

Discuss the reasons behind the failure to implement Home Rule for Ireland in the period between 1885 and 1914. Your answer should make reference to the policies of both major political parties in Britain.

The pursuit for Ireland's *Home Rule* was led by a plethora of political entities, both British and Irish, and inclusive of Irish émigré; from whom the cause was largely financed.¹ However, historical importance derives, not from the eventual implementation of its object, but rather, the consequent division of Ireland, which remains to this day - cast to the colours of two different nations; a result perhaps attributable largely to *Home Rule* itself. As such, with the aim of aiding our understanding of this subject, it is the purpose of this piece to discuss the implementational failures of *Home Rule* from 1885-1914, whilst noting the policies of both the Conservative, and Liberal parties of the period.

For contextualisation, 1848, and the years within proximity, saw outbreaks of insurrectionary activity, most notably within Europe.² Ireland, having just emerged from widespread famine, in which it is estimated one-million people died, joined the rebellion alongside areas of Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Poland, in what has been tagged, the "Springtime of the People." Such outcry contributed significantly towards formation of distinct cultural awareness, and sparked Irish discontent towards Britain, which thus laid the foundations for the foreclosure on Britain's Governmental authority.³

Following '1848,' an attempt to unite an independent Irish parliamentary force within Westminster began under design of Frederick Lucas in 1852, who, in order to incentivise fairer treatment, intended to disrupt processes in what was deemed, an 'anti-Irish House of Commons.'⁴ Disregarding Ireland's diminished population, which had plummeted 25% by 1861, from eight million in 1841, (consequent to famine) Ireland's annual taxation was nonetheless increased by £2,500,000 from 1853 to 1860, as noted by Anne Porritt in *The Irish Home Rule Bill*.⁵ Naturally with examples of such injustice, anti-British attitudes became overt - and political organisations emerged to oppose it. *Fenianism*, which embodied the antagonistic wing of this diatribe, coalesced in actionable directives of paramilitaristic style. On *St. Patrick's Day*, 1858, the *Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B)* was formed by James Stephens and backed by American capital. It purported that 'Britain [...] would never concede self-government to the force of argument, but only to the argument of force.'⁶

Fenian revolts occurred most prominently in 1867,⁷ though, throughout the sixties, it remained a concern for the British Government. Following the election of the Liberal Party under Prime Minister

¹ F. S. L. Lyons, 'The Political Ideas of Parnell,' *The Historical Journal*, 16(1973) 749-775 (p. 757) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2638281>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

² Winks & Neuberger, *Europe and the Making of Modernity: 1815-1914*, pp. 160-161.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Lyons, p. 752.

⁵ Annie G. Porritt, 'The Irish Home Rule Bill,' *Political Science Quarterly*, 28(1913) 298-319 (p. 14) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2141348>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

⁶ Paul Bew, 'Fenian Impulse,' *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2011) pp. 1-74 (p. 13) <<https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199561261.001.0001/acprof-9780199561261-chapter-8?print=pdf>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

⁷ Lyons, p. 750.

William Gladstone in 1868,⁸ Liberals attempted amelioration via the *Irish Church Act* of 1869, which disestablished the Irish equivalent to the Church of England⁹ - a non-Catholic entity in a sizably Catholic population.¹⁰ E. D. Steele notes in *Gladstone and Ireland*, that 'Irish and Catholic were practically synonymous to the British public,'¹¹ with Protestantism likely being similarly synonymous to the Irish perspective of Britain. Lawrence McCaffrey in *Irish Nationalism and Irish Catholicism: A Study in Cultural Identity*, adds that, so-called, 'no-Popery,' i.e., the desired regression of the Irish Catholic Church's political influence under British and largely Protestant directives, contributed more to the conjoined nature of Irish-Catholic identity, than the heightening of Catholic-Protestant conflicts, which were to gain prevalence in later years.¹² Not only did this issue offer division between Conservatives and Liberals; (the former of which were vehemently opposed) but it succeeded in initiating the rekindling of historical rivalries between Catholics and Protestants.¹³

Resultantly, in 1870, the *Home Rule* movement was officialised by Protestant-Conservative,¹⁴ Isaac Butt, to consolidate Protestant opposition to Gladstone's Church and *Land Acts* of 1869 and 1870 respectively.¹⁵ The *Land Act* effected heavy restrictions upon Irish landlords and was even compared by M.P. Robert Lowe as '[putting a] hand in one man's pocket, and rob[ing] him for the benefit of another.'¹⁶ Given southern Ireland's largely agrarian economy; this hit particularly hard.¹⁷ Whig peer, John Wodehouse, former Viceroy of Ireland, confided in 1869 during the formation of the *Land Act*, that, 'England must for her own safety hold Ireland, [...] and it is her duty to leave no remedial measures untried,'¹⁸ in effect corroborating James Stephens' thoughts entirely. Porritt adds that these policies were 'thrown as a sop to quiet the discontent,'¹⁹ but ironically, they instead succeeded in fanning further unrest. Thus, according to Lyons, *Home Rule* 'was offered as a practical and peaceful substitute for the demand for a republic absolutely separate from Britain which the *Fenians* of the *Irish Republican Brotherhood* had asserted.'²⁰ In essence, a medley existed between Protestants and Catholics on both sides of the political fence, in addition to expected political rivalry; thus, there transpired, continuous internal self-debate amongst Irish parliamentarians with regards to religion, politics, and additionally; the question of *Home Rule*.

Butt's *Home Rule* view ventured at the reemergence of Ireland's Parliament, under which, Irish resources, taxation, and internal matters would be governed, and subject to an annual contribution to

⁸ Mathew Kelly, 'Home Rule for Ireland: For and Against,' *The Historian* (2014/15) 30-35 (p. 31) <<https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/docview/1655813116?accountid=130472&pq-origsite=primo>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

⁹ Porritt, p. 300.

¹⁰ Christopher F. McCormack, 'The Irish Church Disestablishment Act (1869) and the general synod of the Church of Ireland (1871): the art and structure of educational reform, *History of Education*, 47(2018) 303-320 (p.304) <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0046760X.2017.1376121>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

¹¹ E. D. Steele, 'Gladstone and Ireland,' *Irish Historical Studies*, 17(1970) 58-88 (p. 73) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/30005453>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

¹² Lawrence J. McCaffrey, 'Irish Nationalism and Irish Catholicism: A Study in Cultural Identity,' *Church History*, 42(1973) 524-534 (p. 529) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3164971>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

¹³ David Thornley, 'The Irish Conservatives and Home Rule, 1869-73,' *Irish Historical Studies* 11(1959) 200-222 (p. 201) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/30005865>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

¹⁴ Kelly, p. 30.

¹⁵ McCaffrey, p. 526.

¹⁶ Steele, p. 82.

¹⁷ Francis Walsh, 'The Changing Industrial Structures of Northern and Southern Ireland,' *The Maynooth Review* 5(1979) 3-14 (p. 3) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20556933>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁹ Porritt, p. 300.

²⁰ Lyons, p. 758.

the British crown for the retainment of 'imperial services.'²¹ Butt believed in maintaining an Irish Westminster presence, which, as a keen supporter of the empire, was deemed acceptable for the greater benefit of Ireland.²² This policy was that which Charles Stewart Parnell, Butt's successor, subscribed to, even before gaining his parliamentary seat,²³ whilst Mathew Kelly states, in *Home Rule for Ireland: For and Against*, that 'opposition to *Home Rule* was Unionist because it favoured the continuing unity of the Irish and British parliaments; polemically, Unionists represented *Home Rule* as a separatist threat to the British-Irish connection.'²⁴

When Parnell entered Westminster in 1875, aged twenty-nine,²⁵ the Liberal's had failed at re-election, and the Conservatives under Benjamin Disraeli assumed office (1874-1880).²⁶ Parnell immediately stamped himself upon his party, advocating for 'fair rents and fixity of tenure,' through to 1877,²⁷ when he replaced Butt's presidential position within the *Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain*.²⁸ Parnell's road to political prowess thereon continued, and in 1879 he gained the presidency of the *Land League*,²⁹ and, 'with the land war reaching a crescendo in 1880,'³⁰ was imprisoned the following year at Kilmainham prison,³¹ under a new Liberal Government (1880-1885).³² The *Second Land Act* of 1881, had opposed the Victorian concept of property-rights, regarded as integral to British fortune, by 'making the Irish tenant co-proprietor of his holding.'³³ Naturally, the clique of British landowners held animosity towards this, given that it reduced their land authority; the Duke of Argyll, himself a landlord, resigned from Government in disgust.³⁴ Parnell on the other hand referred to the truest system as one which sponsored 'the proprietorship of the soil by the people who cultivated it,'³⁵ and as such, was likely content.

To understand why *Home Rule* failed in the ensuing period, it is important to reveal how Victorian Britain deferred its authority, largely, to the 'landed class, long after the country had become predominantly industrial and urban.'³⁶ The New Domesday report of 1873, spotlighted the power that landed gentry possessed; revealing that approximately four-fifths of the United Kingdom's land mass was owned by no more than 7,000 persons.³⁷ Lyons, however, noted, that 'Britain's hereditary rulers were unable to live up to those traditions,' concluding instead that their best chance of survival was to conjoin to a collectivised imperialist agenda, implanted by characters such as Disraeli, and emphasised by his purchase of the Suez Canal in 1875, as a means to further British economic interest without colonisation.³⁸

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Kelly, p. 30.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 752.

²⁶ *Nineteenth British History Timeline* <https://myweb.fsu.edu/cupchurch/Resources/Timeline_19thcBrit.html> [accessed may 30th 2021].

²⁷ Ibid., p. 759.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 758-759.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 760.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 755.

³¹ Ibid., p. 760.

³² *Nineteenth British History Timeline*

³³ Steele, p. 82.

³⁴ H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone. 1875-1898*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 194.

³⁵ Lyons, p. 759.

³⁶ Steele, p. 63.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 64.

³⁸ H. Merian Allen, 'How England Got the Suez,' *The Sewanee Review* 25(1917) 139-143 (p. 142) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27532999?> [accessed May 30th 2021].

Following his *Land Act*, Gladstone's Governmental position became precarious. Though the act may be regarded as the beginning of a long series of remedial measures passed to still the agrarian agitation, the damage had already swelled firmly against himself and party. The prime minister's agency to detain Parnell, by seeing him as an agitator of agrarian unrest, only heightened Parnell's status in the eyes of *Fenian* leaders.³⁹ Releasing Parnell in 1882, the Kilmainham 'Treaty'⁴⁰ only bettered Parnell's confidence and support for his abilities. According to Gary Carville in *The Parnell Split: what happened in Monaghan?* - this made 'Parnell [...] a colossus dominating the Irish political landscape of the 1880s.'⁴¹ The 1880 election itself provided Parnell with a following of 24 members, whilst boosting him to the rank of party chairman.⁴²

Since 1868, Gladstone's policies had given peers distaste for liberalism,⁴³ and as such, with the addition of further *Irish Land Bills* from 1880-1882, he became 'estranged from the majority of Liberal peers and gentry,'⁴⁴ remembering that the *House of Commons* was populated by a majority of landowners until 1885.⁴⁵ Throughout the 1880-1885 parliamentary period, Irish representatives were largely inclined to designate support to the Conservatives,⁴⁶ and the assassination and murder of two government officials in Phoenix Park in 1882, furthered Conservative and anti-*Home Rule* attitudes which often went hand-in-hand;⁴⁷ thus, Gladstone's decision to introduce the first *Home Rule Bill* at the end of his electoral term in 1885, was perhaps tactically assisting to his own re-election, in what was a close competition. Tactical remedy or not, Gladstone nonetheless succeeded at re-election under the support of Parnell's *Home Rule* party.⁴⁸

Two formulas for addressing *Home Rule* had been considered. The first; 'repeal of the *Act of Union*,' and the second, 'statutory *Home Rule*.'⁴⁹ The latter would retain British supremacy, and thus, legislative authority over any Irish Parliament,⁵⁰ whereas, the former aimed to disassemble British oversight altogether.⁵¹ Porritt records that:

Since the demand for statutory home rule took the place of the demand for repeal of the Act of Union, it has been clear [...] that an Irish Parliament would not be a coordinate legislature, united with Great Britain only by the link of the crown, but would be in the same position as any colonial Parliament.⁵²

³⁹ Porritt, p. 300.

⁴⁰ Lyons, p. 752.

⁴¹ Gary Carville, 'The Parnell Split: what happened in Monaghan?' *Clogher Record*, 20(2010) 407-426 (p. 426) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41224141>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

⁴² Lyons, p. 754.

⁴³ Steele, p. 68.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁴⁶ Porritt, p. 300.

⁴⁷ William J. Feeney, 'Ulysses and the Phoenix Park Murder,' *James Joyce Quarterly*, 1(1964) 56-58 (p. 56) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25486461>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

⁴⁸ Kelly, p. 32.

⁴⁹ Porritt, p. 303.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ House of Commons, *Hansards' Parliamentary Debates: The Official Report* (11 April 1848, vol. 198, cols. 178-222) (London Hansard) <<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1848/apr/11/repeal-of-the-union-ireland>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

⁵² Porritt, p. 304.

In essence, the initial *Home Rule Bill* would entail a retention of control by Westminster over trade policy, inclusive of tariffs and commerce, policing, the military, and foreign affairs, as-well-as non-representation of Irish politicians at Westminster.⁵³ Though some Unionists synonymised *Home Rule* with 'separation, repeal or Rome Rule,'⁵⁴ it can be seen through these constraints on Ireland's self-governance, that, under such stated stipulations, it was simply unfeasible to gain any true autonomy. Regardless, Unionists proved pivotal in the failure of the *Home Rule* movement from 1885-1914. 'S. L. Anderson, of the crown solicitor's office in Dublin castle, noted [...that]: 'repeal of the union commences to be agitated by Conservatives and Protestants';⁵⁵ the often tagged 'Unionists' 'opposed the Bill on religious, economic and ethnic grounds,'⁵⁶ according to Éamonn Duggan in *The Life and Times of John Redmond*.

Gladstone's first *Home Rule Bill* provoked a split in the Liberal Party,⁵⁷ and resultantly, a Conservative or Liberal majority proved impossible;⁵⁸ thus, the *Bill* was defeated, precipitating a general election, from which the Conservatives won,⁵⁹ having merged with Unionists, and some Nationalists.⁶⁰

In [...] 1895 and 1900 the Conservatives obtained majorities over Liberals and Nationalists combined. In 1885, 1892, 1906, January, 1910, and December, 1910, the Liberals had the support of the majority elected to the House of Commons; but in one only of these elections-that of 1906-were the Liberals returned in such numbers as to make them independent of the support of Irish Nationalists.⁶¹

Parnell's following had consisted broadly, of agriculturalists, merchants, clergyman, *Fenians*, and politicians,⁶² to the extent that, according to historian Emmet Larkin in Carville, 'the modern Irish state was created in the form of that alliance between Parnell, the Irish Party and the Catholic Church.'⁶³ Lyons described Parnell as; 'the he Protestant leading a Catholic people; the landlord liquidating his own rents; [and] the aristocrat presiding over a middle-class party.'⁶⁴ However, after 1886, his temperament for Ireland appeared to have declined; rarely visiting, and making 'no bones about the fact that he had no intention of speaking there.'⁶⁵ In 1890, reports of adultery between Parnell and former Irish politician, Captain William H. O'Shea, wife, surfaced, which heavily tested the relationships he had formed with party and Church, and consequently, a party split erupted, with Gladstone indicating that the pursuit of *Home Rule* would no longer be possible under such

⁵³ Kelly, p. 32.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Thornley, p. 202.

⁵⁶ Éamonn Duggan, 'The Life and Times of John Redmond,' *The Past: The Organ of the Uí Cinsealaigh Historical Society* (2009-2010) 60-69 (pp. 65-66) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44554532>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

⁵⁷ Kelly, p. 32.

⁵⁸ Porritt, p. 304.

⁵⁹ Kelly, p. 32.

⁶⁰ Porritt, p. 304.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 301.

⁶² Carville, p. 415.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 425.

⁶⁴ Lyons, p. 774.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 773.

circumstances.⁶⁶Eleven months on, Parnell died,⁶⁷ with John Redmond emerging as the new leader of a 'minority Parnellite wing of the Irish Party';⁶⁸ a man who dominated Irish politics from 1900-1918,⁶⁹ and who supported the first *Home Rule Bill*.⁷⁰

The election of 1892 redirected power to the *Liberals*, consequent to *Nationalist* support. As such, the Second *Home Rule Bill* was introduced in 1893,⁷¹ which 'broadly adhered to the provisions of the first *Bill* as regards Irish control over domestic matters.'⁷² However, having passed through the *Commons*, it was subsequently rejected by the *House of Lords*, leading to Gladstone's resignation,⁷³ and his open discontent over the behaviours of the wealthy, and largely peerage class, whom he felt had wronged the public in almost every great political controversy of the preceding fifty years,⁷⁴ and thus concluded that authority within the *House of Lords* required amendment.⁷⁵ By 1894 a retired Gladstone alongside the *Liberals*, abandoned *Home Rule*,⁷⁶ and the *Conservatives* were returned to office.⁷⁷ *Conservative* leadership was expectantly fought on issues besides *Home Rule*,⁷⁸ which they were largely opposed to, and this continued until the *Liberals* returned to office in 1906.⁷⁹ Thus, neither the 1900 or 1906 general elections were propagated to the issue of Ireland, which, with respect to the former, was primarily due to Boer conflicts; however, concerning 1906; a deal was cast between *Conservatives* and *Liberals*, enabling the latter to again a *Commons* majority in exchange for overstepping Irish *Home Rule* until the following election.⁸⁰ The new Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, [...] introduced [...] reforms, including a new land act and the establishment of the National University of Ireland.⁸¹

1910 brought a fresh election following a budget crisis the preceding year, the results of which permeated in leverage for Redmonds Nationalists⁸² who gained the balance of power; and as such, Liberal Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith pledged support, not only for reinstating a third *Home Rule Bill*, but also for removing the *Lords'* veto - to which Gladstone would have no-doubt approved,⁸³ but for which Sir Edward Carson, a leader for the Ulster Unionists and anti-*Home Rule* advocate, strongly opposed.⁸⁴ In 1912, this *Bill* was brought to light, 'providing for an Irish Parliament to run local affairs while leaving taxation and foreign policy as the preserve of the Government in London.'⁸⁵ However, serious opposition in the largely Protestant Irish North was marring this process, for they feared Catholic domination and economic regression, given their own industrial advantages under the Union,

⁶⁶ Carville, p. 408.

⁶⁷ Lyons, p. 772.

⁶⁸ Stephen Collins, 'John Redmond: Discarded Leader,' *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 98(2009) 123-133 (p. 125) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25660650>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

⁶⁹ Duggan, p. 60.

⁷⁰ Collins, p. 125.

⁷¹ Porritt, p. 304.

⁷² Kelly, p. 32.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Steele, p. 69.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

⁷⁶ Carville, p. 425.

⁷⁷ Kelly, p. 32.

⁷⁸ Porritt, p. 298.

⁷⁹ Kelly, p. 32.

⁸⁰ Porritt, p. 304.

⁸¹ Collins, p. 126.

⁸² Porritt, p. 306.

⁸³ Collins, p. 127.

⁸⁴ Porritt, p. 306.

⁸⁵ Collins, p. 127.

and as such, forceful response was pledged should the *Home Rule Bill* succeed. Kelly also notes that 'Home Rule's Tory opposition [...stood] accused of defending the Union by encouraging loyalist extremism.'⁸⁶ These points further highlight the political war that Conservatives and Liberals were still in the process of enacting through the *Home Rule* battlefield. Nevertheless, Conservative opposition leader Bonar Law was open with his party's alignment to the Ulster cause when he stated; 'I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster can go in which I should not be prepared to support them...'⁸⁷ Thus, a deal was made to allow 'six counties in Ulster [...] to opt out of Home Rule for six years.'⁸⁸ Redmond, although opposed to partition, agreed on the understanding that such would be temporary.⁸⁹ The extent to which Ulsterites and Unionists were willing to go was brought forth by the *Curragh Mutiny* in early 1914, when it 'became clear that elements of the Army would refuse to impose Home Rule in Ulster.'⁹⁰

Porritt herself, writing at the time, addressed that 'unless some reverse should overtake the Liberal Government, it is now almost certain that [...] the Home Rule Bill [...] will become law.'⁹¹ Though in September, 1914, the *Home Rule Act* became official,⁹² World War I caused it postment for the duration of the conflict.⁹³

To conclude, the failure to implement *Home Rule*, during the period of 1885-1914, though consisting of a multitude of factors, did largely concern the political rivalry between Liberalism and Conservatism, which in essence, embodied that of tradition versus modernity, and thus restricted consistency and movement for policies concerning *Home Rule*. The Liberal party had not quite birthed a liberalis, liberal enough to motion with rapidity Irish desires, and instead their 'policy in Ireland had been a combination of repression and removal of grievances.'⁹⁴ Regarding Ireland, eighty-six *Coercion Acts* [...] were requested by English parliamentary Governments since the Union,⁹⁵ with eight general elections since 1884 encompassing the Home Rule debate.⁹⁶ The frequency of power change within Westminster, alongside the Upper House' and it's hard-lined protectionism of Conservative values, culminated in prolonged bureaucratic processes that imposed failure on the *Home Rule* advocates. James Stephens' belief that Britain would never concede to force of argument, proved true to an extent, and on Easter Monday, 1916 - Irish Republic forces attempted to impose independence... and the rest is history.⁹⁷

⁸⁶ Kelly, p. 32.

⁸⁷ Richard Murphy, 'The Irish Conservatives and Home Rule, 1869-73,' *History*, 71(1986) 222-234 (p. 222). <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24415260>> [accessed May 30th 2021].

⁸⁸ Collins, p. 128.

⁸⁹ Duggan, p. 66.

⁹⁰ Collins, p. 127.

⁹¹ Porritt, p. 298.

⁹² Collins, p. 129.

⁹³ Duggan, p. 66.

⁹⁴ Porritt, p. 301.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 300-301.

⁹⁷ Maureen Buckley, 'Irish Easter Rising of 1916,' *International Honor Society in Social Sciences*, 31(1956) 49-55 (p. 49) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41884424>> [accessed May 10th 2021].

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