was perhaps a criticism of the government and its leaders in failing to find compromise sooner. As a *Times* article argued, the negotiations 'trembled in the balance'.¹⁵⁶ For the settlement-focused press, the time for change was upon them and the momentum of the groundbreaking negotiations being made needed to be seized. The long process of attempting to resolve the Irish question and the fear of regressing was a motivating factor to advocate for settlement.

The fear of failure was abated when, in the early morning hours of 6 December, the British and Irish plenipotentiaries agreed to settlement and signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty.¹⁵⁷ The Treaty signified an official end to hostilities and deemed that Southern Ireland would become the Irish Free State, with dominion status, while Ulster would retain the right to establish its own government and parliament.¹⁵⁸ In a subsequent Cabinet meeting, the Prime Minister said the Treaty

¹⁵⁵ 'Ireland at the Cross Roads', *Manchester Guardian*, 6 December 1921, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ 'Irish Negotiations', *The Times*, 6 December 1921, p. 11.

¹⁵⁷ TNA, CAB 23/27, Conclusions, 6 December 1921, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ Robert Rhodes James, M.P., *Churchill Speaks 1897-1963: Collected Speeches in Peace and War* (Leicester: Winward, 1980), p. 404.

marked 'one of the greatest days in the history of the British Empire'.¹⁵⁹ He added the Treaty 'would enormously increase Great Britain's prestige in the world' and 'would have the most beneficial effects in America and elsewhere'.¹⁶⁰ These revelations addressed some of the key concerns for the government of maintaining international prestige, particularly with America and for the empire, which had been put forward throughout the Irish debates. With the Treaty, the Cabinet unanimously agreed to the 'entire approval of the settlement'.¹⁶¹

Despite the Cabinet's approval, Lloyd George did concede that 'some difficulties remained' with Ireland but that 'the greatest have been overcome'.¹⁶² The Cabinet generally agreed 'that a year ago Sinn Fein would not have entertained or even agreed to discuss proposals' that had been signed and attributed the change in attitude to the 'rough treatment to which the Irish extremists had been subjected during the last twelve months', which had prompted the need for 'some equitable compromise'.¹⁶³ This contention underscored the challenge of reaching settlement and the overall weariness of the Irish question. The concession that 'difficulties remained' suggested the Irish question had not necessarily been resolved but had rather shifted into a new chapter. Although the government's official pursuit to solve the Irish question was now over, implementing the Treaty, as well as bridging the divide within Irish political opinion, had yet to be achieved.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, CAB 23/27, Conclusions, 6 December 1921, p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

The Treaty agreement initially proved to be a shining moment for Lloyd George. The Cabinet gave 'most cordial thanks' to the Prime Minister and his colleagues for their work on the settlement.¹⁶⁴ In a telegram to Lloyd George, the King expressed he was 'overjoyed' by the 'splendid news' and that he was 'happy in some small way to have contributed'.¹⁶⁵ This telegram again hinted at the impact of the King's speech in Belfast to open the Northern parliament as a turning point in the negotiations process. Reflecting on the Treaty in his memoirs, Churchill wrote of the 'relief of the public, both in Britain and the Empire' and of the 'general feeling of awakening from a nightmare'.¹⁶⁶ For many, the Treaty was a joyful accomplishment. However, there still remained the important step of ratification from the Dáil, as well as Ulster's decision to opt into a unified parliament.

The signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty concluded the British government's official pursuit to resolve the Irish question and reduced press interest in the government's Irish policy. Generally, the press was satisfied with the Treaty because a solution had always been paramount and therefore the remaining problems were overlooked, undervalued, and misunderstood. There was instead general relief and a willingness to charge Irish leaders with accepting and implementing the Treaty terms. The exception to this was, once more, the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* who transitioned into overt criticism against the government for sanctioning the Treaty and continued to put forward scepticism for the prospect

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ 'The King's Message', *The Times*, 7 December 1921, p. 10.

¹⁶⁶ Churchill, *The World Crisis*, p. 308.

of peace. The result of the 'complicated case' of the Irish question with the Treaty transformed the Anglo-Irish relationship, which would continue to evolve as Ireland transitioned into its new independent status.

Following the signing of the Treaty, the government-loyal press lauded the government's achievement. Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* echoed the statements of the Prime Minister's Cabinet speech and called the Treaty 'a memorable achievement in the history of the British Empire'.¹⁶⁷ The paper likewise addressed the historic significance of the accord adding 'the patience and perseverance of the parties to the last Irish Conference achieved what their most optimistic well-wishers despaired on Monday of ever seeing'.¹⁶⁸

The *Daily Express* featured a cartoon that similarly acclaimed the Treaty and Lloyd George. The cartoon depicted Lloyd George in knights' armour triumphantly leaning on a sword that had pierced a deadly blow to the 'Irish Problem' dragon with a setting sun on the horizon.¹⁶⁹ The caption reads: 'Ll. George: "Well, that was the fiercest dragon I've tackled the last five years."' ¹⁷⁰ Considering the context of the five years prior to the Treaty's signing, this argument would have put the resolution of the Irish problem ahead of, among other things, the First World War and the war's aftermath, including the Paris Peace Conference. Whether the Irish question was Lloyd George's 'fiercest' battle is debatable. However, as seen in the

¹⁶⁷ 'Great Irish Peace Treaty Signed', *Daily Chronicle*, 7 December 1921, p. 1.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Untitled Cartoon, *Daily Express*, 7 December 1921, p. 6.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

fractured understanding of the Irish question, this claim advanced an argument for the critical nature and difficulty of its resolution.



Untitled Cartoon, *Daily Express*, 7 December 1921, p. 6.
Caption: 'Li. George: "Well, that was the fiercest dragon I've tackled the last five years."'

Meanwhile, the impact of settlement on international opinion was recognised within the pragmatic and settlement-focused press lines. The *Daily Telegraph* reported,

Public opinion throughout the world has felt instinctively that this is an event of incalculable importance for the British Empire, and one that will add immeasurably to its strength.¹⁷¹

An American correspondent in *The Times* argued,

The proof that British statesmen, with the support of the leading organs of the British Press and of the bulk of English public opinion, are able to find a way out of the terrible situation that existed only a few months ago will strengthen America in the belief in the essential saneness of the British political temperament and stimulate the tendency towards concord between the English-speaking nations.¹⁷²

Finally, a letter in the *Manchester Guardian* contended the Treaty was,

[W]elcomed everywhere... the reason is that there is a stronger motive than the jealousies of diplomacy, and that at this moment the desire for the restoration of peace in the world is stronger than anything else... Europe and America rejoice in the Treaty as a symptom of the moral recovery of mankind.¹⁷³

As evidenced by these articles, the global impact of the Treaty and its role in promoting peace and Britain in the post-war era was generally observed. These

¹⁷¹ 'The Settlement', *Daily Telegraph*, 8 December 1921, p. 10.

¹⁷² Washington, D.C. Correspondent, 'Joyful Surprise In America', *The Times*, 7 December 1921, p. iii.

¹⁷³ Politicus, 'How the Irish Peace Was Won', *Manchester Guardian*, 8 December 1921, p. 10.

lines of argument placed the resolution of the Irish problem in a greater world context, extending beyond the domestic debate the British government had long categorised it as. As seen in the debates throughout 1917-21, the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines had particularly advanced fear of British 'Prussianism' and criticism of the government's Irish policy. The Treaty's resolution, whether out of 'moral obligation' or for the 'restoration of peace in the world', had connotations beyond Britain and, therefore, while it had the potential to strengthen Anglo-Irish relations it also positively assisted with international relations.

Conversely, the unionist-leaning press sources addressed Ulster's position and expressed a firm resolve to maintain Ulster's rights. Continuing with its recently developed support of unionist opinion, one article from the typically pragmatic *Daily Mirror* argued,

The King's joy at the signing of peace with the Sinn Fein delegates will be shared, we may hope, by all his subjects, not excepting the faithful Loyalists of Ulster... What is clear is that *the Agreement implies no betrayal of Ulster...* If Southern Ireland likes to call herself the Irish Free State we do not mind. The King's writ will run within her borders, and the British Privy Council will be her highest judicial court of appeal, as with the rest of the Empire.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ 'Irish Peace in Sight', *Daily Mirror*, 7 December 1921, p. 5.

This article mimicked the argument the paper had made in late November when it contended to 'let the South experience the "economic consequences" of its desire to separate from the country on which it depends for its economic existence'.¹⁷⁵ This tone put more onus on the new Free State to support itself and emphasised the role that the king and the empire would continue to hold in Anglo-Irish relations. This, therefore, undermined the supposed independence that the Sinn Féin leaders had demanded, which foreshadowed future debates, including the Dáil's decision to ratify the Treaty.

The partisan *Morning Post* offered further insight into Ulster's feeling of the Treaty. The paper called the Treaty a 'provisional agreement' because 'it is not a Treaty with Ireland as a whole, but with the rebel part of Ireland'.¹⁷⁶ The paper likewise questioned the extent to which Ulster's position would change by the terms of the agreement.¹⁷⁷ Another article argued that for Ulster,

Everything depended on whether the goodwill of Sinn Fein was really behind the agreement or not. The greatest importance attached to the details, which were not yet determined, and which would have to be settled before it could be said that Ulster was prepared to accept or reject the proposals.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ "'Ourselves Alone.'", *Daily Mirror*, 28 November 1921, p. 5.

¹⁷⁶ 'The Provisional Agreement', *Morning Post*, 7 December 1921, p. 6.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ 'Ulster Puzzled', *Morning Post*, 7 December 1921, p. 7.

These arguments reaffirmed the paper's critical tone against negotiating with Sinn Féin and put forward scepticism for the future of Ireland under the Treaty terms.

The contentions of the *Morning Post* were echoed in Carson's statement against the Treaty in which he said, 'I never thought I should live to see a day of such abject humiliation for Great Britain'.¹⁷⁹ As a political correspondent for the *Post* reported,

The first feelings of bewilderment are beginning to crystallise into deep resentment and disappointment, not unmingled with suggestions almost of despair... The man in the street is torn to-day between his ardent loyalty to Britain and his indignation against the British Governments.¹⁸⁰

These contentions offered insight into Ulster's perception of the Treaty and the difficulty that remained with reconciling the aims of Sinn Féin and Ulster. The long-held Ulster fear of falling under a Catholic majority was not eradicated with the Treaty. The historic divide in Irish political opinion remained and the lack of clarity in the settlement, especially with regard to Ulster's borders, added another layer of consideration to that divide.

As the news of the Treaty settlement was absorbed, and the roles of Ulster and Sinn Féin were considered, the press focused on the next steps for implementing the Treaty terms. The settlement-focused press retained its

¹⁷⁹ Political Correspondent, "'Britain's Day of Humiliation'", *Morning Post*, 7 December 1921, p. 7.

¹⁸⁰ Belfast Correspondent, 'Indignant Ulster', *Morning Post*, 8 December 1921, p. 7.

commitment to seeing settlement put into practice and result in a unified Ireland. The *Manchester Guardian* followed its established critical tone against Ulster's reluctance to participate in settlement contending,

Ulster, so far, has not helped us, and she has not helped Ireland. She will have another opportunity. Throughout the agreement the Free State of Ireland means the whole of Ireland, but Ulster within a month of its ratification may vote herself out, or, on the other hand, she may make terms with Southern Ireland and stay in.¹⁸¹

Similarly, the partisan *Daily Herald* contended it hoped Ulster would not stay outside and that Ulster 'will find it a matter of economic profit and... necessity to work in with the rest of Ireland'.¹⁸² The *Westminster Gazette* added 'Ulster is not to be coerced, but her subordinate position in relation to Ireland is to be placed at last in its proper perspective'.¹⁸³

These arguments from the settlement-focused press and the partisan *Daily Herald* put forward a desire to see Ulster contract into a unified Ireland as a true form of settlement. A unified Ireland was seen as a means of strengthening Ireland economically and placating future discord both within Ireland and in the Anglo-Irish relationship. However, as evidence from previous arguments from Ulster leadership as well as the recent contentions from the *Mirror* and *Post*, reconciling the aims of

¹⁸¹ 'Settlement at Last', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 December 1921, p. 6.

¹⁸² 'Real Hope', *Daily Herald*, 7 December 1921, p. 4.

¹⁸³ 'After 700 Years', *Westminster Gazette*, 7 December 1921, p. 6.

Sinn Féin and Ulster remained problematic. As the Treaty helped to call attention to, the historic neglect to define the Irish question was exposed and continued to impact press understanding. The general press desire for a solution did not address the core issue: bridging the divide within Irish political opinion.

Bridging the divide remained a key challenge but was not contingent on Ulster alone. Following the signing of the Treaty, a split in the Sinn Féin Cabinet was reported when de Valera, who had excused himself from participating in the Conference that had led to the signing of the Treaty, vocally denounced and rejected the Treaty terms.¹⁸⁴ Following this move, the government-loyal press put forward criticism of de Valera and his future role in Anglo-Irish relations. The *Daily Express* argued 'the probability is that peace may be delayed, but that the solid weight of conservative Irish opinion will sweep away the irreconcilables'.¹⁸⁵ Another article contended 'there appears to be nothing left to Mr. de Valera but retirement from political life'.¹⁸⁶ The *Daily Mail* reported it was now up to the Dáil 'to corroborate or disown the signatures of the peace plenipotentiaries'.¹⁸⁷

De Valera's denunciation underscored the defects of the Treaty and how it had manifested into a point of contention within Southern Ireland as well, as Southern politicians split on whether or not to accept the proposal. Yet, as the articles from the government-loyal subset suggested, some within the press did not

¹⁸⁴ 'De Valera Rejects Irish Peace Treaty', *Daily Mirror*, 9 December 1921, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ 'De Valera Rejects the Peace Treaty', *Daily Express*, 9 December 1921, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ 'Ireland Disowns De Valera', *Daily Express*, 10 December 1921, p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ 'Sinn Fein Cabinet Split', *Daily Mail*, 9 December 1921, p. 9.

accept the very real challenge that still existed and instead considered de Valera's role to have transitioned to a state of irrelevance following the negotiations by the Irish plenipotentiaries. Similar to the Ulster situation, these arguments failed to understand the political aspirations of those against the Treaty. This was, once again, a symptom of the press concentration on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question and the historic neglect to define and understand it. As the contentions from prominent Irish leaders such as Carson and de Valera had indicated, the divide in Irish political opinion remained and would continue despite the signing of the Treaty.

Following de Valera's rejection, Griffith, with Collin's support, announced his intention to stand by the Treaty.¹⁸⁸ With this move, the settlement-focused press and partisan *Daily Herald* further reflected on the priorities of the Irish plenipotentiaries. The *Daily Herald* addressed the split in the Sinn Féin Cabinet and argued the Irish plenipotentiaries had agreed to the Treaty in the belief,

[N]ot that they were getting the whole of what they and the majority of their countrymen had demanded... but that they were effecting a fair compromise, doing the best that was possible in the circumstances, and laying... the foundation of a free, peaceful, and happy future for Ireland.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ 'Sinn Fein and the Irish Treaty', *Daily Telegraph*, 10 December 1921, p. 9.

¹⁸⁹ 'The Irish Crisis', *Daily Herald*, 10 December 1921, p. 4.

This line of argument rationalised the work of the Irish plenipotentiaries and outlined the main issues for the Dáil, who, like the unionists, had to decide if the Treaty was the solution it desired.

An editorial in the *Manchester Guardian* similarly reflected that the 'full value of what the Irish plenipotentiaries have gained for Ireland is not readily grasped there'.¹⁹⁰ It added that Griffith and Collins were defending the Treaty 'before many Irishmen who think of it as something infinitely less in dignity and significance than formal independence'.¹⁹¹ The article concluded,

There is good ground for hoping that reason will gain the day; but one warning should be given. It is not the business of Englishmen to abuse Mr. De Valera. He is, as it seems to us, giving his country advice that would be fatal, but he gives that advice from a sense of duty, not from any personal motive. The criticisms of a nation which was yesterday at war with Ireland will not help those Irishmen who mean to secure to their country the fruits of the greatest victory won by any Nationalist movement since the making of Italy.¹⁹²

These contentions suggested a basic awareness of the importance of the Dáil's decision and contextualised de Valera's rationale for rejecting the Treaty for a British audience. By drawing comparisons to other European nationalist movements, these arguments also situated Ireland once more in the context of the

¹⁹⁰ Politicus, 'The Issue the Dail will Decide', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 December 1921, p. 12.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

greater world order. Primarily, they maintained the *Guardian's* focus on settlement through warning against criticism of the Treaty. As another article cautioned, the opposition to the Treaty in Southern Ireland was 'likely to detach a considerable section of the Irish people', which would 'dash the cup of peace from the lips of Ireland and throw her back into the old, miserable conflict and confusion'.¹⁹³ As these contentions rightly suggested, there was a very real threat that Ireland could erupt in a civil war, which would negate the work of the Treaty negotiations. Therefore, there was a desire to see the Dáil ratify the Treaty terms to help ensure the opportunity for the envisioned peaceful future with Ireland.

Despite this desire, the *Observer* added to the reflection by considering the Irish psyche. In one article the paper remarked that settlement had 'flashed a thrill of hope and astonishment through the world' but that there were 'elements of grave danger in the psychology of many Irish extremists, both North and South'.¹⁹⁴ It added 'no wizard's wand will dissipate in a moment all the obsession of the past. The Irish as a whole have been, more than any other, a haunted nation'.¹⁹⁵ It concluded Ireland's acceptance of the Treaty could 'affect profoundly the working of the whole British Empire and even influence the course and procedure of world policy at the main points of its future management'.¹⁹⁶ These contentions considered the broader aspects of Irish opinion by addressing the historic Anglo-

¹⁹³ 'Ireland to Decide', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 December 1921, p. 6.

¹⁹⁴ 'The Hour and the Hope', *Observer*, 11 December 1921, p. 12.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Irish relationship and the significant opportunity that the Treaty offered. It followed the paper's established cautious tone, recognising the feelings of bitterness that remained.

The Times added to the reflection of the historic relationship and in one article asserted,

Priests and politicians, Castle and Rebels, Orangemen and Whiteboys, Unionists and Sinn Fein, Catholics and Protestants, statesmen and newspapers, all have blundered, all have misunderstood, and some have stained their minds and hands with crime.¹⁹⁷

This contention admitted to the misunderstanding between England and Ireland, which was an argument that had been noted at various points throughout the Irish debates, and was a result of the historic failure to define and understand the Irish question. The article added that the Treaty offered,

[S]omething higher and greater than all the Bills and Acts that have preceded them. They are due, not to intimidation, but for conviction – to conviction born out of the Great War. First and foremost, it is the war that had been the great agent in the act of conciliation.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ 'Great Britain and Ireland', *The Times*, 14 December 1921, p. 11.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

These contentions from *The Times* reflected the long path treaded to settlement and noted the role of the Great War in prompting debate that eventually led to the signing of the Treaty. As the article conceded, blame for failing to find a solution sooner rested on all involved. Significantly, the present Treaty was considered to offer a new opportunity for Ireland.

Despite the general press reflection on the opportunity of the Treaty, the challenges of implementing the terms of the Treaty were further tested in mid-December when Ulster announced its disapproval. The *Daily Mirror* reported on a speech Carson made in the Northern parliament that featured a 'slashing attack on the Government's Irish policy'.¹⁹⁹ In his speech, Carson argued in the Treaty 'there is nothing... except that England, beaten to her knees by gunmen and assassins, says: We are willing to scuttle out of Ireland'.²⁰⁰ Carson likewise sent Lloyd George a letter in which he argued, 'The Government concession of a different oath and standard of loyalty to Sinn Fein appears to make it impossible for Ulster ever to enter the Irish Free State'.²⁰¹

De Valera's objection to the Treaty likewise remained an obstacle, which was addressed in a cartoon from the *Westminster Gazette*. The cartoon, entitled 'The President who Wouldn't', featured de Valera stomping on 'peace' standing next to a table with a 'Dail Eireann' tablecloth and the signed Treaty.²⁰² This

¹⁹⁹ 'Lord Carson Denounces the 'Ulster Betrayal'', *Daily Mirror*, 15 December 1921, p. 3.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ 'Ulster's Refusal to Enter Irish Free State', *Daily Mirror*, 16 December 1921, p. 3.

²⁰² 'The President Who Wouldn't', *Westminster Gazette*, 16 December 1921, p. 3.

cartoon emphasised the divide in the Sinn Féin ranks that was addressed by the press earlier in the month and suggested that de Valera remained a formative challenge to peace through his refusal to work with the Treaty terms. This challenge was in spite of what a Dublin correspondent for the pragmatic *Daily Telegraph* reported was the anxiety of Irish signatories ‘that nothing shall arise to sidetrack the real question of whether or not the Treaty is acceptable to the Irish people’.²⁰³



‘The President Who Wouldn’t’, *Westminster Gazette*, 16 December 1921, p. 3.

²⁰³ Dublin Correspondent, ‘Lively Scenes at Dail Meeting’, *Daily Telegraph*, 15 December 1921, p. 11.

Caption: 'I do not care, let come what may,
What Arthur Griffith likes to say,
O take the horrid thing away,
No Treaty will I have to-day!'

In response to the criticism from Ulster and de Valera, Lloyd George replied with what the *Daily Telegraph* described as 'crushing energy' to the criticisms laid against the Treaty and was reported to have said: 'The Dominions of the Crown... are not in the habit of rejoicing over acts of humiliation to an Empire which they have sacrificed so much to maintain'.²⁰⁴ In the Commons, Lloyd George also asserted that 'the prestige of the Empire has been enormously enhanced by this Agreement. It has given the Empire a new strength'.²⁰⁵ The King likewise addressed criticism in a speech at Westminster in which he reiterated his 'earnest hope' for the Agreement to end 'the strife of centuries'.²⁰⁶ These contentions from British leaders retained a distinct focus on Britain's needs without addressing the expressed desires of Irish leaders who, on both sides, found fault with the Treaty. This mimicked what was seen in the press debates through the continued employment of a narrow constitutional perspective of the Irish question. The challenge and 'elements of danger' sustained with this divide in Irish political opinion and the unguaranteed status of the Treaty's ratification.

Consequently, the press reporting and debate on the Treaty's ratification maintained throughout the end of December. A correspondent for Lloyd George's

²⁰⁴ 'Westminster and Dublin', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 December 1921, p. 10.

²⁰⁵ HC Deb., 14 December 1921, vol. 149, cols. 43-8.

²⁰⁶ 'The King's Hope for Ireland's Future', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 December 1921, p. 11.

Daily Chronicle's reported on a 20 December Dáil debate in which Griffith told his colleagues that he thought the Treaty was 'good enough' and that '95 per cent of the people of Ireland thought likewise'.²⁰⁷ The paper reported that de Valera had 'taunted' Griffith and Collins by calling them 'His Majesty's Ministers' and promising 'black flags in the streets of Dublin if the King came to open Parliament'.²⁰⁸ As these events indicated, the ability of the Treaty to bridge the incompatible beliefs within Irish political opinion remained a significant concern and challenge as ratification still hung in the balance.

In response to the rift in the Sinn Féin ranks, the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines reflected on the state of the Irish situation. In one article, the *Westminster Gazette* argued that 'the real issue in Ireland is in danger of being swept away in a spat of words' and the Dáil had to decide if Ireland was prepared to remain in the British Empire.²⁰⁹ The *Daily Telegraph* argued a Sinn Féin's split was 'a tremendous cleavage, and instead of peace coming to Ireland the country will probably again go through a period of acute political strife'.²¹⁰ Meanwhile, the *Manchester Guardian* reiterated its previous stance and cautioned that it was 'no business of ours to join in the controversy going on in the Dail'.²¹¹ The *Gazette* similarly argued,

²⁰⁷ R.A. Scott-James, 'De Valera's Bitter Dail Battle', *Daily Chronicle*, 20 December 1921, p. 1.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ 'Ireland and the Oath', *Westminster Gazette*, 22 December 1921, p. 6.

²¹⁰ Dublin Correspondent, 'Dail and Treaty', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 December 1921, p. 9.

²¹¹ 'The Dublin Debate', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 December 1921, p. 6.

We cannot expect the desperate struggle which preceded the truce to fade at once from the memory of Irishmen. We cannot expect them to look without suspicion at the rapid changes which have brought us within reach of a settlement or to be sure at once that they are on safe ground.²¹²

As these contentions indicated, the decision by the Dáil remained an important step for those within the press that desired the settlement that was offered with the Treaty. Despite the fact the signing of the Treaty had represented a monumental accord that had, as the *Guardian* argued, 'gained the approval of the great mass of Englishmen and Irishmen alike',²¹³ transitioning beyond the Treaty proved to be more difficult than initially perceived. This was a direct result of the press desire for an amorphous solution without understanding what the remaining problems were. And, as the *Guardian* and *Gazette* articles conceded, Irish suspicions of the Treaty and its ability to bring peace were not something that could be overcome overnight. Instead, the transition would require time and thoughtful consideration.

The Dáil ultimately decided to postpone its decision to ratify the Treaty until it reassembled on 3 January 1922.²¹⁴ The *Daily Express* reported the decision was 'received with considerable dissatisfaction by the public waiting outside' and argued it was 'significant that public bodies have begun to exert pressure on the

²¹² 'The Adjournment of the Dail', *Westminster Gazette*, 23 December 1921, p. 6.

²¹³ 'The Dublin Debate', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 December 1921, p. 6.

²¹⁴ 'Dail Adjourns to January 3', *Daily Express*, 23 December 1921, p. 1.

Dail'.²¹⁵ A Dublin correspondent for *The Times* contended though the decision was considered with 'wide agreement' to be the right move, the fact that the debate had 'shown the Treaty to be in possible danger of defeat is rousing the country to the necessity of expressing its will, and that will is for settlement'.²¹⁶

The Dáil's postponement exposed the divide within the Sinn Féin ranks and the concurrent general Irish public desire for settlement. As evidenced in the debates leading to postponement, the decision to ratify the Treaty terms had incited a re-examination of Irish priorities. Ratification or its alternative had consequences for Ireland and Britain alike. Therefore, the decision required careful consideration. Despite the general acceptance of the Treaty by the press, as the unionist-leaning press contentions and the response to postponement had revealed, more remained to be considered. Once more, the historic fear of outside factors, especially a return to violence, were important considerations. December began and ended with the Irish question on the verge of potential major change. The month had seen new strides made to bridge the gap between Britain and Ireland as well as Irish political opinion, but the year ended with ratification unmet and the Irish question left in an unresolved state.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Dublin Correspondent, 'The Voice Of Ireland', *The Times*, 24 December 1921, p. 10.

Transitioning

The important question at the moment is not whether His Majesty's Government are going to stand by the Treaty, but is Ireland going to stand by it?²¹⁷ - Unionist MP William Jellett, Commons debate

The post-Treaty period saw the press coverage and debate of the Irish question maintain until the Dáil's decision to ratify the Treaty was made official. Because of this, the press generally focused reporting on fear of losing the opportunity for settlement. Following ratification, even with some questioning of Ireland's commitment to standing by the Treaty, the administration of Ireland was largely considered by the British press and government to be an Irish concern. Subsequently, despite some recognition of the significance of the Treaty and acknowledgement of the challenges that lay ahead, press coverage significantly declined as the two Irish parliaments settled into their roles. The exception was the unionist-leaning *Morning Post*, which focused contentions on mistrust of the British government and disappointment with the Treaty terms. The paper remained the most active out of its press competitors with reporting, particularly with the pending Boundary Commission.

At the start of January, the press coverage of Ireland continued to focus on the Dáil's decision to ratify the Treaty. Gwynn, as part of his work in the *Observer*, reflected,

²¹⁷ HC Deb., 16 February 1922, vol. 150, cols. 1261-372.

This is surely the strangest New Year that ever came to Ireland; a Treaty which gives her more than any of her leaders had hoped for a century, that is undoubtedly to-day desired by nine out of every ten Irish men and women; and yet acceptance uncertain.²¹⁸

This contention emphasised the prevailing desire for settlement despite the fact that there clearly were leaders who had wanted more than was on offer, even if the offer proposed greater autonomy. This was akin to the *Manchester Guardian's* March 1920 article that had considered another apparent of Ulster accepting Home Rule that it had never asked for.²¹⁹ This contention from Gwynn underscored the overall challenge of addressing the Irish question. The re-examination of Irish priorities seen in the December Dáil debates left Treaty ratification in limbo, especially as de Valera continued to be vocal in his dissent.

The challenge to the Dáil's decision was further underscored when, in early January, de Valera's proposed a new scheme for Ireland, which would make Ireland an independent state in the British Commonwealth, with the King recognised as the head.²²⁰ De Valera reportedly urged Irish citizens 'not to approve of a settlement that can be no settlement, or be rushed into a decision they will deplore'.²²¹ With news of this scheme, in one article the *Daily Telegraph* argued though de Valera may engage in a 'furious public attack upon all in Ireland who

²¹⁸ Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland's Voice', *Observer*, 1 January 1922, p. 15.

²¹⁹ Special Correspondent, 'The Home Rule Bill', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 March 1920, p. 2.

²²⁰ 'De Valera's New Proposals Revealed', *Daily Herald*, 5 January 1922, p. 1.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

disagree with him... the desire and determination of Southern Ireland has been given expression with a fullness'.²²² It added the Dáil had the choice between,

[V]oting for what they want and voting for what their constituents want... If democratic principle is to have any reality or meaning in the Ireland of the future, it will assert itself now.²²³

These contentions from the *Telegraph* addressed the role of the Irish public in desiring peace and challenged the Dáil to embrace the 'democratic principles' it had fought for in its quest for independence. Preserving settlement was once more the main focus and subsequently, de Valera's role was downgraded and disputed against the will of the Irish people. However, de Valera's threat nonetheless remained and would continue long after the signing of the Treaty, which was also an indication of a shifting divide in Irish political opinion.

Ultimately, de Valera's proposed scheme was overcome when, on 7 January, the Dáil approved to ratify the Treaty by a vote of 64 to 57.²²⁴ Following this move, a correspondent for Lloyd George's *Daily Chronicle* considered the importance of resolution for world relations and contended the decision had been 'received with deep satisfaction not only in Southern Ireland but throughout the

²²² 'Ireland's Crisis', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 January 1921, p. 10.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ 'Timeline'. *Treaty.nationalarchives.ie*. National Archives Ireland. Web. 9 January 2017.

world'.²²⁵ Meanwhile, the *Westminster Gazette* addressed the importance of British and Irish opinion asserting,

It is almost certain that neither Dail Eireann nor the present House of Commons would have accepted the Treaty if public opinion in both countries had not practically forced them to do so. The "politicians" have bowed to popular will.²²⁶

These contentions from the government-loyal and settlement-focused press lines addressed the perceived global importance of the Treaty. They likewise considered the impact and persuasive reach of public opinion for both British and Irish leaders. In Britain, the government's handling of the Irish question was managed on an international stage where popular opinion proved to be a great consideration during the government's deliberations. However, though the *Westminster Gazette* declared the Treaty had settled the 'ancient Anglo-Irish quarrel'²²⁷, more remained to be considered. The concentration on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question by the press impacted popular understanding of the Irish situation and meant that solution was desired but the remaining problems were overlooked. So, while the ratification of the Treaty did mark an official conclusion by the British government to pursue Irish settlement, consideration of Ireland's future was lacking.

²²⁵ R.A. Scott-James, 'Dail Declares for the Treaty', *Daily Chronicle*, 9 January 1922, p. 1.

²²⁶ "'Only a Step'", *Westminster Gazette*, 9 January 1922, p. 6.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

Consequently, the press reporting following ratification generally focused on documenting the impending challenges to implementing the settlement and also promoting a desire to back out of Irish politics. The *Manchester Guardian* argued the Dáil's vote had,

[R]emoved the last obstacle to the emancipation of Ireland, and, after long years of struggle, the dream of Ireland a nation can at length be translated into reality... The result, we may believe, is now assured; but the steps by which it is to be reached are not all plain sailing.²²⁸

A Dublin correspondent for the *Daily Express* reported that despite the relief felt by southern Ireland,

At the same time the political situation remains full of uncertainty and anxiety. No one knows quite what the upshot will be, but bitter struggle between the two factions seems inevitable.²²⁹

In addition, the press addressed the role of Irish leaders. *The Times* contended with ratification,

²²⁸ 'Ireland a Nation', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 January 1922, p. 6.

²²⁹ Dublin Correspondent, 'Ireland a Free State', *Daily Express*, 9 January 1922, p. 1.

Men who have little experience of administration will be called upon to assume the control of their country's destinies under new and unprecedented conditions.²³⁰

The paper argued it doubted 'whether either Englishmen or Irishmen truly realize all that this event implies... We have indeed come to the threshold of a new epoch'.²³¹ The *Daily Telegraph* added,

The Irish character, as we believe, is more fitted now to grapple with the problem of self-governing nationhood than at any earlier time; but let us realise that its capacity is going to be put to its severest test.²³²

These contentions from the settlement-focused and pragmatic press lines suggested that implementing the Treaty terms required time and patience. While they generally recognised the pressure for the Irish statesmen who were now responsible for bringing the Treaty terms to fruition and the potential for 'bitter struggle', the desire to see an end to Britain's participation in the Irish question had led to support for that resolution. Subsequently, with the signing of the Treaty terms, Britain's participation, both in its official and unofficial capacities, began to decline following ratification. Conversely, Ireland's journey had just begun.

²³⁰ 'The Irish Free State', *The Times*, 9 January 1922, p. 11.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² 'Ratification', *Daily Telegraph*, 9 January 1922, p. 10.

Southern Ireland's transition began with de Valera's resignation as President, which was tendered in a private meeting of the Dáil on 9 January.²³³ In his resignation, de Valera declared:

It will be, of course, my duty to resign. I don't know if I will do it just now, but I have to say to the country, and to the world, that the Irish people established a Republic. The Republic can only be disestablished by the Irish people.²³⁴

And, although de Valera stood for re-election, the Dáil refused it by a vote of 58 to 50.²³⁵

Upon the election result, the government-loyal *Daily Express* aptly argued,

[F]or the moment... President de Valera is dead. But Mr. de Valera is very much alive, and it would be unduly optimistic to hope that his capacity for making trouble is even moribund.²³⁶

Another article from a Dublin correspondent similarly contended that he, 'despite repeated rebuffs, shows no signs of carrying out his expressed intention to retire into private life'.²³⁷ These contentions rightly recognised the influential role of de Valera. As his resignation, the close result in the re-election, and the slim vote for

²³³ 'Dail's Dramatic Session', *The Times*, 7 January 1922, p. 4.

²³⁴ 'The Dail Accepts', *Observer*, 8 January 1922, p. 13.

²³⁵ 'Re-Election Refused by Two Votes', *Westminster Gazette*, 10 January 1922, p. 1.

²³⁶ 'Ave Atque Valera', *Daily Express*, 10 January 1922, p. 6.

²³⁷ Dublin Correspondent, 'De Valera Fails Again', *Daily Express*, 10 January 1922, p. 1.

Treaty ratification revealed, the divide in Irish political opinion remained and the Dáil was divided too. So, while the press considered the Treaty to have 'resolved' the Irish question, de Valera's continued prominence foreshadowed the bitter dispute that would follow in the civil war, which would begin later in the year.

Following de Valera's resignation, the establishment of the provisional government in the South progressed in mid-January. In accordance with the Treaty terms, a meeting of 'the members elected to sit in the House of Commons of Southern Ireland' was held on 14 January.²³⁸ Under the chairmanship of Collins, the meeting set up the provisional government for the twenty-six counties pending the establishment of the Free State parliament and government.²³⁹ For the time being, the provisional government and the government of Dáil Éireann, which was still not recognised by the British government, existed in parallel.²⁴⁰ With the provisional government established, 'the new Ireland' began.

As the Treaty terms were enacted in the South, the *Manchester Guardian* reflected on England's transitioning out of Irish affairs. In one article it contended,

Henceforth the running of Ireland is an Irish concern, and Englishmen are in the position of spectators – and, with few exceptions, friendly and hopeful spectators... It is going to be a tremendous test of Irish political capacity. But we believe that both the leaders and the led will

²³⁸ 'Parliament in Ireland'. *oireachtas.ie*. Houses of the Oireachtas. Web. 14 January 2017.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

pull through it, not easily nor without misadventures, but will still without disaster.²⁴¹

This contention underscored the paper's established political tone of promoting settlement and reflected the general press desire to remove the British presence in Ireland. The establishment of the provisional government was a step to officially switching Ireland into its dominion function and, as the paper argued, the role of Englishmen was relegated to 'the position of spectators'.

As part of England's transitioning out of Irish affairs, the partnership between Northern and Southern Ireland was a significant hurdle that needed to be addressed. Craig and Collins began to address this in a meeting in late January in which it was decided to end the boycott of Belfast goods in the South and to make preliminary arrangements for future cooperation in matters affecting all Ireland,²⁴² which the settlement-focused and government-loyal press lines were particularly supportive of. The *Westminster Gazette* argued this 'peace concordat' gave 'renewed hope of national unity in Ireland sooner rather than later'.²⁴³ *The Times* similarly contended the agreement was 'acclaimed in Dublin as a triumph of common sense, which gives a new and substantial hope of real unity in Ireland. Belfast regards it as an important step in linking North and South'.²⁴⁴ *The Observer* added the provisional agreements by the governments of the North and South on

²⁴¹ 'The New Ireland Starts', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 January 1922, p. 6.

²⁴² 'First Steps Towards Irish Unity', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 January 1922, p. 7.

²⁴³ 'First Step to Irish Unity', *Westminster Gazette*, 23 January 1922, p. 1.

²⁴⁴ 'Ulster And Sinn Fein', *The Times*, 23 January 1922, p. 10.

'certain important matters' were 'a noteworthy and significant achievement'.²⁴⁵

The initial meeting between Craig and Collins offered a general positive hope for future relations and indicated willingness for a better future partnership. What remained to be seen was if such a partnership would withstand.

Despite strides taken, the move toward recognising a closer partnership and union was not without difficulties, as the divide within Irish political opinion was still an underlying concern, even if not consistently recognised by the press. To implement the Treaty terms, the British government shifted its focus to securing a responsible government in Southern Ireland and ensuring the survival of the parliament in Northern Ireland.²⁴⁶ However, Lloyd George's coalition and its agenda with Ireland were increasingly challenged. Specifically, a new Die Hard movement, supported by the unionist-leaning *Morning Post*, questioned the coalition's strategy with Ireland and worked to undermine policy.²⁴⁷ This coupled with the continual religious discord and IRA border violence in the North posed a considerable threat to the Treaty's ability to function successfully.²⁴⁸ These challenges were further exacerbated by hardships from unemployment and the decline of staple industries, which were seen by some within the British government to be a drain on the British economy.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ 'Step to Irish Union', *Observer*, 22 January 1922, p. 11.

²⁴⁶ Canning, *British Policy Towards Ireland*, p. 30.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁴⁹ Nicholas Mansergh, *The Unresolved Question: The Anglo-Irish Settlement and its Undoing, 1912-72* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 248.

Moreover, the vague stipulations of the Treaty terms, particularly that of the Boundary Commission, which had yet to devise its plan for establishing the borders of Northern Ireland, left significant questions to be resolved. The *Manchester Guardian* reflected on the issue in one article that reported Ireland was 'moving towards union' but suggested,

[T]he Boundary Commission might wait and much more than a month be allowed for consideration of the constitutional problem before the Commission gets to work. There are here great possibilities. Agreement having gone so far, why should it not go farther?²⁵⁰

This argument reflected the paper's established political tone by promoting settlement and also publicised a new fear of the Boundary Commission diminishing the work of the Treaty and the 'possibilities' within Ireland. This again revealed the extent to which the press generally failed to understand the nuances of Irish political opinion as implementing the settlement terms were put before the opinion of Ulster, despite the well-documented concerns of its citizens and leaders.

Conversely, the unionist-leaning *Morning Post* increasingly separated itself from its press competitors through its exclusive recognition of Ulster opinion. Following ratification, the paper reflected on the shift in Ulster opinion and in one article asserted,

²⁵⁰ 'Irish Union', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 January 1922, p. 6.

There is one thing on which the people of Ulster seem to be agreed – that is better to make terms with Sinn Fein than to trust to the honour of the British Government... The British Government had shown itself so treacherous towards Ulster that it was not to be trusted on the boundary question.²⁵¹

As this contention indicated, unionist scepticism of and frustration with the British government's Irish policy had not dissipated with the Treaty. Instead, it had manifested into a new resentment that suggested difficulty with future relations with England. The Boundary Commission remained a prominent topic that had potential significant implications that could change the make-up of the separate Irish territories.

While a solution for the Irish question was formally implemented with the Anglo-Irish Treaty, normalising the Anglo-Irish relationship and relations between the North and the South of Ireland would continue to evolve long after the Treaty's ratification. Ultimately, the Treaty's success depended on the pursuit of compatible objectives from a historically divided, poorly defined, and misunderstood set of communities. Consequently, despite a desire to pull out of Irish affairs, British press interest in and coverage of Ireland would continue to develop along with the new Ireland envisioned by the Treaty.

²⁵¹ 'The Craig-Collins Terms', *Morning Post*, 24 January 1922, p. 7.

Conclusion: "Let us put an end to it." - Anglo-Irish Relations and the Treaty

The fact of the matter is that public opinion on neither side was quite ripe. It was only when it came to be realised by everybody that prolonging the agony would only mean more loss, devastation, irritation, and trouble that the moment came when men of reason on both sides said: "Let us put an end to it."¹ – Lloyd George, Commons debate

The task of 'putting an end' to the Irish question garnered significant attention in Britain throughout 1917-21. The attention included that of the British press who covered the events in Ireland via columns, editorials, cartoons, and articles from outside news agencies and foreign press outlets. Analysis of this coverage indicates that the Irish question was influenced by the historic Anglo-Irish relationship and current world events and was therefore multifaceted and involved (often overlapping) considerations of nationality/race, religion, economics, and empire. At the core of the debate was Ireland's constitutional relationship with Britain and whether or not Ireland would be a united or a divided nation.

During this period, the British press concentrated on the constitutional aspect of the Irish question and its efforts in defining *what* it was and *who* was responsible for its resolution started from that perspective. While the press

¹ HC Deb., 14 December 1921, vol. 149 cc. 43-8.

detailed the crimes and violence perpetrated in Ireland, such coverage retained common tropes of violence, conflict, and emotion that had been historically utilised to explain issues related to Ireland. And, such violence was seen as marginal to mainstream constitutional politics and something which could be stopped by constitutional politics. That suggests the press had not understood the emotiveness of questions of nationhood and the extent to which solutions like Home Rule did not match up with the growing trend of Irish people who had become persuaded that they as a people should be their own nation, not subsumed within the wider United Kingdom. At the same time, while the press generally desired a solution, *what* it should be and *how* to implement it oscillated and was particularly influenced by the public distaste of violence.

The Irish Question in British Politics and Press

After the 1801 Act of Union in which Ireland joined the United Kingdom, Irish men and women formed an ambiguous mixture of identities as members of the global empire and their status as both 'colonial' and 'imperial'. Consequently, anti-colonial and separatist movements dedicated to the establishment of an Irish Republic sprang up and challenged the foundation of the Anglo-Irish relationship. A Home Rule solution allowing for the establishment of an Irish parliament with control over Irish affairs was considered to be a viable option to reconcile the conflicting class, economic, and religious issues straining relations. However, conservatives and liberals attacked Home Rule for being a concession to extremist

Irish parties and a threat to the union and empire. And, the Liberal Party split and those opposed to Home Rule worked as 'Liberal Unionists' with the Conservatives under a single 'Unionist' banner.

The First World War transformed the Anglo-Irish relationship and accelerated militarism within Ireland, providing separatist movements with a new sense of urgency and purpose. The preservation of empire had an enormous attractive appeal that drove many political leaders in both Britain and Ireland including Lloyd George, unionist leader Carson, and nationalist (Irish Parliamentary Party) leader Redmond. Initially, Carson and Redmond were able to encourage their supporters to enlist and join the British war effort, while simultaneously leveraging their respective political aspirations. However, despite serving the same cause during war, unionists and nationalists were brought closer together.

Irish discontent was hurled into the spotlight with the 1916 Easter Rising, which eventually helped to change the tide in Irish popular opinion with more broad based support for the republican call for Irish independence. Following the Rising, various attempts were made to secure a resolution to the Irish question that would supersede and lead to the decline of the republican movement. This research picks up from the after effects of the Rising and the spur in British press reporting on the Irish situation as the Irish war experience and sustained split in Irish political opinion forced Britain to re-examine the Anglo-Irish relationship. This re-examination was tested in the midst of other 20th century social debates in

which public opinion and civilian morale (stemming from the creation of the 'home front' concept that incorporated civilians into the war effort) were factored.

From the newspapers utilised for this research four dominant themes were identified: government-loyal, settlement-focused, pragmatic, and partisan. These themes reflect the political allegiances held by the newspapers and their proprietors and were consistently present in the coverage of Irish affairs up until the 1921 period (after which the categories break down due to significant cross over and similar press coverage as settlement neared). This research argues that the substance of the coverage of the Irish question was consistently narrowly constitutional considering that a Home-Rule-type solution working broadly within the confines of the British constitution could work and there was a collective failure to acknowledge that the rise of republicanism had fundamentally changed the Irish question from its pre-war iteration. This error stemmed from the press not adequately defining all the dimensions of *what* the Irish question was by not taking into account the way in which opinion was already changing in Ireland following the Rising, and instead assuming that it was essentially still a debate about Home Rule.

In 1919, the *Daily Mirror* contended 'Ireland has been a thorn in our side for seven hundred years, defying every known means of pacification'.² During the 1917-21 period, Ireland's thorny persistence was detailed and debated in the press as attempts were made by the British government to resolve the elusive Irish question. And, although settlement was finally met with the signing of the Anglo-

² 'What Sinn Fein Really Wants', *Daily Mirror*, 23 January 1919, p. 7.

Irish Treaty in 1921, admittedly, more remained to be accomplished by way of normalising relations (both Anglo-Irish and North/South relations).

Post-Treaty

Although the Irish question was officially declared 'settled' with the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, the path to settlement was not straightforward and various criticisms and scepticism over the Treaty's result remained. Lloyd George considered this in a Commons debate, in which he reflected,

There were moments when we all feared that we proposed a Conference too soon, and if any of those who think that we might have done it a year ago could have just peeped through and seen the last hours which ended in agreement, they would have wondered whether, on the whole, we might not have waited a little longer... There are those who still think it could have been done a year or two ago. We do not think so.³

As evidenced by this research, despite the strides made with the signing of the Treaty, the result tested both British and Irish statesmen. Each had to deal with a press and public who were critical of violence and were keen for settlement. With the implementation of the Treaty terms, the divide in Irish political opinion remained. Splits in republicanism were fought out in a civil war while partition

³ HC Deb., 14 December 1921, vol. 149 cc. 43-8.

managed the divide between nationalism and unionism (although the security of Northern Irish border counties was not guaranteed). Partition was a way to stabilise the problem but, as a letter to the editor in *The Times* had cautioned in 1917, the 'partition of Ireland, temporary or permanent, in any shape or form, will settle nothing'.⁴

Following the signing of the Treaty, the Anglo-Irish relationship would evolve and be tested as familiar contentions remained. The British press would continue to be charged and challenged with reporting and editorialising the situation in Ireland. They would do that by, as so often in years to come, largely ignoring events in Ireland unless they became violent. Not until the late 1960s would there again be sustained British press coverage of Irish politics when both British and Irish governments were forced to face the problems created with partition.

⁴ W.M. Murphy, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Times*, 2 May 1917, p. 8.

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