

Great Britain and the Irish Question, 1774-1923



Access to History: Great Britain and the Irish Question 1774-1923 Fourth Edition by Brian Leaf

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 7899 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 224 pages



A Complex and Contested History

The relationship between Great Britain and Ireland has been complex and often contested throughout history. The Irish Question, as it came to be known, refers to the political and social issues surrounding Ireland's relationship with Great Britain, particularly the question of Irish independence.

This article explores the history of Great Britain and the Irish Question from 1774 to 1923, providing a comprehensive analysis of the events and forces that shaped the relationship between the two nations.

The Early Years (1774-1800)

The Irish Question first emerged in the late 18th century as a result of growing Irish nationalism and resentment of British rule. In 1774, the British Parliament passed the Coercive Acts, which were intended to suppress Irish dissent and maintain control over the colony.

The Coercive Acts sparked widespread outrage in Ireland and led to the formation of the Irish Volunteers, a militia that defended Irish rights and opposed British authority. In 1782, the Irish Parliament passed the Declaration of Independence, which asserted Ireland's independence from Great Britain.

However, the British government refused to recognize Irish independence and, in 1800, the Act of Union was passed, merging Ireland with Great Britain to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

The 19th Century

The 19th century was a turbulent period for Ireland. The Great Famine of 1845-1852, which was caused by a potato blight, resulted in the deaths of over a million people and the emigration of over 2 million more.

The Famine led to a resurgence of Irish nationalism and a renewed demand for independence. In 1867, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was founded to fight for Irish independence through armed rebellion.

In 1886, the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), led by Charles Stewart Parnell, was formed to campaign for Irish Home Rule, which would have given Ireland its own parliament with limited powers.

However, the British government resisted Home Rule and, in 1886 and 1893, the Home Rule Bills were defeated in the British Parliament.

The 20th Century and Irish Independence

The early 20th century saw a rise in militant Irish nationalism. In 1916, the IRB launched the Easter Rising, an attempt to establish an independent Irish Republic. The Rising was crushed by the British, but it marked a turning point in the Irish Question.

In 1918, the IPP won a majority of seats in the Irish general election and declared independence for Ireland. However, the British government refused to recognize the Irish Republic and, in 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed, which established the Irish Free State, a self-governing dominion within the British Empire.

The Treaty was controversial in Ireland and led to the Irish Civil War between pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty forces. In 1923, the Civil War ended with the victory of the pro-Treaty forces.

The history of Great Britain and the Irish Question is a complex and contested one. The relationship between the two nations has been marked by conflict, violence, and political maneuvering.

The Irish Question was eventually resolved with the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921, but the legacy of British rule in Ireland continues to shape the relationship between the two nations today.

Further Reading

- [The Irish Question on History.com](#)

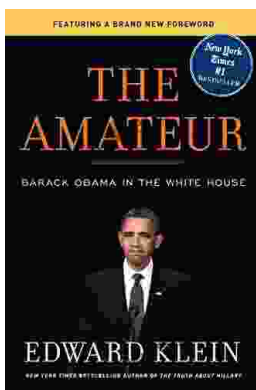
- The Irish Question: A Brief History on BBC News
- The Irish Question 100 Years On on The Irish Times



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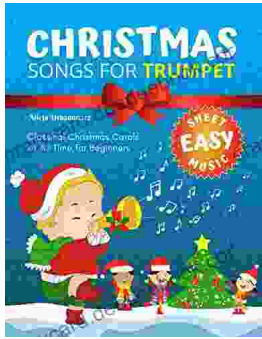
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