

The Partition of Ireland

Partition represents the most fundamental revolution in modern Irish history. By 1925 the country had been divided into two states embodying rival religious and political identities, an outcome unthinkable only a decade before. While often analysed through the lens of elite high politics, partition was by definition a mass participation event, where decision-making was shaped by elections, propaganda and savage acts of violence in defence of, or in opposition to, the new settlement. By examining the complex interaction of nationalism, religion and politics, Robert Lynch seeks to understand how partition was constructed and imagined by Irish people themselves, arguing for a relocation of partition at the centre of historical understandings of events in Ireland which spanned the First World War. Lynch highlights the deep confusion and expediency which lay behind the partition plan, and how it failed to provide answers to the complex and enduring problems of Irish identity.

Robert Lynch has worked, taught and researched at the universities of Stirling, Oxford, Trinity College Dublin, Warwick and Queen's University Belfast. He has published numerous articles and books on the early history of Northern Ireland and the partition era, including *The Northern IRA and the Early Years of Partition, 1920–1922* (2006) and most recently contributing to *The Irish Revolution* (2017). He has also published a number of articles in journals such as the *Journal for British Studies* and *Irish Historical Studies*.

The Partition of Ireland 1918–1925

Robert Lynch



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For Michael Hopkinson, a dear friend, and a true
gentleman

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Chronology

1912	11 April	Third Home Rule bill introduced in the House of Commons
	28 September	Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant signed on 'Ulster Day'
1913	31 January	Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) founded
	24 September	Ulster Unionist Council calls for the creation of the Ulster provisional government if the Home Rule is enacted
	25 November	Irish Volunteers founded at Rotunda in Dublin
1914	20 March	Curragh 'mutiny'
	24 April	Weapons landed at Larne to arm UVF
	25 May	Third Home Rule bill passed for third time by the House of Commons
	26 July	Weapons landed at Howth for Irish Volunteers
	15 September	Third Home Rule Act suspended for duration of the war pending an amendment for special treatment for Ulster
1916	24–29 April	Easter Rising in Dublin
	1 July	36th (Ulster) Division decimated on the first day of the Somme offensive
	23 December	Remaining internees released from Frongoch internment camp and Reading gaol
1917	5 February	Count Plunkett wins by-election victory in North Roscommon
	16 June	Remaining prisoners released
	10 July	Eamon de Valera wins by-election in East Clare
	25 July	Irish Convention opens in Dublin
	26 October	De Valera elected president of Sinn Féin

Chronology

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1918	9 April	Military Service bill introduced, clearing the way for the possible extension of conscription in Ireland
	18 April	Anti-conscription conference held in Dublin
	11 November	Armistice ends the First World War
	14 December	Sinn Féin wins seventy-three Irish seats in the general election
1919	21 January	Dáil Éireann convened at Mansion House in Dublin
	1 April	Eamon de Valera elected president of Dáil
	28 June	Treaty of Versailles signed
1920	25 February	Government of Ireland Act introduced in the House of Commons
	4 April	Irish Republican Army (IRA) launches attacks on over 300 unoccupied Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) barracks across Ireland
	June	Sinn Féin and the nationalists make substantial gains in local elections following on from victories in urban elections in January
	21 July	'Shipyard expulsions' in Belfast lead to three days of rioting
	6 August	Dáil instigate the Belfast Boycott
	1 November	Recruitment started for new Ulster Special Constabulary
	23 December	Government of Ireland Act becomes law
1921	24 May	Unionists win substantial victory in elections to the new Northern Ireland parliament
	22 June	Northern Ireland parliament opened by King George V
	9–14 July	Sustained sectarian rioting in Belfast
	11 July	Truce implemented, ending War of Independence
	11 October	Anglo-Irish negotiations begin in London
	22 November	Security and policing powers transferred to the new Northern Ireland government
	6 December	Anglo-Irish Treaty signed
1922	7 January	Dáil approves the treaty
	21 January	First Craig–Collins Pact
	12 February	Violence erupts in Belfast after IRA shootings along the border, leading to almost thirty deaths in three days

x	Chronology	
	30 March	Second Craig–Collins Pact
	7 April	Northern Ireland government introduces the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act
	May	Ineffectual IRA offensive launched in Ulster
	23 May	Mass internment of hundreds of Republicans in Northern Ireland
	31 May	Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) established
	28 June	Provisional government troops open fire on the Four Courts, thus initiating the Irish Civil War
	12 August	Arthur Griffith dies
	22 August	Michael Collins is killed in an ambush in west Cork
	11 September	Proportional representation for local government elections abolished in Northern Ireland
	28 September	Dáil votes to create special military courts
	17 November	First executions of Republican prisoners takes place
	7 December	Northern Ireland parliament votes to opt out of the Irish Free State
1923	27 April	Suspension of the IRA campaign, effectively ending civil war in the south
	10 September	Irish Free State admitted to the League of Nations
1924	10 May	Northern Ireland government refuses to nominate candidate for the Boundary Commission
	6 November	Boundary Commission convened following the Labour government's legislation allowing the British government to appoint a representative for the Northern Ireland government
1925	7 November	Leaked Boundary Commission report is published in the <i>Morning Post</i>
	20 November	Eoin MacNeill resigns from the Boundary Commission
	3 December	Final settlement of boundary and financial arrangements between the British and both Irish governments in London

Map



Map showing major areas to be transferred under the Boundary Commission, 1925

- Proposed areas to go to the Free State
- Proposed areas to go to Northern Ireland