

the Troubles, also called **Northern Ireland conflict**, violent sectarian conflict from about 1968 to 1998 in [Northern Ireland](#) between the overwhelmingly [Protestant](#) unionists (loyalists), who desired the province to remain part of the [United Kingdom](#), and the overwhelmingly [Roman Catholic](#) nationalists (republicans), who wanted Northern Ireland to become part of the [republic of Ireland](#). The other major players in the conflict were the [British army](#), [Royal Ulster Constabulary](#) (RUC), and [Ulster Defence Regiment](#) (UDR; from 1992 called the [Royal Irish Regiment](#)), and their avowed purpose was to play a peacekeeping role, most prominently between the nationalist [Irish Republican Army](#) (IRA), which viewed the conflict as a guerrilla war for national independence, and the unionist paramilitary forces, which characterized the IRA's aggression as terrorism. Marked by street fighting, sensational bombings, sniper attacks, roadblocks, and internment without trial, the confrontation had the characteristics of a civil war, notwithstanding its textbook categorization as a "[low-intensity conflict](#)." Some 3,600 people were killed and more than 30,000 more were wounded before a peaceful solution, which involved the governments of both the United Kingdom and Ireland, was effectively reached in 1998, leading to a power-sharing arrangement in the Northern Ireland Assembly at [Stormont](#).

Deep origins

The story of the Troubles is inextricably entwined with the history of Ireland as whole and, as such, can be seen as stemming from the first British incursion on the island, the [Anglo-Norman invasion](#) of the late 12th century, which left a wave of settlers whose descendants became known as the "Old English." Thereafter, for nearly eight centuries, England and then Great Britain as a whole would dominate affairs in Ireland. Colonizing British landlords widely displaced Irish landholders. The most successful of these "plantations" began taking hold in the early 17th century in [Ulster](#), the northernmost of Ireland's four traditional provinces, previously a centre of rebellion, where the planters included English and Scottish tenants as well as British landlords. Because of the [plantation of Ulster](#), as Irish history unfolded—with the struggle for the emancipation of the island's Catholic majority under the supremacy of the [Protestant ascendancy](#), along with the Irish nationalist pursuit of [Home Rule](#) and then independence after the island's [formal union with Great Britain](#) in 1801—Ulster developed as a region where the Protestant settlers outnumbered the

[indigenous](#) Irish. Unlike earlier English settlers, most of the 17th-century English and Scottish settlers and their descendants did not [assimilate](#) with the Irish. Instead, they held on tightly to British identity and remained steadfastly loyal to the British crown.

BRITANNICA