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If there is one thing true about the world, it is that nothing lasts forever. Empires are no such exception. The Macedonian, the Roman, the Mongolian, and the British all suffered a very similar fate, even if there are still remnants of the world superpowers of years past. While everyone focuses on what remains from these empires, the events that took place during the reign of such empires is really the matter of greater substance. Take, for example, an event like the Irish Civil War of 1922. Though the war was fought entirely between Irishmen, the conflict itself was a result of continued British occupation of Ireland. Had Britain willingly stepped away from a position of rule over Ireland before the civil war took place, thousands of lives would have been saved. Furthermore, Britain can be connected even more directly to the outbreak of civil war in Ireland, with the appropriate context.

The first piece of this contextual puzzle was the current state of Ireland before the civil war took place. For three years, and likely several prior, The Irish Republican Army, the IRA, as well as the Sinn Fein party, made use of political agitation, and sometimes guerilla warfare, to push for the independence of Ireland from the British Empire. During these three years, a death toll of roughly 2,000 was incurred, which led to the formation of a truce between Irish republican and occupying British forces. However, the treaty which came as a result of the truce was viewed as a step in the wrong direction by many Irishmen. This was because the treaty forced members of the new Irish parliament to effectively swear allegiance to the crown. As well as this, Britain retained several naval bases along Irish shorelines, and still maintained rule over the province of Northern Ireland. This treaty created a division between the Irish people, between those who were for and against the treaty. If it were not for the conditions of the treaty set by Britain, the lines of this civil war would not have been drawn, and physical conflict on such a scale would have been unlikely.

The tensions between pro and anti-treaty Irishmen grew to such a height that an anti-treaty IRA group physically occupied the Four Courts, the central judicial system of Dublin. Thankfully, a physical conflict was avoided through negotiations between pro-treaty leader Michael Collins and anti-treaty leader Rory O'Connor. These negotiations concluded with a short lived pact between the pro-treaty Sinn Fein party and the anti-treaty IRA, which was based on a united front against the occupation of Northern Ireland. This pact was quickly broken during the first self-governed Irish election in 1922, as a result of the mention of allegiance to the crown in the proposed constitution, which managed to pass, as Sinn Fein won a majority of seats during the election. Despite the tension from such an election, the real conflict had still yet to take place, although the lack of conflict was fairly short lived.

Ten short days after the first election, retired British general Henry Wilson was murdered by two IRA members, who were later hanged for their actions. Blame fell upon the IRA's presence in the Four Courts, and Britain threatened to use a 6,000-strong force to attack it if Collins himself

would not. Begrudgingly, Collins obliged, and opened fire on the Four Courts garrison using British-supplied artillery on June 28, 1922. The nationwide conflict lasted nearly a year, and saw the death of Michael Collins during it, as well as the four major leaders of the IRA that occupied the Four Courts garrison for the second time. The war resulted in over 80 executions and 100-150 assassinations during the period. The total casualties ranged from 1,500-2,000, and though on May 23, 1923, a “dumping of arms” was called for, the war never found any official conclusion or surrender from either side. The nation was left in a state of high polarization, with a bitter grudge on both sides. Not only did Britain threaten to bring about this conflict themselves, but they also supplied the opening conflict that ignited the war. There is truly no way of circumventing the fact that the blood of these Irishmen is upon British hands. However, if history is any indicator of patterns, this should come as a surprise to nobody.