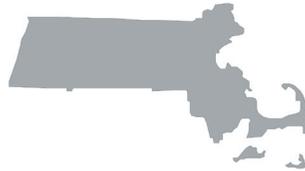




**The United Kingdom and Ireland Today**

# Senator Edward Kennedy and the “Ulster Troubles”: Irish and Irish-American Politics, 1965- 2009

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**Editor’s Introduction:** *In 1921 Ireland was partitioned into two sections: Northern Ireland was composed of the six predominantly Protestant counties of Ulster, while Southern Ireland was made up of the remaining twenty-six, predominantly Catholic counties. Both Northern and Southern Ireland remained part of Great Britain. The next year, Irish nationalist leaders negotiated two treaties with Britain that created the Irish Free State, which had “dominion” status within the British Commonwealth but fell short of full independence. Northern Ireland chose to opt out of the Irish Free State, choosing instead to remain fully a part of the United Kingdom.*

*“The Troubles” refers to approximately three decades of violence characterized by the armed campaigns of Irish republican and Ulster loyalist paramilitary groups. The duration is conventionally dated from the late 1960s to the Belfast “Good Friday” Agreement of 1998. The conflict involved the constitutional status of Northern Ireland and the relationship between the predominantly Protestant unionist and predominantly Catholic nationalist communities there. “The Troubles” had both political and military dimensions.*

*This time period encompassed the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) campaign of 1969–1997, intended to end British rule in Northern Ireland and to reunite Ireland politically. As the following article demonstrates, Massachusetts Senator Edward (“Ted”) Kennedy played an instrumental role in promoting a constitutional resolution to the conflict.*

*A member of arguably the most famous political family in the history of the United States, Edward Kennedy (1932–2009) was both a popular and controversial figure during his nearly forty-seven years in the U.S. Senate. Outspoken on both domestic and international issues, Kennedy was particularly vocal on the violence that plagued Northern Ireland from the 1960s onwards. However, much of the literature on Kennedy’s life neglects to cover this significant aspect of his career.*

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On March 4, 2009, U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy was made an honorary Knight of the British Empire. In an address before the US Congress, Prime Minister Gordon Brown highlighted the critical role that Kennedy had played in the Northern Ireland peace process as well as his overall contribution to relations between the United States and United Kingdom over his career. If Kennedy’s role in the affairs of Northern Ireland was sufficiently significant to merit an honorary knighthood, why has so much literature on the Senator neglected to cover this aspect of his life?<sup>1</sup>

This article explores Kennedy’s role in the American dimension to the “Ulster troubles.” It argues that his connection to the political situation in Northern Ireland offered Kennedy an opportunity to repair his relationship with Irish-Americans both in Massachusetts and beyond. However, his initially hard-line position on the Irish question was confrontational to the British government. Kennedy’s rapid evolution into a strong proponent for peace and reconciliation underlines his genuine intentions on the issue. This study highlights the role of Irish political figures, notably Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) leader John Hume, in persuading Kennedy of the folly of his early positions. The extension of violence from Ireland to the United Kingdom further helped convince Kennedy that he should become an active opponent to violence, particularly when

his niece Caroline was threatened by an Irish Republican Army (IRA) attack on her London hosts during the mid-1970s. Coming at a time when Kennedy’s relationship with Hume was becoming particularly close, this attack underlined for Kennedy the importance of promoting the cause of non-violence.

### **KENNEDY’S EARLY INTEREST IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

The Kennedy family had strong ties with both Ireland and the United Kingdom. County Wexford native Patrick Kennedy left Ireland at the age of 26, arriving in Boston in April 1849, where he married Bridget Murphy. Five years later, Limerick native Thomas Fitzgerald made the same trip. In Boston, Fitzgerald married County Cavan-born Rosanna Cox. Their



**The Kennedy Family, 1938**

Joseph P. and Rosemary Kennedy pose with their nine children. Seated, from left: Eunice, Jean, Edward, Joseph P., Patricia and Kathleen. Standing, from left: Rosemary (daughter), Robert, John, Rosemary (mother) and Joseph Jr.

fourth child, John, became Mayor of Boston in 1906. In October 1914, John's daughter, Rose, married Joseph P. Kennedy, grandson of Patrick Kennedy. "Joe Sr." went on to serve as US Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1938 to 1940, when the Kennedys resided at the Court of St. James.

With Irish Partition barely two decades old, it was controversial for an Irish American to take up the post of British Ambassador because accepting a post with the United Kingdom was seen as a tacit endorsement of its policies. However, even prior to this, Joe Sr. and Rose had visited London with their children John and Kathleen with a view to enrolling them at the London School of Economics as elder brother Joe Jr., had done for a year before moving to Harvard.<sup>2</sup>

The 1944 marriage of daughter Kathleen Kennedy to the British Marquess of Hartington emphasized the close relationship the family had developed with the United Kingdom. After the death of the Marquess, Kathleen became romantically involved with Earl Fitzwilliam before they both perished in an air crash in 1948. Although the Kennedys had spent a significant amount of time in the United Kingdom, it was not until the 1960s that members of the family returned to Ireland. This was not entirely atypical: Linda Dowling Almeida and Angela Wright have commented that it was not until the 1960s that it became common for Irish Americans to embark on the journey across the Atlantic to visit their ancestral home.<sup>3</sup>

After John F. Kennedy's election to the Presidency in 1960, a perception grew that the family had exploited their Irish roots to aide his campaign.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, with more than thirty million Americans claiming Irish descent, this was a significant demographic within which Kennedy could hope to lay the foundations for his campaign. At the beginning of his campaign, John resigned his position as senator for Massachusetts. Benjamin Smith was appointed to hold it on an interim basis until November 1962, at which point his younger brother, Edward, would be constitutionally old enough to assume the seat, indirectly replacing his brother.

Edward Kennedy (nicknamed "Ted") visited Ireland in early 1962, well in advance of the special Senate election he faced against George Cabot Lodge in November. Irish commentators cynically claimed that his visit was "because later this year he is due to be involved in a political fight back home in Massachusetts." In their estimation he was "playing the political game in what has now come to be known as the Kennedy method."<sup>5</sup> Others suggest that Ted Kennedy's intention was to enhance his reputation as an internationalist.<sup>6</sup> By coincidence, 1962 was also a significant year in

the history of Northern Ireland as the IRA’s disastrous Operation Harvest (1956-62), centered on the border regions of the province, was called off.<sup>7</sup>

In 1963, during his campaign for re-election, John F. Kennedy traveled to Europe. In addition to his iconic Berlin stop, the President toured Ireland. He visited the County Wexford town of Dunganstown where his paternal great-grandfather had grown up; the city of Limerick, the home county of his maternal great-grandparents; and the Irish parliament in Dublin. In his recent study, *JFK in Ireland: Four Days that Changed a President*, Ryan Tubridy emphasized the significance of President Kennedy’s short trip to both the Irish at home and those in the US. Its highly personal nature was obvious to all, particularly when compared to the business-like manner in which his short visit to London was conducted.<sup>8</sup>

The tour certainly contributed to renewed positive relations between the nations, damaged by Irish actions during World War II. Ireland’s American-born president, Taoiseach Eamon de Valera, had pursued a policy of neutrality during the war which, along with Irish hostility towards American servicemen present in Northern Ireland as part of the war effort, damaged Irish-American relations for several decades. These tensions were exacerbated by revelations of IRA associations with the Nazis, an association based on the logic that “enemy of my enemy [the United Kingdom] is my friend” rather than ideological empathy.<sup>9</sup> The



**Ted Kennedy gives a speech in Northern Ireland, 1962.**

election of an Irish-American president and his subsequent visit to Ireland were significant events in the history of Irish-American relations.

Interestingly, the ascension of President Kennedy did not reflect a significant rise in Irish American political power, even in Massachusetts. During Edward Kennedy's impressive tenure as a US senator (1962–2009), John Kerry was the only other Irish American to represent the commonwealth in the US Senate. No Irish-Americans served as governor between 1962 and 2009, although during this time, four lieutenant governors were Irish-American. In the US House of Representatives, Irish-Americans were slightly more prevalent. John F. Kennedy had served as a US representative from 1946 to 1952. Upon his election to the Senate in 1952, Kennedy was succeeded by Thomas "Tip" O'Neill. O'Neill served Massachusetts 11th Congressional district between 1953 and 1963 before moving to the 8th district for twenty-four years (1963–1987); upon his retirement he was succeeded by Joseph Kennedy Jr. Richard Neal, elected in 1989 to the Massachusetts 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional district, has both Irish and Northern Irish ties. Other Irish Americans who served as US representatives included Marty Meehan of the 5<sup>th</sup> district (1993–2007) and Ed Markey of the 7<sup>th</sup> district (1976–present).

In 1964 Edward Kennedy successfully defended his seat in the US Senate. Democratic voters were highly motivated that year: Lyndon B. Johnson defeated controversial Republican Barry Goldwater, carrying forty-four states as well as the District of Columbia. The Senate election enjoyed increased voter numbers by association. Ted Kennedy also benefited from popular sympathy, as the nation still reeled from the assassination of President John Kennedy less than a year prior.

The remainder of the 1960s was a difficult time for the Kennedy family. During campaigning in advance of the 1968 presidential election, former Attorney General Robert Kennedy was assassinated. In what became one of his best known speeches, Edward delivered a powerful eulogy at his brother's funeral. Possibly troubled by domestic and personal issues, Kennedy maintained little attachment to Irish affairs during the mid-1960s. Anti-Catholic discrimination had been a fundamental problem in the Northern Irish state since its inception. Kennedy's lack of interest in the Irish situation prior to the late 1960s fuelled subsequent accusations of opportunism.

In the 1960s, the situation in Northern Ireland was descending towards violence. The IRA was becoming marginalized, haunted by the failure of their most recent campaign, an increasing left-wing orientation, and the popularity of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association

(NICRA). NICRA and the civil rights campaign more generally captured the imagination of northern Catholics. NICRA campaigned for enfranchisement of Catholics; the alteration of gerrymandered Northern electoral constituencies; an end to discrimination in housing and jobs; and the disbandment of the "B Special" reserve unit of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which was predominantly Protestant and therefore perceived as sectarian. NICRA began their campaign in June 1968 when a sit-in was organized at a house which had been allocated to a single Protestant woman over a number of Catholic families. In August, a short march in County Tyrone brought a counter demonstration from angry Protestants, foreshadowing more serious violence following a similar march in the city of Derry.<sup>10</sup> The violence of the Derry march was transmitted internationally and put a great deal of pressure on the Northern Irish government to introduce reforms, which were eventually announced in November 1968.

Early NICRA activists openly sought to create analogy with the African American movement for civil rights, conducting sit-down protests and singing the same protest songs.<sup>11</sup> Although the Irish analysis of the civil rights movement in the United States was simplistic, the analogy was easily made, particularly in the media. Most significantly, the 1965 marches from Selma to Montgomery struck a chord with more radical elements within NICRA. On New Year's Day 1969, a march from Belfast to Derry was organized. Counter demonstrations took place throughout the march. As it neared its destination, the march encountered extreme violence from a hostile loyalist crowd opposed to the reforms the marchers sought. The presence of members of the Ulster Special Constabulary (a predominantly Protestant reserve police force) among those attacking the march provoked rioting in Derry. Although this trouble abated, rioting returned as the summer approached.

The summer months in Northern Ireland are traditionally a colorful and musical affair as loyalist marching bands celebrate the victory of King William of Orange over the forces of King James in the late 1600s. Although not a sectarian war itself, the Williamite wars have become closely associated with Protestantism in Ireland and the marches associated with them are therefore, by extension, a highly divisive issue. With sectarian tension at a peak during 1969, it was no surprise that severe rioting took place during the summer marching season, violence which prompted the deployment of the British Army to the streets of Northern Ireland. It is important to note that following the mass burnouts northern Catholics endured in August 1969, the British Army was very much seen as the protector of the Catholic community, fulfilling a role that the domestic

police had been unable or unwilling to play. During the decolonization period, the British Army had been deployed in a variety of roles protecting the shrinking British Empire, but their role as an aid to the civil power in Northern Ireland was one they were not familiar with, which led to a series of mistakes both operationally as well as at the strategic level.

Media coverage brought the Irish struggle back into the consciousness of the American public and made good use of the civil rights comparison. In August of 1969 NBC *Nightly News* contended that “the Catholics in Ulster are the same as the Blacks in the United States.” Earlier *Newsweek* introduced the phrase, “the White Negroes.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, an ABC report in early 1969 related the two civil rights struggles and predicted the imminence of violence.<sup>13</sup> While the two contexts were not easily analogous, the comparison was made in the media, which created problems within Irish-America; conservative Irish-Americans were unwilling to equate the struggle of northern Catholics with that of African-Americans. The mindset expressed by the slogan “Niggers out of Boston, Brits out of Belfast” was common.<sup>14</sup>

The late sixties also presented problems for Ted Kennedy. The public’s initial reticence towards him had dissipated over time, but his reputation was damaged when he left the scene of an automobile accident that killed Mary Jo Kopechne at Chappaquiddick Island in July 1969. Despite this incident, he was successfully re-elected to the Senate in 1970, beating his underfunded opponent, Josiah Spaulding. In the mid-term election of 1966, Republican Edward Brooke defeated Democrat former Mayor of Boston Endicott Peabody convincingly. As his fellow Democrats struggled thanks to Vietnam War divisions, Kennedy still had significant support. His vote, however, dropped from 1.7 million in 1964 to 1.2 million in 1970, evidence of the damage to his popular perception. Especially telling was his overall decline in share of vote from 75% to 62%.<sup>15</sup>

Democrats generally had a successful 1970 election, with an increase of twelve seats and 3% of the popular vote, but Francis R. Shriver (1915–1998) beat Boston Mayor Kevin White (born 1929) in the gubernatorial election. The Massachusetts Republicans had enjoyed gubernatorial success since 1962, but Shriver went on to lose to Michael Dukakis in 1974. This underlines the significance of Kennedy’s victory in 1970 in the wider context of Democratic political success in Massachusetts.

During the early 1970s, issues associated with civil rights began to trouble Ted Kennedy. Although de jure segregation in Boston’s public school system had ended in 1954, Judge W. Arthur Garrity had found that de facto segregation had persisted.<sup>16</sup> Garrity decided to implement reform



Robert and Ted Kennedy in a St. Patrick's Day parade in South Boston.

through the medium of the school bus system, transporting white students to schools in predominantly black areas. Anti-desegregation organizations such as Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR), led by prominent Boston School Committee member Louise Day Hicks, opposed these moves, claiming that the school issue was being used by political figures to disguise their inability to solve the socio-economic issues which troubled black citizens at the time.<sup>17</sup>

Garrity was closely associated with the Kennedy family, having been appointed to the federal bench by President Kennedy. A resident of suburban Wellesley, Garrity had little in common with typically strong Irish neighborhoods such as South Boston. Journalist J. Anthony Lukas has argued that the busing crisis saw divisions on class as well as racial lines. Kennedy came to be seen by some as the upper class Irishman drawing the wrath of the Irish working class.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, Kennedy had adopted a pro-choice stance on abortion which author Ross Douhat later reflected was considered “an extended apology to his party’s feminists for the way the men of his dynasty behaved,” but the stance offended Catholic Irish sensibilities.<sup>19</sup> The possibility of ideological distance developing between Kennedy and the Irish working class, which represented a significant proportion of the Massachusetts Irish population, was dangerous.

The Kennedy family had traditionally drawn support from across the demographic spectrum, but their Irish base was crucial and had been to Ted’s elder brother John during his 1963 Presidential campaign.<sup>20</sup> It was important for Ted to regain the confidence of his Irish support base. The issue of Northern Ireland could scarcely have proven timelier for an Irish-American politician seeking to consolidate support within his own community. Kennedy later commented that Northern Ireland’s “cycle of repression and killing had to be stopped,” but his interest was clearly not entirely selfless.<sup>21</sup> Irish nationalists recognized Kennedy’s willingness to use the Northern Irish issue to restore his political reputation and cite the influence of lawyer Paul O’Dwyer, himself active in Irish-American affairs for a number of years, in manipulating Kennedy’s power and lack of understanding of Irish affairs.<sup>22</sup>

Kennedy’s early participation on the issue of Northern Ireland was particularly controversial as it centered on the issue of the presence of the British Army. Irish republicans opposed the presence of the British Army because they considered the army agents of an illegal occupier. The 1937 Constitution of Ireland had declared the entire thirty-two counties of the island to be one single national territory, when in fact the 1922 Anglo-Irish

Treaty had provided for two separate parliaments in Dublin and Belfast, with the latter ultimately falling under the jurisdiction of London. The British perspective was that Ireland's domestic security forces had proven incapable of handling the rising inter-communal violence and that the troops were to be deployed in a peace-keeping, rather than an offensive or anti-republican, role. Therefore, Kennedy's comment that "there could be no more gross intervention in the affairs of Ireland than the presence of British troops in Ulster," was received favorably by Irish republicans and seen as quite inflammatory by the British.<sup>23</sup> From this point on, Kennedy's sincere but occasionally misguided rhetoric on the subject caused serious diplomatic problems for the British and clashed quite sharply with the more astute understanding of the Northern Irish situation that he later developed.

### **BRITAIN'S VIETNAM?**

Having drawn a great reception from the Irish crowds during his previous visits, Kennedy returned to Ireland in 1970 at a time when the situation in Northern Ireland was rapidly deteriorating.<sup>24</sup> Kennedy addressed a crowd at Trinity College in Dublin and spoke out against oppression in Northern Ireland. Heavily influenced by his visit, and along with Connecticut Senator Abraham Ribicoff and Representative Hugh Carey of New York, Kennedy sponsored an October 1971 resolution in the US Congress calling for the withdrawal of British troops from Ulster. Kennedy commented that "Ulster is becoming Britain's Vietnam," a statement that provoked outrage from the United Kingdom and one that he eventually came to regret, although he later repeated it.<sup>25</sup>

This powerful rhetoric was criticized in the United Kingdom: Northern Irish Prime Minister Brian Faulkner stated that Kennedy had "shown himself willing to swallow hook, line and sinker the hoary old propaganda that I.R.A. atrocities are carried out as part of a freedom fight on behalf of the Northern Irish people." Others dredged up reference to Chappaquiddick, with an unnamed Conservative MP claiming that Kennedy was not in a position to "express moral judgments on anything."<sup>26</sup> Prime Minister Ted Heath was reported as describing the statement as "an ignorant outburst."<sup>27</sup> Kennedy aide Carey Parker highlighted that, unless Kennedy and Ribicoff had led the resolution, a much more extreme reaction would likely have been tabled in Congress.<sup>28</sup> Various commentators have since highlighted the flaw of the Vietnam analogy, even though Kennedy's aim was ostensibly to provide a frame of reference for the American public.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps more damaging was Kennedy's assertion that Ulster Protestants who were unwilling to accept a unified Ireland "should be given a decent opportunity to go back to Britain."<sup>30</sup>

The October resolution was heard by the House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe in February 1972. The intervening period had seen the situation in Northern Ireland rapidly deteriorate. In particular, a law introduced in August 1971 that allowed suspects to be detained indefinitely without trial revived the culture of protest marches and demonstrations. Irish nationalist representatives wrote to Kennedy to seek his intervention, with Kennedy commenting that "Americans of all religious and political persuasions are becoming increasingly concerned about the violence and bloodshed in Northern Ireland."<sup>31</sup> At an anti-internment march on Sunday, January 30, 1972, British paratroops fired at demonstrators, killing thirteen and wounding a further thirteen, one fatally. That the Kennedy-led hearings took place less than a month later was a matter of coincidence, but the international coverage of the incident raised the profile of the hearings considerably. Kennedy joined international condemnation of Bloody Sunday, claiming that the "terrible death and destruction" was the result of "Britain's inability to deal fairly and justly with the people of Ireland."<sup>32</sup>

The British government initiated an inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday under Lord Chief Justice John Widgery, who ruled that the killings were justified, a highly unpopular decision and one which further provoked the nationalist communities of Ireland.<sup>33</sup> Where Kennedy had blamed the British, the popular media was a little more cautious. Two days after the event, *The New York Times* described January 30 as "an awful slaughter" in its editorial, also observing that "the brief clips of the Catholic demonstration shown on American television prove beyond doubt that the provocation for the troops was deliberate and great."<sup>34</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* highlighted what it perceived as British intransigence on issues of discrimination and suggested the implementation of an international inquiry, although it did also note the confrontational nature of the IRA.<sup>35</sup>

The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), already concerned as to the fundraising potential offered to Irish republicans by Irish-American organizations, ordered reports on the hearings.<sup>36</sup> The FCO circulated a memo in advance of the hearings, which considered the possibilities that the House of Representatives could call for the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland and that United Nation intervention was to be proposed as the most suitable solution.<sup>37</sup> Kennedy

repeated the call for international intervention during the hearings because of a US Navy Communication Station situated near Derry, also claiming that "Ulster cannot fairly be called the internal affair of Britain." The British were incensed.<sup>38</sup>

The United Nations had intervened in the Congo, New Guinea, and Yemen during the 1960s, situations that were scarcely analogous with the situation in the territory of the United Kingdom. Indeed, Article 2 (7) of the United Nations Charter precluded the UN from intervening in "matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state."<sup>39</sup> This gave Britain considerable constitutional power on the matter of Northern Ireland but did not shield them from the onslaught that followed during the House of Representative hearings.

Kennedy's speech argued that the "repressive policy of internment . . . the soaring daily toll of bloodshed, bullets, and bombing in Ulster is a continuing awful reminder of how wrong that policy was," continuing that internment had "brought British justice to her knees."<sup>40</sup> His speech was described as "demagogic," Kennedy's prominent position and commitment to the Irish issue ensured the comments were far reaching and quite antagonistic towards the British state.<sup>41</sup> The British FCO were relieved that Kennedy's call for intervention "attracted a good deal of adverse editorial comment and was highly unpopular with the press and general public opinion."<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the idea of international intervention had been raised on a prominent platform, and the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, saw fit to comment to *The New York Times* that

there is much misunderstanding of the situation there [Northern Ireland] even in some of the highest quarters in the United States, though not I hasten to add, the President. It seems not to be understood that the great majority of people in Northern Ireland are Protestants, that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and that the majority wish to stay in the United Kingdom.<sup>43</sup>

The rising issue of Northern Ireland had provided Kennedy with an appropriate medium to consolidate his support within Irish communities in the US, and his impetuosity meant that much of his rhetoric on Northern Ireland during the early 1970s was rather misguided. Fortunately, both for the United Kingdom and for Kennedy's long-term political credibility, the prominent platform he had assumed on Northern Ireland had opened

him up to skillful politicians in Ireland, who had a considerably more sophisticated understanding of the situation.

### THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN HUME

While Kennedy's views on Northern Ireland may have reached their most extreme in early 1972, his monolithic presence within Irish-America on the Irish question ironically served to moderate his stance on the conflict considerably. It was his omnipresence that brought him together with John Hume, later the leader of the constitutional nationalist SDLP and the figurehead of constitutional nationalism in Northern Ireland. As Kennedy noted:

My understanding of the situation in Northern Ireland really began to evolve after I met John Hume, a brilliant young member of Parliament from Northern Ireland. We had met briefly in 1972, after I cosponsored a resolution with Abe Ribicoff calling for the withdrawal of the British troops from Northern Ireland and establishing a united Ireland. But it was really in late 1972 that John began the great education of Edward Kennedy about Northern Ireland and established the seeds that grew into a wonderful relationship.<sup>44</sup>

Hume had been elected as an Independent Nationalist Member of the Northern Ireland Parliament in early 1969 and served until the imposition of Direct Rule from London in March 1972, the British government's response to the rising violence in Northern Ireland. Hume and Kennedy first met in Bonn, then the capital of West Germany, and Hume's ability to express his case for constitutional reform as the most effective manner of resolving the conflict was highly influential on Kennedy's attitude toward Irish issues from then on. Hume explained to Kennedy that, rather than simply exposing British intransigence on Irish unity, his previous stance on Northern Ireland had served to legitimize the cause of those who supported the nationalist cause through violence. Subsequently, as *the Boston Globe* noted, "having lost two brothers to assassination, Kennedy became outspoken against IRA violence, even as he criticized British policies he said drove young Catholics to join the IRA."<sup>45</sup> This was the crux of the SDLP's international program: attempting to engage with those who opposed British policy in Northern Ireland and harness it through a far more constitutional, politicized protest agenda.



### John Hume

A founding member of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), Hume advocated peaceful resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland through constitutional means. He exerted a powerful influence on Kennedy's thinking. From 1979-2001 he served as the second leader of the SDLP; he is widely-regarded as one of the most important figures in the recent political history of Northern Ireland.

Also significant in Kennedy's transition towards a constitutional position was the death of Gordon Hamilton-Fairley at the hands of the notorious London unit of the IRA. Hamilton-Fairley, a renowned international cancer expert, was a neighbor of British Member of Parliament Sir Hugh Fraser, who was targeted by the IRA for assassination. As an old friend of Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis, Fraser had arranged for her daughter Caroline to stay with the Fraser family during an art appreciation course at Sotheby's auction house. The IRA had planted a bomb under Fraser's car, which was spotted and accidentally detonated by Hamilton-Fairley while walking his dog early on the morning of October 23, 1975.

The possibility of a Kennedy dying at the hands of the IRA was described by *The New York Times* as a "narrow escape," and the *Boston Globe* wrote that "this brings the tragedy much closer to most Americans than have most other terrorist acts."<sup>46</sup> The British government sought to capitalize on this event, approaching Kennedy to speak out publicly against IRA fundraising in the US, although the FCO noted that "we have to recognize that it is most unlikely that he will speak out during an election year."<sup>47</sup> Urging a theme of partnership and participation, the British government attempted to reach Kennedy through the newly appointed Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Elliott Richardson, a Boston Brahmin and former Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General of Massachusetts. In an FCO meeting with Richardson, it was suggested that "[Kennedy] had been

reluctant earlier to say anything in case it had been interpreted as the consequence in some way of his daughter's [niece, not daughter —Ed.] escape from the bombing attack in London.<sup>248</sup>

This is not to say that Kennedy had ever necessarily supported the tactics of the IRA, or any of those groups which attempted to bring about revolution in Ireland by violent means, but rather that he had not peppered his statements with sufficient caveats to make it obvious to any listener or reader that he did not support them. The absence of such caveats enabled the men of violence to effectively legitimize their cause to an international market that proved highly lucrative both in terms of finance and armaments. This was the problem of constitutional nationalism in Ireland: as the struggle for Irish unification became increasingly associated with the men of violence, those who shared this ambition were easily associated with the IRA precisely because of their shared goal. Reaching out to Kennedy was a priority. The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office still considered Kennedy a figure with considerable influence: "a few words in public from Senator Kennedy on the evils of fund raising would carry far more weight with the Boston Irish and Irish Americans than any similar statement from British or even for that matter Irish politicians, who are inevitably regarded as prejudiced."<sup>249</sup>

## **KENNEDY'S AMERICAN ALLIES**

Although he had made himself unpopular in the United Kingdom because of his prominence on the Irish question, Kennedy had managed to raise awareness of Northern Ireland across the US and his relationships with Speaker Thomas "Tip" O'Neill, Senator Daniel Moynihan, and Governor Hugh Carey helped to provide constitutional Irish nationalism with a powerful support base. O'Neill, a native of North Cambridge, had been a contributor to Irish Northern Aid until conducting research that revealed the ramifications of his actions; O'Neill also "once admitted to supporting the border campaign during the 1950s."<sup>250</sup> In 1977 President Jimmy Carter spoke on Northern Ireland, declaring that "violence cannot resolve Northern Ireland's problems; it only increases them and solves nothing."<sup>251</sup> Kennedy described the speech as the "most important and constructive initiative ever taken by an American president on the Irish issue."<sup>252</sup> Carter "ended the era of official non-intervention by America in the Irish conflict." However, in doing so Carter created a rift between the United Kingdom and US as he refused to approve the sale of guns from the State Department to the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), which

Kennedy declared was "a force that many Catholics viewed as oppressive and dangerous."<sup>53</sup> Pointedly, Kennedy kept himself on the outside of a bitter debate between the British government and Speaker Tip O'Neill over the issue of the RUC gun sale, with O'Neill claiming that "it would be on my conscience when hostilities increased as a result of the added contributions to the IRA."<sup>54</sup>

Although O'Neill worded his statement very carefully, his hostility towards the RUC was not convincingly hidden by his admittedly real concern about potential increases in IRA support. *The New York Times* observed that "IRA gunmen seem to have less trouble stocking up in the US . . . there is no basis in law or logic for denying a license for the export of guns to combat political murder in Northern Ireland."<sup>55</sup> The veto placed upon the RUC's purchase of arms created difficulties for the British government, who had assumed the challenge of promoting the role of the Northern Irish police force in domestic security in 1976. There had been issues in 1974 over the sale of ground sensors to the British Army for use in all theatres of operation, but in 1977 the influence of Kennedy, O'Neill, Moynihan and Carey had made the acquisition of arms all the more difficult. Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Humphrey Atkins stated:

I very much regret that a body of men and women who have borne so much of the brunt of the terrorist campaign during the past ten years, including the murder of over 170 of its members and serious injury to many others, should be made the subject of controversy over the provision of modern weapons to defend the community and themselves from attack by mindless assassins.<sup>56</sup>

Although opposition was led by O'Neill, Kennedy played an active background role.<sup>57</sup> The British were particularly sensitive over this issue during a year when the IRA had killed thirty-eight soldiers, twelve RUC officers, and nine Ulster Defense Regiment soldiers, along with Lord Louis Mountbatten, in comparison with the solitary IRA volunteer killed by the Army (indeed, the four volunteers that the IRA itself killed made it its own worst enemy that particular year).<sup>58</sup> This did, however, emphasize the neutrality that was imperative to those who went on to form the Congressional Friends of Ireland. This was also clear from a joint statement issued by the group on St Patrick's Day 1981 which read, "we take satisfaction that American support for the violence has declined . . .

we urge all Americans to join us in condemning the violence in Northern Ireland, and to forswear any word or deed that fosters further violence.”<sup>59</sup> Such rhetoric was also evident from the president’s office, with Reagan stating that “those who advocate or engage in violence and terrorism should find no welcome in the US.”<sup>60</sup>

Irish Taoiseach Charles Haughey welcomed the news of the formation of the Friends of Ireland congressional group.<sup>61</sup> The group later played a key role in minimizing the ability of Irish-American groups to fundraise on behalf of armed nationalist movements in Ireland. In order to do this, they depended

for their support on the good-will of a majority of Irish Americans who share their commitment to peace, non-violence and unity by agreement. However, this majority is neither organized nor vocal . . . The Irish National Caucus still seeks to exercise control over Irish affairs in Congress.<sup>62</sup>

It was these efforts and this commitment to non-violence that characterized Kennedy’s involvement in Northern Ireland’s affairs for the remainder of the 1970s. For example, Kennedy called for the banning of plastic bullets, a baton round used in crowd control operations by the security forces that were capable of causing serious injury.<sup>63</sup> He also criticized the continued legality of the loyalist Ulster Defense Association (UDA), a Protestant defense organization that had managed to distance itself from the sectarian paramilitary war through the use of a cover name for its operations. The Ulster Freedom Fighters cover name had been used for a number of murders, and the organization is thought to have been responsible for more than 100 murders by the end of the 1970s. Kennedy argued that:

the political activities of the UDA cannot be used to sanitize or justify the close association between the UDA as an organization and the violent activities of its members. Our resolution calls on the British Government to end its double standard and to ban the UDA, and I would hope the senate will approve it.<sup>64</sup>

The UDA had grown out of a series of local vigilante groups which formed to deal with the increasing threat of IRA violence during the early 1970s, but it did develop a political wing which came to be known as the Ulster Political Research Group.<sup>65</sup> A delegation from this group,

including senior UDA leaders, met with Tip O'Neill in Washington DC. They wrote to O'Neill's aide, Kirk O'Donnell, saying that they thought the trip had been very successful.<sup>66</sup> It was encouraging that the meeting was conducted so amicably and suggested willingness by the Friends of Ireland to build relationships that could help enhance their understanding of the situation in Northern Ireland. O'Neill had been provided with an assessment of Northern Irish paramilitary groups prior to his visit to the United Kingdom and Ireland in April 1979. The American consulate in Belfast suggested that loyalist groups adopted a "cavalier attitude in choosing victims. PIRA generally selects its targets, Loyalists sometimes just went looking for a Catholic."<sup>67</sup>

This file went on to reference the deadly Shankill butcher gang, which cruelly tortured random victims and could hardly be considered representative of loyalism as a whole.<sup>68</sup> This was indicative of the stereotyping to which Kennedy and his colleagues would previously have been susceptible. The fact that O'Neill had made time to meet with UDA representatives was an important step in the evolution of Irish-America as a whole.

## THE 1980-81 HUNGER STRIKES

Politically, Northern Irish affairs during the early 1980s were dominated by the hunger strikes of 1980 and 1981. The hunger strikes were part of a series of protests that began in 1976, after the British government enacted a policy of criminalization that sought to undermine the political credentials of Irish republican prisoners by altering their status from political prisoners to that of ordinary criminals. The prisoners launched a blanket protest, symbolically refusing to wear the required prison-issued uniforms. This escalated into a no-wash protest which, allied to prisoner's refusal to empty their chamber-pots or "slop out," became known as the dirty protest. Unable to secure any concessions from the British Government, the republican prisoners embarked upon a hunger strike in 1980, which ended as the first prisoner neared death.

Led by IRA volunteer Bobby Sands, a second hunger strike began on March 1st, 1981. During the strike, Sands was elected to the Fermanagh and South Tyrone seats of the Westminster parliament. These events were also particularly emotive in the United States. Upon Sands' demise *The Irish People*, the newspaper of Irish Northern Aid, one of the most significant fundraising concerns for the IRA in the US, carried the headline "Murdered," with a lead article claiming that "British politicians, who in

life labeled him a criminal, have been indelibly branded as liars in the eyes of Americans and indeed of the world.”<sup>69</sup> It reprised this story upon each of the subsequent nine deaths; following the death of Joe McDonnell, for example, it spoke of “another British killing of a defenseless man who dared to stand up against aggression and terror.”<sup>70</sup> The mainstream press was, again, far more objective: the *Washington Star* stated that “Bobby Sands, a member of the IRA, was precisely not committed to a peaceful reconciliation of the Irish problem,” and *The New York Times* argued that “the Provisionals do not bring a solution closer; they bring on the unworkable politics of extremism. That is why it is so sickening to see their black shirt tactics romanticized.”<sup>71</sup>

The American dimension was problematic for the British government at this time. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had assumed a hard-line stance on the issue, contending that the IRA prisoners had committed a crime and therefore were criminals. The IRA prisoners were of the view that, once Bobby Sands achieved election, “on one hand the government is saying Bobby Sands you are a criminal, you are not a political prisoner, on the other hand he’s getting 30,000 votes that say you are political, you’re an MP—you don’t get any more political than that.”<sup>72</sup>

The international dimension to the hunger strikes troubled the British government as had Bloody Sunday. They were easily cast in an intransigent role, as recognized by Kennedy. During the hunger strikes, Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald wrote to O’Neill saying, “I firmly believe that the United States has an important role to play here.”<sup>73</sup>

The British Embassy wrote to O’Neill during the dirty protest claiming that the British government would not “recognise that murder and violence are less culpable because they are claimed to be committed for political motives.”<sup>74</sup> Kennedy wrote to Thatcher on behalf of the Friends of Ireland, stating that, “we question a posture of inflexibility that must lead inevitably to more senseless violence and more needless deaths in Northern Ireland.”<sup>75</sup> After Sands’ death, they wrote again, warning Thatcher that “One Senior Irish Diplomat describes American Press Coverage of Ulster as ‘Disastrous.’ The IRA’s American lobby is therefore ‘stronger than ever.’”<sup>76</sup>

In 1981 Kennedy’s role was more of a mediator, seeking to mitigate reaction in the US to the highly emotive deaths of the ten hunger strikers. In Kennedy’s home state, the reaction to Sands’ death was particularly strong and nowhere was this more evident than in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Led by Democrat Representatives Marie Howe, Charles Doyle, and John McNeil, a resolution was offered that was so

strong in its condemnation of British policy in Northern Ireland as to support, implicitly, the Irish republican position. It was precisely the sort of motion that Kennedy was likely to have been involved in during the early 1970s and is worth quoting at length:

whereas, the people of the commonwealth of Massachusetts, remembering the oppression of King George III prior to the American revolution and their break from the tyrannical rule of the British Empire, view the present Government as unconscionable towards the enormous suffering of the people of all of Ireland, and especially Northeast Ireland . . . the citizens of Massachusetts have long been anguished by the intransigence of the Government of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in refusing to grant political status to incarcerated Irish Republicans . . . The people of Massachusetts, in the light of the foregoing circumstances, view the British Consulate, situated in Boston, as *persona non grata*, an unwelcome representative of an unconscionable government who taxes the hospitality and toleration of their hosts most grievously . . . The Massachusetts House of Representatives insists that the State Department of the United States demand that the government of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain recall and withdraw its local embassy, the consul located at Boston, until such a time as it shall accept the 5 demands propounded by the fasting IRA prisoners in Ulster, and to set a time table for the complete withdrawal of British troops.<sup>77</sup>

They also suggested "imposing political and economic sanctions against the Empire of Great Britain."<sup>78</sup> That Kennedy remained distant from such a position spoke volumes of his transition on the Irish issue over the course of the previous decade. The resolution is important for another reason, however, as it is indicative of the predominance of Irish-American politics in the Commonwealth. Although a rather more extreme view than that which Kennedy had developed on the Northern Ireland situation by the early 1980s, it does highlight that many Massachusetts legislators held reactive views on the situation. This radicalism was also evident in the distribution of Irish Northern Aid units within New England; so prevalent were they that they were organized separately from the remainder of the northeastern US.<sup>79</sup> During the early 1980s, the South Boston crime boss James Bulger became increasingly involved in gun smuggling for the

IRA. As the brother of the president of the Massachusetts Senate, William “Billy” Bulger, the case had significant political impact and highlighted the criminal element of the IRA’s campaign in Northern Ireland.<sup>80</sup>

As Northern Irish society began a slow move towards peace, Kennedy was integral to American support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement that materialized in 1985. The agreement provided for an advisory role for the government of the Republic of Ireland in the government of Northern Ireland. As a result of this, it was deeply unpopular with unionists, despite emphasising that no constitutional change was possible without the consent of a majority of Northern Irish citizens. Although they were political opponents, Kennedy’s influence with Ronald Reagan in the matter was crucial to the development of the agreement. The close relationship between Thatcher and Reagan—arguably as close as any prime minister and president since Churchill and Roosevelt, but without a global conflict to encounter—gave Kennedy an opportunity to exert influence on the situation, particularly as Thatcher struggled to achieve domestic consensus on the crucial issues of cross-border security and cooperation.<sup>81</sup> It should be noted that the two did not always see eye-to-eye on issues of foreign policy, the Falklands War and the invasion of Granada being two notable examples.<sup>82</sup>

After the agreement was signed, Reagan provided considerable funds for the International Fund for Ireland, which had been part of President Carter’s 1977 election pledge.<sup>83</sup> Again, Kennedy was hugely important here. His role as a proponent of peace grew considerably during the 1980s. As the IRA campaign wound down, and especially as the Irish-American support base for armed Irish republicanism dwindled, it seemed as though Kennedy’s transition had achieved a lasting positive impact on Northern Irish society. He cemented what should have been his legacy on Northern Ireland with a proactive role during the Northern Irish peace process, which developed during the 1990s.

## **KENNEDY AND THE PEACE PROCESS**

Upon his inauguration as the forty-second president in January 1993, Bill Clinton had made peace in Northern Ireland a priority. He was the first President to “support the Irish strongly against Great Britain.”<sup>84</sup> One of his first appointments was that of Jean Kennedy Smith, Ted Kennedy’s youngest sister, to the position of American Ambassador in Dublin. Ted took the opportunity to visit his sister over New Year’s 1993/4, and during this trip he met with Taoiseach Albert Reynolds who told him of his

support for a US visa for Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein who had previously been imprisoned for IRA offenses. Again, John Hume played an important role. Kennedy and Hume were reunited at Tip O'Neill's funeral in January 1994, a time when the Northern Ireland peace process was still in a fragile condition. Hume had been involved in a series of discussions with Gerry Adams over a number of years and had become convinced that Adams was working within the structures of the republican movement towards peace. He persuaded Kennedy that granting Adams a US visitor visa could augment prospects of peace.<sup>85</sup> John Dumbrell also highlighted the role of John Hume, claiming Vice-President Al Gore had stated that "Hume . . . has not misled us for twenty years."<sup>86</sup>

Support for the Adams visa was strong, and Kennedy quickly assembled a fifty-strong group of representatives who were in favor of granting the visa. Clinton himself recognized the compelling view that the US should make a bold move to try and energize the wavering peace process, a view heavily influenced by Nancy Soderberg, who had served as Kennedy's senior foreign affairs advisor.<sup>87</sup> It was also significant that, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War, the US could attempt to redefine its relationship with the United Kingdom.

Along with Hume, Jean Kennedy Smith's influence over Edward was also important. As Kennedy noted in his memoirs, "one of Jean's first and most significant accomplishments was to persuade me to support the issuance of a US visa for Gerry Adams."<sup>88</sup> Kennedy Smith had only been in the position for six months when the visa was granted, and Maurice Manning, the former leader of the Irish Senate, noted that "she had her own agenda, which was essentially to bring Gerry Adams and company in from the cold. She was hugely successful and hugely influential in doing that."<sup>89</sup> Kennedy Smith was later reprimanded by Secretary of State Warren Christopher for having punished two subordinates who had opposed her recommendation to grant Adams a visa.<sup>90</sup> Such criticism was also forthcoming from a variety of commentators; Michael McMenamin labeled the appeasement of the IRA by Clinton and Kennedy as "Bill and Ted's Irish misadventure."<sup>91</sup>

Clinton, only a year into his first presidential term, was initially reluctant to grant the visa, recognizing the political minefield that was associated with a figure as controversial as Gerry Adams. But the Kennedy-led pressure eventually forced him to relent. Adams was permitted forty-eight hours in the US but was barred from fund raising during his visit.<sup>92</sup> Although there was much negative publicity from within the United Kingdom, the fact that an IRA ceasefire was called in August 1994 was attributed, by Adams

himself, to his ability to visit the US during the early months of the year. The reciprocal effect of the IRA ceasefire was also crucial, as loyalist paramilitary groups announced their own ceasefire six weeks later.

Kennedy returned to Ireland to make his first trip to the northern state in January 1998. He travelled to both Belfast and Derry to meet with representatives from both sides of the community. In the latter, he visited the University of Ulster—where a chair in peace studies was named after his long-term colleague Tip O’Neill—to deliver a lengthy speech addressing the importance of peace and the role he had played in the long road to peace in Northern Ireland. He neglected to mention his early interventions on issues of British government policy in Ulster, a significant omission given the location of his speech. As the site of Bloody Sunday, Derry would have presented Kennedy with a receptive audience to any criticisms he could have offered on the issue of British policy during the 1970s. That Kennedy chose not to refer to this period indicates his investment in the peace process and his recognition of the potential damage of revisiting the past.<sup>93</sup> Later in the visit, Kennedy took part in peace talks chaired by former senator George Mitchell, which were hugely important in the run-up to the Belfast Agreement of April 1998. Where O’Neill had been opposed to the supply of weaponry to the RUC, Kennedy now spoke out in favor of complete paramilitary decommissioning, a particularly sensitive issue for political representatives of armed groups.<sup>94</sup> The peace process persisted through the early years of the twenty-first century and although now in his twilight years, Kennedy was an active participant in Northern Irish affairs.

In late 2004 and early 2005, the IRA ceasefire was severely challenged as the group was linked with both the robbery of some twenty-six million pounds from the Northern Bank in central Belfast and the murder of a Catholic civilian, Robert McCartney. These two events indicated a lack of IRA commitment to the peace process, or, more sinisterly, the fact that the IRA had started to lose control of its militarist element. Well over a decade into the peace process, support for peace was by far the dominant position, even among the republican communities of Ireland, and the murder of McCartney was particularly abhorrent. It was alleged that, following a Bloody Sunday commemoration, an argument had broken out in a bar in central Belfast. McCartney and his companion were attacked before McCartney was dragged into the street and stabbed repeatedly. Most controversial were claims that, with none of the estimated seventy potential witnesses coming forward, members of Sinn Fein had been present, and the subsequent suspensions of twelve party members and the

expulsions of three IRA members have been tied to the murder.<sup>95</sup> Kennedy was particularly outspoken on the McCartney murder.

On St. Patrick’s Day 2005, Senator Kennedy met with McCartney’s sisters, who were active in an international campaign for justice, in Washington DC. Significantly, the McCartney sisters’ trip coincided with a US visit by Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams. Kennedy refused to meet with Adams, perceiving intransigence towards the peace process on the part of a man on whose behalf he had strongly campaigned in the past. Kennedy’s personal website claimed that Kennedy’s “consistently tough message, coupled with a decision not to see Gerry Adams on St. Patrick’s Day in 2005, contributed to the decision of the IRA to disarm in September of 2005.”<sup>96</sup> The IRA conducted its final act of decommissioning that month, and a significant page in the tale of the Northern Ireland peace



An elderly Ted Kennedy the year before both his knighthood and death in 2009.

process had been turned. Kennedy made his final journey to Ireland, again visiting Northern Ireland, in 2007.

### **CONCLUSION: KENNEDY HONORED AS A MAN OF PEACE**

March 4, 2009, bore witness to a rare event: a British Prime Minister was to address a joint session of Congress. Gordon Brown spoke to the representatives of what he described as an “indispensible . . . irrepressible nation,” to call for their assistance in solving the ongoing global financial crisis.<sup>97</sup> During this speech, he publicly announced the bestowment of an honorary Knighthood on “Sir Edward Kennedy.” (As a non-citizen of the United Kingdom, Kennedy would not have been permitted use of the official prefix “Sir;” but rather the suffix “KBE,” for Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire). Previous American citizens who had been awarded the honorary Knighthood included Steven Spielberg, Alan Greenspan, Rudolph Giuliani, and Bill Gates.

The honor was a result of Kennedy’s contribution to US-UK relations. The prime minister claimed that “Northern Ireland is today at peace, more Americans have health care, more children around the world are going to school, and for all those things we owe a great debt to the life and courage of Senator Edward Kennedy.”<sup>98</sup> Given the confrontational angle Kennedy had adopted with regard to British policy in Northern Ireland during the early 1970s, it was no surprise that many British commentators were quick to voice their displeasure at the honor. From their reaction it was clear that, for many, it was Kennedy’s initially more confrontational standpoint on Northern Ireland and his role in the Gerry Adams visa issue that had indelibly defined his relationship with Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. For some, these factors outweighed Kennedy’s subsequent efforts to promote a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Lord Norman Tebbit led the critical reception of the honor:

Edward Kennedy may never have said outwardly he supported the IRA but he certainly leaned towards extreme republicanism. He was certainly no friend of the UK. This honor is wholly inappropriate on the basis of the sleaze attached to him after the crash at Chappaquiddick, let alone his support for nationalism in Northern Ireland. It cheapens the whole honours system.<sup>99</sup>

In October 1984, Tebbit’s wife had been seriously injured during the IRA’s bomb attack at the Conservative Party conference in Brighton, an

attempt to kill Margaret Thatcher. For Tebbit and others, the reality of Edward Kennedy's views on the Irish situation over the past four decades had been subsumed by his early rhetoric. In ultimately becoming a partner for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, Kennedy had confirmed the folly of his earlier rhetoric but cemented his place as a pioneer of constitutional Irish Americanism.

Kennedy's shift of position on the issue of Northern Ireland was by no means unique, and was small when compared to that of figures within the Provisional Irish Republican movement. In 2007 Sinn Fein voted to actually support policing.<sup>100</sup> Although Kennedy had long since adopted a position of anti-violence, the Oklahoma City bombing of April 1995 provided Americans with a new context in which they could understand the armed struggle of the Irish republicans. With the September 11 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, Americans were confronted with a new and more horrifying image of anti-state violence, with noted IRA historians commenting on the impact of the attacks on Irish republicans.<sup>101</sup>

With little prior experience of domestic terrorism, the attack provided an unfamiliar context. The experience of domestic terrorism, underlined by attacks from Islamist extremists, damaged the credibility of groups such as the IRA in the United States. The role of President Clinton, whose involvement raised the profile of the Northern Irish struggle even further, was also crucial in securing majority support within the US for the IRA ceasefires of 1994 and 1997 and their subsequent disarmament of 2005.

\* \* \* \* \*

This article has shown that, although he was initially quite the enemy of Great Britain over the issue of Northern Ireland as the troubles broke out in the late 1960s, Senator Edward Kennedy became very much a champion of peace. Because of the prominent platform he adopted on the issue in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday, he was put in contact with John Hume, whose influence shaped Kennedy's increasingly constitutional approach to the Irish question. Hume and Kennedy became close allies and enjoyed a successful political relationship, evidenced by the continued success of their shared vision for Northern Ireland over the course of the 1990s and the new century.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For example, see Lester David, *Good Ted, Bad Ted: The Two Faces of Edward M. Kennedy* (New York: Birch Lane, 1993), Richard E. Burke, *The Senator: My Ten Years with Ted Kennedy* (NY: St Martin's Press, 1992), Max Lerner, *Ted and the Kennedy Legend: A Study in Character and Destiny* (NY: St Martin's Press, 1980), Joe McGinnis, *The Last Brother* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1993), or Roberty Sherrill, *The Last Kennedy* (NY: The Dial Press, 1976). The issue merits only a paragraph in Theo Liman, *Senator Ted Kennedy* (NY: W.W. Norton, 1976), 175.

<sup>2</sup> "Joseph Kennedy Jr.," John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/The-Kennedy-Family/Joseph-P-Kennedy-Jr.aspx>, (accessed Feb. 16, 2010); Andrew Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict 1968-1995* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press 1995), 14; Francis M. Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question, 1910-1923* (New York, 1978), 179-80.

<sup>3</sup> Angela Wright, "Managing the American Tourist Experience in Ireland: An Emotional Context," *International Journal of Business and Management* 3:8 (August 2008), 86. See also Linda Dowling Almeida, *Irish Immigrants in New York City 1945-1955* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 162.

<sup>4</sup> Sylvia A. Ellis, "The Historical Significance of President Kennedy's Visit to Ireland in June 1963," *Irish Studies Review* 16:2 (2000): 115-7, also John D. Fair, "The Intellectual JFK: Lessons in Statesmanship from British History," *Diplomatic History* 30 (2006): 119-42; Arthur Mitchell, *JFK and his Irish Heritage* (Dublin: Moytura Press, 1993), 48.

<sup>5</sup> *Irish Independent*, February 25, 1962.

<sup>6</sup> Sherrill, *The Last Kennedy*, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Barry Flynn, *Soldiers of Folly: The IRA Border Campaign 1956-1962* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Ryan Tubridy, *JFK in Ireland: Four Days that Changed a President* (London: Harper Collins, 2010); Remarks Upon Arrival at Gatwick Airport, England June 29, 1963 in Papers of President Kennedy, President's Office Files, Speech Files, Box 45; and President Kennedy's Visit England June 29 – June 30, 1963 in Papers of President Kennedy, President's Office Files, Subjects, Reference Box 109, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

<sup>9</sup> Tubridy, *JFK in Ireland*; also Francis M. Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question, 1910-1923*, p.174; Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (London: Pan MacMillan 2003), 63; *Irish Independent*, July 1, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Derry is also known as Londonderry, with Irish nationalists using the former name and unionists the latter. It is often referred to as Derry/Londonderry in literature. To avoid confusion, the city will be referred to as Derry throughout.

<sup>11</sup> Bob Purdie, *Politics in the Streets: the Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1990); Simon Prince, *Northern Ireland's '68: Civil Rights, Global Revolt and the Origins of the Troubles* (Dublin: Irish

Academic Press, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> NBC *Nightly News* August 15, 1969; Robert Korengald, "The White Negroes," *Newsweek*, December 2, 1968.

<sup>13</sup> Ward, Ken, "Ulster Terrorism: The US Network News Coverage of Northern Ireland, 1968-1979," in *Terrorism in Ireland*, eds. Yonah Alexander and Alan O'Day (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 204.

<sup>14</sup> Brian Dooley, *Black and Green: The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland and Black America* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 76.

<sup>15</sup> "MA US Senate Race Nov 03, 1970," Our Campaigns, <http://www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID=6554> (accessed December 5, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Kevin Carleton, "The Origins of the Boston University/Chelsea Partnership in *Partnering for Progress: Boston University, the Chelsea Public Schools, and Urban Education Reform*, ed. Cara Stillings Candal (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2009), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 140.

<sup>18</sup> J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (NY: Vintage Books, 1985).

<sup>19</sup> Kennedy was criticized even after his death for his support of abortion rights, see "Vatican Paper Criticises Ted Kennedy's Abortion Stance," *Daily Telegraph*, August 27, 2009; Cardinal Sean's Blog "On Senator Kennedy's funeral," September 2, 2009, <http://www.cardinalseansblog.org/2009/09/02/on-senator-kennedys-funeral/> (accessed October 20, 2009); R. Douthat, "A Different Kind of Liberal," *The New York Times*, August 30, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> S. Ellis, "The Historical Significance of President Kennedy's Visit to Ireland in June 1963," *Irish Studies Review* 16:2 (2000): 115-117; "Remarks at Redmond Place, Wexford, Ireland," July 27, 1963. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, The Presidential Papers of John F. Kennedy, #3 Presidents Office Files: Series 3. Speech Files. Box 45.

<sup>21</sup> Edward M. Kennedy, *True Compass* (NY: Twelve Books, 2009), 354-355.

<sup>22</sup> Maria McGuire, *To Take Arms: A Year in the Provisional IRA* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 36, 108.

<sup>23</sup> *Hearings on Northern Ireland, Testimony of Senator Edward Kennedy, House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe*, February 28, 1972, in Attitude of Government and citizens of the United States of America towards Political Situation in Northern Ireland, National Archive (United Kingdom) Foreign and Commonwealth Office files (hereafter abbreviated as FCO) #87/102.

<sup>24</sup> See British Pathe "Edward Kennedy pays a visit to Ireland 1964," <http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=63822> (accessed Dec. 20, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> "Northern Ireland: Off the Deep End," *Time*, November 1, 1971; Kevin Cullen, "Kennedy's Irish Roots, Understanding Grew with the Passage of Time,"

*Boston Globe*, August 28, 2009; Andrew J. Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict 1968-1995*, 64.

<sup>26</sup> “Northern Ireland: Off the Deep End,” *Time*, November 1, 1971.

<sup>27</sup> Gail Russell Chaddock, “On Foreign Affairs, Kennedy Challenged Presidential Power,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 28, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Memo to R. Haugh, Private Secretary to Lord Widgery from DS Cape Embassy Washington January 18, 1973 in Attitude of citizens of USA towards situation in Northern Ireland, National Archive (UK) FCO 87/238.

<sup>29</sup> Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (London: Pan MacMillan, 2003), 122-4; Beatrix Campbell, “Northern Ireland Needs Truth Not Money,” *Guardian*, January 28, 2009; Ward, K., *Ulster Terrorism: The US Network News Coverage of Northern Ireland, 1968-1979*, in *Terrorism in Ireland*, eds. Yonah Alexander and Alex O’Day (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 202-207.

<sup>30</sup> David Sharrock, “Ted Kennedy’s Dedication to Ireland Peace Process was ‘Unrivalled,’” *The Times*, August 27, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Notes on Kennedy letter to Cork Corporation, January 11, 1972, in Attitude of Government and citizens of the United States of America towards Political Situation in Northern Ireland, National Archive (UK) FCO 87/100; *Irish News* January 10, 1972 and November 13, 1971.

<sup>32</sup> Hearings on Northern Ireland, Testimony of Senator Edward Kennedy, House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe, February 28, 1972, in Attitude of Government and citizens of the United States of America towards Political Situation in Northern Ireland, National Archive (UK) FCO 87/102.

Also available in Cormac K. H. O’Malley Papers, 1957-1981, Subseries 2:B, New York University Library, the Archives of Irish-America AIA 019.

<sup>33</sup> “Report of the Tribunal appointed to inquire into the events on Sunday, January 30, 1972,” <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmsowidgery.htm> (accessed July 6, 2010). It should be noted that in 2010, the inquiry under Lord Saville ruled the killings unjustified and effectively rendered the Widgery report obsolete. See “The Bloody Sunday Inquiry,” <http://report.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org/> (accessed August 10, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> “Bloody Sunday in Derry,” *The New York Times*, February 1, 1972.

<sup>35</sup> “The Growing Trouble in Ulster,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 1972.

<sup>36</sup> Attitude of Government and citizens of the United States of America towards Political Situation in Northern Ireland, National Archive FCO 87/102.

<sup>37</sup> Memo: Analysis of Pending Legislation Dealing with the Situation in Northern Ireland, February 14, 1972, in Attitude of Government and citizens of the United States of America towards Political Situation in Northern Ireland, National Archive FCO 87/101.

<sup>38</sup> Hearings on Northern Ireland, Testimony of Senator Edward Kennedy, House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe, February 28, 1972, in Attitude of Government and citizens of the United States of

America towards Political Situation in Northern Ireland, National Archive FCO 87/102. Also available in Cormac K. H. O'Malley Papers, 1957-1981, Subseries 2:B, New York University Library, the Archives of Irish-America AIA 019.

<sup>39</sup> Charter of the United Nations: Chapter I: Purposes and Principles.

<sup>40</sup> Hearings on Northern Ireland, Testimony of Senator Edward Kennedy, House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe, February 28, 1972, in Attitude of Government and citizens of the United States of America towards Political Situation in Northern Ireland, National Archive FCO 87/102.

<sup>41</sup> Telegram on Congressional Hearings on Northern Ireland, March 1, 1972, in Attitude of Government and citizens of the United States of America towards Political Situation in Northern Ireland, National Archive FCO 87/102.

<sup>42</sup> Unclassified Memo, March 17, 1972, in Attitude of Government and citizens of the United States of America towards Political Situation in Northern Ireland, National Archive FCO 87/102.

<sup>43</sup> *The New York Times*, March 6, 1972.

<sup>44</sup> Edward Kennedy, *True Compass* (NY: Twelve Books, 2009), 355.

<sup>45</sup> Kevin Cullen, "Kennedy's Irish Roots, Understanding Grew with the Passage of Time," *Boston Globe*, August 28, 2009.

<sup>46</sup> *The New York Times*, October 24, 1975, *Boston Globe*, October 27, 1975, David McKittrick; Seamus Kelters; Brian Feeney; Chris Thornton; D. McVea, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2004), 588.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from J. Hartland-Swann, FCO Republic of Ireland Dept. to Sykes, March 8 1976, IRA Fundraising in the USA, National Archive FCO 87/577.

<sup>48</sup> Note for the Record on meeting with Ambassador Elliott Richardson January 15, 1976, IRA Fund-raising in the USA, National Archive FCO 87/575.

<sup>49</sup> Speaking Notes, IRA Fund-raising in the USA, National Archive FCO 87/575.

<sup>50</sup> Gerald Murray and Jonathan Tonge, *Sinn Fein and the SDLP* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press Ltd., 2005), 85-87; *Irish Echo*, January 12-18, 1994.

<sup>51</sup> Jimmy Carter, "Northern Ireland: Statement on US Policy" August 30, 1977, available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=8014> (accessed August 1, 2010).

<sup>52</sup> Ted Kennedy Providing a Leading Voice for Human Rights and Democracy around the Globe, [http://tedkennedy.org/service/item/foreign\\_policy](http://tedkennedy.org/service/item/foreign_policy) (accessed January 20, 2010).

<sup>53</sup> Kennedy, *True Compass*, 356.

<sup>54</sup> Minutes of Meeting between T.O'Neill and Lord Carrington regarding the purchase of guns for the RUC May 5, 1980. Kirk O'Donnell Papers, Boston College Burns Library (hereafter referred to as BCBL).

<sup>55</sup> See *The New York Times*, May 28, 1980.

<sup>56</sup> Statement by Humphrey Atkins, undated (c. June 1979). Kirk O'Donnell

Papers, BCBL.

<sup>57</sup> Andrew J. Wilson, "Ulster Unionists in America 1972-1985," *New Hibernia Review* 11:1 (2007): 50-73; J. Dumbrell, "The United States and the Northern Irish Conflict 1969-94: From Indifference to Intervention," *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 6 (1995): 107-125.

<sup>58</sup> See Conflict Archive on the Internet, Sutton Index of Deaths, available at <http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/selecttabs.html> (accessed February 16, 2010).

<sup>59</sup> Friends of Ireland Joint St Patrick's Day Statement 1981. Kirk O'Donnell Papers, BCBL.

<sup>60</sup> Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States - Ronald Reagan 1983 (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office 1984), 405.

<sup>61</sup> Statement by Mr Charles J. Haughey, T.D. Taoiseach (Prime Minister of Ireland) in response to the announcement of proposed Friends of Ireland Group in the US Congress March 16, 1981. Kirk O'Donnell Papers, BCBL.

<sup>62</sup> Memo on "Friends of Ireland" organization, undated (c. 1981). Kirk O'Donnell Papers, BCBL.

<sup>63</sup> See J. Steele, S. McBride, J. Kelly, C. Dearden and L. Rocke, "Plastic Bullet Injuries in Northern Ireland: Experiences During a Week of Civil Disturbance," *The Journal of Trauma: Injury, Infection and Critical Care* 46:4 (1999): 711-714.

<sup>64</sup> Statement of Senator Edward M. Kennedy opposing the use of Plastic Bullets in Northern Ireland and calling for a ban on the Ulster Defence Association July 15, 1982. Kirk O'Donnell Papers, BCBL.

<sup>65</sup> Ian S. Wood, *Crimes of Loyalty: A History of the UDA* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

<sup>66</sup> Letter from Glen Barr to Kirk O'Donnell, January 31, 1979. Kirk O'Donnell Papers, BCBL.

<sup>67</sup> Airgram from American Consulate Belfast to Department of State November 2, 1978. Kirk O'Donnell Papers, BCBL.

<sup>68</sup> See Martin Dillon, *The Shankill Butchers: A Case Study of Mass Murder* (London: Hutchinson, 1989).

<sup>69</sup> *The Irish People* 10:18, May 9, 1981.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *The Washington Star*, May 10, 1981; *The New York Times*, May 10, 1981.

<sup>72</sup> Gerard Hodgins, interview with author, Belfast, March 25, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from Garret Fitzgerald Taoiseach to Speaker T.O'Neill, July 20, 1981. BCBL.

<sup>74</sup> Letter from British Embassy, Boston, J.S. Wall to T.O'Neill, February 10, 1981.

<sup>75</sup> Letter from O'Neill, Kennedy, Carey and Moynihan to Margaret Thatcher, May 6, 1981. Kirk O'Donnell Papers, BCBL.

<sup>76</sup> Telex "British Press Coverage of Today, May 15, 1981, of Prime Minister Thatcher's response to Telegram from Senators Kennedy and Moynihan, Speaker

O’Neill and New York Governor Carey.” Kirk O’Donnell Papers, BCBL.

<sup>77</sup> Resolution offered by Representatives Marie Howe (D-Somerville), Charles Doyle (D-Boston) and John McNeil (D-Malden) Adopted Unanimously by the Massachusetts House of Representatives June 15, 1981 – Demanding the Recall and Withdrawal of the British Consulate. Kirk O’Donnell Papers, BCBL.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> See “Irish Northern Aid – Units,” available at <http://irishnorthernaid.com/units.html> (accessed December 10, 2010).

<sup>80</sup> *Irish Independent*, April 14, 2002; Patrick Nee, *A Criminal and an Irishman: The Inside Story of the Boston Mob – IRA connection* (Hanover, NH: Steerforth Press, 2007).

<sup>81</sup> *The Economist* October 6, 2004; “Kennedy’s Death: Ireland Mourns a ‘True Friend,’” Reuters, August 26, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE57P2WZ20090826> (accessed October 10, 2010); on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, see Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 396-402.

<sup>82</sup> Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 331.

<sup>83</sup> See “Agreement Between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Ireland Concerning the International Fund for Ireland,” London and Dublin, September 18, 1986, available at <http://www.internationalfundforireland.com/images/stories/documents/publications/agreement/agreement.pdf> (accessed October 10, 2010).

<sup>84</sup> J. O’Grady, “An Irish Policy Born in the USA: Clinton’s Break With the Past,” *Foreign Affairs* 75:3 (1996): 2-7.

<sup>85</sup> “Northern Ireland Remembers Ted Kennedy, the Peacemaker,” *Time*, August 28, 2009; see also “Ted Kennedy, Providing a Leading Voice for Human Rights and Democracy around the Globe” [http://tedkenney.org/service/item/foreign\\_policy](http://tedkenney.org/service/item/foreign_policy) (accessed December 5, 2009).

<sup>86</sup> John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and after* (London: Macmillan, 2001), 209-210.

<sup>87</sup> Taylor Branch, *The Clinton Tapes: A President’s Secret Diary* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 126-7.

<sup>88</sup> Kennedy, *True Compass*, 460-1.

<sup>89</sup> “A Sister’s Special Tie With Her Youngest Brother,” *Boston Globe*, August 30, 2009.

<sup>90</sup> *The New York Times*, March 8, 1996.

<sup>91</sup> M. McMenamin, “Bill and Ted’s Irish Misadventure – Peace Efforts in Northern Ireland by President Clinton and Senator Ted Kennedy,” *Reason*, August-September 1996.

<sup>92</sup> “Adams is Allowed 48-hour US Visa: Clinton Agrees Visit Despite Dispute,” *Independent*, January 31, 1994.

<sup>93</sup> “Peace for Northern Ireland,” January 9, 1998, [http://tedkenney.org/ownwords/event/northern\\_ireland](http://tedkenney.org/ownwords/event/northern_ireland).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> *Guardian*, July 9, 2008; *Irish News*, January 27, 2006.

<sup>96</sup> “Providing a Leading Voice for Human Rights and Democracy Around the Globe,” [http://tedkennedy.org/service/item/foreign\\_policy](http://tedkennedy.org/service/item/foreign_policy)

<sup>97</sup> “Gordon Brown Appeals to US Congress for Help to Save the World” *Daily Telegraph*, March 4, 2009.

<sup>98</sup> “Anger at Knighthood for ‘Brave’ Ted Kennedy,” *London Evening Standard*, March 4, 2009.

<sup>99</sup> *Daily Mail*, March 4, 2009.

<sup>100</sup> “Sinn Féin Votes to Support Policing,” BBC News, January 28, 2007, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/6308175.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/6308175.stm) (accessed October 12, 2010); “Adams Backs PSNI McCartney probe,” BBC News, January 31, 2007, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/6317565.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/6317565.stm) (accessed October 12, 2010).

<sup>101</sup> English, *Armed Struggle*, 333.