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**MASTER**

**Literature and Civilisation**

***Irish National Identity in Resistance to British  
Colonial Policy. Case Study: The Irish Language  
as a Tool of Resilience.***

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# *Dedication*

*I dedicate this humble work to my dear family and friends*

*People whom I love and respect*

*To my mother Fatiha*

*To my father Amine*

*To my brother Idriss*

*For their efforts in supporting me*

*during my educational journey*

*To my dearest best friends Youcef and Mouna*

*Who provided me with help and encouragements through*

*the course of this study*

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## Abstract

Generally speaking, the historic relationship between Ireland and Britain is often seen as complex and ambiguous. This can be remarkable in the status of Ireland as an internal colony of the British Empire, where this Imperial subjugation of the Irish provides much importance to how they remember their problematic past. On the other hand, the aftermath of the British rule also represents a positive aspect by leading to the formation and evolution of Irish national identity. However, the main purpose for the Irish to establish such identity can be clarified as a form of resilience against Britain's Imperial oppression. For that, this called for reviving the Irish language as one of the most significant elements of Irish identity. On that account, this study aims to identify the impact of Irish language revitalization on reawakening Irish national identity in resistance to British Colonialism. Based on a meticulous analysis applied to the Irish case, namely the Republic of Ireland, it can be concluded that the Irish language was able to de-clutter the British influence in Ireland through cultural activism. In addition, Irish language revival paved the way to reclaim Irishness as an essential requirement to sustain Irish national identity. Furthermore, the preservation of this language led to a future where national identity became enrooted in Irish people. To conclude, this analysis demonstrates that Irish language revival can be regarded as a pivotal medium of change, which can lead the Irish to reignite their sense of national identity. Hence, put an end to any remains of the troublesome and oppressive British enemy.

### Keywords:

- Identity
- National Identity
- British Empire
- Cultural Activism
- British Colonialism
- Irish Identity
- Irish Language Revival
- British influence.

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## **List of Abbreviations & Acronyms**

- EU :** European Union
- SPIL :** Society for the Preservation of Irish Language
- ROI :** Republic of Ireland
- NI :** Northern Ireland

# General Introduction

In general terms, the question about identity never fails to dominate every field of academic research, where it represents a challenging yet interesting topic. For that, it has been captivating the attention of several researchers from different domains since it is considered as a fundamental element in the construction of any society. As a result, this fueled the drive for tackling this concept of identity from various angles as an attempt to investigate the ways it shapes the attitudes of individuals, as well as societies and human civilization in a broader sense. However, identity involves a set of several types but one of its most crucial ones is national identity, where most of its elements provide a basis for identifying any given community. On that account, national identity can be defined with a sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, which can also be a form of expression that describes the collective self-perception shared by individuals who belong to the same nation. Ultimately, national identity is represented by a series of distinctive elements including; religion, traditions, culture but most importantly language. The aspect of language is often considered the first crucial basis to the formation of any nation's identity, where it is regarded as a means of identification of every individual with their unified community. In this regard, although language is one of the first pillars that constitute national identity, it is often disregarded by researchers especially when it comes to the analysis of factors that interrupt the construction of national identities. Specifically, one of these main factors includes colonialism.

For that, one can take Britain's colonialism of Ireland as an example for illustration. Broadly speaking, the histories of both England and Ireland have always been inter-related, where the English invasion represents one of the most memorable invasions in Ireland's history. By the coming of the 16th century, the English Crown had a long established and grounded claim to sovereignty over the Irish Isle. Ultimately, significant parts of Ireland were effectively dominated by English conceptions of lordship, language and law. After that, by the early 17th century the drive for domination and assimilation intensified.

As a result, this led the English culture to become the most dominant culture that marked its influence on Irish population. However, within the 17th century and the spread of the British Empire, this colonization of Ireland began to shift from 'English' into becoming a 'British' one. Ultimately, the invasion of the Irish land denoted a start of colonial domination by the British, where Ireland became one of the most significant colonies for Britain. For that, the long and contested status of the Irish Isle as an internal colony of Britain has been essential to the historical development of how the Irish remember their past. Moreover, British imperial and colonial experience perceived invasion and colonization as a key for change in Ireland, where according to these colonizers Irish people were regarded as 'uncivilized' and required a sense of order. However, with the English interference first as an invading power that turned to a colonial one, this led the Irish to confront an immense turmoil with regard to their identity as a united nation. As a result, Ireland was left victimized by English and then British imperial oppression for several years, where oppressive policies were used as a tool for the purpose of Anglicizing the Irish. Hence, this led the Irish identity to almost vanish and lose its viability under the British rule. Specifically, this was more remarkable with the decline of language as an element reflecting the political situation at the time. In these terms, such declines called for a wave of activism, or rather a cultural revolution for the purpose of reviving the most important element in Irish identity, namely the Irish language.

This dissertation thus examines the way that Irish national identity stands in resistance to British colonialism. To do this, it explores the notion of Irish language as a tool of change and resilience in face of Britain's imperialism. Moreover, its main aim is to identify the impact of Irish language revival on reawakening the sense of national identity among the Irish in a context of British imperial oppression. That being the case, this topic was selected for: first, finding an existing gap in a previous research, where it failed to address language as one of the first necessary elements that define Irish national identity. Second, while many researchers have analyzed the impact of British Colonialism on Ireland, few have emphasized on the sequence of interaction between British Colonial power and Irish national identity. Third, his research also aims at opening a discussion on the challenges the Irish language might face in future terms.

For that, the following research questions are put forward:

- How is the Irish language used as a tool of resistance against British imperial oppression in Ireland?

- How does Irish language revitalization play the role of maintaining Irish national identity in a context of British imperial control?
- To what extent was the revival of Irish language effective in the maintenance of national identity?

To help answer these questions, three hypotheses are delineated to make sense of the potential answer of the research question.

- First, the Irish language rejuvenated the nationalist spirit against the British imperial oppression.
- Second, the Irish language contributed in the sustainability of national identity through cultural activism.
- Third, the revitalization of the Irish language marked the beginning of the reconciliation with Irish national identity.

This dissertation is composed of three themed chapters. The first chapter at length, will offer a theoretical framework in order to identify the concept of 'National Identity' and the way it is constructed, as well as, it will attempt to take a look at the elements that characterize this concept. In addition, this chapter will highlight the constraints threatening the stability of national identity. The second chapter on the other hand will mainly deal with providing a historical background about the origins of the Irish people by following a chronological order, where it will delve into details about their indigenous culture and traditions. This chapter will specifically shed light on the English invasion and its influence on the Irish Isle, where it will provide clarification through examining the cultural elements that witnessed the English and later on British interference in the island. Consequently, highlighting its impact on the Irish sense of national identity. Eventually, this chapter will tackle Ireland's independence by emphasizing on its aftermath, which leads to the revival of the Irish language. Furthermore, the third chapter will make use of the theoretical and historical backgrounds of the previous chapters, in order to generally examine the factors which contributed to the revival of the Irish language as a tool of change, and thus, determining its role in the preservation of Ireland's national identity. Besides, this chapter will specifically focus on the status of the Irish language in Contemporary Ireland by providing a thorough analysis of the way it is maintained through different fields. Finally, this chapter will offer an insight on the future of the Irish language and its impact on the sustainability of Irish national identity.

# Chapter One

## National Identity

### Introduction

The theme of identity is a difficult yet interesting topic, which is why it has been the main concern of several researchers through time. As a result, this led many to tackle the concept from several angles for the purpose of identifying how it shapes individual attitudes, or societies in a broader sense. However, this concept also involves a collective type which is national identity with all its elements that constitute the existence of a given community. With that being stated, this chapter therefore is intended to provide a theoretical framework which includes a definition of 'Identity' with its old and new meanings, as well as clarifications of how it is constructed. In addition, it will delve into the concept of national identity with all its connotations and the way of its formation which provides a basis to certain nation's sense of collective identity. Moreover, this chapter will highlight national identity as a collective phenomenon, as well as taking a look at elements that characterize this collective identity including ; culture, religion and language, while establishing a relation between them and national identity. Finally this chapter will attempt to tackle the challenges that might represent a threat to the stability of national identity, such as ; ethnic identity and immigration.

## 1. Definition of Identity

The concept of identity is very difficult to explain because of the complexity of its meaning, however, its basic meaning refers to where one belongs and what is expressed as their 'self-image', as well as, what differentiates a person according to 'others'. Etymologically, in order to explain the origins of identity 'the word can be traced back during the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the classical late Latin words 'identitas' or 'identidem' meaning repeatedly, which refers to the quality of being identical, as well as, 'sameness, oneness and state of being the same'.( Bhamra 128 )

In other terms, " Identity is a definition, an interpretation of the self that establishes what and where the person in both social and psychological terms. All identities emerge within a system of social relations and representations." ( Guibernau 3). This entails that identity plays an important role in identifying who we are as individuals and how we make a sense of ourselves and others, as well as providing the basis to our individuality and social relationships. Moreover, identity is also about belonging to a specific geographical territory with specific or distinctive characteristics such as traditions, customs, religion, race and ethnicity.

In addition, this concept is the state or the fact of remaining the same as under various aspects or conditions of being oneself and not another where it provides continuity, sameness and personality as a result of the sense of self. According to some scholars " Identity is people's concept of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others."( Hogg & Abrams 20). Therefore, it is the identification of the individuals to themselves and to others. Moreover, according to scholar Alain Touraine, one has to pay attention to the confusion of the notion of identity when it gets a negative character and may become dangerous if it sticks to a nation or religion with the emphasis on collectivity, because it suffocates individuality and alternative forms of identity (287). This also leads identity to become an ideological construction when being closed to one nation or community, which means that besides its interpretation as naturally given or biologically inherited, identity can also be socio-culturally constructed.

### **1.2. Construction of Identity**

Every identity whether of a group or an individual is not a ‘natural fact’ about their true self, but it is rather about things that are constructed and built. In order for identity to be constructed, there are different components required which can include experiences encountered in the life of any individual, as well as connections between social groups that aim for shaping and framing who they are. In addition, since identity is linked to racial and cultural heritage, early socialization in a particular community provides the enduring force of expectations which also shape one’s identity.

As a result, some aspects of the identity of individuals are constructed for them while they construct other aspects themselves. Sometimes one quietly hides parts of their identity but other times they loudly project them. Due to the fact that people and institutions may have rigid ideas about who individuals are and how they should express themselves. As a result, the freedom of personal expression is blocked, since these institutions promote their own versions of acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour. Hence, leading the expression of individual identity to be discouraged and misinterpreted.

Moreover, identity is also a social construction that cannot exist outside of cultural representation. However, according to Anthony Giddens that self-identity is constituted by the ability to sustain a ‘narrative about the self’. This would include the capacity to build up a strong feeling of biographical continuity. He sees identities as stories which effort to answer questions as ‘What to do’, ‘How to act’ and ‘Who to be’. In addition, he argues further that identity is not a collection of qualities that humans acquire but rather about what one thinks about one’s self, as well as being an ongoing process of development. ( 73).

## **2. National Identity**

The term ‘Nation’ is considered an inherently ambiguous word which is sometimes used in its etymological sense of a group of people linked by nativity, birth and geographical territory. Similarly, national identity is an ethical philosophical concept whereby all humans are divided into groups called nations. Members of a ‘Nation’ share a common identity, and usually a common origin in the sense of ancestry, parentage or descent.

According to Anthony D. Smith “ a nation can therefore be defined as a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.”(14). This suggests that there are certain common beliefs concerning what constitutes a nation which include the idea that nations are territorially bounded units of population whose members share a common culture and historical myths, as well as legal rights and duties under a common legal system.

Moreover, a nation refers to a cultural and political bond that unites in a single political community who shares a historic culture and homeland. Whereas, national identity is one’s identity or sense of belonging to one state or to one nation. It is the sense of a nation as a cohesive whole as represented by distinctive traditions, culture, language and politics. In other terms, it may refer to the subjective feeling one shares with a group of people about a nation, regardless of one’s legal citizenship status.

However, this type of identity is not an inborn trait but it is essentially socially constructed. A person’s national identity results directly from the presence of elements from the ‘common points’ in people’s daily lives as ; national symbols, language, nation’s history, blood ties and culture . Consequently, under various social influences, people incorporate national identity into their personal identities by adopting beliefs, values, assumptions and expectations which align with one’s national identity. As a result, people with identification of their nation view national beliefs and values as personally meaningful and translate them into daily practices.

One of the first theories of national identity is ‘Primordialism’, an ‘umbrella’ term used to describe nationality as a ‘natural part’ of human beings, and that nations have existed since ancient times. This term was first used by Edward Shills who argued in an influential article that “National identities were natural, ineffable and attributed to the tie of blood.” (142) . For theorists of primordialism, national identity is explained through customs, blood relations and even language, however, it is something that one is born into naturally which means it is not a changeable social construction but rather an inevitable mode of being. In other words, the nation to which one belongs is predetermined and ‘naturally fixed’.

### **2.1. Formation of National Identity**

National identity is the belief that language, race and borders should add up to a country which runs throughout history. According to western sociologists, with the coming of the modern era several big changes gave rise to this type of collective identity which include; urbanization, mass communication, wars and the decline of the church. As a consequence, these elements sparked an era of revolutions and democracy but they also unleashed ideas of nationalism where people came to see their countries as extensions of themselves and this new identity meant that a nation got its authority from the people which changed the world and also how one thinks.

However, national identity is not only defined from within, namely from the features that people who belong to the same nation share in common such as; national symbols, language and nation's history. It is also defined through the contrast with other nations in order to investigate the ways in which others may condition the formation or lead to the transformation of the in-group identity, and this highlights their role in shaping the identity of the nation. In addition, one of the central issues when trying to understand the process of national identity construction is the interrelation between majority and minority groups, between dominant and less powerful minorities, and between natives and immigrants.

People can hold different concepts or meanings of national identity but the most highlighted is the ethnic concept which influences the different behaviours and attitudes toward different ethnic groups within one's own nation. This concept refers to the idea that some people perceive their nation as having been built around a core ethnic community into which other ethnic minorities should assimilate. For them, people who have inherited or adopted the values of the ethnic core should have a higher status within the nation, and the representatives of ethnic minorities are usually strongly forced to assimilate. Therefore, they start to identify with their nation's views, national beliefs and values and translate them into daily practices that shape their collective identity and mostly who they are.

### **2.2. National Identity as a Collective Phenomenon**

“National identity can be thought as a collective product.” (Kelman 171), which suggests that it is the group's definition of itself with its basic values, institutions, traditions and past history. This type of collective identity is carried by every individual member of a

group in a given community, but it is not similar to the conceptions of these individuals, it rather has an independent existence which is complex and differentiated. Moreover, this identity is transmitted to individuals through socialization and a variety of communications over the course of their lives. Therefore, national identity and its elements become incorporated in an individual's personal identity through social influence. The adoption of these elements may also affect people's personal identity by determining their self-definition as members of the nation, as well as sharing such collective aspects of the national identity as images of the nation itself which include conceptions of national history and attitudes toward national traditions. As a consequence, these elements of collective identity become important parts of these individuals' definition of who and what they personally are. In addition, each group of people who share this collective identity has the right to express its national identity and control its own fate through resisting domination and oppression and the protection of every member's interests.

In other terms, national identity represents a set of beliefs and values that binds people together within a distinct geographical territory. In this regard, it is not the property of individuals but rather of groups since it develops the power to influence people's individual attitudes and perceptions in different ways. According to Guibernau ; 'National identity is a collective sentiment based upon the belief of belonging to the same nation and of sharing most of the attributes that make it distinct from other nations'( 7). This entails that in order for a group of people to identify within a certain nation, it is required to share all these collective elements which are deeply rooted in the nation's history.

### **3. Elements of National Identity**

One of the first primary functions of national identity is to provide a strong community, where each individual possesses certain aspects which help them identify with a certain nation they belong to. Therefore, one's national identity is represented in several elements which mainly include ; culture, religion and language.

#### **3.1. Culture**

The markers of national identity include several characteristics which are used to identify a person who possesses a particular national identity, and these markers are not stable or fixed but they vary from a cultural entity to another. In this context, according to some researchers " Culture is an umbrella term which encompasses the social behaviour and norms found in

human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities and habits of the individuals in these groups” ( Edward 24). In other words, culture deals with the patterns of social organization and the ‘normal’ ways in which one is expected to behave in society through all the aspects of their daily lives. It includes the customs, attitudes, beliefs, traditions and rituals of a society.

Moreover, culture can be defined as a term which includes a diverse set of social behaviours and norms found in every human society. It consists of a number of beliefs, values, systems of language and the different social practices shared by all individuals which can either express the continuity or discontinuity of the social meaning of a life held in common. According to the words of anthropologist E.B. Tylor he defined culture as ‘ that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society’ ( 13). In sociological terms, this concept of culture plays a crucial role in social life due to shaping social relationships, maintaining social order where it is constructed by both material and non-material things. In this regard, aspects of material culture are referred to as cultural products such as art, literature and music. Meanwhile, the non-material aspects include one’s knowledge, common expectations, language and morals that govern any society. Moreover, for some sociologists culture can be a force for oppression and domination, while others believe it can also be a force for creativity, resistance and liberation. In addition, what makes culture difficult to be defined in only one way is due to the fact of being fluid and constantly in motion. However, any given community perceives culture as a key for making a world that mostly consists of a diversity of ethnic societies interconnected by shared common elements. These mainly include religious beliefs, language systems, different customs, traditions and ethical morals that make up the essence of culture.

In addition, one should not assume that all cultures are the same. For example, simply because social life happens to be structured in a particular way , this does not mean that it was like this in the past- or is even like this in other societies around the world. In this regard, culture is seen as the cement that bonds individuals together. It is made up of shared or collective symbols and it shapes the live of every individual by setting certain rules and structuring the world around them. Moreover, it allows them to interact with each other, to share common meanings, patterns of behaviour and ways of communicating.

Besides, cultures exist both objectively and subjectively : they are objective because they are concerned with material things where they shape styles of dress, food, art, music and so on ; and they are subjective because they are concerned with individuals' interpretations allowing them to make sense of the world around them. Particularly, since national identity can be expressed through culture this means there is interconnection between both because culture establishes people's sense of national identity which results directly from the presence of common elements that constitute every individual's sense of belonging to a nation which include ; national symbols, language, religion and nation's history.

### **3.2. Religion and National Identity**

“The concept of ‘Religion’ was formed in the 16th and the 17th centuries.” (Brent 152). This social institution has been a central part of all known human societies throughout history, and it involves holding a range of beliefs about certain spiritual questions. As a consequence, putting these beliefs into practices which become part of a community of people who share the same religion. In other terms, it is a social-cultural system of designated behaviours and practices where it contains various elements ranging from sacred beliefs and faith. Moreover, religious practices may include rituals, sermons and even festivals which are common in each religious community.

However, in ancient times, religion was indistinguishable from what is known as ‘mythology’ in the present day and consisted of regular rituals based on a belief in higher supernatural entities who created and continued to maintain the world. These beliefs behaved in ways which mirrored the values of the culture closely, but the common point between now and then is that it concerns itself with the spiritual aspect of the human condition and the creation of the world where every nation has created its own God in its own image and resemblance.

In this context, every ancient culture practised some form of religion and developed its own belief in supernatural entities to explain natural phenomena or to provide explanations for the uncertain state humans find themselves on a daily basis. In addition, according to some anthropologists “ Religion is a belief in supernatural beings . ” ( Tylor 41 ). This suggests that it was this belief in spirits that was the foundation of all religion which started as a vague belief called ‘Animism’ which refers to the belief in the supernatural power that is responsible for organizing the material universe. However, according to anthropologists nowadays this definition of religion is too simplistic because for them religion is regarded as a

fundamentally social phenomenon. Moreover, from a sociological perspective “ Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things.”(Durkheim 35 ). In this regard, one can notice that religious beliefs and practices lend an aura of ultimate significance to society and its ideology.

Since religion is an aspect of national identity it plays a crucial role in providing values that delineate this type of collective identity where historical beliefs strengthen the connection between religious and national identities, meaning an individual’s self-image may be developed based on both religion and nation. This pattern can be found in many countries where religious values supported the struggle to establish the nation, for instance, Indonesian history has been constructed by many groups representing various tribes and religions. Islam, as the religion of the majority in Indonesia, has strongly influenced the establishment of the nation. As a result, historical contexts can fuse religion and national identities into one entity where each supports the other. However, in other cases national identity influences religious values only when there is high emphasis on religion in the community because a nationalist ideology only affects religious beliefs in a nation where a dominant religion exists. Due to the fact that, religious values promote national identification among religious individuals within a certain community. For instance, Islam as the religion of the majority in Indonesia has strongly influenced the establishment of the Republic. As a consequence, most Indonesian Muslims nowadays believe that their Islamic faith and Indonesian national identity are two sides of the same coin. This belief stems from the historical consensus that established divine values as the primary foundation of the Indonesian state. Therefore, such historical beliefs strengthen the connection between religion and national identities, where the individual’s self-image is developed based on both religion and nation and this pattern might be found in many countries where religious values support the struggle to establish a nation.

### **3.3. Language and National Identity**

Language is also another essential aspect of national identity which is intertwined with culture because it is the principal means whereby one conducts their social lives. It is also a structured system of communication but in a broader sense it refers to the method of communication that involves the use of certain linguistic signs and symbols commonly used in a given community. In this regard, language and culture go hand in hand since both of them define a person’s identity, views, traditions and habits. Therefore, it is bound up with culture

in multiple and complex ways because both of them developed together and influenced each other as they evolved, and culture is a consequence of the interactions of individuals where their acts of communication are their cultural manifestations within a specific community. Consequently, language and culture are inseparable because when interacting with another language, this entails that one is interacting with the cultural community one is unable to understand without accessing its language directly.

Moreover, language enables people to unite based on linguistic affiliations because individuals tend to naturally associate with people who share their language, and it is also a means of cultural identity where it unites people. Human cultural affiliations and identity have always been inseparable from the use of a shared language, or in other words some linguistic characteristics between members of a certain community. As a consequence, these members create experiences through language where they either use the spoken, written or visual medium which in return creates meanings that are understandable to the group they belong to, for example, through a speaker's tone of voice, accent, conversational style, gestures and facial expressions.

Through all its verbal and non-verbal aspects, language embodies cultural reality. In other words, language represents a system of signs that has a cultural value in itself where speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language. As a result, they view it as a symbol of their collective identity and the prohibition of its use is often perceived by its speakers as a rejection of their social group and their culture. Thus, one can say that language symbolizes cultural reality.

Whether objectively or subjectively defined, the nation is often associated with language as a marker of its identity. Whereas language is the most important instrument of socialization where its acquisition takes place in a certain community which provides it with an imprint that is uniquely its own. This kind of emphasis on the role of language in defining group identity leads to the idea that it is essential for mirroring the soul of any nation because it is the medium which is able to create a connection between any individual and their fellow nation members whom they will never hear of, meet or know. Furthermore, language is considered as one marker of national identity among a set of markers which may include such attributes as territory, common culture and descent, shared memories and so on. It also has the ability of forming an imagined community which creates a sense of solidarity between

members of a nation, for example, in the act of singing national anthems. However the words and the tune may be simple, there is an experience of ‘simultaneity’ shared by all people present. At such moments when people who are totally unknown and anonymous to each other utter the same verses to the same melody, that image of union and nationhood is created only through listening to a certain mode of language which promotes the solidarity of the nation.

Since languages symbolize national identities, members who identify with a certain nation are able to categorize other people from different nations according to the language they speak. There is often a particularly strong link between language and a sense of belonging to a national group, a sense of national identity. In simple cases, there is one ‘national language’ which is spoken by everyone with the same national identity, however, most cases are complex and involve more than one language, for instance, Switzerland where French, German and Italian are spoken. Moreover, what makes a country become a respectable and unique nation besides a name, boundaries, a flag or a currency is its national language, consequently it is stated that “the existence of a national language is the primary foundation upon which nationalist ideology is constructed.” (Joseph 94).

This suggests that language represents the basis of the formation of national identity because it is part of a nation and a person’s heritage, and in order to understand or penetrate deep into a community, one must be able to speak and understand its language for a better understanding of its cultural aspects. In addition, national language is a driving force behind the unity that binds the nation’s people making them distinct from other nations which proves the idea that language is a means of identification and self-identification of individuals who belong to a certain social system which provides them with a sense of union and pride about who they really are as a nation.

#### **4. Challenges for National Identity**

At present time, demands for political autonomy or independence are often regarded as principles of democracy. Such claims hold the potential to subvert the idea of having a national identity which generally ignores the need for diversity. As a consequence, some challenges emerged that represented a threat by advancing their own distinctive identities which include; ethnic groups and immigrants.

#### **4.1. Ethnic Identities**

Since national identity is considered as one of the collective identities which are characterized by territory, myths, common history and common mass culture. Ethnic identity refers to the sameness of a band or nation of people who share common customs, traditions, historical experiences, and in some instances, geographical residence. In this regard, “ Ethnic identity and national identity may be in conflict in countries that have multiple ethnic groups and these conflicts are usually referred to as ethno-national conflicts.”( Woods 153). Moreover, despite every government’s effort to maintain and strengthen national identity through symbolic flag ceremonies or memorials and everything that reminds people about their nationality, their efforts would turn out to be ineffective.

The fact that all nations understand their responsibility to maintain national identity demonstrates their constant worries about its fragility and its consequences on the society and the government. In this context, “One of the potential threats against national identity is the presence of vigorous ethnic identities , and an example of this is a famous ethno-national conflict in Northern Ireland during the late 20th century which is described as an ‘irregular war’ or low-level war. ”( Tylor 22 ). The core of this conflict was between the Irish Catholic nationalists who wanted Northern Ireland to leave the United Kingdom, and the Unionists who were mostly Protestants that wanted for Northern Ireland to remain. As a result, since the unionist Protestant government sought for the remaining within the UK, this means that the aspects of national identity were disregarded by the state and nearly eradicated which made the nationalists identify less with other ethnic identities and considered them as a threat to their nationalist values while they kept their national identity salient

#### **4.2. Immigration**

Immigration is often regarded as a threat to a range of things from national security, to the welfare state and jobs. But perhaps above all, many see it as a threat to national identity. In fact, factors such as economic and social worries do not influence the public opinion on immigration as symbolic issues have, which suggests that national identities lead to negative views on immigration. The most common explanation of negative attitudes to immigration is that people feel threatened economically by immigrants due to labour market competition. However, the perceived threats to one’s national identity can explain more about people’s worries about the impact of immigration. Interestingly, the idea of how strongly

someone identifies with their country is not of much importance as how they identify with it because national identity means different things to different people.

For some, it is about being born in Algeria and having an Algerian culture for instance, meanwhile for others it could be about respecting their nation's institutions and values. However, it is also more common for those who have an ethnic-cultural identity to be more negative to immigration more than those who identify with a civic national identity<sup>1</sup>. But this differs from a country to another because some countries are more inclusive on the basis of encouraging immigrants to develop a sense of belonging to their host country. For instance; the Canadian government encourages immigrants to build a sense of belonging to Canada, and has fostered a more inclusive concept of national identity which includes both people born in Canada and immigrants. Meanwhile, immigrants were perceived negatively by the Russian people and were viewed as 'unwelcome and abusive guests.'( Liedy ) because they were excluded from sharing the national identity of belonging to Russia. In this regard, the important conclusion is that though the rate of immigration may vary, any number of immigrants would be perceived as threatening if the national identity of a country is based on exclusive elements.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, national identity aims to produce positive emotions such as pride and love to one's nation, and it also gets generated from people who get united in a nation due to having a common threat or a common goal. For that, it strengthens national solidarity by enhancing the identity of any nation with all its common elements, where it is considered as the main source that establishes and influences a certain community's social attitudes. However, one aspect of utmost importance in the making of national identity is language. For that, Irish national identity will be taken as a case study in the upcoming chapters. Therefore, in the second chapter, light will be cast on origins of the Irish people as the main historical background of this research. Also, emphasis will be put on the influence of British colonial policies on the Irish national identity, mainly through religion and language.

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<sup>1</sup> It is an inclusive form of nationalism that adheres to traditional liberal values of freedom, tolerance, equality, and individual rights.

# Chapter Two

## Origins of the Irish People

### Introduction

For a small nation, the Irish are recognised everywhere as highly inventive and cultural people with their huge contribution today's world. As native inhabitants of 'The Emerald Isle' or Ireland, they share a common Irish ancestry, identity and culture which is characterized in their history. With that being stated, this chapter will delve into details about the Irish native and indigenous culture, which involves their land, common customs, religious traditions and native Gaelic culture. In addition, this chapter is intended to provide a historical background about the origins of the Irish people, which includes an introduction to Ireland's early waves of foreign invasions. On that account, it specifically sheds light on the settlement of the foreign English invaders from the 12th century, where it tackles the history of the English influence on Ireland. This is clarified through the examination of the cultural elements that witnessed the English interference in Ireland, thus highlighting the impact of the English and later on British colonial policies on the Irish sense of national identity and who they are as a nation.

### 1. Land

Etymologically, the names of Ireland or 'éire' represent the Modern Irish words which evolved from the old Irish word 'ériu' referring to the name of a Gaelic goddess in Irish mythology first recorded in the 9th century. Ireland is an island situated in the North Atlantic and separated from Great Britain by the North Channel to its East side, the Irish Sea and St

George's Channel . It is also considered as the second- largest island of the British Isles where it is divided between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland which is part of the United Kingdom ( **See Map 01** ) . Moreover, one of the reasons Ireland attracted a whole string of foreign people with ideas of taking over was the landscape, the beauty of monasteries with the Vikings and also the weather. As a result, these invaders eventually decided to settle and interfere with the process of establishing a distinct culture in Ireland. Among them were the Gaelic people who made Ireland unique, where they had their own language and started a system of ruling through kings that would dominate for centuries.

**Map 01:** Map of Ireland



**Source:** <https://ontheworldmap.com/ireland/>. Accessed on 22 August 2020.

## 2. Indigenous People

For most of its recorded history, Ireland's people have been primarily Gaelic people with a Celtic culture, which is due to the fact that one of the land's first settlers are the Celts.

### 2.1. The Celts (500 B.C)

Around 500 B.C, Ireland started to witness the Iron age ( 500 B.C-500 A.D) mainly because of some iron weapon-wielding invaders called the Celts. This new group of invaders were a collection of tribes who emerged from central Europe and their arrival to Ireland was around the period of 500 B.C, also known as the Iron Age. Although not the first to arrive, the Celts are considered the original wave of foreigners in Ireland, where they brought a new language and the most advanced forms of metal work. However, the last wave of these Celts was Gaelic people who were the main reason for making the inhabitants of Ireland truly Irish especially in language terms. This final Celtic invading force also went under the collective name of the Goidelic or Gaelic people who changed Ireland more profoundly than all their predecessors. Moreover, it is remarked by historian works that ‘ if countries could have trademarks there is a good chance that Ireland's would be the word ‘Celtic’, and most things Irish are ascribed the adjective Celtic to indicate their ‘Irishness’’ (O’Malley 16) . Therefore, the Celts were the original invaders of Ireland because their Gaelic language and culture became adopted in Ireland. As a result, this made the Celts gain recognition of being the most influential immigrants on the Irish Isles. For that leading the Irish people to regard themselves as Celtic in origins until the time where the Celtic civilization barely survived under the brutal English culture. In addition, when the Celtic culture came to Ireland it brought totally different and new customs, languages, art, beliefs and technology , where they introduced using iron for making tools and weapons. But more importantly they brought the sense of kinship<sup>1</sup>, kingdoms and power, where they divided their lands up with each being ruled by different kings.

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<sup>1</sup> A system of social organisation based on real or assumed family ties. It also refers to the patterns of social relationships , which include people related by both descent-i.e.social relations during development- and by marriage.

### 3. Indigenous Irish Culture

The culture of Ireland is considered the product of external invading powers who left their mark on Ireland for most of its recorded history. However, one of the main cultures which dominated the native Irish culture that is still common in Modern times is the Celtic one. More specifically, the Gaelic culture which emerged in about 500 B.C, where it was adopted by the Irish ever since this last Celtic tribe<sup>2</sup> that came from Gaul ( present day France) set foot on Ireland. Moreover, this Gaelic cultural history came from the time between the Bronze age and the arrival of Christianity to the island in the 4th century A.D, where Ireland witnessed legendary sagas, beautiful metalwork, and rich oral literature of poetry and history. As a result, Celtic Irish norms became considered as Ireland's native culture until present times, where it is shaped by several elements which include its own ; customs, traditions, religion and language.

#### 3.1. Ancient Language

Language is considered to be an essential element for establishing social lives, which makes it inseparable from culture and bound up with it when it is used in contexts of communication. This linguistic system of signs has a cultural value in itself, where it helps speakers identify with the social community around them, thus viewing their common language as a symbol of their true identity. As a result, one can say that language symbolizes the cultural reality of any nation. In this regard, although Irish is the official language of Ireland, it is estimated to be spoken by only '1.8 %' of the population ( Hoffman ). This was due to the efforts of the English policies in trying to demolish this native language in Ireland for the purpose of inserting the English language. Particularly, this was set as an indirect scheme to gradually establish English domination in Ireland through making its local people more English, thus submitting to English rules and more importantly becoming part of Britain.

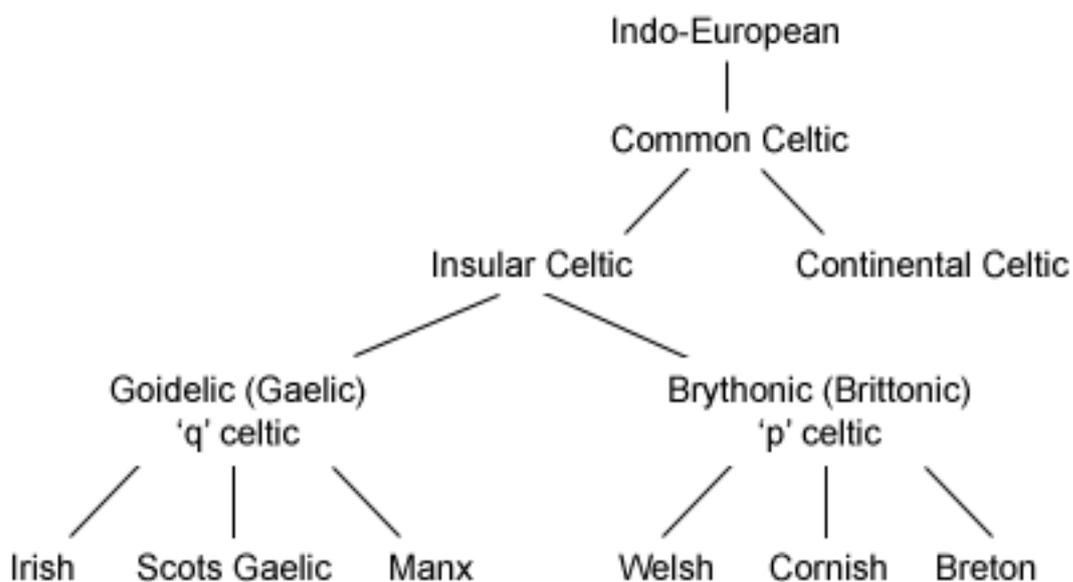
First to define it, Irish, Gaeilge or Goidelic is an indigenous Celtic language which is closely related to Scottish Gaelic and it started to emerge around 500B.C ( **See Figure 01**). The Irish language is considered to be the first official language in Ireland where it represents

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<sup>2</sup> A group of people united by ties of descent from a common ancestor. They often live together, share the same language, culture and history.

much of crucial importance to Irish identity and culture. In this regard, this language arrived to Irish shores from mainland Europe, where old Irish was found to be first written in the Roman alphabet before the beginning of the 7th century. This ancient form of Irish evolved from old to Early Modern Irish, dating from the 13th century, where it began to spread more by the start of the Christian era. However, this Gaelic language did not experience much of a foreign influence before the 16th century where it faced several waves of invasions that failed to shake its status in Ireland. One example of that is the Anglo-Norman invasion by the 12th century where the conquest started a period of multilingualism in the Irish Isle, but Irish maintained its dominance and gradually influenced the Normans to become Irish language speakers instead. For that, ‘ the small community of Anglo-Norman colonisers began to mix with the local population, learn Irish and adopt local customs’ (Baleva 2). These invaders assimilated so much into Irish society until they became more Irish than the Irish themselves. By the end of the 16th century, Irish went through harsh and traumatic events which came along the start of facing the British threat that aimed for its extinction and replacing it with the English language in hopes for a long term control of the land and its people. Therefore, this aim was achieved by the English policy of supplanting Irish with English, where it became the most spoken language in Ireland until recent times compared to the Gaelic language which is only spoken in few areas in Northern Ireland.

**Figure 01:** Insular Celtic Languages Tree



**Source:** <https://www.quora.com/What-is-Irelands-first-language>, accessed on 22 August 2020.

### 3.2. Ancient Religion

In broad terms, religion refers to an organized series of beliefs, cultural systems and views concerning the world that links humanity to a certain order of being and existence. As well as, offering every individual a sense of meaning and purpose in life which can be attained through certain sacred practices including ; rituals, sermons, sacrifices, veneration of a deity, feasts and festivals.

In these terms, religion has been central to the story of Ireland compared to other cultures where its impact has been most long lasting from the old Celtic pagan religion to the arrival of Saint Patrick with Christianity, which offered Irish people the title of being very religious and loyal to their faith. First of all, the Celtic religion is recorded to be one of the first adopted faiths in Ireland which had a major influence long before the coming of Christianity. This first religious belief which dominated ancient Ireland revolved around Celtic tribes and came to be known as ‘ Celtic Paganism’ which dates between 500 B.C and 500 A.D a period known as the Iron Age. These Pagan Celts believed in supernatural beings and the other world that was home for many Gods and Goddesses since they were Polytheistic, as well as they also saw deities and omens throughout nature, such as giving special powers that could only be understood by a Celtic priest or ‘Druid’ for them. Moreover, the feast days in this Celtic religion revolved around the calendar year and the changing seasons, and their main purpose was pleasing the Gods to ensure the survival of the Celtic tribes during times of disease or misfortune. However, by the coming of Christianity in the 5th century, the Pagan Celtic population was gradually becoming Christianized replacing these ancient religious views and traditions that the Irish followed.

On the other hand, one of the most dominant faiths in Irish history is Christianity which first came to Ireland in the 5th century leading the Irish believers in Pagan Gods to convert to the Christian faith. For that, it is believed a famous missionary called Saint Patrick who arrived in Ireland around 432 AD, made a great achievement of bringing this faith to Ireland where he was successful in converting much of the Irish land. Although, the Irish were resistant in accepting Christianity at first because they preferred the old ways of the Pagan faith and ancient beliefs, rather than this new organised religion that emerged from Rome.

Therefore, Saint Patrick started to gradually win them over through explaining the pillars of Christianity which include explaining Holy Trinity<sup>3</sup> through picking up a shamrock and using its three leaves to clarify the main elements which are ; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. For that, the shamrock plant survived as a living embodiment of Ireland's patron Saint . As a result, St Patrick's contribution in Irish history had a huge effect on the establishment of the Christian faith in Ireland on a solid basis. This helped the new Christianized Irish land to create closer links with Europe, where it was no more a distant place of unknown pagan tribes, but instead more connected through a common Church which is the Catholic church. However, the influence of St Patrick continued beyond his death due to the churches and monasteries he set up across Ireland, where these institutions had a huge impact on Irish life and a period of steady growth and expansion began. In this regard, most of the Irish started to accept the Christian faith where they integrated it to their way of thinking and even their customs. As a result, religion became one of the great themes of Irish history.

In addition, according to what was previously stated, the history of Ireland as a Christian Catholic nation precedes the arrival of the English invaders, and dates back to the 5th century with Saint Patrick who came from Britain. However, Patrick's conversion of Celtic Ireland to Christianity is not considered to be the beginning of British colonialism in Ireland. This is because his main purpose with the early Christian church was to effectively build upon Celtic traditions in order to develop an Irish spirituality, which fused both of historic beliefs and festivals with the faith of Catholicism and its practice. For that, even though it emerged from Western Europe, this Catholicism was not uniquely British and did not arrive for the purpose of achieving colonial control over Ireland and an evidence of that is portrayed in how the early waves of invaders did not affect the Catholic identity of the Irish much. As an example, when the Anglo-Normans arrived to Ireland in the late 12th century they started modernizing the church and organising it differently, however, their presence did not threaten the religious identity of the native Irish. In this regard, according to certain historical records ; ' The real challenge to the Catholic identity of the Irish began with Henry VIII's decision to declare himself head of the church in England. As he and later English kings became increasingly assertive in demonstrating their control over Ireland, they insisted that the Irish conform to the established Church of the realm' (Ohlmeyer33). As Henry VIII began swapping the Roman Catholic Church for a Protestant one, his reformation had a deep effect on Ireland where he sought to control, and eventually suppress

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<sup>3</sup> The Christian concept of God as three entities: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

the Catholic Church. However, while the English had always been following the same ways to control the Irish which is through force, the 16th and 17th centuries witnessed a new tactic through 'Plantations'. This was done by the English crown who decided to send Protestants to Ireland for settlement where they hoped to establish themselves so dominantly that Ireland would fall into line and see the virtues of the new Protestant church. However, this resulted in an increase of the tension between the Irish (Catholics) and these new-comers (Protestants), which led to creating religious feuds and conflicts between both religious groups. As a result, most of the indigenous Irish sought to remain loyal to their Catholic faith despite the Protestant efforts for conversion, where the division of religious belief coincided with differing political allegiances as an aftermath of the English Plantation scheme. Hence, this allowed a connection between Catholicism and Irishness which came to define the basis of Irish culture, thus Irish identity.

### **3.3. Customs/Traditions**

Irish culture contains a wide variety of old 'feasts', traditions, customs and historic legends which have been transmitted from a generation to another, where some traditions have been lost and forgotten while others survived until recent times. For that, one of the most common customs in Ireland is the celebration of different holidays which include celebrating religion, music, history, harvests and sporting events. The Irish calendar still reflects Christian traditions which also had significant influences including one of the most common holidays is Christmas, on December 25th, that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. In the weeks before Christmas, the streets of Irish towns and cities fill with Christmas markets where people purchase gifts, decorations and food, as well as, decorating these towns with holy symbols, lights and large Christmas trees, along with putting a lit candle in a window where it symbolises both welcoming holy spirits to the household, and any guests or family members returning from far away.

Moreover, another widely celebrated holiday is Saint Patrick's Day which is a national holiday celebrated on March 17 which began as a way to honour Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Patrick brought Christianity from England to Ireland by the 4th century and he was named a Saint after his death, which led Saint Patrick's Day to be a religious holiday then a national one where it is considered as an Irish cultural celebration. Traditionally, people in Ireland celebrated St. Patrick's Day as a holy day where Irish families attend

churches in the morning and wear something green<sup>4</sup> to celebrate Saint Patrick's legacy and contribute to parades for the purpose of celebrating their Irish heritage. In addition, perhaps one of the most popular and earliest holidays in Ireland is Halloween or 'All Hallows Eve'. This originated in Ireland as a pagan festival called 'Samhain', meaning 'End of summer'. In other terms, according to some historians; 'Halloween has always been a major calendrical festival throughout Ireland. In pre-Christian Celtic Ireland, the eve of November 1 was a high festival day known as the pagan festival Samhain (pronounced roughly, Sah-wen).' ( Santino 2). Samhain in Ireland was originally meant to honour the dead and Gods using pagan rituals, but as soon as Christianity spread across the Irish Isle these rituals died over time which gave rise for Halloween to become the main festival since the 9th century despite the fact that some Samhain traditions still remained. Traditionally, celebrations of this holiday mainly include dressing up in costumes which is originally a Celtic tradition carried out through generations. According to Celtic beliefs, huge bonfires were lit and people wore ugly masks and disguises for the purpose of driving away the evil let loose and confuse the spirits of the dead in order to keep the evil out. For that, these pagan festivals remained an essential part of Ireland's culture which are still celebrated and attributed to Irish traditions even in present time.

However, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ireland witnessed a period of 'The Great Famine'<sup>5</sup> from 1845 until 1849. For that, an estimated number of over 2 million Irish escaped through a mass emigration to America. With them, the Irish brought their age old Celtic customs such as Halloween as a celebration of their Irish roots. As a result, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, America began to commercialize this Irish festival with figurines, masks and costumes, which led it to have such an impact on Halloween that many people believe it is an American invention, rather than an ancient Irish tradition. Thus, with such cultural influence on many parts of the world, the date of celebration of Halloween changed nowadays to be on October 31<sup>st</sup> and it started including several activities such as; trick-or-treating, attending Halloween costume parties for children where they dress up as witches, Monsters. Consequently, this contributed to promoting the Irish culture with its customs of Celtic origins all across the world.

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<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, the green represents the Catholics of Ireland. This religious symbolism refers to Saint Patrick's introduction of Christianity in Ireland, through the use of green shamrocks to teach people about the Holy Trinity ( God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). Thus, a justification for greenifying everything during the celebration of St. Patrick's Day.

<sup>5</sup> A period of mass starvation and disease that hit Ireland from 1845 to 1849, which led to the death of about one million Irish people and a million more emigrated.

#### **4. Ireland, Land of Foreigners ( 500 B.C- 1169 A.D)**

Throughout its history, the island of Ireland has been considered as a highly prized land in the eyes of foreign invaders. Hence, from the patterns of its landscapes to the roots of its cities, Ireland was shaped by waves of migrations and invasions. As a result, new languages, faith and cultures came from continents such as Europe who perceived it as a promising land. These early foreign invaders include; The Vikings, The Anglo-Normans and the English who had a real effect on who the Irish were, therefore making Ireland truly distinct through their contributions to Irish life whether good or bad.

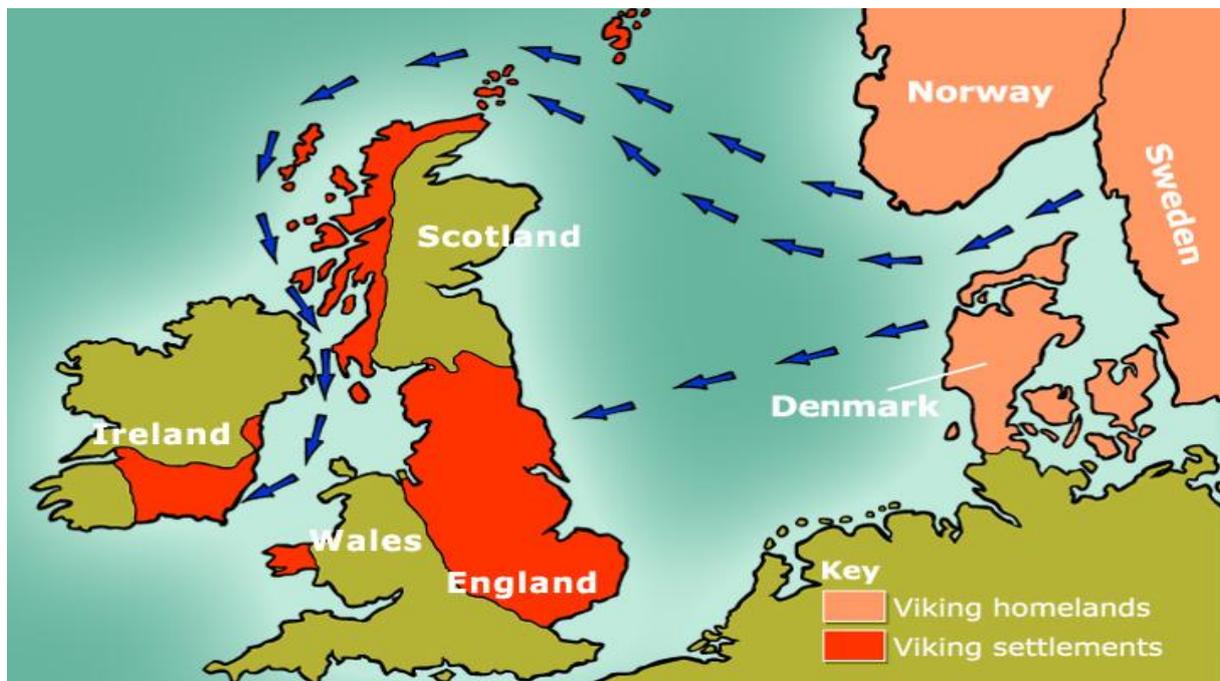
##### **4.1. The Vikings (795 A.D - 1014)**

Although the history of Ireland is dominated by stories of the British rule, but these were not the first invaders. The people who came before them to the land with aggressive intentions were the Vikings in 795 A.D. This new group of invaders also known as the Norse came all the way from Norway and other places in Scandinavia, which also includes the countries of Denmark and Sweden ( **See Map 02**) leading them to have a huge impact as soon as they settled in Ireland. They brought several contributions to Irish life and changed the ways in which the country had traditionally been governed. Moreover, they established new cities such as the city of Dublin where they put its first buildings together and turned it to the most important Viking trading place in Ireland. In other terms, several monasteries and towns were destroyed in Ireland, followed by the building of forts and settlements by establishing themselves strategically in locations suitable for trading. As a result this also allowed these Norsemen to become the leaders when it came to the Irish political scene. However, they did not stop there because the longer any invading force is present in a country, the more they mix with the local population. For that, a good deal of cultural assimilation took place between the Vikings and the local Irish through intermarriage, leading them to get integrated into Irish society.

Eventhough, their initial arrival to the Irish land was at times bloody and fierce, within a short time they started making alliances with the Irish to settle, form communities and establish trading centres. In addition, according to some historians ; ‘ The Viking way of life was not very different from that of the Irish, but one key difference was that the Irish were Christian while the Vikings still worshipped a pantheon of pagan Gods.’ ( Fry.46 ). This entails that part of the popular image of the Vikings is that they were all Pagans in creed, but

that came to change when some began to adopt Christian habits due to close contact with the Irish Christians, and abandoned their former faith. On the other hand, the Irish took on board several things brought by these invaders, such as ; new technologies (weaponry, shipping), as well as cultural and linguistic forms brought by the Vikings which left a huge mark of influence on Ireland.

**Map 02:** Origins of The Vikings



**Source:** <https://englishosaca.wordpress.com/seventh-grade/what-a-mixture/>. Accessed on 22 August 2020.

#### 4.2. The Anglo-Norman Invasion (1169-1175)

Arriving at the end of the twelfth century the Anglo-Normans made the most critical intervention in Irish history, and just like the previous invading forces of vikings these new invaders showed no signs of leaving. As soon as the Anglo-Normans set foot on the Irish isles in 1169, it was considered a breaking point in Ireland's history which marks the beginning of direct English, then British involvement in Irish affairs. Consequently, one can consider the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland as a deep root of Britain's 'Irish problem'. Moreover,

despite how brutal the initial Anglo-Norman Conquest of Ireland was, it still cannot be compared to their previous invasions in Europe which often resulted with no change in their culture and civilization.

Meanwhile, their tendency for assimilation was more evident in Ireland, where these invaders adopted the Irish language, culture and custom. However, as much as they integrated into Irish life, they changed Ireland quite dramatically. More specifically, by introducing and promoting the feudal system<sup>6</sup> structure, which was a common system in European medieval societies of the 10th to the 13th centuries A.D. whereby a social hierarchy was established based on local administrative control and the distribution of lands into units. On the other hand, these invaders started adapting Irish habits that they became known as the Anglo-Normans, and their settlement in Ireland was a major key that linked the history of both Ireland and England for centuries to come.

### **4.3. English Invasion and Act of Union (1536 - 1801)**

One of the consequences of the Anglo-Norman Invasion in 1169 the conquest of Ireland, which paved the way for more than 800 years of English involvement within Irish affairs. In fact, this desire for the English to colonize Ireland is quite old and dates back to the 12th century, where it began with Henry II (1154-1189) king of England who had been plotting to seize Ireland since the beginnings of his rule. For that, he ordered all his Anglo-Norman subjects to return from Ireland or else they would lose all their lands and titles. However, led by their king 'Strongbow' whom Henry regarded as a threat to his power in Ireland, the Anglo-Normans refused to leave. As a result, Henry II beat them into submission as he was not only militarily more powerful, but also the largest land owner in Europe. This led the lands of those rebellious lords to get confiscated, as well as, the Irish church's power getting eliminated which started the declaration of Henry II as king of Ireland.

In other terms, this marked the beginnings of Ireland to get occupied by the ruthless English rule of people who were very culturally different from the Irish. Although, the main purpose of the English conquest of Ireland was not simply occupation, it was rather colonisation. These English invaders wanted to make the Irish do things the English way, where these local people would have not only to accept Henry II as their new ruler, but also

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<sup>6</sup> A system of structuring society around relationships that were derived from the holding of land in exchange for service or labour. This system was a combination of legal, economic, military and cultural customs that flourished between the 9th and 15th centuries in Medieval Europe.

to start conforming to English norms. For that, the Irish started conforming to the English scheme of inter-marriage, which allowed them to make unions with English nobles, therefore, this gave these foreigners an easy way into the Irish social scene.

Moreover, another conquest of Ireland by their English counterparts was the Tudor Conquest. This took place again in 1534 which was led by the Tudor king of England Henry VIII (1509-1547) who was responsible for the reformation of the Catholic Church. This reformation began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with Henry VIII's quest for a male heir, which came to failure during his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Consequently, Henry VIII began to believe that his marriage was cursed and decided to annul it through the Catholic Roman church but his wishes were denied by pope Clement VII. For that, the English king challenged papal authority and questioned the Catholic church's ability to define Christian practice. As a result, this created Anglicanism which later on developed to Protestantism by King Henry VIII as a religious authority separate from the Catholic Church in Rome. For that, it contributed to establishing the Anglican Church of England with King Henry VIII who declared himself its head in 1534.

Meanwhile, the Irish, who were still Catholic and wary of England started to worry about their Catholic faith, and the waves of reformation in England reaching the Irish isles. Indeed, the English monarchy shifted its focus towards Ireland again and this time for the purpose of enforcing the reformation among the Catholic Irish people, but it was a failure where the Protestant rule failed in taking hold of the Irish. Nevertheless, Ireland started to change from a lordship to a full kingdom under Henry VIII. However, the main purpose of the English was extending their rule through Ireland by the policy of 'surrender and regrant' where the Irish would surrender all their land to the crown, and in return they would be given a new English title such as 'Earl'<sup>7</sup> or 'Baron'<sup>8</sup> which would make them feel loyalty towards King Henry VIII, as well as, accepting the English legal system, and adopting English habits and manners. For that, England was basically offering the Irish a choice where they would only recognize the authority and wealth of the Irish people only if they became similar to them.

In addition, although the English were in Ireland as early as the 12th century, they never gained effective control until the coming of Elizabeth I (1559-1603) as a new monarch to the

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<sup>7</sup> A member of the nobility who held the highest political rank below king in Anglo-Saxon Britain.

<sup>8</sup> A rank of nobility or title of honour, which is given to a feudal vassal holding his lands under a direct grant from the king.

English throne. She fully believed in the process of the Reformation, and saw the Irish adherence to Catholicism as completely wrong as she was a committed Protestant. According to McCaffrey;

“Elizabeth’s church, however, was Protestant in doctrine and worship, and she planted Protestants on lands seized from Catholic rebels. Catholics, began to defend their religion against Protestantism as a dimension of English conquest and civilization. Since early in the seventeenth century, religion in Ireland has symbolized culture and nationality” (13).

Despite enforcing the Irish into submission for the new Protestant faith, Queen Elizabeth I insisted on having firm control of Ireland as she feared that her Catholic Spanish enemies would send forces to Ireland in order to attack England. As a result, the Queen of England wanted to maintain some stability in Ireland where the Irish people would be loyal to England, but as she could not do it militarily she sought for another way, hence the plantation system was born which lasted from 1556 to 1620. This new system revolved around sending more English Protestant settlers to Ireland and offering them lands for the purpose of keeping the neighbouring Gaelic clans<sup>9</sup> and chiefs under control. In fact, the real objective behind this was to enhance the strength of the English crown in Ireland through armed Protestant settlers controlling the native Irish. As a result, this led to the final collapse of the Gaelic social and political system, as well as the total conquest of Ireland by the English. Thus, Ireland became part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain due to ‘The Act of Union’ of 1801.

Throughout its history, England had always been the dominant political power among Scotland, Wales and Ireland. For that, the English rulers were always eager to bring all of the three states together through conquest and political union. At first, the Kingdom of England gained control of Wales and claimed it as an official English territory during the 1530s. This was the first major political union in what would become the United Kingdom. In 1603, the death of Queen Elizabeth I occurred, which led her cousin King James VI of Scotland to be the next person in line to the throne. Thus, he gained a second title and became King James I of England. However, even though Scotland and England shared the same King, they were still two politically separate kingdoms, each with their own parliament. For that, since King James VI of Scotland was crowned as James I of England, he hoped for a union of his two kingdoms’ parliaments and tried to sell the idea to both the English and the Scots but without

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<sup>9</sup> It refers to “offspring” or “descendants”. It is a group of people united by actual or perceived kinship and descent.

success. These attempts to politically merge both of England and Scotland ended in 1707, where they both united as ‘Great Britain’ and shared one flag that later on was given the title of ‘The Union Jack’<sup>10</sup>. One of the main reasons for this union was England’s concern of losing Scotland to side with the French enemies in the War of the Spanish succession. Eventually both countries’ parliaments came to an agreement and passed the Acts of Union to become one nation in 1707.

In this regard, England used its union with Scotland as a model for Great Britain to unite with Ireland as well. Back in the 1540s, Ireland became a dependent kingdom of England and the 1542 ‘Crown of Ireland Act’<sup>11</sup> mandated that the King of England was now also the King of Ireland. This first started with Henry VIII holding both titles and it continued until King George III’s rule of England, where he supervised the creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. For that, the Act of Union was passed in 1801 where politicians in Britain and Ireland came to the decision that the only way to maintain Ireland’s stability for the long terms was to merge both countries together formally. However, it was also supposed to bring Britain more security by making Ireland stable, in order to act as a defence against attacks from the French enemies. On the other hand, this Act of Union was a disaster for Ireland where it’s true sense of national identity and self importance as a country was on the way to be lost.

## **5. Ireland Hosting the English Culture (1169-1921)**

Throughout history, Ireland has always been considered a target for its English and later British counterparts, but the full-scale control and colonization of the land was not until the late 16th and early 17th centuries. This gradual control came as a result of a wide range of English policies and practices in Ireland whether military, political, religious or cultural. Hence, this created a form of imperialism<sup>12</sup> which sought to exploit the Irish land for England’s political and economic advantage, as well as to anglicize the native Irish population. Moreover, another purpose of the English colonisers was seeking for a

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<sup>10</sup> The national flag of the United Kingdom which represents a legal union between Great Britain (England, Wales, Scotland) and Ireland. It combines aspects of three national flags: the red cross of Saint George for the Kingdom of England, the white cross of Saint Andrews for Scotland and the red cross of St Patrick to represent Ireland.

<sup>11</sup> An Act passed by the parliament of Ireland on 18 June 1542, which created the title of King of Ireland for King Henry VIII of England and his successors, who previously ruled the island as Lord of Ireland.

<sup>12</sup> The policy of extending the rule or authority of an empire or nation over foreign countries, or of acquiring and holding colonies and dependencies. In other terms, it is the advocacy of imperial or sovereign interests over the interests of the dependent states.

homogenous Irish population based on English customs, traditions, manners and dressing. However, much of this colonization is characterized by the cultural domination of this imperial power, mainly over the subjugated Irish people's beliefs and religious practices. Therefore, Ireland's long history as an internal colony of Britain is essential to the evolution of Irish identity as a consequence of the English getting involved in Ireland's affairs.

Over the centuries, the relationship between the Irish and their English, later on British counterparts has been marked by a series of wars and religious feuds. This came as a consequence that reflected waves of English conquest and settlements in Ireland. For that, Ireland with her grand traditions and ancient glories remained stuck under the British legislation and control for so long. This involvement continued over 800 years of connection between both nations, which led to an increase of poverty among the Irish under the British rule as one of the many negative effects of British colonialism. However, while many have analyzed the impact and consequences of this colonisation in Ireland, few have shed light on the effects caused by these British colonizers on Irish national identity with regards to the Catholic faith, Gaelic culture and language.

### **5.1. Countering English Interference with Irish National Identity**

In general terms, national identity is considered as one of the major elements that defines any nation through its relation with culture. This identity provides a sense of collective belonging to a group of people from the same community who are bound by common experiences. For that, it is constructed around the shared values and rules which are embedded in every nation's social institutions. On this account, Ireland's national identity is inter-related to the nation's culture, which is the product of several invading forces that contributed to Irish history. However, one of the turning points that led to the development of Irish national identity is the impact of Ireland's encounter with the English imperial power that came to be known later on as the British Empire. This led both nations to struggle finding ways for mutual understanding, where the British saw Ireland as a troublesome and backward place still governed by Catholicism. In this regard, England's first attempt to control Ireland was not for colonisation but for occupation through imposing certain laws, as a consequence of the Irish who kept challenging the authority of the crown. This was due to the fact that England had several European enemies that could strike their attacks at any time, and Ireland was a strategic place they could seize which would have facilitated their attempts to attack England. Therefore, the English crown made sure to suppress the Irish land and keep it under

control, but soon enough Ireland became a British colony due to the British needs to expand its empire.

‘While Ireland’s status as a colony is often seen as complex and ambiguous and therefore contested, many depict the Irish as a national group that was subjugated by British Imperialism and sought to resist it’ (Kenny 90). However, before the British started to exert political control over the island, the identity of the Irish nation was built on strong religious beliefs and experiences provided by the Catholic faith, which were sacred among the majority of the Irish population. Therefore, by the coming of the 18th and 19th centuries, the Irish began a series of rebellions because of the new alien religious reformations imposed by the British along with a foreign ruler as an attempt to eliminate the Catholic beliefs of the Irish. However, this led the British intentions in creating a single dominant religious Protestant faith, to produce competing religious traditions in Ireland that deviated from adopting English traditions and loyalty to the crown. As a result, this led to the birth of Irish national identity which came as a reaction of Ireland losing its native Gaelic cultural heritage under the British rule. Therefore, since the Irish masses were in need of a common bond for maintaining this national identity, this could only be offered through Catholicism where it is considered as an essential element for uniting the Irish due to their devotion to the same faith. Hence, religion came to be one of the major themes that define Ireland’s national identity, which was one of the aspects that clarified the British imperial power’s interference in shaping Irish history.

## **5.2. Religious conflicts**

Since the 1100s, England started to gain control over Ireland which became one of its first colonies. This colonisation first aimed to control the most sacred institution in the Irish land which is religion. As a result, this caused the Irish to start rebelling against their British oppressors; hence the long conflict between the Irish Catholics and the British Protestants began from the 16th century. By the beginning of the 16th century, the English population started witnessing the religious reformation of the church brought by king Henry VIII. Therefore, the birth of Anglicanism and later on Protestantism, started to outlaw Catholicism in England which began to be seen as a national enemy since most of England’s rivals such as Spain and France were Catholics. In this context, the English Tudors shifted their focus on Ireland in hopes of converting the Catholic Irish, but the outcome was against their wishes.

Since the coming of Christianity with Saint Patrick during the 5th century, Catholicism was adopted by most of the Irish population, where it became intimately associated with Ireland's national identity. Thus for the Irish, their Catholic faith represented a symbol of native resistance to the Tudor conquest. However, although the English noticed that Ireland was against the new religion and kept its religious links with Rome, they decided to begin persuading the Irish again through the scheme of plantations from 1609. England tried to send over English and Scottish Protestant settlers by this process of plantation, but instead of converting the Irish, that set up two separate communities who deeply distrusted each other. Eventually, at the end of this period, the issue of royal succession in England affected Ireland. In 1690 a royal war was fought off in Ireland between the Protestant king William III of Orange and the Catholic king James II of England, which came to be known as ' Battle of the Boyne' . With the final defeat of James's Catholic forces, William III was in complete control, hence this led to the end of Catholic resistance in Ireland where Protestants dominated positions of power on the land, as well as, the establishment of laws that prevented the observance of the Catholic religion in Ireland. Thus the Irish had no choice but to fall under English supremacy.

By the 18th century, the Irish Catholics found themselves powerless and marginalised in a society where the only power-holders were Protestants who banished the Catholic hierarchy from Ireland. Hence, the Irish got fed up with the English rule which left them no choice but to initiate several rebellions, that were mainly for the purpose of gaining their freedom and rights as Catholics. As a result, the chaos in Ireland led the British to decide that the only way to maintain stability in Ireland was to merge both countries together through the 'Act of Union' in 1801. For that , with this act Ireland became officially part of the British state, which offered the Protestants more security since the Irish were ruled directly from the Protestant Westminster parliament in England. These attempts to overwhelm Catholic belief and its practices in Ireland caused a response from the side of the Catholics where they felt a sense of threat. On this account, the main purpose of this British colonialism of Ireland was not simply for political domination or economic profits, but it was a matter of cultural efforts to transform Ireland into a land much more conformed to the conventions, religious values and practices of England.

However, according to the historian analyst Jenkins, ' The attempt to integrate Ireland into the United Kingdom after the Act of Union was destined to fail and the Catholic church

played an important role in motivating Catholics to resist British rule and seek their own separate political destiny' (335). As a result, the desire to overthrow the British rule united different parts of Irish society where the Catholic Church played an essential role in forming this unity. For that, by the coming of the 19th century this union led to the rise of nationalism<sup>13</sup> and nationalist movements in Ireland, which are political movements that incorporated the Catholic faith. This was designed for the aim of breaking the hold of the British colonizers's power in Ireland, and mainly overthrow the Protestant policies. Therefore, by the end of the 19th century, Ireland's demands of becoming an independent nation started being realized, where the devotion of the Irish to Catholicism was successful in maintaining a bond that led to creating their national identity. This identity was conjoined with the Catholic faith, and began reviving Gaelic Ireland after it lost its true viability, as well as its native Gaelic culture under the British rule. Hence, Ireland gained its official independence from Britain in 1921.

### **5.3. Supplanting Irish with the English Language**

By the late 12th century, the English language was introduced to Ireland for the first time by the Normans, and remained there until becoming the most dominant language over a period of more than eight centuries. Due to the interacting influence of British settlement, this long transition from English to Irish characterized Ireland's linguistic history for centuries. Nevertheless, before the coming of the English invaders, Ireland was already introduced to a number of civilizations with their own distinct languages, such as; the Celtic civilization with its Gaelic language and Scandinavian languages when Ireland was involved in trade with the Vikings. However, with the English colonisation of Ireland, the coming of this foreign English language was destined to be long lasting. Particularly, the rise in the status of English reached its peak during the 16th and 17th centuries, where Ireland witnessed a revival of English colonial interests in Ireland. For that, the English crown ruled by King Henry VIII began making efforts to assimilate the Irish Gaelic society with their Anglo-Irish counterparts, thus uniting them under the English rule. This was done through schemes of plantations whose aim was to anglicize the Irish land by setting huge numbers of loyal English and Scottish colonists. As a result, there was a major shift to speaking English which began to spread among the Irish population during the 18th century. As Ireland became totally

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<sup>13</sup> The identification with one's own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations.

subjugated to the British rule, this political conquest was accompanied by linguistic change. For that, the English language and culture spread all over the country. However, according to historical records, the effects of this linguistic shift in Ireland became more intense by the coming of the 19th century. In particular, ‘It was the efforts of the Catholic community for emancipation, under their leader Daniel O’Connell, which had by far the greater effect. O’Connell’s championing of the Catholic cause led to the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. He himself urged his fellow countrymen to abandon Irish as he saw English as the necessary pre-condition for social advancement’ (Hickey 46).

Since English was forced upon the Irish population by British rulers, the use of Irish was prohibited from being used and the subjugated people had no choice but to submit. This escalated to the point where any individuals who spoke Irish became legally banned from participation in any economic activities. The Irish language was looked upon as a peasant language, where it was regarded by the British colonizers as an obstacle in the total subjugation of the Irish. As a result, the British colonial policies regarding the inferiority of the Irish were so effective, that the public began to accept it as truth and a valid reason for switching to English. Moreover, in terms of religion, the British rule sought to eradicate the influence of the Catholic Church to promote Protestantism instead, where they perceived that being faithful to the Protestant faith is being faithful and loyal to the English and later on the British crown. For that, they believed that as long as the Irish language was kept in place, there would be no success in weakening the Catholic institutions in Ireland. Hence, the aggressive and forced promotion of the English language ensued, which caused the major shift from Irish to English until present times in Ireland.

#### **5.4. Ireland’s Independence and Cultural Revival**

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Irish became increasingly bitter about British rule in Ireland, and this was mainly due to the fact that the Irish Catholics felt detached from the system of the Protestant British government. This feeling of alienation dominated every aspect of their lives under the union with Great Britain, where issues like poverty, violence and outdated agricultural systems that led to a disastrous Irish famine began to aggravate. For that, this exacerbated the political problems the country faced under the system that was put in place years earlier by the Protestant British parliament. As a result, several ideas of violent attempts to drive the British out of Ireland began dominating Irish thoughts. Thus, the only solution they could find to the everlasting problems of British rule was the demand for Ireland

to become an independent nation. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Irish believed that the only future for Ireland was to have an independent parliament, free of Britain. Indeed, between 1919 and 1921 the Irish Republican Army (IRA)<sup>14</sup> fought for independence from the United Kingdom, where the Irish War of Independence<sup>15</sup> ended with the division of Ireland into Northern and Southern regions in 1922. The Northern region remained a part of the U.K, which changed its title to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Meanwhile, the Southern region became ‘The Irish Free State’<sup>16</sup> which despite its name was still a part of the British Commonwealth<sup>17</sup>. Until it became the sovereign nation of Ireland or the Republic of Ireland in 1937.

Moreover, after the Irish took matters into their own hands and rebelled against the British. They won freedom from Britain in 1921 by fighting a war, but the freedom was only partial. This was due to the fact that many Irish thinkers, artists and political activists began realizing that traditional Irish culture was in danger of being lost. Since Ireland was undergoing a process of Anglicanization, where most aspects of Irish life were being replaced by British forms. For that there was a fear that unless the process of Anglicanization was arrested, Ireland would cease to be distinctive in terms of its culture. As a result, this led to the realization that without an indigenous Irish culture, the demands for an independent Irish nation would be meaningless and Ireland would be culturally indistinct from the rest of Britain. Thus, this led to an Irish Cultural Revival. The Cultural Revival was a wide ranging movement during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which operated in many different areas of Irish society. As a result, the work of the cultural revivalists aimed to play a role in limiting the spread of English forms of culture in Ireland. For that, Ireland witnessed a rise of a series of movements in Irish art, literature, drama and sport, which was a way to preserve their sense of national identity and develop a sense of Irish nationalism. Hence, removing the appeal of British culture for the vibrant Irish culture to flourish again.

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<sup>14</sup> An army of the Irish Republic that fought a guerrilla war against British rule in Ireland in the Irish War of Independence between 1919 and 1921.

<sup>15</sup> It is also known as an Anglo-Irish War, which was a guerrilla war fought in Ireland between the Irish Republican Army and British army forces between 1919 and 1921.

<sup>16</sup> A state established in 1922 under the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921, which ended the three-year Irish war of independence between the Irish Republican army and British crown forces.

<sup>17</sup> A free association of sovereign states comprising the United Kingdom and a number of its former dependencies who have chosen to maintain ties of friendship and practical cooperation, where they acknowledge the British monarch as a symbolic head of their association.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, since ancient times Ireland had stood at the heart of European culture, where it possesses a characterful and unique culture located on unique green landscapes. Hence, it gained the title of 'The Emerald Isle'. For that, this land represented the main attraction of numerous invading foreign forces who contributed to the construction of Irish culture, thus the Irish people's identity as a nation. However, with the English interference first as an invading power which turned to a colonial one, this left the Irish population confronted to immense turmoil with regard to their identity as a united nation. For that, it left Ireland victimized by English and British imperialist oppression for centuries, and the struggle for reinventing itself did not take an easy path. With that being stated, the third chapter will cast light on the challenges that faced Contemporary Ireland's Culture and National Identity in relation to the British colonial presence. Therefore, the next chapter will particularly delve into one of the previously mentioned elements of Irish culture that is Language. Hence, it will focus on Contemporary Ireland by examining how the Irish sense of national identity stood in resistance to British Imperial control through the revival of Irish language .

# Chapter Three

## Irish Language in Contemporary Ireland

### Introduction

Over the centuries, the position of the Irish language on the island of Ireland has changed dramatically. Having been spoken by the majority of the population in the past, by the 17th Century it had undergone a considerable decline reflecting the political situation at the time. Such situation demandingly called for an urgent activism to revive the language and the Gaelic culture. With that said, this last chapter will illustrate a theoretical reconstruction of identity via language. Succinctly, it will introduce the Irish experience that is personified through the rebirth of Irish language as an important factor that contributed in gaining its independence. This last chapter will scrutinise the impact of social and political movements in Ireland in preserving national identity, namely, through language revival. Additionally, this will offer an inside view of Contemporary Ireland, and a thorough analysis that elucidates the maintenance of Irish language through different fields such as: politics, education, and media. On yet another level, this chapter will highlight the benefits of nationalism on Contemporary Ireland by taking the case of the Republic of Ireland as an example. Finally, this chapter will study the attitudes towards the Irish language, and attempts to predict its future in the Republic of Ireland.

## 1. Reconstruction of Identity through Language

On broad terms, language is considered as a cultural and social construct which represents an essential element of every nation's cultural heritage. It symbolizes one's belonging and affiliation to a given community, where it intertwines with its collective awareness of shared history. Every cultural group can be defined by language which enables cultural expressions of individuality, thus a significant part of culture is reflected in language. Josselson notes that "identity is the stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands in the world" (10). In addition, Norton asserts that "Language...is a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated" (1). For that, it is perceived as a key aspect of cultural and national identity, where it provides a solid ground for the identification of every individual with their community. One may infer that the interplay between language and identity can be triangulated to self, person, and identity. Therefore, language is paramount to one's individual awareness and social identity (Riley 45), for language not only expresses identities but also constructs them. They are closely interwoven, that words themselves are inscribed with ideological meanings (Evans 20). As a result, identity is expressed through language which leads to creating a feeling of togetherness, solidarity, and belonging.

Although language usage can generate feelings of pride and unity within a nation, it can also cause the emergence of fear, uncertainty and shame especially for minority languages in colonized countries. This leads these languages to be regarded as inferior, where they are only spoken by backward or rural people in comparison to the dominant language inserted by the colonial powers. Thus, it was claimed to be the language of "progress". Furthermore, language can be used as a tool of control in oppressed societies, where it can be manipulated and its meaning can be systematically distorted for the interest of the ruling class. A group ceases to be an ethno-linguistic group<sup>1</sup> if it 'loses' its language, *i.e.* when its members use another's ethno-linguistic group's language. This process is described by Brenzinger as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> A group that is unified by both common ethnicity and language.

Language contact is a prerequisite for language shifts. Ethnolinguistic communities, usually those with minority status, become bilingual in that they still retain their own language and acquire the language of a dominant group in addition. Recessive use of the old language with intra-ethnic communication leads to the process of language displacement. The changing language behavior of members of an ethnolinguistic minority of this kind qualifies to disturb the fragility of a status quo. This unstable bilingualism may finally develop into monolingualism in the new language. The process of language replacement usually takes at least three generations. This is not a unidirectional development, but in the course of time successive phases with different characteristics modify the process before a language becomes extinct. (282)

As a result, this is most evident in the process of colonisation where the language of the colonizer is imposed on a colonized society through certain political and educational measures. On this account, one can take Ireland's long history of being colonized by the British as an example in order to clarify how the Irish language came to be viewed as a key aspect in reviving Irish national identity, as well as, an essential instrument of resistance against British imperial power and challenging its control in Ireland.

## **2. Rebirth of the Irish Language**

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, and during the Great Famine (1845-1849), the Irish language became equated with poverty and lack of power. Not only did the disease of the Famine kill the Irish people but it also killed the language of the people (Ó Ceallaigh 181). Therefore, the English language subsequently gained an upper hand in the cultural equation of the Irish society. The latter stimulated an urgent change in order to reawaken a significant element in the Irish culture; that of language. Conspicuously, the evolution of the Irish language has undergone several changes in Ireland's history. In this regard, it is widely known that linguistic change is a direct consequence of social change in any society. Likewise, Irish society witnessed a remarkable transformation which was characterized by the Gaelic revival that aimed to preserve all aspects of Ireland's indigenous culture. As a result, this reignited interest in the Gaelic language after it had been on the decline for so long under the dominant English rule.

Garret Fitz Gerald estimated that "something approaching half of the children in Ireland at the start of the nineteenth century spoke Irish" (126). Language change accelerated in the

early nineteenth century, especially in north Leinster and south Ulster, and English also began to penetrate into east Connacht and east Munster (Morley 634). On that account, the formation of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language in 1876 marked the start of sustained efforts to put an end to the language's decline. The Society concentrated its efforts on lobbying to improve the position of Irish in the educational system and obtained permission for it to be taught outside of normal hours in primary schools and its recognition as an optional subject in secondary schools. Therefore, it propounded a first wave of activism that aimed at prioritizing the preservation of the Irish language and culture. The latter was harboured via social and political movements.

The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century saw the emergence of a Gaelic revival where Irish linguists who had studied under continental scholars became involved in the great task of editing and translating the rich heritage of medieval Irish texts (Connolly 333). Organisations such as The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, The Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association were at the forefront of the renaissance of the Irish language and culture. The early leaders of the renaissance wrote rich and passionate verses, filled with the grandeur of Ireland's past and the music and mysticism of Gaelic poetry. Contemporary texts in Irish written by the cultural nationalists of the early twentieth century are an important primary source for historians of the Irish revolution; several prominent figures, including Douglas Hyde, Ernest Blythe, and Seán T. O'Kelly, left memoirs in Irish. More emphasis was directed to education and literature as means to perpetuate the Irish language, conserving by that a crucial element of Irish national identity. Since, such procedure requires activism and order, political Irish movements emerged to mark the first glances of hope of language revival. For instance, the Gaelic League employed itinerant organizers to form branches and teach evening classes, while original works and editions of the literature of earlier centuries were published under the League's imprint (Morley 638). Other contributions were made by different social groups that were actively present in the political scene in the late 19th and early 20th century with the purpose of the revival of Gaelic language, and de-anglicising the Irish nation.

### 3. Social and Political Movements in Ireland

The plan to revive the Irish language was due to its cultural significance and its relation to Irish identity. For that, a series of social and political activist movements started to take place in Ireland, where their main attempt was to revitalize the Irish language.

#### 3.1. The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language

As stated by Moore "...the primary objective of this new movement was to go to the country and get people speaking Irish again" (27). With its antiquarian nature, the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language (SPIL), or as it is called in Irish; Cumann Buan-Choimeádtana Gaeilge (Ó Murchú 2001), was a cultural organisation in late 19th-century Ireland founded in 1876, and was part of the Gaelic revival of the period. The SPIL aimed at protecting the status of the Irish language, during a time when it was threatened with extinction. The significance of this group lies in the fact that it made an evident influence in the history of Ireland, as it represented the beginning of something big and revolutionary. In its mission statement it asserted its objective that it was "possible and desirable to preserve the Irish Language in those parts of the Country where it is spoken, with a view to its further extension and cultivation." (Ó Murchú 7). In addition, the SPIL merged with the Gaelic Union in 1878 and became the chief organisation committed to promoting the language revival.

#### 3.2. The Gaelic Union

A more activist group, the Gaelic Union, was instituted in 1880 for the preservation and cultivation of the Irish Language. Two years later it took the important step of establishing a literary journal, *Irisleabharna Gaedhilge*. Besides having prepared and edited in a few years many works in Irish for beginners and advanced students, the Gaelic Union conducted, and continues to conduct, a "Gaelic Department" in the *Irishman and Shamrock*, "Lessons on Gaelic" in *Young Ireland*, and a "Grammar Course" in the *Irish Teachers' Journal* (Gaelic Union 20). Besides, it proposed several other objectives in its journal such as: promoting the formation of classes and associations for the cultivation of the language, procuring greater facilities and better encouragement for the teaching and learning of the Irish language in the schools of Ireland, particularly in the Irish-speaking districts, publishing cheap elementary works from which the language can be easily learned, and a suitable literature, encouraging a familiar use of the language by those who know how to speak it, and encouraging the

production of a modern Irish literature, original and translated, by offering prizes for competition (8-9). However, the central mission did not halt there. The mantle was passed to another group that advocated for the same aims, that group was called the Gaelic League.

### 3.3. The Gaelic League

The Gaelic League, historically known in Irish “ConradhnaGaeilge”, is considered to be one of the most important organisations that adopted the movement of Gaelic revival. Founded in July 1893 by EoinMacNéillwith Douglas Hyde as its first president, when it emerged as the successor of several 19th century groups such as the Gaelic Union to preserve and extend the use of Irish as a spoken language. The League’s importance lies in the fact that it contributed immensely in raising public consciousness of Gaelic culture, engaged in campaigns to include Irish in school curricula, inspired a modern literature in Gaelic, and energized the nationalist movement in the years before 1916 “Gaelic Revivalism: The Gaelic League”. Accordingly, The League noticed the shortcomings of other movements and improved upon them. Opposed to the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, the Gaelic League was anti-British in character. On that account, Hyde spoke to the slowly but distinctly changing Irish landscape in which the Gaelic culture was disappearing and being replaced by generically English ways, he contended in a speech he made to the National Literary Society in Dublin which he entitled “The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland”, that:

In order to de-Anglicize ourselves, we must at once arrest the decay of the language. We must bring pressure upon our politicians not to snuff it out by their racist discouragement merely because they do not themselves understand it. We must arouse some spark of patriotic inspiration among the peasantry who still use the language, and put an end to that shameful state of feeling—a thousand-tongued reproach to our leaders and statesmen—which makes young men and women blush and hang their heads when overheard speaking their own language. (3)

To solve the problem of the decay of the Irish language, Hyde wanted to ignite the patriotic spark inside Irishmen and women to speak the language and teach it to their children. He concluded his speech by saying “...We must strive to cultivate everything that is...most Gaelic, most Irish, because in spite of the little admixture of Saxon blood in the north-east corner, this island is and will ever remain Celtic at the core...” (3). Furthermore, the Gaelic

League is also deemed to be an inclusive, non-political organisation<sup>2</sup>, it attracted a wide membership at first, including nationalists, unionists, Protestants and lower middle class members. Although many adherents had traditional attitudes towards women, Garret FitzGerald proclaimed that “the Gaelic League is due the credit of having established the first Irish national society which accepted women as members on the same terms as men” (158). Therefore, the League’s inclusivity diversified the movement and forged a path that gradually excludes the English, and revives the Gaelic culture per se.

Therefore, the source of inspiration behind the late 19th century language revival was raising nationalism. For Irish nationalists, nothing so symbolised a distinct and venerable Irish culture than the Irish language. The fact that so few people of Irish birth or background spoke Irish as a direct result of British colonial domination made its resurrection all the more meaningful. It represented not merely Ireland’s political independence, but its cultural independence as well.

#### **4. Irish Language in Contemporary Ireland**

After a state of a paralyzing immobility, the Irish people in contemporary Ireland are living a period of rapid change. Although an impetuous decline in the number of Irish speakers took place from the middle of the nineteenth century, a language revival movement helped foster a climate conducive to the growth of radical nationalism. While consistency is a defying element to preserve, the eagerness to bring about a noticeable alteration in society was almost a common aim during twentieth century Ireland. Therefore, it paved the way to breaking from the fetters of the English rule. So to speak, the nationalist spirit, which dominated the political scene during a time that was calling for a Gaelic revival, has also forged a motivated vision to conserve and perpetuate the Gaelic culture, and namely, the Irish language in contemporary Ireland. The latter begs to ask the question that of; what is the state of the Irish language in contemporary Ireland?

In retrospect, the revival of the Irish language was a result of a meticulous and organised activism in order to de-anglicize Ireland from the sweeping influence of the British rule. The latter resulted in Irish rebellion after a number of attempts to gain Home Rule and aiming to live in an “Irish Ireland”. According to Matthew Kelly, the wave of nationalism and Gaelic

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<sup>2</sup> Originally the organisation intended to be apolitical, but many of its participants became involved in Irish nationalism.

revival during the nineteenth century was a fuelling force towards political change and Irish sovereignty, he asserts in his essay “Nationalisms” the following:

Most obviously, there was an Irish nationalism predicated on the conviction that Irish sovereignty was distinct from British and should be exercisable according to the wishes of the people of Ireland. To this end, Irish nationalists pursued various devolutionist and separatist strategies across the nineteenth century, which at times were subordinate to efforts to mold the Irish people according to cultural nationalist dictums. Efforts to displace the Catholic communalism of O’Connellism with more pluralist conceptions of the Irish nation were one aspect of this cultural nationalism; nurturing an “Irish Ireland” predicated on the revival of the Irish language was another.(843)

In order to assess the outcome of the Gaelic revival and namely the Irish language revival, one is obliged to track down the relevancy of the language and the continuity of its contribution in enlivening the Irish national identity. Impressively, according to Vincent Morley, the Irish language in contemporary Ireland is, in fact, in a “good health” if one takes the census returns as well-founded indicators. For instance, the 2011 census for the Republic of Ireland found that 1.77 million people, representing 40.6% of the population aged three and older, claimed to know Irish. Passive comprehension of the language is wide-spread. According to Morley:

A more realistic measure of linguistic competence is provided by the numbers who reported that they speak Irish on a daily or weekly basis outside of the education system: these groups numbered 77,185 and 110,642 respectively, equivalent to 1.8% and 2.5% of the population aged three and older. (640)

The Northern Ireland census of 2011 did not ask about language use, but 10.6% of the population claimed to have “some ability in Irish.” This result should be accorded the same credibility as the 40.6% reported for the Republic. The total number of Irish speakers on the island can therefore be estimated at about 200,000. ( Central Statistics Office 2011).

However, Morley’s estimation about the prosperity of the Irish language being in a “good health” was bound to grapple with the test of time. For example, there were 96,090 persons living in Gaeltacht areas in April 2016 and of these 63,664 (66.3%) indicated they could speak Irish. This is down by 2,574 persons on the 2011 census, while the proportion who

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could speak Irish has also fallen from 68.5 per cent in 2011. Under the Gaeltacht Act 2012, the Gaeltacht was redefined into 26 *Limistéar Pleanála Teanga* (LPTs), or Language Planning Areas. Of these *Toraigh* recorded the largest proportion of daily Irish speakers in 2016 at 74.6 per cent. A further 6,284 spoke Irish on a weekly basis while 36,794 persons living in the Gaeltacht spoke Irish less often, never or spoke Irish in the education only or did not state the frequency they spoke Irish. The population of the Gaeltacht area in Galway County had the largest proportion of daily Irish speakers at 29.0 per cent while Galway City had the least at 4.3 per cent. The Gaeltacht area in Cork reflected the highest proportion of weekly Irish speakers with 11.7 per cent. (Central Statistics Office 2016).

Taking the census returns into consideration, the indicator of the Irish language's growth is its relevancy in current time in Ireland. Being a part of the educational system, the Irish language is still not spoken outside schools. On the other hand, it is more or less a geographical privilege to people who live in Gaeltacht area, who predominantly represent a large Irish-speaking community. Nonetheless, linguistic comprehension might be evident when it comes to the Irish language in most parts of Ireland despite the lack of practice. In addition, it is rather vital to indicate that the Irish language is still competing with the English language. The English language was for the most part adapted for its prevalence at a time of dependence and reformation for Ireland by its counterpart, the British government. One simply cannot dismiss the impressive growth of the Irish language without alluding to the historical background that comprises the difficult challenges and the various dimensions of how intricate the ramifications of internal imperialism<sup>3</sup> are on the Irish people. Thus, looking back at what the revival has brought into the table of discussion of a new Ireland, the Irish language has been steadily and moderately integrated in Irish people's daily lives. While the number of people who speak Irish has remarkably dwindled throughout the years, it is indispensable to cite that there is a certain change in the Irish society, namely, the Irish national identity which is now connoted to be a reviving element of what is to be Irish, and that is through language. However, the future of the Irish language remains unclear in light of the current numbers that seem to be implying a slight decline.

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<sup>3</sup>This term was used to describe the internal relationship between the British Empire and its colonies, namely, when Ireland was a part of the colonies. The term used to describe the distinct separation of the dominant core, from the periphery in an empire. It was created to describe the "blurred" lines between geographically close locations that are clearly different in terms of culture (Howe 18). Some other factors that separate the core from the periphery are: language, religion, physical appearance, types and levels of technology, and sexual behaviour (Howe 19).

## 5. Preservation of the Irish Language

Language preservation in Ireland transcends the attempt to reconcile with the rich past of old Ireland; it is rather an effort to declutter the remnants of the British rule. Hence, through the rejuvenation of the Irish language, a sense of national identity is to be felt by the majority of Irish speakers. Be it as it may, it might appear as a mere “symbol of identity” for some of the Irish population who are not active speakers (NicEoin 135). Since the development of the Irish Free State in 1922, Irish society has undergone rapid reform and reconstruction, thereby also reforming and renegotiating Irish culture and identity. Yet, national identity has remained at the heart of justifications for reviving the Irish language. Arguments in support of learning Irish, or of rejuvenating it, tend to be founded on the claim that Irish is an essential element of Irish identity. People learn Irish and support its promotion because of this sense of identity (Watson 74). Therefore, there are a number of methods that were adopted by the Irish new government in many fields such as, politics, education, and media in order to maintain the process enlivening what it is Gaelic.

### 5.1. Politics

Speculations about the state of politics in Ireland may vary. Nevertheless, when mentioning the Irish language in the general scheme of the political scene, the Irish language comes to be an important element in Ireland that is even supported by the government to a degree to which other minority languages are not<sup>4</sup>. In general, according to Watson Irish people support this level of commitment because of the “perceived connection between the Irish language and Irishness” (74). In order to preserve the Irishness, i.e. the Irish identity, it is almost a necessity to preserve language nationally, as well as, internationally, since it represents a vital part of collective identity. Therefore, after its independence, the Irish government made a number of reforms and agreements in order to facilitate the required regulations to enliven Irish national identity through language such as: Good Friday Agreement (1998), The Official Languages Act (2003), Irish as an Official Language of the European Union (2007), and the Gaeltacht Act (2012).

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<sup>4</sup>An example of minority language is Shelta. Shelta language is a mixed form of Irish and English. The speakers of Shelta are called Travellers, who descend from craftsmen, traders, musicians and so forth sharing a common culture of nomadism. They are a minority group inside the UK, but Ireland does not recognize them as an ethnic group, which leads to discrimination (Gansterer 27).

- *Good Friday Agreement (1998)*

In the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, it was stated that a North or South Implementation body would be established to promote the Irish language through the help of institutions such as Foras na Gaeilge<sup>5</sup>. The latter's main work is to facilitate and encourage the speaking and writing of Irish in public and private arenas in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland in accordance with part three of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages<sup>6</sup>. According to Ó Ceallaigh, this set out "specific measures to promote the use of regional or minority languages in public life" (184).

- *The Official Languages Act (2003)*

In 2003, the Official Languages Act was passed, giving expression to the constitutional status of Irish as the first official language. That Act led to the establishment of the office of An Coimisinéir Teanga which is a Language Commissioner created in order to monitor and enforce compliance by public bodies with the provisions of the Official Languages Act. The Act sets out a statutory framework for the provision of public services through the Irish language. Moreover, the act guarantees the right of all Irish citizens to communicate with the state in either Irish or English, and provides mechanisms to ensure that this right is respected by public officials. It also provides for the simultaneous publication of important official documents, such as annual reports or policy statement in both languages. The Official Languages Act also makes provision for the designation of official Irish language versions of place-names and the removal of the official status of English place-names in the Gaeltacht.

- *Irish as an Official Language of the European Union (2007)*

The 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2007 characterised with a watershed moment for the Irish language and the Irish population, where it fortified their position and international perceptions. Irish was granted the status of an official and working language of the EU. Therefore, the status of the language was automatically enhanced at EU level not only giving greater attention to the entitlements of Irish-speakers, but also creating and enhancing employment opportunities for

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<sup>5</sup> A cross-border, inter-governmental institution was established in 1999 to carry out the task of promoting the Irish language.

<sup>6</sup> A European treaty adopted in 1992 under the Council of Europe to protect and promote historical regional and minority languages in Europe.

them across a range of translation and interpretative needs on a European stage. When Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC), now referred to the European Union (EU) on 1 January 1973, Irish acquired a unique status as a treaty language, though not an official working language. Given this background, such decision made by the EU invigorated a national acceptance of the Irish language as being a part of Irish identity and substantial culture.

- *The Gaeltacht Act (2012)*

The Gaeltacht Act in 2012 had two primary objectives, namely, to provide for a new definition for the Gaeltacht (primarily Irish-speaking region) and to make modifications to the structure and functions of *ÚdarásnaGaeltachta*. *ÚdarásnaGaeltachta* is the regional authority responsible for the social, cultural and economic development of the Gaeltacht. The overall objective of *ÚdarásnaGaeltachta* is to stabilize the current patterns of language shift and to ensure the future of the Gaeltacht as a distinct Irish-speaking community. Under the Gaeltacht Act 2012, it is envisaged that the Gaeltacht will in future be based on linguistic criteria instead of on geographic areas which has been the position to date. Hence, language planning at community level will be central to the new definition of the Gaeltacht.

## **5.2. Education**

Education plays an indispensable role in maintaining and rejuvenating language. Thus, the revitalization of the Irish language within the Irish society was highly dependent on education to keep it alive. For that, many Irish organizations that preached about the necessity of the Gaelic revival, emphasized on the role of education to the revitalization of Irish language. Hence, one of these organizations was the Gaelic League. The League was more than an organization that supported a revival of Irish, it, in many ways, formed a conceptual foundation for the formation of the Irish nation state and changes in the national school systems. This is justified in the opinion of John Laukaitis who highlighted the role of the Gaelic League in prioritizing education, as well as, for its strong belief in the benefits of education on the free Irish society. Accordingly, education was promoted to be a focal strand in the preservation of the Irish language in the long term, where he asserts the following:

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The major changes in educational policy, it is argued, resulted from the Gaelic League's deep conviction that language was integral to national identity and that schools could generate its particular vision of an Irish Ireland. The Gaelic League's pillars of sentiment became a driving force in the hope for an Irish Ireland, and the school was seen as the most powerful agent toward this vision. The point that the national school system under English control eradicated Irish from Ireland dominated the Gaelic League's publications. With similar logic, the Gaelic League viewed compulsory Irish as a plausible vehicle to reviving Irish across the country. In its fight for the language, the Gaelic League viewed education as a means to bring Ireland back to a former glory. (228)

Subsequently, and on a similar motive, an act was announced by the Irish government in 1998 entitled the Education Act. The Education Act 1998 contained other important references to the Irish language. It states, for example, that every person involved in the implementation of the act shall have regard to the following objects: "to contribute to the realisation of national policy and objectives in relation to the extension of bilingualism in Irish society and in particular the achievement of greater use of the Irish language at school and in the community" and "to contribute to the maintenance of Irish as the primary community language in Gaeltacht areas" (Government of Ireland, Section 6).

One of the results of the Education Act is the creation of *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta*<sup>7</sup> (COGG) in 2002 under the provisions of Section 31 of the Education Act, which is translated to *The Council for Gaeltacht and Gaelscoileanna Education*. Its functions include: the planning and co-ordination of provision of textbooks and teaching resources through Irish; advising on promotion of education through Irish in schools generally and in Irish-medium schools; providing support services to Irish medium schools; and engaging in research. COGG's website contains a comprehensive directory of resource materials now available to support teaching and learning through Irish.

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<sup>7</sup>COGG is a Republic of Ireland State-agency who serve as a consultative council to the Irish Department of Education and Skills and other organisations and individuals on Irish language-medium education and who also provide support services and teaching resources and carry out research for Irish language-medium schools both inside and outside the Irish-speaking regions or Gaeltacht in the Republic of Ireland.

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### 5.3. Media

Rapid changes in communication technologies during recent decades have sharpened the question of the media's role in shaping and maintaining national identity. The Irish media during the revival of the Irish culture and language have contributed immensely in rendering, as well as, adopting cultural nationalism to invigorate the political movement against the English rule, and raise awareness about Irish national Identity. Consequently, the role of print periodicals and other types of traditional mass media as integrators of the Irish nation became vital during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and continued to this day. For that, mass media played a significant role in preserving the Irish culture, language and national identity. One of the first print journals in Irish language was engendered by the Gaelic League under the name of 'The Gaelic Journal' in 1882. In its first volume David Comyn wrote a letter to the readers of the Gaelic Journal to explain the status of the nation and the standpoint of how it should move on to sustain the national spirit in order to enliven the Gaelic culture. Comyn contends:

It will be strange, indeed, if this journal, founded as it is on an independent basis, going neither to the right nor to the left, but keeping its object steadily in view, should be allowed to languish and die. Established, not as a commercial, but as a purely patriotic undertaking, and by those who have already given such good earnest of their zeal and energy, I cannot believe that Irishmen will fail in their clear duty of sustaining the Gaelic Union, which in this effort needs the aid of all. Many things are yet necessary to complete our country's regeneration and secure her happiness, but I am unwilling to believe that in the struggle she would suffer her language to be lost; and I think that if the case were fairly put before the people, they would not purchase a (perhaps) very temporary material advantage by the loss of the one grand link which binds them to the past—the one indelible, undying and unmistakable mark of Irishmen. (17)

The Irish media extended even more to other types, such as broadcasting. The first radio station to be established in Ireland was 2RN<sup>8</sup> which began broadcasting on 1 January 1926. This was basically a Dublin station as it usually could be received only within a 25-mile radius. In the opening speech Douglas Hyde<sup>9</sup>, alluding to the role radio was to play in the promotion of the Irish language, claimed that “a nation is made from within itself, it is made

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<sup>8</sup>Understood to mean 'to Erin' a compliment from the British Post Office, Erin, or more accurately 'Éireann', is the Irish for Ireland.

<sup>9</sup>Douglas Hyde later became the first President of Ireland (1938-45).

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first of all by its language”(qtd. in Watson 2). Furthermore, since broadcasting was well-received among the Irish society and political movements who were seeking for an independent Ireland. The latter paved the way to create the first national radio station after the Broadcasting Authority Act in 1960. According to Iarfhlaith Watson, Radio Éireann<sup>10</sup> (RÉ) managed to devote over 4% of its airtime to Irish language programmes. This situation improved during the 1940s when over 11% of airtime was devoted to Irish language programmes (3-4). In his book *Forty Years of Broadcasting*, Maurice Gorham<sup>11</sup> claimed that nearly all types of programmes broadcast in English during the 1940s had their counterpart in the Irish language, as well as talks and discussion programmes, poetry readings and plays, children's programmes and Irish language learners' programmes such as *Is Your Irish Rusty?* and *Listen and Learn* (136-40). However, during the 1950s the percentage of airtime devoted to Irish language programmes decreased to less than 9%. From 1953 onward RÉ began to consider the factors involved in establishing an Irish television service. With the establishment of television the Irish language continued to hold an important role. This was reflected in the Broadcasting Authority Act (1960), Article 17 which stated that “In performing its functions, the Authority shall bear constantly in mind the national aims of restoring the Irish language and preserving and developing the national culture and shall endeavour to promote the attainment of these aims”. Therefore, the preservation of language in Ireland was the central occupation for Irish government. Hence, via media's outlets and platforms, the Irish identity Ireland succeeded to a certain extent, to plant a seed that deepened its roots in the Irish soil and minds of Irish people.

One might infer that those different methods were combined to forge a force that made the preservation of the Irish language plausible and more able to be executed on many intervals. For instance, the focus on politics in Ireland played a significant role in advocating for national freedom and for bringing social change. As far as education is concerned, it allowed the Irish population, despite the differences between the two jurisdictions, to enlarge the linguistic comprehension of the Irish language, and perpetuate its integration in schools, and outside schools in non-Gaeltacht regions. Meanwhile, the media occupied a large part of the promotion for the Irish language, and pushed for implementing new policy to invigorate its use. Generally speaking, the preservation of the Irish language sustained the same

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<sup>10</sup>Radio Éireann (translated as Ireland Radio) is the name given to the national radio service prior to the Broadcasting Authority Act (1960).

<sup>11</sup>Maurice Gorham was Director of Broadcasting in Radio Éireann.

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nationalist image that called for its revival in first glimpses of freedom; the latter helped reconstruct the status quo of the Irish nation.

## 6. Benefits of Irish Nationalism on Contemporary Ireland

The vigorous and steadfast wave of nationalism and patriotism in Ireland during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked a revival of national identity. After being colonised by the Cromwellian<sup>12</sup> and Williamite<sup>13</sup> forces in the seventeenth century, the English language began to spread in many regions in Ireland (Laukaitis 221). Therefore, the Anglicization of Ireland represented a linguistic shift that suggested a threat to the Irish culture, and identity per se. The latter called for a movement and an urgent mobilization to de-anglicize Ireland. Thus, it paved the way to unfetter and untie Ireland from the English influence. Nationalism in Ireland, according to Hutchinson, consisted of “coteries of intellectuals” (2) who claimed that Ireland was a primordial expression of spirit with “its unique history, culture, and geographical profile” (Hutchinson 13). Irish nationalists sought to revive Irish in order to establish Ireland, first and foremost, as a culturally distinct nation. From the founding of the Gaelic League in 1893 to the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922, Irish nationalists’ purpose increasingly became intertwined with politics. Although, they were split in two, as those who promoted an Irish Ireland and those who promoted Home Rule, they had one common aim, that of an Ireland free from English influence. With this said, it is important to note that many nationalists supported a form of nationalism distinctly different than those who supported Home Rule, for nationalism for many nationalists, namely, Leaguers, meant that Ireland would once again embrace its cultural language and traditions and not necessarily demand Home Rule. However, in the Republic of Ireland, being a source of resilience, both sides from Irish nationalists fought resolutely to regain and revive the national identity, as well as, the Irish culture.

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<sup>12</sup>Cromwellian is term that pertains to the characteristic of the politics, practices of Oliver Cromwell or of the Commonwealth and Protectorate.

<sup>13</sup> The term "Williamite" is commonly used to refer to William's multi-national army in Ireland during the Williamite War in Ireland, 1689–1691. In Ireland itself, William was primarily supported by Protestants and opposed by the native and Anglo-Irish Catholic Jacobites who supported James.

### 6.1. The Republic of Ireland

The role of the language activist movement in attempting to revitalize the language in Ireland was a catalyst for social and political change, where it promoted the reconstruction of the Irish national identity. The Irish language has had a great effect, namely on the Republic of Ireland. Knowingly, the Republic of Ireland was considered to be the gatekeeper of the Irish heritage, from religion (Catholicism), language (Gaelic/Irish), and culture. Evidently, the Republic had brought up many nationalists who defended the great cause of reviving Ireland, namely, its national identity, and Home Rule. By the end of the 19th century, interest in cultural nationalism, and particularly in the Gaelic League, had grown dramatically and continued to expand in the early years of the 20th century. The growing nationalist zeal was stimulated by different factors. First, the centenary celebrations of the 1798 rebellion staged by Theobald Wolfe Tone<sup>14</sup> in order to ‘break the connection’ with Britain (qtd. in Kee 60) stirred nationalist passions and benefited cultural nationalism as well as more radical forms of nationalism. A second and even more significant factor was the outbreak of the Boer War<sup>15</sup> in 1899. Several scholars suggest that many Irish people identified with the Boers in their fight against the might of the British Empire.

Towards the end of the 20th Century, many authors predicted the continued decline of the Irish language (Hindley 50). Despite these predictions, the proportion of Irish speakers has remained relatively steady, with the Republic of Ireland being a significant part of the demographic that speaks Irish. Currently, the Republic of Ireland has two official languages; Gaeilge (Irish) and English. Irish is the first official language of Ireland and an official language of the European Union. However, English is the mother tongue of the majority of the population. Although the aim of the Irish State has been to promote bilingualism in Ireland (O’Laoire 95), there are few active Irish speakers outside the educational system in non-Gaeltacht areas.

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<sup>14</sup> Wolfe Tone was a nationalist inspired by the republican ideals of the French and American revolutions. He wanted Irish Protestants and Catholics to struggle together against the British in order to establish an Irish republic. In 1798, he led an insurrection which failed but whose direct result was the 1800 Act of Union incorporating Ireland into the UK.

<sup>15</sup> The 1899-1902 Boer War took place between the Boers (Dutch-origin South African farmers) of the independent republic of the Transvaal and the British after a vast goldfield was discovered in the Boer republic. The British did not act out of pure cupidity; they worried that if the Boers’ wealth made them too powerful they could threaten Britain’s supremacy in the rest of South Africa.

According to Darmody and Daly, the factors that have impacted on the number of proficient Irish speakers include the removal of regulations requiring all civil servants<sup>16</sup> to be proficient in Irish (15-16) and the lack of meaningful opportunities to use the language outside of schools due to the fragmented distribution of Irish-speakers among the population. These factors are likely to present a serious challenge in promoting the national language.

In the Republic of Ireland there have been various initiatives that aim to promote the Irish language. *ÚdarásnaGaeltachta* and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht support various initiatives that promote the use of the Irish language within Gaeltacht areas. Financial support and sponsorship is available for the provision of Irish language pre-schools, language-based activities and events, Irish-medium youth clubs in Gaeltacht areas, development of language service centres, and initiatives to encourage Irish in workplace and Irish-medium third-level courses. As far as language revival is concerned, the Republic of Ireland represents the mecca of nationalism where the initial movement started growing to a public and common cause. Therefore, the Irish language in the Republic of Ireland has been remarkably spoken by a great number of the Irish people despite the slight decline; the Irish language has been considerably in a good health in the Republic of Ireland

## **7. Irish & British Attitudes towards the Irish Language**

Attitudes towards the Irish language and its revival vary in Ireland and outside the aisles. The general reception in Ireland was split between support and rejection. However, conspicuously, the Irish Language Survey of 2013 explored whether the Irish people were in favour for or opposed to the Irish language using a five point Likert scale (from ‘strongly opposed’ to ‘strongly in favour’) many adult respondents held positive attitudes towards the Irish language. Over two-thirds of the people in the Republic of Ireland (67%) and almost half in Northern Ireland (45%) reported a positive attitude to the Irish language (Darmody and Daly 77). The views of respondents from the two jurisdictions differed regarding attitudes towards the Irish language and its role in the heritage and culture of Ireland. In the Republic, almost two-thirds (64%) believe that Ireland would lose its identity without the Irish language. However, a significantly smaller (33%) proportion of Northern Irish residents shared this view. There were notably mixed views on the level of involvement that the Government should have in promotion of the Irish language; in the Republic of Ireland there

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<sup>16</sup> People employed in the public sector for a government department or agency.

was a significantly stronger feeling that the Government should ensure that Irish is taught well in schools (53%), in contrast to a third of those in Northern Ireland (34%). In terms of maintaining the language, residents in the Republic of Ireland believed that policy focus should be on 'Irish-speaking households/Gaeltacht areas' (26%), whereas those in Northern Ireland believe that the language should be maintained through media; 'Television/Radio programmes in Irish' (23%). Many respondents felt that the respective jurisdictions should seek to become bilingual, although with English as the principal language (ROI 43% and NI 34%). (Central Statistics Office 2013)

Meanwhile, the attitudes in Britain towards the Irish language, and Ireland in general are not largely captured in surveys and researches. In the words of James O'Connell, who is a professor of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, in his work 'English and Irish Perceptions of One Another: How Good is the Mirror of a Friendly Eye?' he firmly asserts that:

There are serious problems inherent in expressing how the peoples of Britain and Ireland see one another. First, it is seldom that comprehensive survey research can be drawn on; and in recent years questionnaire research on relations between Britain and Ireland has mostly focussed on conflict in Northern Ireland. Second, peoples are far from monolithic; and, in consequence, it is necessary to write about groups within countries rather than about entire populations. Third, there are few areas in which the subjective views of an observer are so likely to intrude. (389)

O'Connell also believes that a 'frustration' has been built into Ireland and Britain. Such attitude is explained to be related to sheer ignorance. Remarkably, the English can mostly appear to ignore the Irish or at best manifest a 'sporadic interest' in them. O'Connell explains that 'such interest as there is, is mostly sparked off by troubled and distorting happenings in Northern Ireland' (389). The latter is an illustration of the attitudes that is projected towards Ireland as a nation from its counterpart, England. Additionally, Thomas O'Dowd, who wrote about the attitudes of the Irish and British towards each other, has remarked:

Post-war Ireland was rampantly Gaelic and nationalist because of its uncertainty about its identity. It wished to demonstrate a separateness and self-sufficiency that it has never been able to carry off because Britishness is too intertwined with Irishness. Many however remain oppressed by a Britishness in their make-up as a people.... This leaves them over-sensitive to and obsessed by British attitudes to Ireland. (qtd. in O'Connell 393).

To all intents and purposes, the divergent attitudes towards the Irish language are a representation of what the internal and external perceptions truly are. Via the conducted surveys about the situation and public position on the Irish language, a clear perception is to be deduced from the collected data. The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland's position towards the language is fairly and moderately positive. In fact, "all research assessments of the language attitudes of Irish people confirm that the Irish language enjoys immense goodwill as the enduring indicator of the unique, distinctive history and identity of Ireland and its people" (Ó Flatharta et al. 3). Meanwhile, the attitudes of Britain towards the Irish language and Ireland in general are stemmed from a mild frustration and ignorance. The latter gives the general notion of how preconceived the sentiments of the English counterpart towards Ireland.

## **8. The Future of the Irish Language**

The status of the Irish language since 1922 has been closely scrutinized and examined in order to help keep the first flame of independence kindled. Therefore, there have been several surveys and new policies created for this matter to ensure the continuation of one of the very elements of the Irish identity, which is its language. It is no secret that at the forefront of this current global shift is the English language which is the *lingua franca*<sup>17</sup> of the digital age. Today those speaking English as a second language outnumber native English speakers by hundreds of millions. However, the Irish case is respectively divergent when it comes to its relationship with the English language, for it is a deeper relation that has historical, as well as, sociological factors that interfere in such exchange. It is worth mentioning that, the Irish language, originally known as Gaelic, was at the core of Ireland's independence movement. Many of the main players in the fight for independence had their roots in the Gaelic Revival Movement. Today, Unesco's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, classifies Irish as "definitely endangered"; on a five-point scale ranging from vulnerable, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered, or extinct. Thus, such fact puts the future of Irish in jeopardy with an unclear and pessimistic vision. However, it's worth to note the positive aspects within the instability that the Irish language seem to be experiencing in the current time.

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<sup>17</sup> A language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different.

The year of 2007 marked the EU's inclusion of the Irish language, which opened up a new avenue for social mobility due to the need for Irish translators and interpreters (Ó Ceallaigh 180-190). Globalization coupled with the influence of the EU has enabled Irish people to acknowledge that their language, Irish, is a very powerful tool to express one's identity, especially in Europe, and that Ireland has a responsibility for protecting it. Such decision sets a hopeful vision towards the preservation of the Irish language.

With a futuristic vision, in 2010 the Irish Government agreed a *20-Year Strategy* for the Irish Language. The aim of the strategy was to increase the number of people using Irish on a daily basis outside the education system to 250,000 people over the coming 20 years. The Strategy set down 13 objectives, including provision of services to parents who wish to raise their children through Irish and the continuation of a high-quality broadcasting service (Ó Cuirreáin). The aim of Government policy is to Increase the number of families throughout the country who use Irish as the daily language of communication; Provide linguistic support for the Gaeltacht as an Irish-speaking community and to recognise the issues which arise in areas where Irish is the household and community language; ensure that in public discourse and in public services the use of Irish or English will be, as far as practical, a choice for the citizen to make and that over time more and more people throughout the state will choose to do their business in Irish; and ensure that Irish becomes more visible in our society, both as a spoken language by our citizens and also in areas such as signage and literature (Government of Ireland, 2010).

Notably, the number of Irish speakers has decreased in the past few years. However, with the above mentioned program and with the general sentiment that the Irish language is important and should be preserved, the language might sustain the danger of decline and extinction. Irish has been around for thousands of years, throughout which it has acted as a catalyst for political and societal change, bringing people together, and keeping the Gaelic culture alive. Reviving the language is important to maintain a relationship to Ireland's past, and to preserve it for the country's future. According to the survey of 2013, the most desired outcome is that the country should remain bilingual, with English as the principal language (ROI<sup>18</sup>: 43% ; NI<sup>19</sup>: 34%). Very few indicated that the Irish language should be disregarded and forgotten (ROI: 1%; NI: 8%). One might predict that the future of the Irish language will

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<sup>18</sup> Abv. The Republic of Ireland.

<sup>19</sup> Abv. Northern Ireland.

be moderately sustained above all since the supervision of the Irish government has given a priority to it and created programs exceptionally for the aim of preserving the Irish language and national identity.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, over the decades there has been continued interest in the position of the Irish language, one of the minority languages in Europe. Once holding a prominent position on the island, social, economic and political factors throughout the centuries have resulted in its decline. Deliberately, such state suggested a political and social mobilization, or rather a “revival” in order to preserve the Irish national identity. By revitalizing the Irish language, the Irish people grew a strong attachment to their Irishness. Thus, they made it clear that their aim exceeds the desire for a cultural revival. For the Irish nationalists, Ireland must thrive to become Irish again free from the English influence. The latter was made possible by adopting a nationalist perspective that was eager to achieve independence (1922). On that account, cultural nationalism, through Irish revival, paved the way to a future where the Irish language was no longer deemed as “the language of the poor”, and national identity became enrooted in Irish people. Therefore, the notion of Irishness was more attainable than ever, despite the many challenges that were encountered by the Irish government in contemporary Ireland. Being one of endangered languages in the world according to UNIESCO’s study in 2003, more interest has been directed to the preservation of Irish language, in order to maintain the Irish heritage in the future with a great sustainability.

## General Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the impact of Irish language revival on reawakening the Irish national identity in resistance to British Colonialism. For that purpose, a meticulous analysis was applied to the Irish case, namely, the Republic of Ireland. It can be concluded that Irish language's preservation and invigoration altered the political, social, and economic view of Ireland after it was under the British rule. Ultimately, Ireland, through language activism, de-cluttered the British influence and embraced Irish identity in an "Irish Ireland", the latter was the central aim of such ambitious movement.

In addition, not only does this research illustrate the significance of Irish language revival, but it also raises the question about the status quo of Ireland and its preservation of its national identity post-revival in contemporary Ireland. In retrospect, the status of the Irish language since 1922 has been closely scrutinized and examined in order to help preserve Irish national identity. Therefore, throughout the years there have been several surveys and new policies created for this matter to ensure the continuation of one of the very elements of the Irish identity, which is its language. On that account, this nationalist spirit played a significant part in enlivening Irish identity, as it was called for during the revival by Douglas Hyde which he strongly stated by calling attention to the illogical position of men who drop their own language to speak English, of men who translate their euphonious Irish names into English monosyllables, and of men who read English books, and know nothing about Gaelic literature (1). Today those who speak English as a second language outnumber native English speakers by hundreds of millions. However, the Irish case is respectively divergent when it comes to its relationship with the English language, for it is a deeper relation that has historical, as well as, sociological back ground that remarkably interferes in such exchange.

Consequently, shifting the narrative that was attached to the Irish language was and is still a vital task to execute in order to move forward from the stigma that was instilled by British colonialism, which deems the Irish language as the language of the "poor". Shifting the narrative represents a shift in general perception towards the Irish language, even though such aspiration has been evolving into fruition since 2007 when Irish language became acknowledged by the European Union (EU). Deliberately, Irish identity and its associative links with culture have no doubt influenced the growth in popularity of the Irish language. The Irish language and culture have enjoyed a period of growth in art, media and education,

exemplified by increased interest in and access to, literature, the performing arts and music, and by expanded provision for broadcasting and pre-school play groups (Ó Ceallaigh 180). The EU's inclusion of the Irish language opens up a new avenue for social mobility due to the need for Irish translators and interpreters. Globalization coupled with the influence of the EU has enabled Irish people to acknowledge that their language, Irish, is a very powerful tool to express one's identity, especially in Europe, and that Ireland has a responsibility for protecting it.

One can infer that Irish language revival paved the way to reclaiming Irishness as a pivotal requirement in sustaining Irish national identity separate from the English influence. As it is deduced by Garret Fitzgerald, there is at least a fair chance that in a perspective of history the recent tragic years in Ireland will come to be seen as a period in which a new and wider concept of "Irishness" began to emerge, providing a looser but stronger basis upon which Irish society may eventually achieve a measure of reintegration (142). This approach provides new insights into the possibility of the perpetuation of Irish language as a medium of cultural and a tool to express Irishness.

The central element in this research explores the notion of Irish language as a tool of change and revival in Ireland, namely, Irish national identity in face of British imperialism. By taking the existing gap in previous studies into consideration, the findings of this research challenge former and recent interpretations of language revival and the events that played a role in re-igniting such purpose. It also provides a fresher view about Ireland's education and its indispensable position in the continuity of Irish language usage. Finally, this research attempts to predict the future of the Irish language and the challenges that it might face in the next 30 years.

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