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The United States and Northern Ireland:  
International Pressures as an Impetus for  
Civil Rights Progress

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**The United States and Northern Ireland: International Pressures as an Impetus for  
Civil Rights Progress**

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“Sweet Liberty! To thee  
Let all the nations bend;  
Thou art the comfort of the free,  
Their true unwavering friend!”

-Joseph Cephass Holly, “To Liberty” 1853

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**Introduction:**

The United States and Northern Ireland share histories of minority repression and disenfranchisement. African Americans within the United States as well as Catholics in Northern Ireland have lobbied for recognition and civil rights guarantees for years but have met with varied success. In the United States, attempts to create social change via legislation and judicial decisions through the mid twentieth century, although promising, did not stimulate the desired progress. These methods fell short, as did similar attempts in Northern Ireland through the 1960s. Favorable court rulings for Catholics in Northern Ireland were few and far between, and at the same time, legislatures failed to address the gross inequalities between Catholics and their Protestant counterparts. However, both populations have experienced an increase in rights over the last few decades and an important question to answer is how, in fact, did the changes come about? What was the impetus? This question is a valuable one because if a consistent model exists, then it can perhaps be applied to other countries experiencing civil rights inequalities in the hopes of instituting positive, lasting changes.

Differing theories exist regarding the extension of civil rights to minority populations, but some, like the theory of strong active courts pushing for change, have been discredited, as the civil rights movement has met many barriers within the United States judicial system over the decades. In the post-Civil War era of Reconstruction, African Americans lobbied for rights, but the movement for equality was a hard one to sell in the recently war-torn nation. Northerners desired an end to the strife and generally looked the other way when literacy tests, poll taxes, and Jim Crow laws sprung up in the South. In the desperate search for equal treatment, African Americans took their cases of

discrimination to court. However, the unsympathetic courts often ruled against recognizing black rights. *Plessy v. Ferguson*, decided in 1896, was a detrimental decision for activists. The case focused on the legality of separating Louisiana railroad cars into white and black compartments, and the ruling approved “separate but equal” spheres. With this decision the court system blatantly failed to recognize the equality of white Americans and African Americans. Not only was the ruling itself dubious, but the court failed even to enforce the equal nature of facilities. Robert McCloskey writes in *The American Supreme Court* that “the facilities [of African Americans] did not have to be very equal to pass the Court’s mild inspection.”<sup>1</sup> This lack of concern for minority populations served to undermine the Court’s further decisions on rights related issues.

In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Court missed an opportunity to set a precedent for civil rights, but even when the Court issued a promising decision, success did not necessarily follow. Gerald Rosenberg in *The Hollow Hope* highlights the lack of influence court decisions in the United States actually had on the rights movement. He points to *Brown v. Board*, the case that ended with “a unanimous Supreme Court clearly and unequivocally holding that state-enforced segregation of public schools was unconstitutional” and ordering that it be ended “with all deliberate speed,” to showcase how, even with good intentions, the U.S. courts lack the necessary means of implementation to see their rulings through to fruition.<sup>2</sup> He further emphasizes that “despite *Brown*, public schools in the South remained pristinely white, with only one in a hundred black children in elementary and secondary school with whites by 1964, a

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<sup>1</sup> McCloskey, Robert. *The American Supreme Court*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Rosenberg, Gerald. *The Hollow Hope*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. p. 43.

decade after the ruling.”<sup>3</sup> Although the courts tried to create change, their rhetoric failed to mobilize legislators as for ten years after the ruling the executive branch along with Congress did little to address the system’s inequalities. “The court spoke alone. Yet words are not action.”<sup>4</sup> Rosenberg disputes the conventional wisdom that the courts were an important factor in this movement towards equality.

The Catholic population of Northern Ireland has also seen repression of rights by the courts. As Kevin Boyle writes in *Law and State: The Case of Northern Ireland*, “the Roman Catholics distrust[ed] the whole legal system as the puppet of the Unionists,” and thus “the civil rights leaders failed to make any sustained attempt to obtain a legal remedy for their grievances.”<sup>5</sup> Not only was the legal system inhospitable to the Roman Catholics, but even when select civil rights cases were actually brought before the Court, they met with defeat. The Republican Clubs Case of 1967, which challenged the law banning the existence of Republican clubs (groups supporting a united Ireland and equal rights), failed to overturn the law and proved “to the minority community that they could expect no aid from Britain in their struggle for what they regarded as their legitimate civil rights.”<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the Roman Catholics could find no recourse within the Protestant-controlled court system of Northern Ireland.

Although one may look to legislation and constitutional amendments instead of dynamic courts as key factors in promoting the rights movement in the United States, these avenues have their barriers as well. Looking back to the Fourteenth Amendment,

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<sup>3</sup> *The Hollow Hope*, p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> *The Hollow Hope*, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Boyle, Kevin, Tom Hadden, and Paddy Hillyard. *The Case of Northern Ireland*. London: University of Massachusetts Press, 1975. p. 7, 10. *Questia*, 17 Nov. 2007.  
<<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=11035641>>

<sup>6</sup> *The Case of Northern Ireland*, p. 15.

which was supposed to guarantee equal protection for African Americans, one sees initial failure. Although Congress amended the Constitution to extend freedoms to minority populations, the amendment suffered from poor implementation, rejection by certain states, and even essential nullification by the Supreme Court with the ruling on *Plessy v. Ferguson*. As Michael Perry notes in *We the People: The Fourteenth Amendment and The Supreme Court*, “The clear and central purpose of the Fourteenth Amendment was to eliminate all official state sources of *invidious* racial discrimination in the States.”<sup>7</sup> The guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment, however, were not always enforced: “Although the amendment guarantees both substantive rights and procedural fairness, the three great clauses of Section 1 do not specify either the rights protected or the procedures required. While Section 5 grants Congress the power to enforce Section 1 by ‘appropriate legislation,’ it is silent on how, if at all, the federal structure of the government limits that power.”<sup>8</sup> Due to these silences and southern white resistance, although the amendment was enacted, it failed to achieve equal rights for African Americans.

Similarly, the Fifteenth Amendment also failed to live up to its promise of equality and enfranchisement of black Americans. With the case *Giles v. Harris* and subsequent *Giles v. Teasley* in the early twentieth century, the Supreme Court failed to endorse black suffrage and allowed the state of Alabama to deny African Americans the right to vote. In its decision on *Giles v. Harris*, the court recognized that the “the refusal

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<sup>7</sup> Perry, Michael J. *We the People: The Fourteenth Amendment and the Supreme Court*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. p. 90, *Questia*, 17 Dec. 2007.  
<<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=79128582>>

<sup>8</sup> Bond, James E. *No Easy Walk to Freedom: Reconstruction and the Ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997. p. 1. *Questia*, 17 Dec. 2007.  
<<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=27469215>>

to register the blacks was part of a general scheme to disfranchise them [in Alabama],” but ruled that “the circuit court has no constitutional power to control [Alabama’s] action by any direct means.”<sup>9</sup> The court agreed that black Americans were being mistreated, but refused to rule in their favor because they could not guarantee the enforcement of a decision favorable to the black minority. Thus, they acquiesced in the continuous repression. The ruling went on to state, “The great mass of the white population intends to keep the blacks from voting . . . unless we are prepared to supervise the voting in that state by officers of the court, it seems to us that all that the plaintiff could get from equity would be an empty form.” Instead of taking whatever action it could, the court did nothing.

Legislation in Northern Ireland did not provide reliable guarantees for citizens of the minority population either. As Kevin Boyle notes in *The Case of Northern Ireland*:

The Government of 1920 Act made specific provision to that effect, notably in declaring void any law enacted by the new parliament which gave preference, privilege or advantage or imposed disability or disadvantage on account of religious belief. The reality was otherwise. The proud promise of a 'Protestant parliament for a Protestant people' was effectively fulfilled through the continued stranglehold of the exclusively Protestant Unionist Party in the parliament at Stormont.<sup>10</sup>

Northern Ireland lacked legitimate guarantees for minority rights, and Boyle suggests that this discrimination against Catholics also had an effect on the frequency as well as the

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<sup>9</sup> “Supreme Court of the United States. Jackson W. Giles, Appellant, v. E. Jeff Harris, William A. Gunter, Jr., and Charles B. Teasley, Board of Registrars of Montgomery County, Alabama.” *Virginia Law Review*. (1903): p. 94-5, 99. JSTOR. University of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia, PA. 15 Mar. 2008. <<http://www.jstor.org>>

<sup>10</sup> *The Case for Northern Ireland*, p. 7.

outcome of court cases. “The most obvious explanation for this failure of law and lawyers was the absence of any formal guarantees in the British and Northern Irish constitution of basic civil rights, [rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of speech,] and the consequent lack of any tradition of civil rights litigation.”<sup>11</sup> He goes on to state that although “Unionist practices were a direct or indirect infringement of the constitutional guarantees against discrimination in the Government of Ireland Act, no serious legal challenge to the Unionist regime was mounted.”<sup>12</sup> As in the United States, the government of Northern Ireland did not fully support or implement minority rights.

With the events surrounding Blood Sunday in 1972, it became even clearer that the law was not an effective means of protection for the minority. As a peaceful march for civil rights formed on January 30<sup>th</sup>, British soldiers shot into the mass of people for disputed reasons, killing thirteen unarmed civilians and wounding others. Dermont P.J. Walsh notes in *Bloody Sunday and the Rule of Law in Northern Ireland*, “the failure to prosecute those responsible [for Bloody Sunday] inflicted irreparable damage on the rule of law.”<sup>13</sup> He goes on to say, “A crushing blow was dealt to the nationalists’ confidence in the capacity of the law to protect them and their lives against the oppressive policies and strategies of a hostile state and its armed forces. Any vestige of legitimacy the state might have held for them was dissipated.”<sup>14</sup> One organizer of the movement, Finbar O’Kane, expressed his distress by questioning, “What on earth will happen to us all now?”<sup>15</sup> The situation was dire, and an inquiry into the events left many feeling

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<sup>11</sup> *The Case of Northern Ireland*, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> *The Case of Northern Ireland*, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Walsh, Dermont P.J. *Bloody Sunday and the Rule of Law in Northern Ireland*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2000. p. 216.

<sup>14</sup> *Bloody Sunday and the Rule of Law in Northern Ireland*. p. 216.

<sup>15</sup> Winchester, Simon. “13 Killed as Paratroops Break Riot.” *Guardian*. 31 Jan. 1972. 20 Mar. 2008. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/1972/jan/31/bloodysunday.northernireland>>

hopeless. The *Los Angeles Times* reported, “Britain’s Lord Chief Justice absolves the army of wrongdoing . . . and Ulster Roman Catholics, from moderate to militant, were . . . vehement in denouncing [the decision] as a whitewash.”<sup>16</sup> In this situation, as in previous ones in Northern Ireland, Catholics had no recourse against the system of repression; the laws simply did not protect their rights.

The cases of the United States and Northern Ireland highlight the failure of both judicial decisions and legislative actions in creating civil rights protections for minority populations. However, a differing theory, one that emphasizes international pressure as the impetus for change, shows how success was ultimately achieved. The following section elaborates on this topic and illustrates how the civil rights movement in each location remained at a standstill until necessary international pressures pushed the movements forward.

### **Argument:**

An alternative theory, as mentioned above, regarding the progress minority populations in both the United States and Northern Ireland have seen in regards to the area of civil rights, is that growing international pressures helped to reinforce the respective domestic civil rights movements and served as an impetus for change. The United States began implementing new policies regarding racial segregation in response to Cold War politics, while Northern Ireland experienced an expansion of rights due in large part to the United Kingdom’s membership in the European Economic Community

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<sup>16</sup> Nossiter, Bernard. "'Bloody Sunday' Inquiry Absolves British Troops in 13 Irish Deaths." *Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File)* [Los Angeles, Calif.] 20 Apr. 1972, a4. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1986)*. ProQuest. University of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia, PA. 29 Mar. 2008. <<http://www.proquest.com/>>

and subsequent European Union. Civil rights progress in Northern Ireland also benefited from American encouragement of peace and reconciliation. Thus, the relatively recent increase in interdependence between nations both economically and politically has created a new sense of accountability among states. Domestic repression has become an embarrassment in a global society that touts the benefits of democracy and freedom, and thus states have taken greater care to solve internal problems of inequality.

### **The United States**

Although international institutions, prominent world actors, and even developing nations have pressured for rights progress in recent decades, that has not always been the circumstance. In past centuries, states were either left to deal with these issues domestically, or sometimes, as was the case with the colonial movement, nations were actually encouraged to continue discriminating without interference. It was merely seen as the norm, and oftentimes, colonization was deemed “the white man’s burden.” When war erupted in the Philippines in the late nineteenth century, “some white Americans were troubled by the course of the war . . . but many openly accepted it as one of the unfortunate burdens of civilization.”<sup>17</sup> Because England had already sprinted to colonize the third world, there was no pressure for Americans to consider the rights of the native populations; there was only the drive to colonize faster. “U.S. policy toward its new colonies abroad after 1899 derived directly from its prior policies toward Native Americans, . . . and Roosevelt wrote to a friend that if whites were ‘morally bound to

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<sup>17</sup> Borstelmann, Thomas. *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001. p. 17.

abandon the Philippines, we were also morally bound to abandon Arizona to the Apaches.’ ”<sup>18</sup> There existed a clear sense that these actions were not only acceptable, but necessary. The natives owed a debt to the settler for showing them civilization.

The Civil War period in the United States was similar to that of colonization as the U.S. felt international pressure to continue its repressive behaviors. While on a tour of the United Kingdom in 1853, the husband of Harriet Beecher Stowe addressed an audience in Glasgow and said, “In this country,” referring to Great Britain, “is the great market for American cotton; and it is cotton which sustains American slavery.” Instead of merely touting the ills of slavery, Professor Stowe implicated a separate nation in the act and cited its poor influence on U.S. behaviors. An observer remarked, “It is not pleasant to hear from Professor Stowe that the price of a slave, who was formerly worth \$100, has risen through our demand for cotton, to £300. It is not pleasant to think that the moral sense and judgment of any portion of our countrymen are under coercion by commercial interests.”<sup>19</sup> Regular citizens appeared perturbed as Professor Stowe highlighted the fact that although Englishmen did not necessarily own slaves themselves, they were in fact propagating the institution of slavery by demanding cotton imports. Pressure from England to deliver the commodity combined with the economic incentives of the transaction encouraged the business of slavery.

American citizens also cited English traditions of rule in order to build support for the argument for slavery. One letter to the editor of the *New York Daily Times* in 1854 stated that “*Negro slavery is the basis and foundation of Democracy, without which it*

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<sup>18</sup> *The Cold War and The Color Line*, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> “Cotton and Uncle Tom.” *New York Daily Times (1851-1857)* [New York, N.Y.] 6 May 1853, 2. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2004)*. ProQuest. University of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia, PA. 15 Feb. 2008. <<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2100/>>

*cannot exist*. Witness Europe. It is as essential to Democracy as pauperism is to Aristocracy. One cannot exist without the other.”<sup>20</sup> There existed little outside pressure to improve the rights of citizens. It seemed as though England, and other nations for that matter, had no reason to support civil rights across the ocean. Not only did England benefit from the cotton trade, but its class-based system and historical feudal hierarchy also left little room for the British to claim moral superiority or insist on an end to the abuses of African Americans. Another article, abolitionist in nature, asked in the *New York Daily Times* in 1854, “Will not the Americans of the North heartily join in the good work [to end slavery]? Will not England?—she who *particeps criminis*—nobly lend a helping hand?”<sup>21</sup> This writer recognized that England was instead another factor encouraging this social ill. And as the Civil War began, Southerners continued to look to the international community to validate and support its actions. *The Christian Recorder*, an African American newspaper, lamented the existence of international support for slaveholders in 1861: “The French ultramontane press, true to its instincts, sympathizes with the South.”<sup>22</sup>

The events of the Civil War and colonization provide insights as to how international pressures, regardless of motives, can affect the domestic policy of a nation, and one sees a similar trend with the events of World War II. The Second World War

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<sup>20</sup> “Philosophy of Slavery: A new Revelation--Position of the South--Nature of the Issue.” *New York Daily Times (1851-1857)* [New York, N.Y.] 22 Nov. 1854, 3. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2004)*. ProQuest. University of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia, PA. 15 Feb. 2008. <<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2100/>>

<sup>21</sup> “American Slavery: The African Race in the United States. Number Two.” *New York Daily Times (1851-1857)* [New York, N.Y.] 12 Apr. 1854, 2. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2004)*. ProQuest. University of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia, PA. 15 Feb. 2008. <<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2100/>>

<sup>22</sup> “The Press of England and France on the American Civil War.” *The Christian Recorder*. [Philadelphia, PA.] 29 June 1861. Accessible Archives. University of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia, PA. 18 Feb. 2008. <[www.accessible.com](http://www.accessible.com)>

demanded much from the United States, including full mobilization of the economy and the presentation of a united front. In order to achieve these goals, some racial differences had to be pushed to aside. In *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America*, Phillip Klinkner and Rogers Smith contend that “wartime changes eroded the color line. Tight labor markets, pressure from the FEPC, and growing black demands increasingly opened up jobs to blacks,” but they also note that “many white workers were less than happy about such changes.”<sup>23</sup> The economy had to operate at its maximum potential, but racial discrimination did not end overnight. Still, the pressure to win the war, from the Americans, the British, the French, and Allies the world over, called for a degree of disregard for racial prejudices.

At first, however, this shift from repression of black Americans to near acceptance in certain instances was difficult to see. In 1942 the Office of Facts and Figures “conducted a survey of New York blacks on the war effort and found a rich reservoir of resentment. Many blacks felt they were worse off since the start of the war. Fully 38 percent said that the country should concentrate on spreading democracy at home rather than defeating the Axis.”<sup>24</sup> But by 1943, Time magazine reported that “U.S. citizens are fighting World War II with much less hysteria, many fewer violations of civil rights than during World War I, concluded the unsparing American Civil Liberties Union.”<sup>25</sup> As Penny Von Eschen notes in *Race Against Empire*, “The global dynamic unleashed by World War II brought [civil rights] to the forefront of black American

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<sup>23</sup> Klinkner, Philip A. with Rogers M. Smith. *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. p. 171.

<sup>24</sup> *The Unsteady March*, p. 172.

<sup>25</sup> “Report.” *Time*. 26 Jul. 1943. Time Magazine. 15 Mar. 2008.

<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,802854,00.html>>

politics and animated political discourse at an unprecedented level.”<sup>26</sup> New civil rights groups sprouted up, and existing ones grew. “Between 1939 and 1945, NAACP membership grew nearly tenfold from fifty-four thousand to more than five hundred thousand, giving the organization its first mass base, [and] . . . along with blacks, the war prompted a growing number of white liberals to step up their civil rights efforts.”<sup>27</sup> Although full equality was still elusive, real progress was not.

In order to maintain the united front necessary to win the war, “the federal government made some efforts . . . to back up its rhetoric and to protect and extend the rights of blacks.”<sup>28</sup> Congress battled the white primaries, while the government encouraged Americans to support their own. As Joe Louis prepared for his rematch with Max Schmeling, Roosevelt told him, “Joe, we need muscles like yours to beat Germany,” and once he won, the head of the New Deal’s National Recovery Administration reported that “there should be just as much pride in their progress and prowess under our system as in the triumph of any other American. For all their misfortunes and shortcomings they are our people.”<sup>29</sup> By 1947, average white Americans also considered Jackie Robinson as one of their own, and cheered his successes on the baseball diamond. However, at times the U.S. government did fall short of its promises, and portions of the American public failed to notice. Lynchings still occurred in the South after the war, and the President’s Committee on Civil Rights found that “the white population can threaten and

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<sup>26</sup> Von Eschen, Penny M. *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism 1937-1957*. Ithaca: University of Cornell Press, 1997. p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> *The Unsteady March*, p. 166-7.

<sup>28</sup> *The Unsteady March*, p. 173.

<sup>29</sup> *The Unsteady March*, p. 142-3.

do violence to the minority member with little or no fear of legal reprisal.”<sup>30</sup> Even so, the longstanding racial hierarchies were becoming increasingly unstable.

Yet because the United States was fighting a war of global scope, its racist policies did attract scrutiny. Enemies of the U.S., namely Japan and Germany, pointed to the inequalities perpetuated in America and used this racism to fuel their propaganda machines. *The Unsteady March* highlights the effects of this scrutiny: “Previously, the department [of Justice] had claimed that lynching was simply not a federal crime, but the coming of war required a change in policy. Occurring shortly after Pearl Harbor, Axis propagandists broadcast details of the incident around the world. In particular, the Japanese used the incident to warn Asians of how Western ‘democracies’ treated non-whites.”<sup>31</sup> The international community took notice of the fact that elevated American rhetoric about freedom and democracy did not necessarily match with the nation’s domestic policies and actions. “Postindependence India became one of the most vocal international critics of Jim Crow.”<sup>32</sup> One commentator noted:

Both America and Britain lack the moral basis for engaging in this war unless they put their own houses in order, while making a fixed determination to withdraw their influence and power both from Africa and Asia, and remove the color bar. They have no right to talk about protecting democracies and protecting civil and human freedom until the canker of white supremacy is destroyed in its entirety.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *The Cold War and The Color Line*, p. 56.

<sup>31</sup> *The Unsteady March*, p. 173.

<sup>32</sup> Plummer, Brenda Gayle. *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996. p. 91.

<sup>33</sup> *Rising Wind*, p. 94.

Indians and Japanese alike also resented the existing immigration restrictions against their entry into the United States. For these reasons, the U.S. saw its international reputation fading in some eyes. However, the whole of the international community did not speak out against the internal abuses in America. New York Post correspondent Walter White “found ample evidence that the U.S. command discriminated against black soldiers in Britain, [and that] British authorities generally condoned miscarriages of justice.”<sup>34</sup> Although the U.S. was trying to institute change, the international pressure was not complete.

Events following World War II show how African Americans, themselves, turned to the international community to locate support for equal rights. With the advent of the postwar anticolonial movement, African Americans “argued that their struggles against Jim Crow were inextricably bound to the struggles of African and Asian people for independence.”<sup>35</sup> They saw a reflection of their struggle in the international arena and called for equality and fair treatment of their race. International equality was highlighted because, as Tom Mboya, a Kenyan politician, stated, “Africans are highly conscious of the plight of black America, and they will be suspicious of the intentions of American foreign policy until they are convinced that the goal of American domestic policy is social justice for all.”<sup>36</sup> African Americans believed that this focus on the international image of the U.S. would stir the government to act. However, the movement ultimately fell far short of its goals in the late 1940s. As Penny M. Von Eschen details in *Race*

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<sup>34</sup> *Rising Wind*, p. 96.

<sup>35</sup> *Race Against Empire*, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Mboya, Tom. "The American Negro Cannot Look to Africa for an Escape :Africa is no escape." *New York Times (1857-Current file)* [New York, N.Y.] 13 Jul. 1969, p. 1. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2004)*. ProQuest. University of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia, PA. 15 Feb. 2008. <<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2100/>>

*Against Empire*, “The 1950s eclipse of 1940s anticolonialism had profound implications for the politics of the black American community as questions concerning political, economic, and social rights in an international context were neglected in favor of an exclusive emphasis on domestic political and civil rights.”<sup>37</sup> International pressures are important for creating civil rights progress, but in this instance the international pressures from African colonies were fairly weak and negligible. Domestic organizing and Cold War international factors would prove more effective in the next decade. In the anticolonial movement, African Americans were also fighting for rights on a global, not national scale, which may have been too large for the struggling movement. Although the movement did “shape black American politics and the meaning of racial identities and solidarities,” the fact that they were trying to “demand a genuine transformation of global power relations” worked against the goal of African American enfranchisement.<sup>38</sup> Yet though there was no immediate success in helping American blacks win civil rights, the anticolonial movement did serve to further inspire the population of African Americans.

With the advent of the Cold War, race relations became a matter of national security, and leaders, under pressure from the international community, struggled to create domestic civil rights progress. Americans realized both the importance of the issue as well as the difficulties inherent in change. *The New York Times* reported in 1948 that, “In its leading editorial, ‘The South and Truman,’ today’s *Athens Banner-Herald*, a Democratic paper since 1832, called for an end to the ‘cold war’ on the civil rights issue

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<sup>37</sup> *Race Against Empire*, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> *Race Against Empire*, p. 2, ix.

‘before this question eventually destroys unity at a time of national peril.’<sup>39</sup> This shows that even Southerners were concerned about the race question. Some called for equal rights, though others doubted that they would come to pass. Some, like the American Civil Liberties Union, even believed that the Cold War would further chip away at the few rights African Americans held. The ACLU issued a statement in 1949 saying that “civil rights in this country [are now] in greater danger than at any time in the last twenty-nine years because of ‘imagined insecurity’ in the face of the cold war with Russia . . . fear of war, Communist expansion and espionage [have] helped create in the United States a ‘dominant spirit’ of ‘nervous conservatism’ and [sparked the] failure of Congress to enact any civil rights measure.”<sup>40</sup> The organization believed that liberties were threatened but also noted that “the Truman Administration’s civil rights program shows increasing vitality, though bogged down in Congress at the moment . . . [and] also, on the international front the United Nations [has] for the first time in history laid a working basis between the nations and peoples for enforceable civil rights and international freedom of communication.”<sup>41</sup> The group recognized the importance of the international community and cited its potential positive effects on the domestic rights situation.

Since becoming a signatory for the United Nations Commission of Human Rights on December 10, 1946, the United States found itself committed to supporting human

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<sup>39</sup> “Georgia Paper Hits South’s ‘Cold War’: Athen’s ‘Banner-Herald’ Assails Civil Rights Rift as Menace to National Unity.” *New York Times (1857-Current file)* [New York, N.Y.] 6 Nov. 1948, 2. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2004)*. ProQuest. University of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia, PA. 15 Feb. 2008. <<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2100/>>

<sup>40</sup> “Civil Rights in U.S. are Seen in Peril: Liberties Union Decries Fear of ‘Insecurity’ in Face of Cold War With Russia.” *New York Times (1857-Current file)* [New York, N.Y.] 25 Sep. 1949, 79. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2004)*. ProQuest. University of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia, PA. 15 Feb. 2008. <<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2100/>>

<sup>41</sup> “Civil Rights in U.S. are Seen in Peril.”

rights abroad; but with this responsibility, it became increasingly important that the U.S. promote rights domestically as well. The council was said to “encourage the forces of egalitarianism around the globe,”<sup>42</sup> but one criticism of the commission was that some of the member states actually had poor human rights records themselves. Although these critiques were mostly directed at countries like the People’s Republic of China, Cuba, and Pakistan, the U.S. was not immune to disapproving remarks. The U.N.’s June 7, 1949 memorandum entitled *The Main Types and Causes of Discrimination* called for the protection of minorities, and by doing so, highlighted the shortcomings of the U.S. in the area of individual rights. The document stated, “Protection of minorities is the protection of non-dominant groups which . . . wish in general for equality of treatment with the majority . . . the characteristics meriting such protection are race, religion and language.”<sup>43</sup> The document also stated that “on the basis of this ethical concept of the dignity of the human person, the following principles are founded: (a) the principle of individual freedom, and (b) the principle of equality of all human beings before the law.”<sup>44</sup> The United States, however, with its active Jim Crow laws and separate but equal policies, was not living up to this ideal of minority protection, and leaders recognized this. President Truman even warned Americans that “their confidence in the U.N. cannot be absolute . . . [and that] it is not true that every big and little wrong anywhere must be

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<sup>42</sup> *The Cold War and The Color Line*, p. 56.

<sup>43</sup> “The Main Types and Causes of Discrimination.” *Official Documents System of the United Nations*. 12 Feb. 2008. p. 2. <<http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G49/000/03/pdf/G4900003.pdf?OpenElement>>

<sup>44</sup> “The Main Types and Causes of Discrimination,” p. 4.

righted before for the world can have peace.”<sup>45</sup> Although the system of international cooperation seemed to be off to a rocky start, it had started nonetheless.

Throughout the Cold War, the United Soviet Socialist Republic continued to criticize the racial tensions existent in the United States. The USSR pointed to the disadvantaged population of African Americans as proof that American democracy had severe faults. Communist leaders wanted to embarrass America in the global arena, and as the spread of communism became an increasing threat, the United States began to dismantle its domestic racist policies and laws. This change was not immediate. It occurred over time, with a climax in the 1960s and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. The U.S. felt the pressure of the international community and responded by implementing appropriate change. Mary Dudziak, in her article “*Brown* as a Cold War Case,” highlights the effects of the Cold War on American judicial proceedings. She states, “the Justice Department briefs gave only one reason for the government’s participation in [the *Brown* case]: segregation harmed U.S. foreign relations, . . . and, as the United States argued in the *Brown* amicus brief . . . ‘racial discrimination furnishes grist for the Communist propaganda mills, and it raises doubts even among friendly nations as to the intensity of our devotion to the democratic faith.’ ”<sup>46</sup> The United States realized that “discrimination at home must be fought because it undermined the legitimate U.S. leadership of the ‘free world.’ ”<sup>47</sup> In its mission to win the Cold War and become the world hegemon, the United States could not

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<sup>45</sup> “The President on U.N.” (7 Feb. 1947). *Wall Street Journal* (1889-Current file),6. 22 Feb. 2008. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The Wall Street Journal (1889 - 1990)* database. (Document ID: 104416142).

<sup>46</sup> Dudziak, Mary. “Brown as a Cold War Case.” *The Journal of American History* 91 (2004): p. 1. <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/91.1/dudziak.html>>

<sup>47</sup> *Race Against Empire*, p. 3.

afford to have a tarnished image. As President Truman said, “Our foreign policy is designed to make the United States an enormous, positive influence for peace and progress throughout the world. We have tried to let nothing, not even extreme political differences between ourselves and foreign nations, stand in the way of this goal. But our domestic civil rights shortcomings are a serious obstacle.”<sup>48</sup> International cooperation and adherence to basic human rights had become key.

U.S. Department of State records of the period highlight the concern of rising Soviet power and discuss the methods employed by the USSR to achieve the desired power. One declassified document states:

The general Soviet strategy for carrying on the world struggle in the present phase rests on two propositions . . . the second [of which] is that the world position and power of the “imperialist” states can be undermined by a persistent and aggressive campaign waged by methods short of war—political struggle, economic and scientific competition, subversion. Political struggle takes the form of a constant agitation designed to capture and organize in broad mass movements the sentiments which focus on the great issues of the current period—peace, disarmament, anticolonialism, social justice, economic development. By manipulating these issues and by dramatizing the growth of Soviet power, the Soviets are also trying to align the governments of the underdeveloped and uncommitted states with the Bloc, and against the West.

The Soviet leaders hope that the result will be a progressive isolation and

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<sup>48</sup> Dudziak, Mary. *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. p. 80.

loss of influence for the Western powers, divisions among them, and a decline in their ability to deal effectively with threats to their interests.

This is what the Soviets mean by "peaceful coexistence"—a strategy to defeat the West without war.<sup>49</sup>

The U.S. government was aware of the tactics of the Soviet Union, and realized that it did not want the Soviets to capitalize on the racial tension existent in the United States.

American intelligence worried about the possibility of a fifth column growing within the nation and compromising national security.

To guard against this scenario, the Federal Bureau of Investigation drafted memos regarding the potential threat of civil rights groups. In one such 1963 document, the Bureau reported, “Although evidence to date is lacking which would show the black nationalist movement in this country is either under foreign control or direction, it must be recognized that a real potential for foreign exploitation exists and presents a definite threat to our internal security.”<sup>50</sup> Not only did intelligence officials worry about foreign control of groups, but they also were concerned that communists, American or otherwise, would infiltrate and lead these communities to revolt. One report notes, “Communists and other subversives and extremists strive and labor ceaselessly to precipitate racial trouble and to take advantage of racial discord in this country. Such elements were active in exploiting and aggravating the riots, for example, in Harlem, Watts, Cleveland, and

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<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of State. “Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-1963.” Vol. V: Soviet Union. Washington D.C. 16 Feb. 2008. <[http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_v/01\\_09.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_v/01_09.html)>

<sup>50</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. “Intelligence memorandum on the potential for foreign exploitation of the following Black Nationalist organizations: Organization of Afro-American Unity; the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC); the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM); the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Foreign influence may stem from the following: Puerto Rican involvement; the Communist Party, USA; Cuban involvement.” *Declassified Documents Reference System*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2008. Issue Date: 11 Jan. 1968. Date Declassified: 15 Aug. 2002. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com>>

Chicago.”<sup>51</sup> Race relations had become an issue vital to the nation’s security. The new, political consequences for discriminating against African Americans came to be a central concern of American leaders. As late as 1967, a White House memorandum explored the potential effects of Cuban involvement in Black Power movements.<sup>52</sup>

Not only was the United States concerned about the foreign exacerbation of tensions during the Cold War; it was also concerned with its legitimacy and reputation around the world. As the book *Race Against Empire* notes, “discrimination at home [had to] be fought because it undermined the legitimate U.S. leadership of the ‘free world,’ . . . [and for that reason] the Truman administration and the State Department embarked on far-reaching attempts to shape Asian and African perceptions of American ‘race relations.’ ”<sup>53</sup> The United States was supposed to be the leader of the free world, and for that to be the case, it had to lead a free nation first and foremost. The U.S. was criticized for human rights abuses, and this criticism went well into the 1980s. In 1987, the *New York Times* wrote that the U.S.S.R. reported “American agents had developed a lethal gas that kills black people but not whites.”<sup>54</sup> The “chief editor of the official Novosti press said he did not recall the article, but if it existed, it probably had been based on Western press reports. [He] went on to talk about massacres of American Indians [and] mistreatment of Japanese-Americans in World War II . . . arguing that development of an

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<sup>51</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Subversive and Extremist Elements in Racial Violence." *Declassified Documents Reference System*. Issue Date: 22 Sep. 1966. Date Declassified: 17 Jun. 2002. <<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu>>

<sup>52</sup> White House. "FBI finds no Cuban involvement in the civil rights and 'Black Power' movements." *Declassified Documents Reference System*. Issue Date: 3 Aug. 1967. Date Declassified: 18 Apr. 1984. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com>>

<sup>53</sup> *Race Against Empire*, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Keller, Bill. "Americans Outraged by Soviet Article." *New York Times (1857-Current file)* [New York, N.Y.] 6 Jun 1987, 5. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2004)*. ProQuest. University of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia, PA. 15 Feb. 2008. <<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2100/>>

ethnic weapon would not be inconsistent with American history.”<sup>55</sup> Enemies of the U.S. were quick to cite past discriminations, and even quicker to claim new ones. Competing against these sorts of allegations, the U.S. had to take actions that countered the claims.

The U.S. was so concerned with its image abroad that President Lyndon Johnson, in a telephone conversation with Roy Wilkins in 1964, asked whether it would be appropriate for the government to appoint black Americans as ambassadors to African countries. The question was whether this would show that the U.S. conformed to stereotypes or that it supported equal opportunities. A short excerpt of the transcript follows:

President: Now let me ask you this. They tell me that we shouldn't send a Negro to an African country as an ambassador. Is that true?

Wilkins: The Africans have strenuously denied it when we have confronted them with it. I don't know whether it's true or not. All I can say is that diplomatically they have said no. Some of them have been vehement in denying it. Others have said this is silly. And I don't know exactly how they feel about it. I would say that if you made a uniform practice of assigning Negroes--or such Negroes as you had--to African countries, they would resent it. You understand.

President: I agree with that. But we've got'em in Scandinavia and we've got'em in other countries, and what I want to do is enlarge 'em a little more. They don't have their twelve percent. Now I'm not a percentage man, but if we can find some of the top people in this country--I mean you

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<sup>55</sup> "Americans Outraged by Soviet Article."

take either of the [unintelligible] would be wonderful ambassadors to some country, but top men. I would like to get'em up to where they are at least in walking distance of the rest of us.

Wilkins: Exactly.<sup>56</sup>

This exchange shows that there was serious consideration given to the issue of black equality at the highest levels of the government, and the image of America in the international arena was an important factor to consider in this movement towards increased rights.

Although international pressures were effective at bringing about civil rights progress, it was still difficult to move forward, as the events leading up to the passage of both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 show. As Southern Senators and Congressmen tried to prevent the bills from seeing the light of day, black activists, along with President Johnson, pushed for their passage. It is important to note the tireless efforts of activists such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., but it is also necessary to understand that the U.S. government felt two distinct opposite domestic pressures, one for calling for change, and the other satisfied with the status quo. Thus, it was the outside, international pressure that tipped the scales in favor of civil rights.

### **Northern Ireland**

Although Northern Ireland is not a nation unto itself like the United States, its history of civil rights progress follows a path similar to that of the U.S, as international

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<sup>56</sup> U.S. Department of State. "Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Roy Wilkins." Washington D.C., 16 Jan. 1964. <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/johnsonlb/xxxiii/32637.htm>>

pressures played a key role in the movement towards equality. The international pressures to secure equal rights were not present in the early twentieth century when violence erupted in the Easter Rising of 1916, the subsequent Irish War of Independence begun in 1919, or in the later Irish Civil War, and thus the repression of Catholics was legitimized. In a 1919 *New York Times* article titled “England assailed by Irish Leaders,” activist groups in America lamented the fact that there was no outside pressure on England to end the repression of the Catholic Irish. The nationalists had fought for their freedoms and liberties but only achieved half the objective, as England partitioned the island and claimed Northern Ireland as its own, leaving the Catholic minority there with few protected rights.

The League of Nations was denounced as ‘an abomination’ . . . and ‘a League to prohibit peace’ by a group of speakers representing the Friends of Irish Freedom . . . who appeared today before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. They demanded that the treaty be utterly rejected, on the double ground that it will cause destruction of American political and commercial independence, and that it will prevent Ireland and other subject nations from obtaining their independence . . . the speakers denounced England and her tactics in Ireland and assailed President Wilson by innuendo.<sup>57</sup>

The *Times* article shows that international organizations, specifically the League of Nations, were incapable of exerting any real influence over the situation, and although

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<sup>57</sup> “England Assailed By Irish Leaders.” *New York Times (1857-Current file)* [New York, N.Y.] 31 Aug. 1919, 1-2. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2004)*. ProQuest. University of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia, PA. 28 Mar. 2008. <<http://www.proquest.com/>>

there was lobbyist support in the U.S., this support did not permeate to the top levels of government. President Woodrow Wilson remained relatively silent on the issue and refused to intervene. As Andrew J. Wilson writes in *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict, 1968-1995*, “In April 1919, a delegation from the American Commission on Irish Independence arrived in Versailles to win Woodrow Wilson’s support for Irish self-determination. The President, however, refused to pressure Britain to recognize the Irish provisional government.”<sup>58</sup> Wilson was an advocate for the League, but because it did not champion the Irish cause, Irish Americans did not support the international body. Although the League officially promoted the idea of self-determination of nations, “application of the principle . . . in the postwar peace settlement was limited. It was not to apply to the victorious powers, [not] to the Irish in the United Kingdom, . . . or [to the] African-Americans in the United States.”<sup>59</sup> Because of these reasons, England was free to restrict civil rights. The Government of Ireland Act of 1920 further proved this point.

It is important to note before moving forward that there existed two intertwined and nearly inseparable conflicts in the Northern Ireland. One, the civil rights movement, called for equality between Catholics and Protestants. It denounced gerrymandering and the effective exclusion of Catholics from government activities among other abuses. The second conflict focused on the struggle to create a united Ireland. Although these are two distinct goals, the effort to unite Ireland has its roots in the movement towards equality. Early supporters of a united Ireland desired an end to British rule on the island so that they would not have to face continued repression, and the desire to unite the two areas

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<sup>58</sup> Wilson, Andrew J. *Irish America and The Ulster Conflict, 1968-1995*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University Press, 1995. p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> Esman, Milton J. and Shibley Telhami, eds. *International Organizations and Ethnic Conflict*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1995. p. 23.

was grounded in the same desires for freedom and equality that the civil rights movement advanced. To illustrate this point more clearly, Sinn Féin, a political group known for its policy of supporting the self-determination of the Irish people, uses as its motto the phrase, “Building an Ireland of Equals.”<sup>60</sup> This shows that essentially the struggle for a united Ireland is grounded in the struggle for basic equality.

Although domestic pressures grew throughout the 1960s in Northern Ireland, they ultimately failed to have the desired impact on the movement towards equality. Prime Minister Terence O’Neill advocated change through his rhetoric and stated that he “wanted to build an opportunity state in which no man [would] be imprisoned by his environment and in which every citizen [would] have the chance to realise his full potential.”<sup>61</sup> Yet, as Bob Purdie notes in *Politics in the Streets*, O’Neill often made “liberal and modernist statements and gestures, while using extreme caution in nudging his party towards changes its traditional outlook.”<sup>62</sup> Because of this half-hearted attempt, change was unattainable through domestic means, and further domestic efforts did not experience success.

The re-defined Irish civil rights movement that emerged in the 1960s was partly motivated by the events occurring in the United States at the same time. “The new strategy was inspired by the Black civil rights movement in the United States. The term ‘civil rights’ had not been used to define the aspirations of the minority community in Northern Ireland before the 1960s and it had never before adopted a strategy that was

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<sup>60</sup> “History of the Conflict.” *Sinn Féin*. 30 Mar. 2008. <<http://www.sinnfein.ie/history>>

<sup>61</sup> Purdie, Bob. *Politics in the Streets: The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1990. p. 14.

<sup>62</sup> *Politics in the Streets*, p. 14-5.

both militant and constitutional.”<sup>63</sup> Although this new direction appeared promising, some scholars have noted its ultimate failure. Purdie writes that there were “strategic and tactical problems involved in transferring the model of the Black movement in the United States to Northern Ireland” as it “produc[ed] sectarian tensions, instability, conflict and violence” in the region.<sup>64</sup> There existed indirect international influence in the domestic movement in the sense that Northern Ireland activists adopted street marches and sit-downs, but there did not exist the necessary direct international pressure to help these tactics succeed.

Although “the first months of the civil rights campaign, non-violent and concentrated in Derry, aroused intense interest in the Republic of Ireland,”<sup>65</sup> the internal movement ultimately sparked the violence leading to the Troubles. In the early 1970s, the Parliament of Northern Ireland responded by restricting rights even further. The Special Powers Act of 1971 served as emergency legislation to halt terrorist activities; it called for internment without trial and acted as another roadblock in the move towards equality. The movement then lost some of its legitimacy as the Provisional Irish Republican Army resorted to terrorist tactics. “While both wings of the IRA [Official and Provisional] were committed in varying degrees to the intensification of conflict, there were powerful forces within the Catholic community in Derry strongly opposed to such a development . . . [they noted that] such small highly militant groups [are not usually] successful to any great degree.”<sup>66</sup> Because there was not a united front and violent tactics were met with heightened repression, this domestic effort failed to create

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<sup>63</sup> *Politics in the Streets*, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Politics in the Streets*, p. 157, 156.

<sup>65</sup> *From Civil Rights to Armalites*, p. 55.

<sup>66</sup> *From Civil Rights to Armalites*, p. 243.

the desired change. The IRA can be seen as something other than a domestic pressure, perhaps even an international pressure as the Provisional IRA has been, at times, headquartered in Dublin, but the fact that it recruited citizens of Northern Ireland and maintained offices throughout the six Northern counties, removes it from the strictly international category. In the sixties and seventies, this militant effort failed; as Bob Purdie states, “At the outset the movement was supported by every shade of political colour, including some individual members of the Unionist Party. In the end, the campaign was hijacked by the gunmen who created a new and even greater need for basic civil rights in Northern Ireland.”<sup>67</sup>

Yet, there were some positive effects of the Irish civil rights movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Irish author Niall Ó Dochartaigh stated:

One of the most significant achievements of the civil rights campaign was to attract international attention to the grievances of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland. From the beginning, reports of marches in Derry were carried as far afield as New Zealand, Thailand, Zambia and, of course, Britain and the United States. The most important external pressure that came to bear on the Unionist government came from the British government at Westminster, but there were also significant pressures from the Republic of Ireland and, as time went on, from the United States.<sup>68</sup>

A new and effective force for change, international pressure from both Britain and the United States, surfaced, and with this, slowly change began. Classifying the pressures

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<sup>67</sup> *Politics in the Streets*, p. ix.

<sup>68</sup> Ó Dochartaigh, Niall. *From Civil Rights to Armalites*. Cork: Cork University Press, 1997. p. 53-4.

included as “domestic” or “international” is admittedly difficult, because Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, and yet at the same time, it is distinctly separate. Northern Ireland “remain[s] bound to Britain by the consent of [its] inhabitants, . . . [yet] because Northern Ireland is not fully integrated into the United Kingdom either constitutionally or politically, it is seen internationally as a political entity in its own right and not simply as a subordinate part of the United Kingdom.”<sup>69</sup> Because of this dynamic relationship, the argument regarding international pressures becomes more difficult to pinpoint and articulate. At times Britain was pressured to enact change in the Northern Ireland arena, and at other times, Britain itself acted as an outside force pressuring for change. Still the overall pattern is clear: progress in civil rights came only when pressures for change arose from actors and influences outside Northern Ireland.

With the Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973, Britain put direct pressure on the acting government in Northern Ireland by suspending the Parliament, encouraging devolution, and declaring discrimination on the basis of religion as unlawful. Part III of the document states, “Any Measure, any Act of the Parliament of Northern Ireland and any relevant subordinate instrument shall, to the extent that it discriminates against any person or class of persons on the ground of religious belief or political opinion, be void.”<sup>70</sup> Britain used its force to pressure Northern Ireland to change, and in the 1970s, the British government also looked into potential abuses of the Special Powers Act and declared that previous and harmful interrogation methods of nationalist suspects were being stopped.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, however, the Republic of Ireland also exerted some

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<sup>69</sup> *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective*, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> “Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973.” *Cain Web Service*. 25 Feb. 2008. <<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmsol/nica1973.htm#section17>>

<sup>71</sup> *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective*, p. 166.

force over the situation. It brought a case before the European Court of Human Rights regarding the mistreatment of suspects held in Northern Ireland. The court found the United Kingdom guilty in 1978. “In any context, such a judgment would have been a grave embarrassment to the British Government, . . . [and] the case and its outcome exposed Britain’s vulnerability over the issue of Northern Ireland internationally.”<sup>72</sup> This case shows both sides of Britain’s dilemma; on one hand it was acting with force to end the inequalities in Northern Ireland, and on the other, it was being pressured by outside governments and international organizations to do more. Yet, in both instances, it is clear that international pressure regarding the issue was growing from Britain, the Republic of Ireland, and the European Court.

Like the European Court of Human Rights, the European Union played an important role in securing peace in the region. In 1973 the United Kingdom joined the European Economic Community, later the European Union, and with this membership, Britain became accountable to a group of nations that supported human rights and was opposed to disenfranchisement of a particular group of persons. Jonathan Stevenson notes in “Peace in Northern Ireland: Why Now?” that “the drive toward European integration and unity has eroded national borders . . . and undermined the beliefs and the support that gave voice and strength to Northern Ireland’s most stubborn politicians. The European Union has become . . . a formidable supranational political lever.”<sup>73</sup> Garret FitzGerald, the seventh Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland and 1970s Foreign Affairs Minister, argued that “membership of the Community [had] a psychological impact on

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<sup>72</sup> *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective*, p. 166-7.

<sup>73</sup> Stevenson, Jonathan. “Peace in Northern Ireland: Why Now?” *Foreign Policy* (Fall 1998) p. 41. *Questia*, 17 Nov. 2007. <<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5001415211>>

people in both parts of Ireland because more extensive contact with other Europeans [made] internal differences in Ireland appear less significant.”<sup>74</sup>

The theme of international embarrassment for the United Kingdom from denials of civil rights in Northern Ireland continued to serve as a factor for progress from the 1970s on, as Brendan O’Leary notes in *The Politics of Antagonism*. He states, “The Soviet Union used to bring up the Northern Ireland experience to embarrass the UK: when British complaints about human rights in the USSR exceeded permitted diplomatic niceties Soviet officials raised questions about British repression in Northern Ireland and the jailing of innocent Irish people in Great Britain, like the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, and the Maguire Seven.”<sup>75</sup> Not only did the Soviets recognize the hypocrisy of the British, but the European Convention, a body created in 1999 to develop the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, took note as well. It stated, “The UK government has been found guilty of violations of the European convention on human rights and its officials’ treatment of suspects has led to consistent and empirically supported criticisms of infringements of basic civil rights.”<sup>76</sup> Eventually though, as O’Leary states, Great Britain finally realized that “good relations with Northern Ireland, the UK, and the EEC became imperative for the success of the new economic strategy,” and thus the U.K. had to refine its dealings with the Roman Catholic population.<sup>77</sup>

American intervention through the years has also been of importance to those in Northern Ireland and has had a lasting effect on the rights movement as well as the peace process between Northern Ireland and Ireland. As Adrian Guelke notes in *Northern*

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<sup>74</sup> *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective*, p. 155.

<sup>75</sup> O’Leary, Brendan and John McGarry. *The Politics of Antagonism*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1996. p. 19.

<sup>76</sup> *The Politics of Antagonism*, p. 47.

<sup>77</sup> *The Politics of Antagonism*, p. 155.

*Ireland: The International Perspective*, “Outside of the British Isles the country most deeply involved in the Northern Ireland conflict is the United States. Viewed from Northern Ireland the American dimension has assumed increasing importance in the conflict as is shown by the attention all parties in Northern Ireland lavish on American opinion.”<sup>78</sup> American interest in the issue reaches back to the 1950s and has steadily grown throughout the decades, peaking with the support for the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. “In 1950 the House of Representatives passed an amendment to the Foreign Aid Appropriation Bill to withhold all aid to Britain as long as Ireland remained partitioned,”<sup>79</sup> and by the time of Jimmy Carter’s presidency, Congress began to push with more intensity for recognition of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The Department of State along with Congressional members O’Neill, Kennedy, and Carey in 1977 proposed a statement regarding the Northern Ireland situation that articulated concern over the violence, encouraged Americans not to support the use of force, and “express[ed] United States Government’s] willingness to join with others in seeing how additional investment can be encouraged in the event of a settlement.”<sup>80</sup> The last point was noted as “somewhat controversial and [one that would] not make the British happy.”<sup>81</sup> However, the Carter Administration maintained a policy of non-intervention unless directly requested from Northern Ireland officials. When Jimmy Carter’s Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, met with Irish Foreign Minister Brian Lenihan in 1977, Vance noted in a memo:

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<sup>78</sup> *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective*, p. 128.

<sup>79</sup> *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective*, p. 129-30.

<sup>80</sup> U.S. Department of State. “Memorandum for President Jimmy Carter from Acting Secretary of State Warren Christopher regarding a proposed presidential statement on the violence in Northern Ireland.” *Declassified Documents Reference System*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2008. Issue Date: 11 Aug. 1977. Date Declassified: 8 Feb. 1999. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com>>

<sup>81</sup> “Memorandum for President Jimmy Carter from Acting Secretary of State Warren Christopher.”

Lenihan finally raised Northern Ireland. He maintained the present situation is ripe for a joint political initiative by the two sovereign governments concerned – Britain and Ireland. He asked that we encourage the British to talk with the Irish Government about such an initiative. Without such an initiative he said, the violence will continue and the political vacuum will remain, subject to exploitation by troublemakers. (I made no comment to his request, consistent with our policy of not becoming involved unless asked by the parties.)<sup>82</sup>

The Republic of Ireland clearly wanted international intervention and believed that without it, the situation would fail to improve. Yet, although certain American actors, that is O'Neill, Kennedy, and the Ancient Order of the Hibernians, wanted to step in, the administration was still, at that time, wary of direct intervention.

By the 1980s, however, the U.S. government became more concerned with the effects of the Northern Ireland issue within in the United States. In 1986, the FBI produced a report on Irish terrorism investigations in the United States, and although most of the document has been redacted, it does show that concern in the U.S. reached the level of federal agencies. The document states, “The FBI has enjoyed significant accomplishments against Irish terrorism in the United States and will strive for further developments pointing toward, at least, substantial decline in this activity,” noting that since the investigations began, there had been a “precipitous decline in the number of

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<sup>82</sup> U.S. Department of State. “Secretary of State Cyrus Vance provides President Jimmy Carter with his daily report.” *Declassified Documents Reference System*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2008. Issue Date: 18 Mar. 1980. Date Declassified: 30 Jul. 2002. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com>>

incidents in the United States, (51 in 1982, 31 in 1983, 13 in 1984, and 7 in 1985).”<sup>83</sup> Irish terrorism was beginning to impact domestic safety to some degree, and with this in mind, the Department of State distributed an internal memo prefacing a visit by Margaret Thatcher, stating that “We [the United States] welcome any action which will promote reconciliation of the parties in N.I. We are encouraged by the progress in the Anglo-Irish dialogue and will respond positively to continuing efforts by both governments to achieve a peaceful solution for the sorely troubled community of N.I., [and that] the Administration would examine seriously any request for direct US financial assistance to an economic reconstruction fund for Northern Ireland.”<sup>84</sup> The U.S. began taking greater steps to reach a level of peace and equality in the region.

International pressures on Northern Ireland increased. The *Belfast Telegraph* reported on December 10, 1996 that “Human Rights Organisations in Britain and Ireland today called for a bill of human rights.” The article states, “The Committee on the Administration of Justice made the appeal, along with Liberty, the Irish and Scottish Councils for Civil Liberty and British Irish Rights Watch . . . jointly issued a ‘Human Rights Challenge’ for the government [which asked for] a bill of rights for Northern Ireland and repeal of emergency legislation, . . . changes in policing, the strengthening of anti-discrimination legislation and reform of the justice system.”<sup>85</sup> Although these

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<sup>83</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. “FBI Involvement in Irish Terrorism Investigations in the United States.” *Declassified Documents Reference System*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2008. Issue Date: 1 Mar. 1986. Date Declassified: 24 Oct. 2000.

<<http://galenet.galegroup.com>>

<sup>84</sup> U.S. Department of State. “Department of State (DOS) executive secretary Nicholas Platt provides Robert McFarlane with updated background information on Northern Ireland in preparation for British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s U.S. visit.” *Declassified Documents Reference System*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2008. Issue Date: 15 Feb. 1985. Date Declassified: 15 Nov. 2000.

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<sup>85</sup> “Government Gets Human Rights Challenge.” *The Belfast Telegraph*. 10 Dec. 1996.

<<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/imported/article812917.ece>>

groups may appear to be domestic in scope, their participation in international networks qualifies them as international pressures. The Irish Council for Civil Liberty holds membership in the International Federation of Human Rights, while the British Irish Rights Watch was founded by a group of people from England, Ireland, and the United States. The pressure from these groups to create a bill of rights made the Protestants of Northern Ireland realize that they could no longer justify their repression of the Catholics in the international arena.

With the election of President Clinton, American participation in a settlement grew larger than ever. In a 1998 Presidential Statement, Clinton supported the Good Friday Agreement, which called for the establishment of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the abolishment of the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, and the general promotion of equality between all ethnic communities. He pointed to the continued U.S. assistance in the situation and said, “since 1993, [his] Administration and the Congress have contributed \$100 million to the International Fund for Ireland, for Northern Ireland, and the border counties of the Republic of Ireland.”<sup>86</sup> And in an Op-ed for the *Belfast Telegraph* in 2000, President Clinton stated, “Now is the time to reaffirm [the] core principles of [the Good Friday Agreement including] strict protection of individual human and civil rights.”<sup>87</sup> In the same article, he also noted the benefits of “the 900-job call center that a Denver-based company recently announced will open in

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<sup>86</sup> Clinton, William J. “New Initiatives in Support of Peace in Northern Ireland.” *Clinton Foundation*. 7 May 1998.  
<<http://www.clintonfoundation.org/legacy/050798-presidential-statement-on-peace-in-northern-ireland.htm>>

<sup>87</sup> Clinton, William J. “Why the Good Friday Agreement is working.” *Belfast Telegraph*. 19 October 2000.  
<<http://www.clintonfoundation.org/legacy/102000-remarks-by-president-in-oped-for-the-belfast-telegraph.htm>>

north Belfast.”<sup>88</sup> American interests in the region were not just altruistic, but economic as well. Clinton saw this as a great opportunity to increase American prosperity while securing the future of Northern Ireland.

Polling data from the era also shows that the American public was aware of the Northern Ireland issue and approved direct intervention. When asked, “Have you read, seen or heard anything about the current sectarian violence between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland?” sixty-eight percent of Gallup poll respondents replied yes.<sup>89</sup> On the same day, Americans were asked, “In terms of its impact on the United States, how important is it to end the violence in Northern Ireland: Very important, somewhat important, just a little important or not at all important?” Thirty-nine percent said it was very important, while thirty-six percent believed it was somewhat important.<sup>90</sup> Even two years later in 2002, the majority of Americans polled, seventy percent, still believed that a peaceful solution to the situation in Northern Ireland should be an important foreign policy goal of the United States.<sup>91</sup>

American intervention in the Northern Ireland issue is still being celebrated. “Taoiseach Bertie Ahern made his first invention in the US presidential election yesterday as he firmly dismissed criticism of Hillary Clinton” as she was recently accused by U.S. media sources of exaggerating her involvement in the Northern Ireland

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<sup>88</sup> “Why the Good Friday Agreement is working.”

<sup>89</sup> Portrait of America. “Have you read, seen or heard anything about the current sectarian violence between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland?” *Polling the Nations*. 20 Jul. 2000. 20 Mar. 2008. <<http://poll.orpub.com/>>

<sup>90</sup> Portrait of America. “In terms of its impact on the United States, how important is it to end the violence in Northern Ireland: Very important, somewhat important, just a little important or not at all important?” *Polling the Nations*. 20 Jul. 2000. 20 Mar. 2008. <<http://poll.orpub.com/>>

<sup>91</sup> U.S. Gallup Poll. “As far as you are concerned, should the development of a peaceful solution to the situation in Northern Ireland be a very important foreign policy goal of the United States, a somewhat important goal, not too important, or not an important goal at all?” *Polling the Nations*. 22 Feb. 2002. 20 Mar. 2008. <<http://poll.orpub.com/>>

peace process; Ahern simply stated, “I think they’re wrong.”<sup>92</sup> And just three days later, when Bill Clinton cancelled a trip to Belfast scheduled for April of 2008, “there was palpable disappointment . . . the appearance of Mr. Clinton at the conference was to be the highlight of the celebrations for the anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.”<sup>93</sup> Clearly, the Irish, those in Northern Ireland as well as those in the Republic of Ireland, acknowledge and appreciate U.S. interventions.

The Good Friday Agreement served as a landmark event because it called for the reform of police powers, the development of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons, and the long anticipated ceasefire in the region. The Agreement “affirmed the commitment to the mutual respect, the civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community . . . [and articulated] the right to equal opportunity in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, disability, gender or ethnicity” among others.<sup>94</sup> Its development was integral to the progress of the Irish civil rights movement, and the international pressures on Northern Ireland were necessary to bring about this change.

### **Conclusion:**

In the cases of the United States and Northern Ireland, judicial decisions and legislative actions, though promising, did not spark civil rights progress. In the United States, black Americans struggled for over a century to gain the same civil rights and

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<sup>92</sup> Sheahan, Fionan. “Bertie defends Hillary’s role in North peace deal.” *Irish Independent*. 18 Mar. 2008. p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> Smyth, Sam. “Clinton pulls out of Belfast trip.” *Irish Independent*. 21 Mar. 2008. p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> “The Agreement: Agreement reached in the multi-party negotiations.” *Cain Web Service*. 3 Apr. 2008. <<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/agreement.htm#rights>>

freedoms that white Americans enjoyed. They saw the failure of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to secure their rights, and experienced the disheartening decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in the late nineteenth century. When the Supreme Court finally released what seemed to be a promising decision with *Brown v. Board*, there was only disappointment, as the ruling was not fully implemented. Yet, with the increasingly prominent role of America in the international arena, it became more difficult to validate domestic inequalities. The U.S. felt international pressure to live up to its ideal of American democracy, especially as Cold War tensions erupted in the middle of the twentieth century. Although one cannot ignore the important work of civil rights activists over the years, their work gained more prominence as international institutions and nations around the world began examining the U.S. situation. With outside pressure, there existed a new sense of accountability.

Similarly, the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland experienced repression by the Protestant majority and called for equality. The Catholics denounced gerrymandering, discrimination in housing, and discrimination in employment. Although they tried to seek recourse in the courts, they met with failure. The largely Protestant courts turned out rulings unsympathetic to the Catholic population, and the various statutes in existence made few protections for them either. However, the seemingly hopeless movement found new vigor with the rising international interest in the situation. Britain, the United States, and Ireland, as well as international bodies such as the European Union, pressured the region to alter its treatment of the minority population. Under this pressure, Northern Ireland began to implement changes like the Fair Employment Act of 1989, which stated that employers could not discriminate on the basis of religion. The Irish across the island

still celebrate the work of the U.S. in the area, and credit international standards and norms for the ensuing peace in the area.

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