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Between Robustness and Authority: An Organizational Theory of Rebel Success

By

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the relationship between rebel leaders and rebel field commanders is an important factor in determining the outcomes of civil wars. Rebel organizations must balance the need for organizational robustness, the ability to regrow parts that are destroyed, and leadership authority, the ability of leaders to command other parts of the organization to act. These two virtues are in tension. The relationship between rebel leaders and rebel field commanders determines the balance between robustness and authority. Horizontal rebel organizations with too much robustness cannot effectively operate as the leader does not have authority over field commanders and vertical organizations with too much authority are vulnerable to decapitation as field commanders cannot communicate with each other if the leader is destroyed. Therefore, mixed rebel organizations that can balance the two virtues tend to be the most successful. This thesis presents a new typology of rebel organizations with cases drawn from modern Ireland.

Acknowledgements

French filmmaker Jacques Rivette wrote in “The Act and the Actor” that, “Every film is a documentary about the actor.”¹ In that spirit, I believe that every academic paper is an autobiographical, detective’s report on the people and organizations the scholarly author interacted with during the research process. Nowhere is that clearer than in the acknowledgement’s section of a paper. As such, I have many people to thank for helping me in this project. First, I want to thank the staff of The Joseph Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago and the Irish Military Archives in Dublin for running their institutions and providing me access to most of the texts consulted for this project. Next, I want to thank my classmates in my master thesis workshop for asking good questions, pointing out problems I was blind to, and providing productive suggestions for new avenues of research. I would like to also thank Zackary Gostisha, and Ruairí O’Mahony for many long hours of discussion on a wide range of social scientific topics and Dr Conor Mulvagh for his advice and incite. I owe a great deal of gratitude to my faculty advisors on this project: Paul Staniland and David Cantor-Echols. Prof. Staniland effectively pushed me further than I ever thought I could go and Prof. Cantor-Echols let me go to crazy places without ever raising an objection. Finally, I am eternally grateful to my parents’ years of support as I have worked towards becoming a political scientist and my girlfriend, Merrill, for being there for me every single day even as we were geographically quite far apart during the writing of this thesis. I apologize to anyone I have forgotten to thank here, and of course I claim responsibility for all mistakes made below.

¹ Mary Wiles, “Introduction: Remembering Rivetter and Marker,” *The Cine-Files* 12 (Spring 2017), 2. <http://www.thecine-files.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/WilesIntroductionPDF-2.pdf>.

Main Argument

What accounts for the variation in the success of rebel organizations? As rebel groups fight against the state, we should expect to see an inverse relationship between state power and rebel group success.² However, in modern Ireland we do not see that relationship, in fact the opposite seems to be true. In 1798, the United Irishmen failed to defeat the weak and under-prepared Irish government forces. The Irish state successfully countered the United Irishmen's opening attack and was able to contain and defeat the rebel organization quickly. Similarly, in 1922, the Anti-Treaty Irish Republican Army was unable to overthrow the newly created, extremely weak Irish provisional government even though the Anti-Treaty Irish Republican Army had twice as many soldiers as the government did. The Irish provisional government was able to outmaneuver the internally conflicted Anti-Treaty Irish Republican Army, take control of the country's major cities, and slowly defeat the rebels in the country-side. On the other hand, between 1919 and 1921, the small Irish Republican Army fought the powerful British state to the point at which they were able to achieve most of their political demands, including political independence. Clearly, some other explanation besides state capacity is needed to explain the variation in outcomes.

This thesis proposes that variation in civil war outcomes can be explained by variation in the organization of rebel groups. Specifically, rebel groups must balance two non-

² For articles arguing for a negative relationship between state capacity and rebel success see:

Allison M. Shelton, Szymon M. Stojek, and Patricia L. Sullivan, "What Do We Know about Civil War Outcomes?" *International Studies Review* 15 (2013), 520-522.

T. David Mason and Patrick J. Fett, "How Civil Wars End: A Rational Choice Approach," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40, no. 4 (Dec. 1996), 546-568.

T. David Mason, Joseph P. Weingarten, and Patrick J. Fett, "Win, Lose, or Draw: Predicting the Outcomes of Civil Wars," *Political Research Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (1999), 239-268.

David E. Cunningham, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Idean Salehyan, "It Takes Two: A Dyadic Analysis of Civil War Duration and Outcomes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 4 (Aug. 2009), 570-597.

complementary virtues in order to be successful: robustness and authority.³ Robustness is the ability of an organization to survive the destruction of part of the organization. In the context of a rebel group fighting a civil war, units can be destroyed in military actions, leaders can be arrested or killed, parts of the rebel group can split off from the main group, etc. In a violent and chaotic civil war, it is extremely likely that a rebel group will take losses. In order to succeed, rebel groups need to have the capacity for regeneration of lost parts of the organization. This is particularly true for the organizational leadership, without which a rebel group will have difficulty making strategy or acting in a unified fashion. The leadership can get the organization to act in a unified fashion because of its authority. Authority is the ability of leadership to get other parts of the organization to act in the manner that the leadership wishes. Authority can be seen in a leader issuing orders that are followed, disciplining members of the organization, collecting revenue from members of the organization, etc. Establishing and maintaining organizational authority can often be difficult when members of the organization have interests which are unaligned with those of the leadership, when communication between the leadership and the other parts of the organization is difficult, or when the organization has an ideological commitment opposing centralized authority. Unfortunately, there is a tension between robustness and authority and how rebel groups manage that tension is key to their success.

Rebel groups must manage the tension between organizational robustness and authority, this is because each virtue stresses opposing sets of network ties within the organization.

³ This thesis is agnostic on the type of outcomes a rebel organization considers success. Rebel groups seek different preferred outcomes in different contexts such as regional secession, autonomy within the host country, seizing national power, opposing the general growth of state power, or forcing the government to make a policy concession. For the purposes of this paper, the United Irishmen in 1798 and the IRA in 1919-1921 were secessionists and the Anti-Treaty IRA were trying to seize control of the national state. This thesis does not care about how close the rebel group gets to reaching its political goal. Therefore, the IRA in 1919-1921 is considered successful as most of Ireland gained independence as a result of their activity. The other two groups are considered unsuccessful as they were militarily crushed and did not achieve any of their political goals through fighting a civil war.

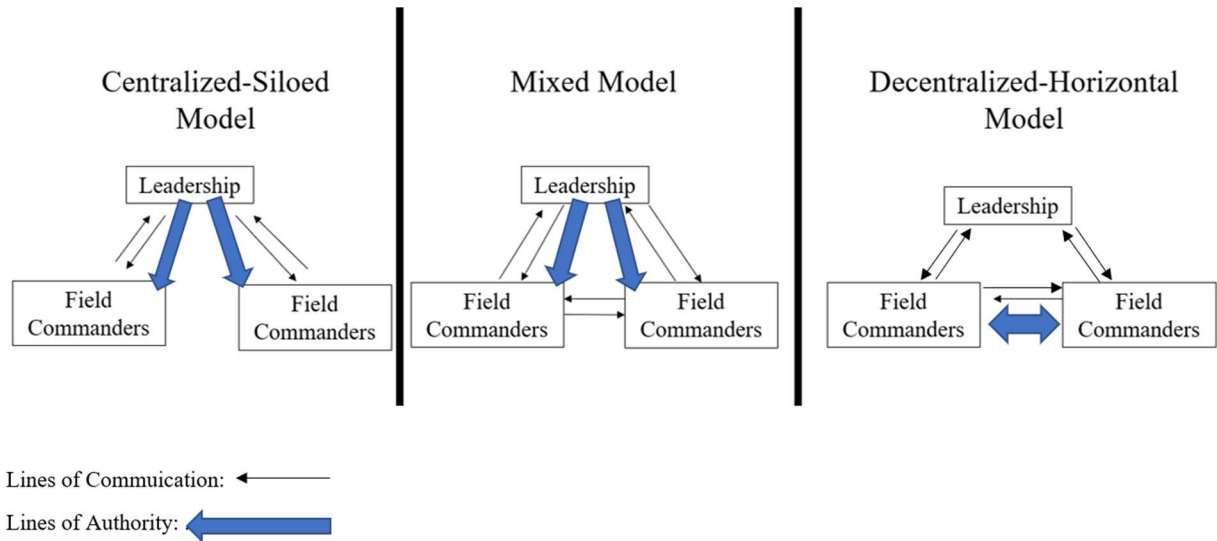
Robustness comes from strong horizontal ties between rebel field commanders and authority comes from strong vertical ties between rebel field commanders and the leadership.⁴ A robust organization needs to be able to regenerate itself if it loses a part, especially the leadership. If the rebel leadership is destroyed then other parts of the organization need to be able to create a new leadership that they can follow. This process requires that members of the organization can communicate with each other outside of channels that run through the leadership. If members of the rebel organization cannot communicate with each other without the leadership, then the organization will fall apart when the leadership is destroyed. Intraorganizational communication between field commanders is the source of robustness. On the other hand, horizontal lines of communication between non-leadership parts of the rebel organization can be a challenge to the leader's authority within the organization. This is because those horizontal lines of communication allow for field commanders to engage in discourse that could challenge the orders coming from the top. These discourses can sow dissent and cloud the ability of the organization to take unified action. In extreme cases, the rebel leadership loses all authority, cannot effectively issue orders, and becomes a mere figure head for the organization. In these cases, field commanders act either out of their own limited interest or their actions are checked by horizontal lines of peer-pressure. Rebel groups finding themselves in either one of these extremes have difficulty achieving their over-arching political goals through warfare.

In cases of bureaucratized, hierarchical rebel organization, which often seek to mimic the organization of state militaries, the balance between robustness and authority is expressed in three possible ideal-type models (see Fig. 1 on the next page). The Centralized-Siloed Model

⁴ For a discussion on organizational ties see: Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 1-35.

emphasizes authority above robustness. Rebel field commanders cannot communicate with each other except through the leadership. All authority comes from the leadership down to the field commanders. In the Decentralized-Horizontal Model, there are horizontal lines of communication between field commanders and the leadership loses control of authority. If there is any authority within this organization it travels between peers. Finally, in the Mixed Model, the rebel organization has horizontal lines of communication and the leadership can maintain authority over the field commanders. This thesis argues that the United Irishmen in 1798 was a Centralized-Siloed organization, the Anti-Treaty Irish Republican Army in 1922-23 was a Decentralized-Horizontal organization, and the Irish Republican Army in 1919-1921 was a Mixed Model.

Fig. 1: Three Models of Rebel Organizations



This typology provides insights which other typologies of rebel organizations do not. This thesis's important intervention into the literature on rebel organization is emphasizing the importance of the relationship between rebel leadership and the field commanders of rebel

organizations. Those relationships are important because rebel organizations cannot rely on the external, hegemonic power of the state to control its members. Rebel leaders cannot call the police if one of their members is grievously misbehaving. Rebel leaders must develop strategies for handling those problems within the organization. Other authors emphasize other important factors such as Weinstein (2007) dividing rebel groups into two types: those that employ opportunistic strategies to mobilize fighters and those that employ activist strategies to mobilize fighters;⁵ Reno's (2011) argument that African rebel groups change as the nature of African states change;⁶ Staniland's (2014) argument that rebel's preexisting social networks determine the kind of organization they can build during a civil war.⁷ This thesis is indebted to Staniland (2014), particularly the concept of horizontal ties, but Staniland (2014) describes "irregular guerrilla forces" not the centralized, hierarchal organizations that this thesis examines.⁸ Martin (2021) also highlights the importance for the relationship between rebel leaderships and field commanders, but it is looking at post-conflict stability and isn't interested in war outcomes.⁹ By theorizing about the importance of the relationship between rebel leadership and rebel field commanders, this thesis seeks to provide new insight into the importance of the internal functioning of rebel organizations on civil wars.

This thesis compares three rebel groups in Ireland for several reasons. This study compares three cases from the country to minimize the differences between the three cases.

While Ireland changed in many ways between the late 18th and early 20th centuries, factors like

⁵ Jeremy Weinstein, *Inside Rebellions: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁶ William Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷ Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion*.

⁸ *Ibid*, 10, 21.

⁹ Philip A Martin, "Insurgent Armies: Military Obedience and State Formation after Rebel Victory," *International Security* 46, no. 3 (Winter 2021-22), 87-127.

geography, the major ethnic and religious groups, location of capital city, and general culture are more similar across these three cases than if the study was comparing three rebel groups from different countries. Ireland has several distinctive features that make it a good choice for this study. First, it is a majority English speaking country during the modern period with several quite different active rebel groups. As the author is a native English speaker, it is relatively easy to consult primary sources and archival material produced in Ireland in the last three hundred years. This makes conducting research much easier than in cases where there is a large body of relevant non-English language primary and secondary sources. Second, Ireland, being an island, is relatively geographically isolated. This isolation decreases the role of third-party interventions into the three Irish civil wars reviewed in this study. Finally, the modern history of Ireland is in many ways like much of Europe as it was part of a large empire at the end of the 18th century, witnessed a growth in political and cultural nationalism during the 19th century, and gained its independence after World War One. That description fits several other European countries and historical lessons drawn from Ireland maybe more applicable to other European cases than historical lessons drawn from Britain.¹⁰ These are the reasons for the case selection in this thesis.

The rest of the thesis reviews each of the three cases to demonstrate how each organizational model functioned. Each case begins with an introductory paragraph providing an overview of the case. Next comes the historical context in which each case exists. After that is an analysis of the state forces which opposed the rebel group during the civil war. Then comes an analysis of the organization of the rebel group. The cases conclude with a description of the

¹⁰ For a discussion of Ireland being in the “mainstream of European history” and England being “an eccentric tributary,” see:

Roy Foster, “Roy Foster on Ireland’s Many Unmade Futures,” interview by Tyler Cowen, *Conversations With Tyler*, Mercatus Center at George Mason University, February 22, 2022, audio, <https://conversationswithtyler.com/episodes/roy-foster/>.

course of the civil war each rebel group fought in. The thesis finally ends with a conclusion section summarizing the argument of the thesis and suggestions for further research.

United Irishmen 1798

The United Irishmen is the centralized-siloed organization in this thesis. As such there should be little to no communication between rebel field commanders, leading to low organizational robustness, but there should be high levels of leadership authority and efforts to direct the organization from the center. The United Irishmen was an organization of Irish political actors in the last quarter of the 18th century that opposed British rule. Between 1791 and 1795, the organization was radicalized away from being a legal, constitutional opposition party seeking to secure more civil liberties, rights, and political power for the majority population of Ireland into an organization seeking to use violence to secure Irish independence. The organization tried to rise up in the spring and summer of 1798, but this effort failed due to the ability of the government to remove the organization's leadership rendering the organization unable to coordinate its activities. The United Irishmen was a centralized-siloed organization, which provided the organizational leadership the theoretical ability to coordinate the activities of cells of United Irishmen throughout the country. But in reality, the government was able to arrest the leaders and the United Irishmen were not able to regenerate its leadership in order to lead the rebellion. This brittle rebel organization was defeated by relatively weak government forces in due course.

Ireland after the end of the Williamite-Jacobite War in 1691 was divided into three religious classes.¹¹ The lowest group, the majority of the population (70 percent), were Catholic,

¹¹ Thomas Bartlett, Kevin Dawson, and Dáire Keogh, *The 1798 Rebellion: An Illustrated History* (Boulder: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1998), 4.

descended from the old Gaelic Irish residents, and possibly spoke the Irish language as their first language.¹² Under the Penal Laws system, this group was denied the rights granted to other British subjects under the Bill of Rights, could not hold public office, vote, or sit on a jury. The second, middle, class was composed of groups of dissenting Protestant denominations such as Quakers, Methodists, and most importantly Presbyterians. Then as now, most of the Presbyterians were of Scottish descent and lived in Ulster. This middle group had more wealth than their catholic co-nationals and were able to take part in the political discourses transforming the Atlantic world in the late-18th century but were prevented from controlling political power on the island by the most powerful class: the Anglo-Irish.¹³ Being excluded from political power led to many Presbyterians Scots-Irish to feeling alienated from the Irish regime. The Anglo-Irish were descendants of English settlers in Ireland and as such owned most of the farmland. They conformed to the local Episcopalian franchise, The Church of Ireland.¹⁴ The Anglo-Irish were the ruling class of 18th century Ireland, and like many settler colonialists they were, generally, determined to protect their special privileges against uprisings from the indigenous population and from threats to their power and privileges coming out of the imperial capital.¹⁵ These dynamics, a large, scattered, lower catholic class with significant grievances but no power or leadership, a mostly Presbyterian middle class with education and wealth but little political power, and a small ruling Episcopalian class that wanted to protect their interests from a popular

¹² Ibid, 1.

¹³ Ibid, 3.

R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 212-217.

¹⁴ Some authors refer to the Anglo-Irish adherents of The Church of Ireland as Protestants and the members of the other Protestant denominations as Dissenters. I am not going to use this naming convention because it is unnecessarily confusing and a poor representation of the history of Presbyterianism. While Quakers and Methodists can be said to have dissented from the Church of England, Presbyterians developed independently of the Church of England in the separate Scottish Reformation. The diminutive relationship Presbyterians in 18th century Ireland and the Church of Ireland was purely political.

¹⁵ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 167-194.

uprising but also wanted to prevent the reforms that would prevent that uprising, determined the nature of the political crisis of the 1790s in Ireland and nature of the United Irishmen's uprising in 1798.

Irish politics started careening in the 1770s. Decades of population growth had led to rising pressure on a limited amount of farmland and led to rising rents and rural discontent.¹⁶ Then the American War for Independence broke out in 1775. The British government withdrew most of the regular British Army soldiers from Ireland so that they could fight in North America.¹⁷ In response to the security vacuum Irish men started forming independent Volunteer militias to protect their communities, often of mixed Catholic, Presbyterian, and Church of Ireland stock.¹⁸ According to a letter written by Lord Charlemont, the Commander of a Belfast based Volunteer company:

Abandoned by Government in the hour of danger the inhabitants of Belfast were left to their own defence and boldly and instantly undertook it; associations were formed, arms were purchased; uniforms were provided; officers were chosen; parades were appointed and every diligence exerted towards the necessary acquirement of military skill and discipline.¹⁹

These, questionably legal, Volunteer companies were a problem for the Crown's government in Ireland. While these companies swore loyalty to the Monarch, they were not under government command and control.²⁰ Additionally, about a third of the Volunteers were from Ulster, mostly Presbyterians of Scottish descent who were openly sympathetic to the cause of the American

¹⁶ Bartlett et al., *The 1798 Rebellion*, 8-9.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 16-17.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 17.

²⁰ *Ibid*.

rebels.²¹ In these conditions, the Volunteers shifted from organizing to fill the security vacuum to demanding an end to mercantilism and electoral reforms.²² The British government, all ready fighting against a rebellion in North America and a broader war with the French and Spanish governments, was not in a position to deny the wishes of the Irish Volunteers, which at this point had 100,000 relatively well ordered soldiers.²³ In 1782, the British government granted a number of concessions for increased Irish home-rule.²⁴

The reformed, “Constitution of 1782”, split the opposition in the Volunteers into radicals who rejected the reforms as they did not provide universal male suffrage and moderates who feared that Catholic enfranchisement would lead to “despotic rule”.²⁵ This internal division within the opposition volunteer movement provided the Anglo-Irish elite the opportunity to capture the Irish Parliament and roll back the political concessions.²⁶ As it became clear that the new political order was not going to address the popular grievances that had led to its creation, groups started forming to oppose the Irish government. A major organization of resistance to the new Irish political status quo was the Defenders. The Defenders was a secret, rural, Catholic organization that sought to use violence to overthrow the Anglo-Irish ruling class, redistribute land holdings, abolish mandatory church tithes, and generally over turn the rural social hierarchy.²⁷ The Defenders, being an organization of rural Catholics, was demographically quite

²¹ Ibid, 12,13,17.

²² Ibid, 19-20.

²³ Ibid, 18.

²⁴ Ibid, 19-21.

²⁵ Ibid, 24.

“Despotic Rule,” in the eyes of Protestant Anglo-Irish writers, of course being intrinsic to Catholic political power and not a feature the preceding several centuries of English policy in Ireland.

²⁶ Ibid, 22.

²⁷ Ibid, 25.

Radical Irish Catholics, like those in the Defenders and United Irishmen, despite believing in Catholicism, often saw the institutional Catholic Church not as an ally in their struggle against the Anglo-Irish and the British state but as part of the repressive structure that stood between them and emancipation. This belief was well warranted during the

different than the second group organized to oppose the Irish government: the United Irishmen. The French Revolution of 1789 electrified the reading and writing Irish urban middle class. Members of the educated middle class of all three major religious back grounds divided into two factions: the “democrats” who generally supported the Revolution and the “aristocrats” who generally opposed the Revolution.²⁸ It took very little time for this heated public debate about French politics to turn into a heated public debate about Irish politics. The “democratic” position was laid out in Theobald Wolfe Tone’s book *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics in Ireland* in which he argued to his Presbyterian readers that the “Constitution of 1782” failed because it did not allow broad, Catholic, political participation thus allowing the Irish government to infringe on the rights of its subjects.²⁹ Importantly, the French Revolution demonstrated that a Catholic people could oppose tyranny and embrace liberty as well as Protestants, overturning a long held Anglophone assumption.³⁰ In October 1791, members of these “democrat” discussion circles formed the United Irishmen, an organization demanding a fully democratic government in Ireland and an end of religious division, but not yet full independence.³¹ Domestic opponents to the Irish government were given a boost in April 1793, when the British government went to war with Republican France. The British government, seeking to secure its position in Ireland, granted Irish Catholics the vote in Irish elections on the same terms as Protestants and opened service in the British military to Catholics.³²

1790s. During the French Invasion scare of 1796 and the Rising of 1798, the Church leadership denounced those threats to the establishment and excommunicated priests that took part in them.

²⁸ Ibid, 28.

²⁹ Ibid, 32.

³⁰ Ibid, 31.

³¹ Ibid, 33-34, 36.

³² Bartlett et al., *The 1798 Rebellion*, 41.
Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 260.

But as a reaction to Westminster granting more rights to Catholics, the Irish government cracked down on opposition. Between 1793 and 1795, the Irish government took harsh measures to crack down on the Defenders, including mass arrests, executions, and impressment into the Navy.³³ By 1795, the Irish government suspended habeas corpus and passed a law allowing the Viceroy to place parts of the country under direct military control.³⁴ Concerned that United Irishmen had infiltrated the Irish militia, the Irish government created a new armed force, the Yeomanry, led by loyal Anglo-Irish gentry to protect the Irish government from domestic uprisings or a coup by the Irish militia.³⁵ The government also turned a blind-eye to the activities of the newly formed Orange Order, a non-governmental anti-revolutionary group that attacked Defenders and United Irishmen.³⁶ This wave a repression radicalized the United Irishmen and drove them into a union with the Defenders.³⁷ In May 1795, Tone and other leaders of the United Irishmen swore an oath “never to desist in our effort until we subvert the authority of England over our country and asserted our independence.”³⁸ Tone then leave to organize a French invasion of Ireland.³⁹ In December 1796, a French force of 50 ships, over 14,000 soldiers, and 40,000 arms to provide to members of the United Irishmen sailed for Ireland under the command of Gen. Lazare Hoche and Tone.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, from the Franco-United Irishmen perspective, the fleet was hit by a terrible winter storm and scattered across the Atlantic Ocean.⁴¹ Many of the

³³ Bartlett et al., *The 1798 Rebellion*, 42.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 45-46.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 46.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 43-44.

The Orange Order is a right-wing organization dedicated to preserving the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland founded in 1795. The colorful name of the organization refers to William of Orange, the Protestant monarch closely associated with securing Protestant power in Ireland after defeating the Jacobite supporters of James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1691.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 44.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 47.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 49.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 52-53.

By this point Tone had a commission in the French Army as an Adjutant-General.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 52.

French ships managed to reach Ireland, but Gen. Hoche and a third of the fleet was not able to rejoin and without his leadership the French commanders decided to return home.⁴² While the invasion was a failure, the Irish government had done nothing to prevent it. There were no Irish government forces in the area that could have prevented the French forces from landing.

Furthermore, the Irish government was not even aware of the French force until a local man living near the landing site saw the ships and reported it to the authorities.⁴³ Lord Camden, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, afterwards wrote that if the French had landed, Cork city and Limerick would have fallen before any force could have been gathered to repel them.⁴⁴ In December 1796, the Irish government was saved due to getting lucky with the weather and through no effort of their own. After the failed invasion, Irish government forces began massive campaigns of terror, featuring floggings, house-burnings, and torture on a large scale throughout the county, to destroy internal threats to the regime.⁴⁵ This wave of state violence convinced the United Irishmen leadership that they needed to stage an uprising without waiting for another French invasion.⁴⁶

The military near miss of the French invasion highlights the weaknesses of the Irish government in the 1790s, being the poor quality of the government's armed forces, but the invasion scare also obscured the government's greatest asset, its intelligence capabilities. The armed forces the Irish government could call upon were below the standards of the late 18th

⁴² Ibid, 53-54.

⁴³ Ibid, 54.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 61.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 83-88.

On 31 March 1798, Prime Minister William Pitt wrote to Gen. Lake, the commander in charge of the operation "to make a speedy and (as far as circumstances will admit) a well-concerted effort for crushing the rebellion by the most vigorous military exertions in all the disturbed provinces." Lord Clifden wrote from County Kilkenny that, "We are out every day foraging [for arms] and burning the houses of known rebels." In Queen's County, Lord Wycombe wrote that his men "are perpetually doing acts under the sanction of the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Councils for which a French soldier in an invading army would be shot."

⁴⁶ Ibid, 91.

century. The Irish government had command authority over four armed forces: the regular British Army, the Militia, the Fencibles, and the Yeomanry. The British Army was the best trained, most professional force. But after 1793, the British government withdrew most of the regular Army soldiers from Ireland for redeployment in the Caribbean.⁴⁷ By the end of 1796, there was only 3,500 regular cavalry and 1,600 regular infantry in the country, not nearly enough to secure the island.⁴⁸ Concerningly, due to the heavy recruitment of Irish soldiers into the British Army by 1798 there were no “purely” British regiments left in the force raising questions about the political reliability of the Army in the case of an Irish uprising.⁴⁹ To plug the holes in the defences, the Irish government employed a succession of other forces: the Militia beginning in mid-1793, the Fencibles beginning in early 1795, and the Yeomanry beginning in late 1796.⁵⁰ The Militia were a home raised force, open to anyone, under the control of the Irish government that could be used anywhere in Ireland but not outside. Problematically for the government, the majority of the rank-and-file Militia men were Catholics who were pressured into the force and the United Irishmen were successful at infiltrating the ranks of the Militia.⁵¹ The Militia officers were often unmotivated, uninterested in training their men, and unable to control their soldiers.⁵² The lack of quality leadership in the Militia can be seen in the frequency of intra-organizational

⁴⁷ Ibid, 59.

Thomas Bartlett, “Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion: Ireland, 1793-1803,” in *A Military History of Ireland* ed. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 250.

⁴⁸ Bartlett et al., *The 1798 Rebellion*, 59.

⁴⁹ Concerns that “so large part of our regular infantry is composed of recruits or men raised in Ireland” were raised by Lord Portland, William Cavendish-Bentick, who was the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in the 1780s and a Member of the House of Commons during the 1798 rising.

Bartlett, “Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion,” 257.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 250.

⁵¹ Bartlett et al., *The 1798 Rebellion*, 46.

⁵² Irish Militia officers had little since of their professional duty and only really wanted “to indulge in walking the streets of Strabane [a town in County Tyrone] and lounging in the mess room” according to Charles Vallancy of the Tyrone Militia.

Bartlett, “Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion”, 258.

fights, sectarian brawling, and attacks on civilians.⁵³ This fact led to the Militia being politically unreliable, plagued with morale issues, and beset by deserting soldiers.⁵⁴ The Fencibles were soldiers from Britain that signed contracts that prevented the British government from sending them outside the British Isles.⁵⁵ The British identity of the Fencibles increased their loyalty and decreased desertion among the ranks, however this organization was crippled by the poor health of the soldiers. The Army Medical Board concluded that the Fencibles were as a whole “boys too young for service, or...unhealthy old men...most of them mechanics from unhealthy parts of Great Britain from unwholesome sedentary trades.”⁵⁶ Since the Irish government lacked enough regular soldiers, could not rely on the loyalty of the Militia, and could not hire enough healthy Fencibles, they raised the Yeomanry in 1796. The Yeomanry were drawn from local non-governmental armed bands that had been informally fighting the Catholic Defenders since 1774.⁵⁷ The organization was intentionally meant to be filled with “Protestants and Orangemen” with known liberal Protestants excluded from joining.⁵⁸ While politically loyal, this organization was poorly trained and units could not be taken outside their home county, preventing commanders from massing a large force of Yeomanry in one place. It was with this less-than-ideal collection of soldiers that the Irish government fought off the United Irishmen uprising of 1798. The Irish government was able to fight off the United Irishmen rising because the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 248, 254, 257.

Two members of the Irish government commenting on the Militia:

“Desertion is terrible at present and we know not how to prevent it.” – Edward Cook

“There is no keeping Irish troops in Ireland, they desert so abominably.” – Earl Fitzwilliam

⁵⁵ Ibid, 258.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

For an example of how general poor health hampered the usability of the Fencibles see the Prince of Wales Fencible regiment. When this regiment arrived in Dublin in 1795 396 of its 500 men were found to be unfit for duty and were sent home. This rate of unfitness was typical of the Fencibles during this time.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 267.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 266.

Orangemen being members of the Orange Order.

government had strong intelligence on the internal functioning of the rebels.⁵⁹ A major weakness in the United Irishmen's organization was that it was easy to infiltrate by government spies.⁶⁰ The Irish government used this intelligence capacity to arrest United Irishmen leadership, crippling the organization.⁶¹

The United Irishmen was vulnerable to being crippled by leadership arrests because it could not regenerate its leadership under state pressure. Without leadership, the organization was unable to act in a coordinated fashion that could have overwhelmed the ill-prepared Irish government forces. On 10 May 1795, the United Irishmen reorganized into small (max 36 members), oath-bound cells.⁶² Each town or half-baron would have a cell or society.⁶³ Each cell elected three representatives to a baronial committee, representing eight cells. If there were three or more baronial committees within a county, a county committee was formed and two or more county committees sent representatives to create a provincial committee. The national leadership of the United Irishmen was chosen from and by the provincial committee (see Fig. 2 on the next

⁵⁹ Marianne Elliot, *Partners In Revolution: The United Irishmen and France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 165.

⁶⁰ Curtin, *The United Irishmen*, 112.

⁶¹ Elliot, *Partners In Revolution*, 194-195.

Bartlett et al., *The 1798 Rebellion*, 94.

Theobald Wolfe Tone, *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone, Founder of the United Irish Society, and Adjutant General and Chef De Brigade in the service of the French and Batavian Republic, Vol. II*, ed. William Theobald Wolfe Tone (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton, 1826).

The most significant arrests being on the evening of the 12th of March 1798, when the government was able to grab most of the Dublin leadership. This raid left the organization without a central leadership able to coordinate the activities of local United Irishmen. Writing from Paris, exiled leader Theobald Wolfe Tone wrote in his diary that "...almost every man I know and esteem in the city of Dublin..." was taken in the raid and that "It is by far the most terrible blow which the cause of liberty in Ireland has yet sustained. I know not whether in the whole party [United Irishmen] it would be possible to replace the energy, talents, and integrity, of which we are deprived by this most unfortunate of events."

⁶² Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 274.

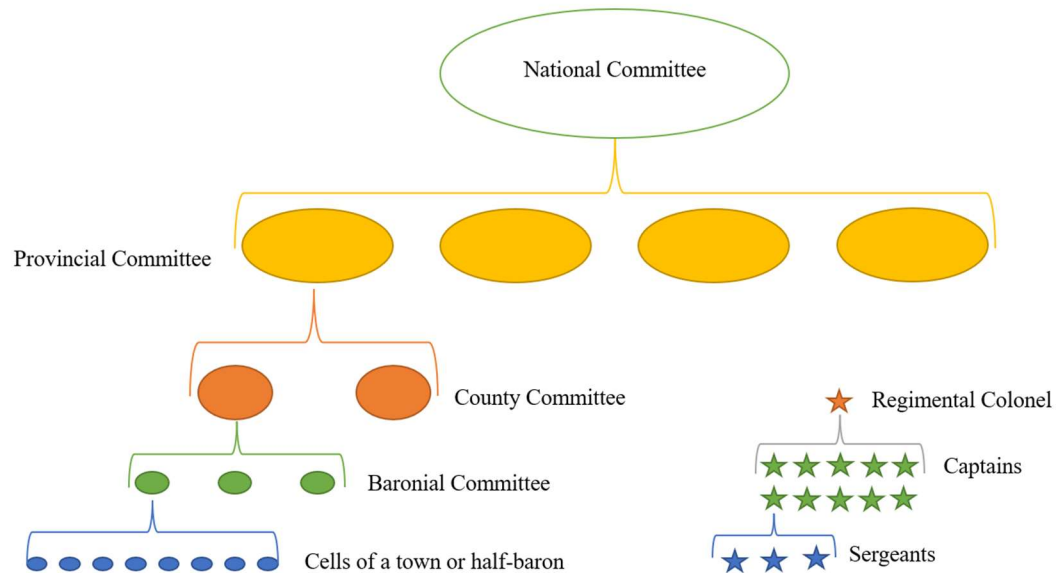
Nancy J. Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 102-103.

⁶³ Curtin, *The United Irishmen*, 102-103.

A Baron Land is a traditional non-standard unit of land associated with a Baronage.

page).⁶⁴ This system of organization was inspired by the organization of the Presbyterian Church in Ulster.⁶⁵ Each society elected a sergeant. Three societies elected a captain. Ten captains formed a regiment with superior officers within the national military command.⁶⁶

Fig. 2 Organization of the United Irishmen



⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 274.

⁶⁶ Curtin, *The United Irishmen*, 104-105.

Sir Richard Musgrave, Bart., *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland, From the Arrival of the English: Also, a Particular Detail of that which broke out the 23d of May, 1798; with the History of the Conspiracy which Proceeded it* ed. by Steven W. Myers and Delores E. McKnight (Fort Wayne: Round Tower Books, 1995).

Richard Musgrave gives a different account of the military organization of the United Irishmen in a book published in 1802. There are some details that Curtin and Musgrave disagree on. Not being acutely familiar with the primary sources for the United Irishmen, I have opted to use Curtin's description and not solely rely on Musgrave's account. "The military organization engrafted on the civil was constituted in the following manner: The secretary of each subordinate society, composed of twelve, was appointed their petty or non-commissioned officer: The delegate of five societies to a lower baronial committee was commonly appointed captain of a company, consisting of the five societies who had delegated him, and who made the number of sixty privates; and then the delegate of ten lower baronials to the upper or district committee was commonly appointed colonel of a battalion, which was thus composed of six hundred: The colonels of battalions in each county sent in the names of three person to the executive directory of the union, one of whom was appointed by them adjutant-general of the county, whose duty it was to receive and communicate military orders from the executive to the colonels of battalions, and in general to act as officer of the revolutionary staff."

Information was shared within the organization by representatives carrying oral messages between the layers of committees.⁶⁷ While initially this system worked fine, over the course of 1797 the Irish government cracked down on the United Irishmen and this communication system fell apart.⁶⁸ Under these conditions, committee meetings became increasingly rare and the national leadership had to send messengers further down the organizational hierarchy to communicate.⁶⁹ A result of this break down in the committee structure is that individual societies did not form horizontal ties with members of the United Irishmen in other counties. Without those horizontal lines of communication, the United Irishmen local leaders were unable to form plans of action across county lines nor were they able to replace leaders removed from action by the state. In this way, the United Irishmen were victims of the classic problem faced by centralized-siloed rebel organizations: the inability to regenerate leadership after decapitation.

However, the United Irishmen are not a perfect case for this thesis's theory. The primary problem this thesis faces with using the United Irishmen as an example of a centralized-siloed rebel organization is the limited evidence of field commanders following orders from leadership. This problem is due to the operational procedures of the United Irishmen, specifically the lack of surviving internal documents due to the preference for oral communication.⁷⁰ This lack of surviving evidence is difficult for the thesis to overcome as there is no way to produce records that never existed. However, the thesis needs to show that the leadership of the United Irishmen was able to issue commands to field officers and those commands were followed. While that cannot be done at the same fine-grained level as the Irish Republican Army, there is evidence of

⁶⁷ Curtin, *The United Irishmen*, 113-114.

⁶⁸ Elliot, *Partners In Revolution*, 165-166.

⁶⁹ Curtin, *The United Irishmen*, 113-114.

⁷⁰ Curtin, *The United Irishmen*, 113-114.

United Irishmen field commanders following orders. During the state crack down in spring 1797, after the failed French invasion, there was an internal debate about whether to rise up immediately or wait for another French invasion. A group of Ulster based United Irishmen wanted to launch the rising as soon as possible and a group of southern United Irishmen argued for waiting for another French invasion in 1798. The Dublin leadership heard both arguments and chose to wait for French reinforcements. The Dublin leadership seems to have had enough authority to restrain the Ulstermen from acting because they respected the decision and waited until later.⁷¹ The rising came after the Dublin leadership had decided that it was the right time to try and overthrow the government.⁷² This shows that at the broadest levels, the Dublin leadership was able to get restless field commanders to follow the leaderships desires.

When the uprising came on the 23rd-24th of May 1798, the outcome was not long in doubt. Without a central authority, there was no leader to coordinate the different revolutionary actives in Ireland leading to them misfiring.⁷³ The United Irishmen's lightning strike on the capital was quickly rebuffed as the leader in charge of it was arrested a few days before.⁷⁴ Next, there was a popular uprising in County Wexford, the southeastern most corner of Ireland, which was able to take control of most of the county, winning decisive victories over government forces at Oulart, Enniscorthy, Duncannon, and Tubberneering, but was unable to push out in the south or center of the country.⁷⁵ Seeing what was happening in Wexford, the United Irishmen county committees of Counties Antrim and Down rose, but they were unable to coordinate with

⁷¹ Bartlett et al., *The 1798 Rebellion*, 80-82.

⁷² Ibid, 93.

⁷³ Ibid, 101.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 102.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 108-114.

“Any attempt that was not next to a certainty of succeeding against the rebels should never again be attempted. Believe me, they are no longer to be despised as common armed peasantry. They are organised and have person of skill and enterprise among them.” – Gen. Fawcett, the commander of state forces at the Battle of Duncannon.

each other and Irish government forces were able to crush Antrim without Down coming to aid and vice versa.⁷⁶ By July, government forces were able to retake most of Wexford with the surviving rebels fleeing north to hide in the Wicklow Mountains.⁷⁷ In September, a small number of French soldiers landed in County Mayo in the north west to aid the United Irishmen, but this was too little, too late, in too remote a corner of the map to significantly revive the rebellion.⁷⁸ Government forces carried out another terror campaign that finally destroyed the United Irishmen, with the handful of surviving leaders fleeing the country leaving 30,000 dead behind them.⁷⁹ Their last activities being a tiny rebellion launched from the Wicklow Mountains in 1803.⁸⁰ This outcome is predicted by the organizational theory advanced in this thesis as centralized-siloed rebel groups, like the United Irishmen, are unable to recover from leadership decapitation due to a lack of organizational robustness. The Irish state was able to remove the leadership in the run up to the rebellion. Without the ability to regenerate leadership, the United Irishmen were unable to take advantage of a weak state position in 1798 to achieve their political goal of independence for Ireland. That goal had to wait until 1921.

Irish Republican Army 1919-1921

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was a mixed organization with both the organizational robustness to survive attacks from the state and the leadership authority to direct the organization to a common goal. The IRA was the rebel group that successfully fought against the British government leading to the country's independence. The IRA was able to avoid the problems the other two rebel groups in this thesis had by balancing robustness and authority. The organization

⁷⁶ Ibid, 123-128.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 129-133.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 136-141.

⁷⁹ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 280-281.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 285-286.

had authority due to the leadership's ability to monitor and discipline field commanders but also provide aid and guidance to them. The organization was robust due to the dense intraorganizational communication network between field commanders. The IRA was able to build a much more effective intraorganizational communication network than the United Irishmen because of the new technologies of trains and bicycles. These exogenous transformations in Irish life provided greater mobility over the whole country allowing information to be carried quickly and reliably across internal geographic boundaries, leading to a more robust organization than the United Irishmen. In this way, the IRA was able to avoid organizational decapitation but had clear leadership.

After the United Irishmen rising, the British government removed Ireland's political autonomy, closed the Dublin Parliament, and governed the country directly from London bringing Ireland into full union with Britain.⁸¹ However, this new arrangement did not immediately lead to Catholic "emancipation" or full inclusion as equal subjects of the Crown.⁸² This new arrangement meant that Ireland's political future was dependent on Westminster politics and that Westminster politics was influenced by Irish forces during the 19th century. In 1829, a group of Irish MPs led by Daniel O'Connell, secured the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 which removed most of the remaining legal discriminations against Catholics in the United Kingdom, opening public life for the Irish middle class.⁸³ Between 1845-49, Ireland in general and rural western Ireland in particular experienced the massively destructive Potato Famine. A round one million people died from the famine with over another million emigrating.⁸⁴ Politically, the famine deepened Anti-English feelings and brought the economic issues of land

⁸¹ Ibid, 282-286.

⁸² Ibid, 285.

⁸³ Ibid, 301-302.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 323-324.

ownership and the rural economy to the center of Irish politics and public discourse.⁸⁵ The political-economy of agriculture took center stage in the 1880s during the land-war, a period of popular protest and legislative activity that led to state-sponsored redistribution of land and the end of tenancy.⁸⁶ At the same time, Belfast and the surrounding areas became heavily industrialized. This process did not happen to the same extent in the rest of the country, creating a deep economic divide.⁸⁷ In the later half of the 19th century, there was a growth in Irish cultural nationalism, especially in literature, theatre, athletics, and the revival of the Irish language.⁸⁸ The late 19th century also saw the emergence of the Irish Home-Rule or Parliamentary Party, a Westminster party with the goal of legally establishing a devolved government for Ireland.⁸⁹ Between 1912 and 1914, the Home-Rule party almost achieved that goal, but a series of contingent events upset their Parliamentary efforts and pushed Ireland into civil war.⁹⁰

The legislative progress towards Home Rule between 1912 and 1914, led to the formation of “loyalist” militias to oppose Home Rule through violence if needed. The most significant group, the Ulster Volunteers, had 100,000 members or one-third of adult, male, Protestants in Ulster.⁹¹ In response, pro-Home Rule Irish nationalists organized their own militias, the Irish Volunteers, to provide a non-governmental force to enforce Home Rule when it was declared.⁹²

⁸⁵ Ibid, 342-343.

⁸⁶ Samuel Clark, *Social Origins of the Irish Land War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 3-17.

⁸⁷ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 342.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 446.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 400-428.

⁹⁰ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 461.

Frank Callanan, “The Home Rule Crisis,” in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 140.

⁹¹ David Fitzpatrick, “Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1920,” in *A Military History of Ireland* ed. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 383.

Timothy Bowman, “‘Ulster Will Fight’,” in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 156-157.

⁹² Fitzpatrick, “Militarism in Ireland,” 384-385.

Gerry White, “‘They Have Rights Who Dare Maintain Them’: The Irish Volunteers, 1913-1915,” in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 164-172.

By summer 1914, there were 150,000 members of the Irish Volunteers, including one-sixth of adult, Irish-Catholic, men, and an increasing number of small clashes between the Ulster Volunteers and Irish Volunteers.⁹³ Then, most unexpectedly, the political movement towards civil war in Ireland was interrupted by the outbreak of the Great War in Europe. The British government suspended the implementation of Irish Home Rule until after the end of the war and both the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish Volunteers were transformed into Army units and sent to France to fight against the Germans.⁹⁴ But a minority faction of Irish Volunteers, about 12,000, refused to join the British Army as they refused to serve the British government in any fashion.⁹⁵ In the spring of 1916, members of refusers Irish Volunteers staged an uprising in Dublin to try to overthrow the British government in Ireland. They occupied a number of public buildings, flew Irish nationalist and socialist flags, and declared the creation of an Irish Republic.⁹⁶ What they failed to do was seize control of the city, the trainlines, the government headquarters in Dublin Castle, the telephone office, or the ferry port.⁹⁷ Failing to take those key targets, the government leaders in Dublin were able to call in soldiers from Ireland and Britain, surround the buildings the Volunteers were held up in, and use heavy guns to drive them out.⁹⁸ Militarily the uprising failed in a week. Politically it was more successful. The uprising brought the idea of Irish Republicanism to the general public and the sixteen leaders executed by the British became national heroes.⁹⁹ Organizationally the rising was not as big as a disaster as it could have been. Most of the surviving Irish Volunteers were captured and put in a shared prison in Wales

⁹³ Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland," 386.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 386-388.

⁹⁵ White, "'They Have Rights Who Dare Maintain Them'," 169-170.

⁹⁶ Fearghal McGarry, "The Easter Rising," in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 254.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 249.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 255.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 257.

together for a year.¹⁰⁰ This was a key time for them to spend with each other, building relationships and making plans. When they were released in 1917, the Irish Volunteer veterans of Easter Week were able to start rebuilding their organization and prepared to take advantage of the next crisis.¹⁰¹ The next crisis came in March 1918 when the British government announced that they were preparing to impose military conscription in Ireland due to manpower needs for the war effort.¹⁰² This move was met with massive resistance to the government's plans that turned republicanism and desires for independence from fringe ideas into much more mainstream political positions. Riding a wave of pro-Independence, anti-British sentiment, the Sinn Féin political party swept the general election in December 1918 winning almost all the seats outside of loyalist Ulster.¹⁰³ The newly elected Sinn Féin MPs refused to take their seats in the House of Commons, instead meeting together in Dublin and claiming to be the legitimate government for the whole country.¹⁰⁴ In January 1919, the recently reorganized IRA used this constitutional crisis to launch a war for Irish independence.

The state forces during the Irish War of Independence were the strongest set of opponents that any of the three Irish rebel groups faced. British Crown forces in Ireland during the War of Independence was divided in two types, the British Army and a variety of Irish police forces. The British Army was the less important of the two. During this time period the Army was recovering from the Great War and had a number of other commitments around the world to

¹⁰⁰ Justin Stover, "Republican Hunger Strikes," in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 445.

¹⁰¹ John Borgonovo, "Reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers," in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 316.

¹⁰² Pauric Travers, "The Conscription Crisis and the General Election of 1918," in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 323-329.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Mary Daly, "The First Dáil," in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 334.

handle.¹⁰⁵ This limited the number of Army units in Ireland at any one time and led the Army to take more of a supporting role for the police forces.¹⁰⁶ The main Irish police force was the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), which in January 1920 had 9,500 officers spread around the island in 1,300 detachments.¹⁰⁷ Police officers were from Ireland, received six months training, and were professionals who expected to serve their whole career in the force.¹⁰⁸ While before the outbreak of war the RIC had lost much of its past para-military characteristics, the organization quickly rearmed with rifles and grenades and concentrated their forces in major towns.¹⁰⁹ To increase the strength of the RIC, the British government opened up recruitment to recently retired British soldiers coming home from the Great War.¹¹⁰ These new British RIC officers were called “Black and Tans” due to the color of their mismatched uniforms. Most of the “Black and Tans” were deployed to areas in Ireland with the most unrest from the IRA in the south.¹¹¹ They quickly gained a reputation for violence and reprisals on civilians.¹¹² But they were valued as additional manpower and by the end of 1920, the RIC was increasing in strength and morale across the board.¹¹³ A third police recruitment pool was opened in July 1920, with the hiring of “Temporary Cadets” or “Auxiliaries”.¹¹⁴ These police were drawn from ex-police officers, who were offered twice the pay of the regular police constables, and signed one-year long contracts.¹¹⁵ Unlike the regular RIC or the “Black and Tans”, the “Auxiliaries” were organized into Army-style

¹⁰⁵ William Sheehan, “The British Army in Ireland,” in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 363.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 365, 369-370.

¹⁰⁷ David M. Leeson, “The Royal Irish Constabulary, Black and Tans and Auxiliaries,” in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 372.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 372-373.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 373.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 374.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 376.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 377.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 379.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

companies of 100 men divided into platoons and sections and with military-style commanding officers.¹¹⁶ They were heavily armed with machine guns and were fully motorized with trucks and armoured cars.¹¹⁷ While the “Auxiliaries” had problems with discipline, they were a full realization of the British government’s effort to build a para-military organization to fight a war against the IRA in all but name.¹¹⁸ Between the British Army, the regular RIC, the “Black and Tans”, and the “Auxiliaries”, the British crown forces were more capable defenders of the state than what was available to the Irish state in 1798 or 1922.

A reasonable critique of this thesis is that while British state forces in Ireland in 1919-1921 were more capable than state forces in Ireland in 1798, the British state faced greater domestic pressures checking their actions in responding to rebel activities than it did in the 18th century. Due to a number of political developments during the 19th century, the British government was facing significant domestic political opposition to its policies on Ireland and could not use overwhelming terror to suppress the IRA like it did with the United Irishmen.¹¹⁹ However, contemporary Irish nationalists did not feel that the state forces were constrained. State forces often responded to IRA attacks with reprisals on locals in the form of night raids that resulted in beating men and cutting off women’s hair before burning down their house or shop.¹²⁰ Police forces increasingly turned to extrajudicial killings after September 1920, burned down the center of Cork City in December 1920, and opened fire on a crowd of civilians watching a

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 381.

¹¹⁹ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 280.

For example, Foster writes that, “The 1798 rising was probably the most concentrated episode of violence in Irish history.”

¹²⁰ David M. Leeson, “Reprisals,” in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 384.

football match in Dublin on 21 November 1920 leaving fourteen died.¹²¹ The British government did little to stop its forces from carrying out reprisals, and the police policy of reprisals wasn't abandoned until 3 June 1921.¹²² While it was most likely true that more Irish people were killed by state forces during and after the 1798 rising than during the 1919-1921 war (exact figures are impossible to produce), it would be wrong to say that British forces in either case were significantly restrained by domestic political pressure.

Opposing these state forces is the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The IRA grew out of the Irish Volunteer movement, reorganized after the failure of the 1916 Easter Rising, and took advantage of nationalist feelings in early 1919 to launch a guerrilla war for independence. The IRA was organized up from the parish or neighbourhood company. Companies within the same district, barony, or parliamentary constituency were organized into a battalion, with a number of battalions forming a brigade.¹²³ The IRA was led by General Headquarters staff (GHQ) in Dublin under the command of chief of staff Richard Mulcahy and Intelligence Chief Michael Collins.¹²⁴ Communications between field officers and the leadership were handled by an underground mail system that relied on bicycle mounted couriers moving messages between safe houses and IRA couriers taking trains to carry messages between counties.¹²⁵ Field officers could

¹²¹ Pádraig Yeates, "Dublin," in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 593.

Leeson, "Reprisals," 384.

¹²² Leeson, "Reprisals," 384.

¹²³ John Borgonovo, "'Army Without Banners': The Irish Republican Army, 1920-1921," in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 390.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Borgonovo, "'Army Without Banners'", 393.

"Message from Adjutant General to Brigade Commandant, Dundalk," 17 June 1920, IE-MA-CP-03-09, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin. https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_03_09.pdf.

"Anything done re railway communications since [unintelligent]."

"Message from Wexford Brigade to Adjutant General," 31 May 1920, IE-MA-CP-03-14, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin. https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_03_14.pdf.

also easily travel to Dublin to have a meeting with the GHQ staff.¹²⁶ This elaborate communication system functioned significantly better than the United Irishmen system of communication. The usage of written messages better preserved the information than the oral system used by the United Irishmen. Messages did not have to be presented at a large meeting as the information could be copied and shared locally by the brigade officers. Field officers were also able to use this network to communicate with each other. GHQ also encouraged field officers to meet with each other.¹²⁷ This dense communication network within the IRA gave that

“Message from Adjutant General to Brigade Commandant, Dundalk,” 8 October 1920, IE-MA-CP-03-09, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin. https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_03_09.pdf.

“All O/Cs will note that on no account whatever must the post be used for Volunteer correspondence, except where such usage has been specially sanctioned by G.H.Q.”

The IRA’s effective usage of trains to hold together a national rebellion is in opposition to the railways association with building of European state power at home and in the colonies during the 19th century.

Dennis Edwin Showalter, “Railroads and Rifles: The Influence of Technological Development on German Military Thought and Practice, 1815-1866” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1969), 1-22.

E. G. Campbell, “Railroads in National Defense, 1829-1848,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 27, no. 3 (Dec., 1940), 361-378.

Elisabeth Köll, *Railroads and the Transformation of China*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 165-219.

Zachary Callen, *Railroads and American Political Development: Infrastructure, Federalism, and State Building*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016).

Arturo Grunstein, “Railroads and sovereignty: Policy-making in Porfirian Mexico” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1994).

J. P. Daughton, *In The Forest of NO JOY: The Congo-Océan Railroad and The Tragedy of French Colonialism*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021).

¹²⁶ “Message from Adjutant General to The Commandant of the West Clare Brigade,” 24 October 1919, IE-MA-CP-02-32, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_02_32.pdf.

“I am directed by Headquarters’ Staff to summon you to attend in Dublin, some time between Saturday 1st prox. and Monday 3rd prox. The other Brigade Officers are also similarly summoned.”

“Message from Adjutant to The Commandant of the Athlone Brigade,” 2 December 1919, IE-MA-CP-02-17

The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_02_27.pdf.

“The request to come to town came from the D.C.S. [Deputy Chief of Staff]. I am asking him to write you again and make a further arrangement for seeing you. When you are here, please do not go away without seeing me.”

¹²⁷ “Message from the Director of Operations to the commanding officer in Kilkenny,” 20 October 1920, IE-MA-CP-03-09, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_03_09.pdf.

“The position with regard to the [?] Brigade – Limerick East – is that Sean Wall of Bruff is Commandant. W. should, therefore, get into touch with him.”

“Message from Adjutant to The Adjutant, Cork No. 2 Brigade,” 31 December 1919, IE-MA-CP=02-19, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_02_19.pdf.

rebel organization much more robustness than the United Irishmen. This robustness allowed the IRA to survive as an organization despite significant attacks on GHQ by British forces such as the arrest of Dick McKee and the raid on Richard Mulcahy's safe house.¹²⁸ Admittedly, the IRA leadership was never destroyed to the same degree as the United Irishmen leadership, but the IRA did prove capable of recovering from the frequent interruptions to leadership necessitated to avoid British forces.

While the IRA was able to build organizational robustness, it was also able to maintain its authority by closely monitoring field officers and providing useful resources that supported units in the field. The GHQ demanded that field officers write monthly reports on their activities.¹²⁹ These reports were closely analyzed and GHQ would issue responses if there was a problem than needed correcting, often demanding that a brigade do more. For example, on 14 October 1919 GHQ staff wrote a memo criticizing North Roscommon's September Report as "in an extremely slovenly form."¹³⁰ More seriously, Sean Wall was criticized in August 1919 for "an entirely unsatisfactory state of things, and I would ask you whether something could not be done to put life into the Companies of the East Limerick Brigade. Quite clearly the Officers are not doing their work, and such being the case, it is hard to expect activity on the part of the men."¹³¹ For issues more serious than underperformance, the GHQ could arrange to courts-martial a member

¹²⁸ Yeates, "Dublin," 588-589.

Michael B. Barry, "The curious case of the 'Sinn Féin typhoid plot'," *History Ireland* 28, no. 6 (December 2020), <https://www.historyireland.com/the-curious-case-of-the-sinn-fein-typhoid-plot/>.

¹²⁹ Borgonovo, "Army Without Banners", 392.

¹³⁰ "Message from GHQ to The Commandant of the North Roscommon Brigade," 14 October 1919, IE-MA-CP-02-20, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_02_20.pdf.

¹³¹ "Message from GHQ to Sean Wall," 7 August 1919, IE-MA-CP-02-05, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_02_05.pdf.

"The latter [Organisation Report Form] shows an entirely unsatisfactory state of things, and I would ask you whether something could not be done to put life into the Companies of the East Limerick Brigade. Quite clearly the Officers are not doing their work, and such being the case, it is hard to expect activity on the part of the men."

of the IRA. Such was the case in Wexford where Commandant James Cullen was reported to have disclosed confidential relating to an ongoing operation at a public house.¹³² Perhaps worse, Cullen's commander, Brigade Commandant Thomas D. Sinnott, was informed of this event but did not take any actions to discipline Cullen nor informed GHQ.¹³³ Both men stood before a formal court-martial composed of the Deputy Chief of Staff, the Director of Organisation, and the Director of Training.¹³⁴ There was a Prosecutor presenting the case against the two men and a witness was called.¹³⁵ Sinnott pled guilty and was removed from his leadership position within the organization.¹³⁶ The same sentence was handed down to Cullen. A memo was sent to the new Acting Commandant of the Wexford Brigade with instructions to read the report of the case to all the members of the Wexford Brigade so that Cullen and Sinnott are not reelected as officers in the future.¹³⁷ Similar steps were taken against Brigade Adjutant Matthew Butler of Tipperary, when it was revealed that he had stolen money from other Volunteers.¹³⁸ These cases show that the IRA leadership was able to gain a good deal of information about their membership and was

¹³² "Message from Headquarters to Phil Lennon," 22 March 1920, IE-MA-CP-03-14, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_03_14.pdf.

¹³³ "Charge Sheet of Brigade Commandant Thomas E. Sinnott," 12 March 1920, IE-MA-CP-03-14, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_03_14.pdf.

¹³⁴ "Report of Courtmartial Held on Brigade Commandant Thomas D Synott on 21st March 1920," 21 March 1920, IE-MA-CP-03-14, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_03_14.pdf.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ "Memo on the result of the Courtmartial of Thomas D Synott," 21 March 1920, IE-MA-CP-03-14, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_03_14.pdf.

¹³⁷ "Memo to Acting Commandant, Wexford, on the Courtmartial of James Cullen," 1 April 1920, IE-MA-CP-03-14, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_03_14.pdf.

"The suggestion that the defendant would be re-elected Commandant does not speak too highly for the Intelligence of the electorate. The lives of Volunteers are in the hands of the Commandants. If a senior officer shows such total lack of discipline he should not be even considered at an election."

¹³⁸ "Description of the Courtmartial of Matthew Butler," 20 December 1919, IE-MA-CP-02-23, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_02_23.pdf.

willing to punish field commanders for violations of military order. But along side this method of discipline, the GHQ could also reward field commanders with aid.

Beside monitoring and disciplining field commanders, the IRA leadership supported them with information and organisers. The IRA leadership did not have much funds or weapons to provide field commanders.¹³⁹ But the GHQ provided information to field commanders about British forces in the area.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, the GHQ provided transfer notices to field commanders when they were getting new soldiers from another brigade.¹⁴¹ This is extremely helpful because it reduces the uncertainty surrounding the identity of new members of a unit thus reducing the risks of government spies being able to get into the IRA. A more serious form of assistance was the provisioning of organisers to field commanders. Organisers were itinerant officers that GHQ sent to different brigades to help them fix the internal problems they were facing. Ernie O’ Malley, an IRA organizer, wrote of his experience that: “I was attached to Organisation Staff under Michael Collins. I never received instructions, memos, or help. I was told to organise a county, given the address of someone on the Brigade Staff who might not be at home when I called – then I was left to myself utterly.”¹⁴² Field officers wanted organisers to come and help them increase the capability of their units. A memo to the Acting Commandant of the Cavan Brigade reads,

With regard to your request for an Organiser to be sent for the 2nd. and 5th.

Battalions, I am afraid that this is quite out of the question. An Organiser spent a

¹³⁹ Borgonovo, “Army Without Banners”, 394-395.

¹⁴⁰ “Message to the Commandant of the East Limerick Brigade on the House of Col. O’Grady,” 28 August 1919, IE-MA-CP-02-05, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_02_05.pdf.

¹⁴¹ “Message on the transfer of Volunteer to Wexford Brigade.” 17 December 1919, IE-MA-CP-02-14, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_02_14.pdf.

¹⁴² Ernie O’Malley, *Raids and Rallies* (Dublin: Anvil Books Limited, 2001), 1.

considerable time in your Area last year, and when he completed there, we were of opinion that the organisation could be developed by the existing Brigade, and you are accordingly directed to that this is done.¹⁴³

This quotation shows both that organisers were a scarce resource that GHQ controlled and that organisers were desirable to have to help improve field units. By providing, but also controlling access, to resources such as information and assistance and monitoring and disciplining field officers, the GHQ was able to maintain their authority even while the IRA was a robust organization.

Unfortunately for this thesis the IRA is not a perfect case for demonstrating the strengths of a mixed rebel organization. First, the IRA did not have to actually regenerate its leadership after a decapitation strike by the state. This missing example is because the state was never able to destroy the IRA General Headquarters' Staff. Ideally, from the point of view of this paper, Mulcahy, Collins, and the rest of the staff would have been captured and killed and the IRA would have had to rebuilt the leadership through internal processes to demonstrate organizational regeneration. There is not a clear example of this happening because it did not need to. This thesis tries to simulate the loss of organizational leadership by pointing towards state disruption in leadership activity which temporarily took them out of action, but disruption is a poor substitute for destruction. Further research should find cases where rebel groups lose their leadership to examine leadership regeneration. Second, this thesis would be stronger if the IRA had launched a massive, country-wide, coordinated action that translated into political gains. That did not happen. However, a massive coordinated action that quickly achieves its political

¹⁴³ "Memo to the Acting Commandant of Cavan Brigade," 11 November 1919, IE-MA-CP-02-10, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.
https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_02_10.pdf.

goals is a high bar for any guerrilla organization. The thesis's position that the IRA leadership was able to effectively coordinate the activities of field officers is secure in that the GHQ was able to get field officers to cooperate across county lines for joint operations.¹⁴⁴ Within the goals of this thesis, that level of cooperation across county lines counts as a success. While the IRA is not a perfect example of all the facets of a mixed rebel organization, it still demonstrates many of the features of the organizational category.

It should not surprise us that the IRA during the War for Independence was able to achieve most of its goals. Starting in 1919, the IRA built up its forces while probing the British state's position on the island. Then in 1920 and the first half of 1921, the IRA was able to effectively wage guerrilla warfare against the state. The British government, realizing that there was not a military solution to defeat the IRA, sat down to talks with the self-proclaimed Irish government and granted most of what they wanted in July 1921. This is a level of political success neither of the other two Irish rebel groups came close to during their wars against the state. One critique of this thesis' argument is that the IRA effectively won in 1921 because they were more popular than the other two rebel groups. But general popularity does not directly translate to the successfulness of a rebel group.¹⁴⁵ And it is not clear how generally popular the IRA was during the war for independence. A vast majority of the population of Ireland voted the pro-independence political party in 1918 but voting for Sinn Féin did not mean that someone supported launching a violent civil war for independence.¹⁴⁶ Many Sinn Féin MPs did not fully support the IRA's war effort. Without being able to assume that Sinn Féin voters were IRA

¹⁴⁴ "Memo to The Commandant of East Limerick Brigade," 2 November 1919, IE-MA-CP-02-05, The Collins Papers, Irish Military Archives, Dublin.

https://www.militaryarchives.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/MAC-002/IE_MA_CP_02_05.pdf.

¹⁴⁵ Barbara F. Walter, "The Extremist's Advantage in Civil Wars," *International Security* 42, no. 2 (2017), 7-39.

¹⁴⁶ Travers, "The Conscription Crisis and the General Election of 1918," 329.

supporters, it becomes harder to argue that there was broad, general support for the IRA among nationalist Irish. So, there is not necessarily a clear relationship between popular support for rebels and their success rate. This thesis maintains that the IRA's success was due to the mixed organization's ability to balance the tensions between the robustness of the organization and the authority of the leadership. Unfortunately, after Ireland gained independence the country's political leaders were less successful at maintaining peace.

The Anti-Treaty Irish Republican Army 1922-1923

The Anti-Treaty IRA is the decentralized-horizontal rebel organization in this thesis. As such, the theory predicts that this organization is robust enough to regenerate its leadership but it struggles with not having enough authority to behave in a unified fashion. The Anti-Treaty IRA was a rebel group that opposed the peace terms laid out in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. The organization broke with the government in the summer of 1922 and tried to overthrow it. Even though the Provisional Irish Government was weak, the Anti-Treaty IRA could not take power because they had no way of cooperating within the organization. This lack of cooperation is because the Army Executive, a council of field commanders within the Anti-Treaty IRA, checked the power of the Chief of Staff. The exogenous shock of Irish independence led to the divisions within the Anti-Treaty IRA over how to achieve the goals of republicanism. The Chief of Staff and the Army Executive were not able to cooperate because independence created a new political context in which the Anti-Treaty IRA was operating. Given that Anti-Treaty IRA members were accustomed to operating in the context of the British empire, there was no time to craft a new general political and ideological consensus they could work towards. Therefore, the Anti-Treaty IRA was internally divided into different factions competing for power. Without a single leader with authority, the Anti-Treaty IRA could not operate effectively and was defeated.

The Irish War for Independence ended with a treaty negotiated between the provisional government of Ireland and the British government. The treaty turned Ireland into a Dominion within the British Commonwealth, placed Ireland under British naval protection, and recognized the partition of Ireland.¹⁴⁷ The last two points were uncontroversial within the Irish nationalist movement, as the leaders of Ireland did not want to maintain a large military after the war and Northern Ireland already existed as a fact on the ground.¹⁴⁸ What did cause problems was the oath obligations inherent to being a Dominion. As a part of the Commonwealth, members of the new Irish government would have to swear an oath of loyalty to the Monarch, which was extremely unpopular in republican circles.¹⁴⁹ The treaty ratification process in the Irish Parliament divided Sinn Féin in two. The “realists” led by Michael Collins who argued that the terms of the treaty were the best they were going to get and were tolerable for the time being as it ended the war, granted sovereignty to most of the island, and removed British forces.¹⁵⁰ The rest of the issues can be resolved by future Irish governments. The treaty provided, “not the ultimate freedom that all nations aspire and develop to but the freedom to achieve it.”¹⁵¹ On the other side were dedicated republicans led by Eamon De Valera who feared that the treaty would not be a starting point for Irish independence but a limit enforced by the British. However, De Valera failed to articulate a clear vision for how Ireland should move forward.¹⁵² The lack of a clear alternative meant that the Anti-Treaty faction was not able to rally towards a shared goal. The final vote on the treaty was sixty-four for it and fifty-seven against it.¹⁵³ The narrow ratification

¹⁴⁷ Michael Kennedy, “The Anglo-Irish Treaty,” in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 642-648.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 646.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 642.

¹⁵⁰ Bill Kissane, “The Politics of the Treaty Split and the Civil War,” in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 652-653.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 653.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 653.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 652.

of the treaty split divided the Sinn Féin party and the Irish Republican Army in two. A majority of the IRA leaders met at a convention in late March and declared themselves as no longer loyal to the Ministry of Defense or the Irish government, and on 13 April 1922 Anti-Treaty IRA units started occupying government buildings in central Dublin.¹⁵⁴ Neither side wanting deeper conflict, Collins and De Valera tried to repair the damage by running a united party in general elections held in May, but the anti-Treaty Sinn Féiners came out of that election unable to form a government.¹⁵⁵ By May 1922, there was a clear majority in the Irish civilian government that supported the treaty but also a clear majority in the IRA that opposed it.¹⁵⁶ Talks fell apart and at the end of June, loyal Pro-Treaty IRA forces under Collins opened fire on the Anti-Treaty forces in Dublin.¹⁵⁷ The Irish civil war had begun.

The government forces in the Irish civil war were named the National Army and were not prepared to fight a civil war in June 1922. The National Army was built around a core of between 8,000 and 9,700 Pro-Treaty IRA men that were still loyal to the government.¹⁵⁸ This was a weaker starting position than the Anti-Treaty IRA opposing them that started with about 13,000 men.¹⁵⁹ The National Army was concentrated in Dublin and was ill-prepared to take any action outside of the capital where they could expect to find little support from surviving IRA

¹⁵⁴ Ibid 657.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 656.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 656-657.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 658.

The Provisional Government decided to start fighting against the Anti-Treaty IRA as a result of British governments demands and threats. A member of the British government was assassinated in London in June 1922 and it was assumed that it was the Anti-Treaty IRA who were responsible. The British government demanded that the Provisional Government crush the Anti-Treaty IRA or else the British military would invade the country. Not wanting to fight another war against the British, the Provisional Government acted to meet those demands and attacked the Anti-Treaty IRA.

¹⁵⁸ Gerry White, "Free State *versus* Republic: the opposing armed forces in the Civil War," in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 691. Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), 127.

¹⁵⁹ White, "Free State *versus* Republic," 691.

units.¹⁶⁰ To quote an observer from the 29th of June 1922, “No one can say what line the P.G. [Provisional Government] troops will take under pressure, for it must be remembered that all the leading men of the P.G. side are in Dublin.”¹⁶¹ In contrast the Anti-Treaty IRA forces started the civil war controlling most of the south and west of Ireland and were concentrated in their home counties with detailed knowledge of the physical and human geography.¹⁶² The National Army tried to solve these problems by recruiting a large number of fresh soldiers and by importing weapons from Britain. In July 1922, the Provisional Government called for 35,000 men to join the National Army and by the end of the war in April 1923 the National Army topped out at 60,000 soldiers.¹⁶³ However, with the exception of some Great War veterans, most of the fresh soldiers were totally untrained, unprepared for war, and were frequently mutinous.¹⁶⁴ National Army General Seán MacMahon commented that “Men were taught the mechanism of a rifle very often on the way to the fight.”¹⁶⁵ To compensate for the weakness of the men in the National Army, the Provisional Government imported a large number of arms from Britain. By September 1922, the National Army received 27,400 rifles, 246 machine guns, over 3,000 hand grenades, nine field guns, and a number of armed vehicles.¹⁶⁶ This is an absolute advantage over the Anti-Treaty force who had to rely on weapons taken from evacuating British forces. However, a steady supply of foreign weapons does not guarantee victory for the state forces. For example, the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces had access to plenty of American weapons but that could not prevent the Taliban from overthrowing the Afghan Republic in August 2021. Point

¹⁶⁰ Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, 127.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ White, “Free State *versus* Republic,” 691.

¹⁶⁴ Michael Hopkinson, “Civil War: The Opening Phase,” in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 676.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ White, “Free State *versus* Republic,” 692.

being that an absolute material advantage on paper does not cleanly translate into military victory. Additionally, the United Irishmen and the Irish Republican Army over the previous three years also faced a significant material disadvantage. Especially at the beginning of the civil war in the summer of 1922, as the National Army was still onboarding new soldiers and weapons, the Anti-Treaty IRA stood in a position where they could have overthrown the Irish government if they had tried. Why didn't they?

The Anti-Treaty IRA was unable to overthrow the Provisional Government of Ireland in the summer 1922 because the organizational leadership lacked the authority to coordinate the field commanders. The exogenous shock of Irish independence left the Anti-Treaty IRA without a clear political vision to rally around. During the War of Independence, it was clear who the IRA was fighting against, the British, and what goal they were moving towards, independence. After Irish independence, it was much less clear to the Anti-Treaty IRA members how they should try to achieve their new goal of securing republicanism within the Dominion context. This lack of clarity is due, not to the inability of the members of the Anti-Treaty IRA from communicating with each other as they still had most of their couriers to run messages, but due to internal divisions within the Anti-Treaty IRA and the inability of the organizational leadership to resolve disagreements.

During the IRA conventions in spring 1922, two Anti-Treaty IRA factions emerged: the “moderates” and the “militants”.¹⁶⁷ The moderates took a wait and see approach of the emerging crisis, hoping to reconcile with the Pro-Treaty IRA and government so that they could further republicanism from inside the government. The militants were much less compromising and

¹⁶⁷ John Borgonovo, “Truce and Civil War,” in *Florence and Josephine O'Donoghue's War of Independence: A Destiny That Shapes Our Ends* ed. John Borgonovo (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 196.

wanted to openly challenge the state. In an effort to hold together the Anti-Treaty IRA, the organization formed an Army Executive, a council of senior IRA officers responsible for helping to make policy, representing both factions.¹⁶⁸ Critically, moderate Liam Lynch was also elected the Chief of Staff of the Anti-Treaty IRA and led the moderate faction towards developing a reunification plan in May 1922.¹⁶⁹ This effort raised suspicion among the militant faction on the Executive, who moved in June to push the moderates out of power. The militants rejected the reunification plan and passed a policy of trying to violently disrupt the June General Election.¹⁷⁰ In response the leading moderates on the Army Executive resigned.¹⁷¹ On 18 June 1922, the militant Anti-Treaty Executives then led a walk-out of the reunification All-IRA convention, signalling the end of negotiations.¹⁷² That night the militant Anti-Treaty Executives assembled in the Four Courts, a court house in central Dublin under Anti-Treaty IRA occupation, and voted to replace Lynch with one of their own as Chief of Staff.¹⁷³ Ten days later, the National Army opened fire on the Four Courts starting the Irish Civil War. With the outbreak of conflict, Liam Lynch, reinstated as Chief of Staff, and some of the moderates returned to the Anti-Treaty IRA.¹⁷⁴ The internal fighting within the Anti-Treaty IRA had distracted the organization and prevented it from seizing control in the summer of 1922. The Anti-Treaty IRA Army Executive kept a check on the Chief of Staff's power and the organization tried to fight the war through committee. That did not go well as the organizational leadership lost all ability to quickly make decisions and coordinate activities. Over the course of July, the National Army launched a series of major conventional attacks on cities held by the Anti-Treaty IRA, forcing the rebels to abandon

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 196-197.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 198.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid, 199.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 200.

their conventional efforts and return to guerrilla warfare on 11 August 1922.¹⁷⁵ After August, the civil war descended into Kalyvasian violence as local power brokers fought each other for power at the county level of politics.¹⁷⁶ On 10 April 1923 Chief of Staff Lynch was killed. The Anti-Treaty IRA Army Executive, now under the control of moderate Tom Crofts, appointed a new Chief of Staff and ordered the organization to ceasefire and ‘dump arms’ ending the Irish Civil War.¹⁷⁷

The Anti-Treaty IRA was not a weak organization. Even in its last moments in April 1923, the Army Executive was clearly robust enough to replace fallen leaders and make policy. But it was an organization unable to focus on its goals long enough to overthrow the government. This is because as a decentralized-horizontal organization there was not a leader with enough authority to make the organization work as a team. Of the three rebel groups examined in this thesis, the Anti-Treaty IRA is most comfortable within its model, with clear evidence supporting the theoretical arguments and no significant problems emerging from the historical record. It was a decentralized-horizontal organization with the robustness and aimlessness inherent to that theoretical model. Due to bitter internal ideological divides, the Anti-Treaty IRA developed an organizational structure with a powerful Army Executive and a weak Chief of Staff. This structure was able to survive the dangers of war, but was not able to lead the Anti-Treaty IRA towards victory or anywhere else.

¹⁷⁵ Paul V. Walsh, “The Irish Civil War, 1922-1923: A Military Study of the Conventional Phase, 28 June-11 August, 1922,” (paper presented to A New York Military Affairs Symposium, CUNY Graduate Center, New York, 11 December 1998), <http://bobrowen.com/nymas/irishcivilwar.html>.

¹⁷⁶ Stasis N. Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence’: Action and Identity in Civil Wars,” *Perspectives On Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003), 480.

Literarily:

“Likewise, ‘family and faction dictated the course of the IRA split in units all over Ireland’ during the civil war. “Once again, it was the Brennans against the Barretts in Clare, the Hanniganites against the Manahanites in east Limerick, and the Sweeneys versus the O’Donnells in Donegal as all the old feuds were reignited.”

¹⁷⁷ Borgonovo, “Truce and Civil War,” 202.

Conclusion

The Anti-Treaty IRA was, organizationally, the opposite of the United Irishmen. Where the United Irishmen had isolated field commanders who relied on their leadership for the organization to function, the Anti-Treaty IRA had closely networked field commanders who were able to assure control over their leader at key moments to set policy. Both organizations were similar in that they lost. The United Irishmen was destroyed by organizational decapitation and the Anti-Treaty IRA fell apart due to the lack of centralized leadership. On the other hand, the Irish Republican Army was able to function as both a robust organization and had a leadership with the authority to monitor and discipline the field commanders when needed. By striking the right balance the Irish Republican Army was much more successful than the other two organizations reviewed in this study. Understanding the internal relationship between rebel leaders and rebel field commanders is important because of its effect on the outcomes of civil wars and understanding the outcomes of civil wars is important to understand politics on the local, national, and international level.

Further research is needed to explore the importance of the relationships more fully between rebel leaders and rebel field commanders. First, this thesis does not provide a general theoretical explanation for the origins of each model of rebel organization. Second, this thesis lays out each model as an ideal type and tried to find a rebel organization that matched each type as closely as possible. However, future work should try to embrace a spectrum of rebel organizational types and consider what a rebel organization in between two types would look like. Perhaps scholars could assign a zero value to a “perfectly” mixed rebel organization and either extreme edge be given a value of plus or minus five, with decentralized-horizontal organizations receiving a negative score and centralized-siloed organizations receiving a positive

score. Then scholars could assign each rebel organization a given score allowing comparisons. Third, this thesis picked short lived rebel organizations, the longest fighting for less than three years, in an effort to keep the analysis simple. Future research should examine how and why a single rebel organization would move along the spectrum of organizational type from one model to another. Scholars should assign rebel organizations scores on the plus/minus five spectrum that changes over a discrete period of time, perhaps monthly. Fourth, this thesis only examines rebel groups that are fighting solo against the state. Future work should examine the relationship between the leadership and field commanders of armed groups in state-collapse contexts or multi-rebel civil wars. In those contexts, mixed model rebel organizations may not outperform centralized-siloed and decentralized-horizontal model rebel organizations. Centralized rebel organizations may be less vulnerable to decapitation if there is not a state. Decentralized-horizontal rebel groups may be adept at merging with other rebels forming larger, more powerful coalitions. Finally, there should be an effort to classify the rebel organizations in large data sets, such as The Correlates of War Project, the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, and Project Mars, to allow scholars to ask quantitative questions about rebel organizational types. Using large-n studies, scholars could observe general trends in the relationship between several independent variables and rebel organization. This approach could provide insight into the origins of each model of rebel organization. Overall, this thesis has presented a new theory for explaining the outcomes of civil wars with a particular emphasis on the importance of the relationship between rebel leaders and rebel field commanders, how rebel organizations balance the competing needs of authority and robustness, and the outcomes of civil wars. But there are many opportunities for future research remaining.

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