

WORKING PAPERS IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

ISSN 2053-0129 (Online)

Financial reintegration assistance for veterans of the Irish revolution (1916-23): post-conflict
policy in an historical setting

Dr Marie Coleman

School of History and Anthropology, Queen's University, Belfast

m.coleman@qub.ac.uk



Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice

CTSJ WP 07-15

June 2015

Abstract (100 words)

In the aftermath of the Irish revolution and Civil War the governments of independent Ireland introduced various compensation schemes to provide financial reintegration assistance to revolutionary veterans. This would be recognised today as part of a programme for DDR. This paper will examine various service and disability pensions paid to veterans in the context of literature on post-conflict reintegration. It will examine various challenges to reintegration in an effort to analyse the success of revolutionary compensation as a post-conflict reintegration mechanism in independent Ireland after 1922.

Key words: Ireland, Irish revolution, pensions, veterans, reintegration assistance, IRA

Introduction

The historiography of the Irish revolution¹ has tended to focus on the causes of political violence and on the course of events during the period (Townshend, 2013). When dealing with individual combatants, much of the literature has been focused on creating a social profile of guerrilla fighters and in the process seeking to explain their motivation for joining a revolutionary organisation and engaging in violent uprising against British rule in Ireland (Hart, 2003: 110). Historians and political scientists looking at the period immediately after the cessation of violence have tended to focus on nation-building, constitutionalism and the emergence of political cleavage within the new Irish Free State (Garvin, 1996; Kissane, 2005; Regan, 1999).

There is a strong argument for adapting ideas from post-conflict studies to the situation in Ireland immediately after the end of the Civil War in 1923. Post-conflict literature relating to the treatment of veterans² and the efforts to reintegrate them into civil society offers a particularly useful method for analysing the attitude of the governments of independent Ireland to the veterans of the revolutionary organisations that fought for independence. The ongoing release (between January 2014 and mid-2016) of archival material in the Military Service Pensions Collection containing applications for service and disability pensions by revolutionary veterans will furnish the evidence for the veterans' experience, while post-conflict theory provides a useful methodological framework within which to analyse and interpret government policy towards them.³

This paper analyses how successfully revolutionary veterans were reintegrated into Irish society after independence by examining the various forms of compensation awarded from

the perspective of post-conflict financial reintegration. It highlights the case of Ireland after 1922 as a useful example of the financial reintegration aspects of DDR to illustrate further the historic origins of the concept. Finally, it identifies the successful and ineffective aspects of the historic Irish case that could inform DDR scenarios in modern conflicts that bear some similarities to Ireland in 1922, then a small nation emerging from a colonial war of liberation fought by an indigenous guerrilla army followed by a domestic civil war.

Revolutionary compensation

Royal Irish Constabulary Pensions

The governments of independent Ireland provided various forms of compensation for veterans of the independence campaign, and in some cases their dependants, in the decades following independence in 1922. Some of the compensation introduced by the first government of the Irish Free State was obligatory under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. This was most notable in the case of members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) who were pensioned after the disbandment of the force in 1922. This committed the government to 'pay fair compensation on terms not less favourable than those accorded by the [Government of Ireland] Act of 1920 to judges, officials, members of Police Forces and other Public Servants who are discharged by it or who retire in consequence of the change of Government effected in pursuance hereof.' The Irish liability did not extend to the Black and Tans or Auxiliaries who were the responsibility of the British government.⁴

The Ninth Schedule of the Government of Ireland Act (1920) and the subsequent British Constabulary Act of 1922 set out the provisions under which the remaining RIC officers

(approximately 8,000 at the time of disbandment in early 1922) would be compensated on the disbandment of the force. This included the award of up to twelve years of additional service for pension purposes and the option for advancing a portion of pension should the officer wish to emigrate. Under the terms of the Treaty, the Irish Free State government undertook to match this offer in regard to Irish members of the RIC who opted not to serve in the new state's police or civil service. Compensation for the disbanded RIC was shared on a 75 per cent to 25 per cent basis with the new government of Northern Ireland (Brennan, 1996).

These generous terms reflected the British government's sense of obligation to the members of the RIC who had remained loyal to the Crown by staying in the force during the guerrilla campaign of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) which was targeted in particular against the RIC. It also reflected the fact that there was a tradition of generosity in the treatment of members and families of the RIC who were wounded or killed during political violence in Ireland going back to the nineteenth century.

In the aftermath of the Easter Rising of 1916 the force's Inspector General, Neville Chamberlain, argued that the dependants of the fourteen RIC men killed in the uprising should be given an equivalent military rank thus entitling their families to compensation commensurate to that awarded to dependants of soldiers. While this recommendation was rejected by the Irish authorities in Dublin Castle, who feared establishing a precedent, additional compensation in excess of what was provided for in the Constabulary Acts was awarded in most cases. The Irish police authorities argued that this was a recognition of the precedent that 'death or injury by violence on quasi-military duty has long been recognised as establishing claims to extra-statutory treatment'. They also felt that 'the ordinary scale

for injury or death on duty has generally been regarded as inadequate', citing cases from the Land War of 1881 in which the widows of police constables killed on duty were given pensions four times in excess of what they were legislatively entitled to.⁵

These provisions related only to those still serving in the RIC at the time of disbandment in 1922. Departures from the RIC between 1919 and 1922 amounted to 7,122, of whom 3,391 resigned, 1,911 retired on pension, 766 were dismissed, 503 discharged, 145 declared mentally unfit to serve and 74 deserted (Malcolm, 2006: 200). As the eyes and ears of British administration in Ireland, and a valuable source of intelligence on republican activity in the regions, neutralising the RIC became one of the principal objectives of the political and military campaign for independence between 1919 and 1921. From early 1919 the revolutionary Dáil Éireann decreed a peaceful boycott of the force, leading to its members and their families being ostracised from their local communities. Officers were also encouraged to resign from the force in sympathy with the aims of the independence movement. As an armed force, the RIC became a target of the guerrilla IRA which undertook systematic raids on RIC barracks in search of arms from January 1920. Under pressure, the RIC consolidated its numbers evacuating smaller outposts and concentrating numbers in larger citadels, leaving the abandoned posts to be burned out by the IRA in a visible demonstration that the Crown writ no longer ran in large parts of rural Ireland. In such an atmosphere the RIC began to haemorrhage personnel in 1920; between July and September 1920 the force suffered a net loss of 1,300 personnel (Coleman, 2014a: 67-72).

Following independence the Free State government acknowledged its responsibility to these men who sacrificed a pensionable position at the urging of the revolutionary government and accepted that legislation would be required to provide pensions 'on the same terms as

was given to the disbanded RIC'. At this early stage of the post-revolution compensation process the government was concerned not to establish a precedent that could expose it to a significant financial liability: 'Assuming ... that the Ministry of Finance is now prepared to saddle the Exchequer with this burden, I think all we can do is limit the grant as far as possible so that undeserving cases shall not benefit.'

Under the Superannuation and Pensions Act (1923) and the subsequent RIC Pensions Order (1924), pensions, gratuities or allowances were awarded to men who resigned from RIC between 1 April 1916 and 6 December 1921, from the beginning of the month in which the Easter Rising took place to the signing of the Treaty. They had to demonstrate that their resignation or dismissal had been caused by their national sympathies, and were also liable to forego compensation if they refused a reasonable offer of employment in the Free State public service. To make up for the loss of their RIC pension and ensure parity with their ex-comrades who had remained in the force until disbandment they were permitted to count towards pensionable service their completed years of actual service, in addition to the period between the date of leaving and 31 March 1922 and 12 years of added service.

Prior to the enactment of this legislation a committee had been established under the chairmanship of Batt O'Connor, a well-known Dublin builder who had been a close ally of Michael Collins during the War of Independence, to identify those officers whose resignations from the RIC between 1919 and 1921 were 'caused by national sympathies'. The committee was also given some leeway to examine resignations that occurred since April 1916. In total 1,136 former RIC officers made their case to the committee, of which 631 claims were allowed. Subsequently a number of additional claims were made directly to the government and were handled by the Department of Justice. In total under this initial

process instigated by Cumann na nGaedheal (the pro-Treaty party in power from 1922 until 1932), 1,300 claims were submitted and 573 pensions were paid.⁶

Two applicants refused pensions by Cumann na nGaedheal were excluded purely on political grounds, rather than on an absence of evidence that their resignations were politically motivated. Patrick Wilcox and John MacCarvill's applications for pensions were approved initially by O'Connor's committee in 1923 but payment was withheld because 'they had been actively identified with the anti-Treaty movement'. This was in line with a commitment made by the Free State's prime minister, W. T. Cosgrave, in the Dáil during the debate on the Superannuation and Pensions Act that 'I certainly will not pay the pension of any person who has been in arms, or otherwise seriously responsible, in connection with the late outbreak [the Civil War].'⁷

When Fianna Fáil (the party representing the majority of anti-Treaty republicans) took office in 1932 it set about rectifying such injustices shown to republican supporters. MacCarvill and Wilcox had their full pensions restored and a new enquiry was established to examine cases turned down in the 1920s and new claims submitted in the meantime. Soon after the formation of the new government over 100 new claims were received, presumably from Fianna Fáil supporters who felt that there was not any point applying under Cumann na nGaedheal.

In an effort to reduce a potentially significant increased financial liability a number of restrictions were imposed, carrying forward many that had also operated under Cumann na nGaedheal. No claims were admitted from men with service of less than three years or who had joined the RIC after the abortive attempt by the British government to impose wartime conscription on Ireland in April 1918; those who had already received a pension or gratuity

on retirement; or from any man who, having joined An Garda Síochána (the new Irish police force), resigned or were dismissed from that force 'from causes within his own control'.

The committee was anxious to avoid unwarranted additional expenditure and also to ensure that to the greatest extent possible pensions were only awarded to those worthy of them. To this end it required 'the clearest evidence of the applicant's national sympathies before deciding to report favourably'; sought as much contextual evidence as it could find – including any outstanding disciplinary charges; and looked for evidence of other possible reasons for the applicant's departure – such as marriage before the allowed date, dissatisfaction at a transfer to another location upon marriage, refusal to transfer to a disturbed area or resignation prior to emigration. These eligibility restrictions resulted in only 50 of the 250 applicants to the new committee being approved; among those turned down was James J. McGovern from Claremorris, County Mayo, 'who was never in the RIC'!

The largest potential liability lay in paying newly approved pensions from the original date of April 1923. In the cases of the 50 successful applicants it was estimated that this would amount to £58,000 in addition to the annual current charge for pensions of £5,000. Therefore, the Fianna Fáil government opted not to pay arrears, and simply to make the 50 new pensions payable from 1 April 1936 – the start of the new financial year.⁸

By 1936 the Department of Finance had come to rue the initial beneficence shown by the British to the disbanded RIC and the decision to match this in the case of their more nationally-minded comrades, feeling that the Irish political leaders were forced to accept an excessively generous package by the political circumstances of 1922: 'if the leaders had not been preoccupied with other pressing matters at the time, the terms granted to the resigned and dismissed RIC would never have been so generous'.⁹

Army Pensions

The government also owed an obligation to soldiers of the Irish national army who were wounded during the Civil War against the anti-Treaty IRA between 1922 and 1923. Under the terms of the 1923 Army Pensions Act these men were given pensions of various gradations depending on the nature of their disability. Dependants of soldiers who died in service during that conflict were also eligible to apply for pensions and gratuities. A third category to come within the remit of the legislation included members of the revolutionary organisations (principally the Irish Volunteers/IRA and Irish Citizen Army) who were wounded between 1916 and 1921, and the dependants of those killed during these years. The value of pensions and gratuities was based upon similar awards made by the British government to its soldiers who were disabled during the First World War. Subsequent Army Pensions Acts in 1937 and 1943 introduced annual allowances for the immediate families of the signatories of the 1916 proclamation and means-tested special allowances for veterans of Easter Week who were in poor economic circumstances (Coleman, 2013: 203-4).

The operation of the Army Pensions Act provoked controversy in 1925 when Margaret Skinnider, who had received a serious gunshot wound while serving with the Irish Citizen Army during the Easter Rising in 1916, was denied a pension on the grounds that the term 'soldier' in the legislation applied exclusively to men. Amending legislation was eventually passed in 1932 to correct this anomaly. However, the view that the original legislation did not apply to women appears to be entirely subjective and at odds with the Irish Free State's Interpretation Act of 1923 which stated that legislation should be deemed gender-neutral unless stated otherwise.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that gender was used as a pretext to deny a pension to Skinnider on account of her prominence as an opponent of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the pro-Treaty Cumann na nGaedheal government. This conclusion is given added weight when contrasted with the decision to award a military service pension to Dr Brigid Lyons, a well-connected and prominent pro-Treatyite, in spite of the fact that she was not entitled to one as the organisation in which she served, Cumann na mBan, was not covered by the original military service pension legislation (Coleman, 2014b).

Military Service Pensions

The rationale for the army pensions is clear enough as the government had an obligation to the men of its own army who had been wounded in the service of the state. The motivation for the introduction of an entirely different form of pension the following year is more complex. Military service pensions were introduced in 1924 to allow veterans who served in specified revolutionary organisations between 1916 and 1923 apply for pensions purely on the basis of the service they had given. As legislation already existed to provide for wounded ex-combatants it appears that the Military Service Pensions Act was an exercise of damage limitation within the pro-Treaty family. The 1924 army mutiny, occasioned by discontent within the army at the extensive demobilisation and downgrading of ranks that followed the end of the Civil War and the subsequent need for a much smaller standing army, was the first serious internal dissent experienced by the Cumann na nGaedheal government.

The provisos that eligible applicants must have served in the national army during the Civil War, as well as in the revolutionary years between 1916 and 1923, and that pensions could

not be drawn down until after the applicant had left the army, indicate strongly the extent to which these pensions were a reaction to a specific political event rather than part of any long-term strategy for dealing with revolutionary veterans in independent Ireland. The army service pre-requisite was another example, like the cases of Margaret Skinnider and Wilcox and MacCarvill, of the Cumann na nGaedheal government discriminating blatantly in favour of its own supporters to the detriment of veterans from the losing republican side. It was not until the political representatives of the defeated side in the Civil War, Fianna Fáil, took power that eligibility for service pensions was extended to anti-Treaty republicans, as well as to Cumann na mBan and Civil War neutrals, in the 1934 Military Service Pensions Act (Coleman, 2013).

Fianna Fáil's extension of eligibility represented a significant change in the party's policy concerning revolutionary compensation. The blatant way in which military service pensions were used to reward supporters and placate potential internal opponents of the Cumann na nGaedheal government was highlighted frequently by Fianna Fáil when it served in opposition between 1927 and 1932 and on numerous occasions it promised to abolish these pensions as soon as it took office. The initial intention appears to have been to do so, but opposition from the Labour Party (upon whom Fianna Fáil was dependent for support for its minority government between 1932 and 1933) to tampering with established superannuation, lobbying by existing pensioners for retention, and support among Fianna Fáil's backbenchers for the extension of pension benefits to republican opponents of the Treaty, appears to have resulted in this significant U-turn in policy.

The 1934 Military Service Pensions Act which introduced this substantial widening of eligibility was characterised by the support which it received from all shades of political

opinion within the Oireachtas (Parliament). Fine Gael, the reincarnation of Cumann na nGaedheal and the main opposition party, was largely supportive of the move and its former Minister for Defence, Richard Mulcahy, played a constructive role in the formulation of amendments.

The 1934 Military Service Pensions Act, and the comprehensive support for it from the different shades of political opinion (although many republicans who had not followed Fianna Fáil and still regarded the Free State as illegitimate neither lent their support nor applied for pensions) needs to be seen as an important step in the process of conflict transformation and reconciliation in the aftermath of the Irish revolution and Civil War. Effectively, within eleven years of the end of the Civil War, the losers in that conflict had been admitted to the full benefits of revolutionary compensation that had initially been reserved solely for the victors. In this regard the Irish Free State compares well to other post-civil war jurisdictions. In Spain, republicans were not allowed to avail of veterans' benefits until the 1970s, 40 years after the end of the Spanish Civil War. A gradual process of restoring Confederate veterans to full military benefits was not completed until the 1950s in the United States and in modern-day Mozambique pensions and other benefits are still denied to Renamo ex-combatants (Coleman, 2013; Schafer, 2007: 124; McMullin, 2013: 145).

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the effectiveness of the military service pensions in resolving conflict in post-revolution Ireland was hindered by controversies that attended the operation of the system. The application and appeals process was unwieldy and extremely bureaucratic. It relied heavily on the recollection and support of former IRA leaders who were depended upon to vouch truthfully for the claims of their former

comrades. In many cases it appears that some who took opposing sides failed to provide the support necessary, while some former officers exaggerated the claims of their fellows ensuring that undeserving pensions were awarded.

The entire system was flawed from the outset by the failure to define what was meant by 'active service' and as a result different standards were applied by the assessors at different times; for example, by the 1950s the Referee with principal responsibility for deciding eligibility, Eugene Sheehy, was applying a much more generous interpretation of service than that which applied during the 1930s and 1940s. The resultant confusion and lack of uniformity, accompanied by claims that political influence was a factor, alienated many veterans who felt that their services were not given proper recognition. This sense of grievance was especially strong among women from Cumann na mBan, who were only granted pensions at the lower end of the scale and who felt that the burden of proof was much higher for women applicants. A significant number of disgruntled pensioners resorted to legal challenges and the dissatisfaction of many affected their co-operation with the Bureau of Military History, the government's official oral history project that operated during the 1940s and 1950s to collect first-hand accounts of the revolution (Morrison, 2012).

These pensions also represented an extremely limited form of financial reintegration assistance. Studies of modern-day reintegration have shown 'that reintegration works best if it is part of more general post-conflict reconstruction, linked to the economic revitalization of society overall' (Rolston, 2007: 265). They were introduced to achieve a particular short-term political goal of placating the government's supporters and quelling the potential for further armed resistance to the new state. While they were successful in

contributing to the successful and peaceful reintegration of pro-Treaty veterans they were not conceived initially as a mechanism for resolving conflict and were not accompanied by other measures to ensure political or social stability through economic regeneration. In this regard the Irish military service pensions serve as a useful historical example of the limitations of relying exclusively on cash payments for economic reintegration, rather than using it as one aspect of a wider programme for reintegration and reinsertion that would include schemes for education, such as the American GI bill, targeted assistance for finding employment for veterans, medical benefits or the redistribution of land. Elements of the latter three were introduced in a piecemeal fashion by various Irish governments in the decades after Irish independence but they were limited and not very successful, as will be illustrated below in the case of land.

The military service pensions as initially conceived by Cumann na nGaedheal in 1924 were intended as compensatory rather than remunerative. The revolutionary generation was mostly born in the 1890s and their formative years in either higher education or establishing themselves in employment were interrupted by their activities between 1916 and 1923. The pensions were intended to compensate them for the loss of earnings that this entailed. However, sight was soon lost of this underlying principle and the perception that both of the main political parties used the pensions as a form of patronage, combined with the controversies surrounding the operation of the system referred to above, alienated public opinion and damaged the standing of revolutionary veterans in independent Ireland. P. S. O'Hegarty, a former political revolutionary, described the unseemly scramble for monetary reward among veterans as telling a 'sorry tale of patriotic degeneration and lack of public spirit', while a veteran-turned-politician, Patrick Giles, regretted that they had ever been

introduced such was the level of opprobrium they had generated for veterans by the 1950s; rather than serving as an effective form of resolving conflict, he stated in 1953 that the introduction of military service pensions in 1924 had 'brought on this country 30 years of disunity'. The military service pensions system operated between 1924 and 1958, during which time, 18,186 pensions were awarded to just over 80,000 applicants (Coleman, 2013: 220, 203).

Connaught Rangers Pensions

The sense of entitlement created by the award of military service pensions generated a revolutionary compensation culture among veterans. The knock-on effects of the Military Service Pensions Acts in particular can be seen best in the case of the former members of the Connaught Rangers regiment of the British Army who had mutinied in India in June 1920 ostensibly in response to the actions of the Crown forces in Ireland. One of the leaders James Daly, was executed by firing squad, the last serving British soldier to receive such a punishment, and a large number of others served prison sentences of varying duration in both India and England. The last remaining mutineers were released in 1922 and discharged from the army. Many returned to Ireland having forfeited their army pensions and facing dim employment prospects (Babington, 1991).

The Free State government first considered the possibility that the Connaught Rangers might be eligible for compensation in June 1923 when the Army Pensions Bill was being debated, but did not see a way of including them.¹⁰ By 1925 small sums amounting to £63 had been paid to mutineers from the Dáil Special Fund, a discretionary fund which provided

loans and grants to former revolutionaries and their families who were in difficult financial circumstances. The issue appears to have lain dormant for a year until the first appeals by the released mutineers themselves were made in July 1924. The timing indicates that these were clearly a reaction to the passing of the Military Service Pensions Act.¹¹

The growing pressure on the government to consider the cases of the Connaughts resulted in the establishment of an inter-departmental Committee of Inquiry in 1925, the terms of reference of which were to investigate *prima facie* whether the Connaughts' claim should be honoured by the government; if so, to carry out a detailed investigation of each individual claim and recommend how much compensation should be paid; and decide on the best method of paying compensation, including the need for legislation. Particular concern was expressed for those career soldiers who would otherwise have qualified for a British army pension, but were rendered ineligible on foot of their mutinous actions: 'Long service men should receive a generous compensation. Men "not entitled to pension" should receive reasonable compensation.'

The Committee agreed that the motivation of the men was honourable: 'the mutiny had its origin in a desire on the part of the men concerned to make a protest against the condition of affairs in Ireland.' The mutineers demanded to be treated on a par with the resigned and dismissed RIC, but in admitting to the spontaneity of their actions, they undermined their case for such parity because the RIC had taken their action in direct response to the call of the revolutionary leaders in Ireland:

The position of the men who mutinied was not analogous to that of the men who resigned from or were dismissed from the Royal Irish Constabulary. The Royal Irish Constabulary were serving in Ireland and were a considerable hindrance to the National forces. A public appeal was made to them by the National leaders to resign or to confine themselves to ordinary police duties,

and it was in response to that appeal that some of them resigned rather than do acts against the Irish people and that others were dismissed for refusing to perform such acts.

The Connaughts, by contrast, were not based in Ireland, nor were they responding to a direct call from the revolutionary leaders, so that their position was deemed more analogous to ‘the very numerous cases of Irish civilians who performed voluntary acts during the period of struggle and lost very heavily through such acts’. Such individuals did not receive compensation. Additionally, the compensation given to the resigned and dismissed RIC was limited to those who had served at least three years in the force; whereas the majority of the Connaught Rangers mutineers appear to have had less service than this.¹²

The committee’s hearings discovered that about half of the men concerned were or had at some point been in Irish state employment following their release, either in the national army or An Garda Síochána. Rather than offering monetary compensation, the committee felt that the best way for the government to discharge any moral obligation to these men was through the offer of employment. Those who had been offered such employment but had lost it ‘through causes within their control’ were no longer the government’s concern.

Having already overseen the introduction of compensation for soldiers, revolutionaries and policemen, the government was clearly becoming concerned about the growing numbers of those seeking some form of remuneration for their actions during the independence struggle and appears to have been determined not to concede the claim of the Connaught Rangers:

The payment of gratuities at this hour of the day to the ex-Connaught Rangers would open the door to this and possibly other classes of claimants who at the

moment are quiet, but would become clamant when it became known that the Connaught Rangers were to receive special benefits.

Viewing the Connaught Rangers as no different from civilians who had made sacrifices and suffered accordingly, the Minister for Finance, Ernest Blythe, was keen to establish the principle that a line had to be drawn with regard to who was entitled to compensation:

It would be an impossible position if civilians who could prove they did sacrifice certain prospects or lost certain trade because of their efforts during the national struggle were to be compensated. There is no reason why a man because he wore a British uniform, who perhaps took no greater risks than many civilians took, should be given a pension or a gratuity at the public expense.¹³

Aside from not wanting to expend additional money on pensions, Blythe was clearly sceptical about the motives of the Connaughts; in 1929 he was forced to withdraw remarks in which he incorrectly described the findings of the 1925 enquiry as concluding that 'patriotism was an afterthought' for the mutineers.¹⁴ He was also dubious about the impact of the mutiny on British policy in Ireland; in contrast to the men who resigned from the RIC, thereby playing an important role in neutralising its effectiveness, Blythe characterised the mutiny as 'a very small matter and probably had no effect whatever.' He was also sceptical about their claims of ill-treatment in prison, while conceding that their health might have been damaged by prison conditions.¹⁵

When Fianna Fáil introduced new military service pension legislation in 1934 they used the opportunity to re-consider the status of the Connaught Rangers. Initially it was suggested that they be included in the new bill, but given its complexity it was decided to deal separately with them and another inter-departmental enquiry was established to examine their claims. The resulting Connaught Rangers Pensions Act in 1936 introduced a variety of pensions and gratuities for 63 of the mutineers or their dependants. Preferential treatment

was given to those who had the longest service and as a consequence forfeited a significant earnings-based British pension; seven who had served in excess of twelve years prior to the mutiny were awarded weekly compensation allowances in addition to disability benefits. The lowest level of compensation – a single payment gratuity of £150 was paid to those with short service, defined as having joined the army after 18 April 1918, the date on which the Military Service Act, which sought to extend wartime conscription to Ireland, was signed into law. This reflected both the fact that they had not accumulated significant pensionable service and political disquiet about rewarding men who had enlisted voluntarily in the British Army after a crucial moment in the independence campaign. Provision was made for the payment of a pension to the father James Daly, the only mutineer to be executed. Pay scales for disability pensions and allowances to dependants were similar to those paid to Irish soldiers and their dependants under the army pensions legislation.

Land

The majority of post-conflict compensation awarded by the Irish government after independence was financial. Some efforts at economic reintegration were made by seeking to find employment in the civil and public service for veterans, reserving certain civil service entrance competitions for them, allowing additional years' service towards pension and permitting them to remain in state employment beyond the statutory retirement age of 65. Another form of economic reintegration was the distribution of land.

While the series of land laws enacted by the British government between 1870 and 1909 had largely transformed the ownership of Irish land, transferring it from landlords to tenant

proprietorship, they had by no means solved the issue of congestion, uneconomic holdings and the demand for land among small farmers, especially in the west of Ireland. The process of breaking up and redistributing large landed estates had effectively ceased during the war and revolutionary years and was resumed by the Irish Free State government in 1923.

The first suggestion that preference be given to IRA veterans was made in the Dáil (lower house of parliament) in 1922 but they were not included as a category to which preference was given in the 1923 Land Act. The formation of old comrades associations by IRA veterans during the 1920s turned them into a more effective lobby group and one issue on which they sought to influence the government was in regard to the allocation of land. Dooley has suggested that campaigning for land might have been an impetus for the establishment of these organisations, which 'were strongest in counties such as Tipperary, Laois, Limerick, Offaly and Galway where a high proportion of large estates were yet to be divided and pre-Truce IRA men could still hope to receive parcels of land' (Dooley, 2003: 95).

Statistical evidence does not exist to indicate how many IRA veterans were among those to whom the Irish Land Commission allocated land during the 1920s but Dooley's suspicion that 'those veterans who benefitted most during the Cumann na nGaedheal administration were predominantly Free Staters', is highly plausible in view of that government's bias towards its own supporters as seen in the reservation of military service pensions for those with national army service in the Civil War, and its discrimination against opponents of the Treaty such as Margaret Skinnider, Patrick Wilcox and John MacCarvill. There is also evidence of Free State army officers being allocated holdings outside their own localities, at the expense of more deserving locals (Dooley, 2003: 96).

When Fianna Fáil assumed office it sought to redress this balance as it did with military service pensions and in 1933 the Land Commission was instructed to include IRA veterans in the hierarchy for receiving allocations. Dooley has described Fianna Fáil's early years in office, from 1933 to 1937, as the 'heyday of land allotments to IRA veterans', and Fianna Fáil appears to have favoured its own supporters in the same way that Cumann na nGaedheal did in the preceding decade. However, by the end of the 1930s the problems with this policy were becoming clear, as many of those to whom land was allotted did not possess the expertise to farm it effectively or economically and by the 1940s IRA veterans had fallen out of favour in the allocation of land, as the focus of veterans' benefits switched back to increasing pension payments and finding employment (Dooley, 2003: 99-103).

Revolutionary compensation as historic DDR

Many of the efforts of the Irish government to deal with and provide for revolutionary veterans after independence would now be recognised as a programme for DDR. Generally described as 'Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration', a number of variations of the concept have evolved including 'Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration':

Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups ...

Reinsertion is the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization ...

Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income (Muggah, 2009: 126-7).

These definitions appear to be the most applicable to independent Ireland, as disarmament did not happen in Ireland after either the War of Independence or the Civil War. While the cessation of the IRA's campaign in the Civil War was not 'formal' and only somewhat 'controlled', the reorganisation and reduction in size of the Irish national army in 1924, which occasioned the army mutiny that in turn was a causal factor in the introduction of service pensions, conforms to the above definition of 'demobilization'.

DDR is of course a much more modern concept and now implemented through systematic programmes backed by international agencies such as the UN, but scholars have recognised its historic origins in the treatment of war veterans throughout the twentieth century in policies such as the American GI Bill after the Second World War:

the GI Bill was the policy response to a securitized debate about the place of veterans in post-war American life. Policy elites worried that the return of 16 million unemployed veterans could trigger another depression, social instability, and even communist revolt of the working class. The security fears underpinning the passage of the GI Bill echo modern security discourse of DDR (McMullin, 2013: 59).

In a similar vein, the aim of this paper is to identify the ways in which the treatment of revolutionary veterans in independent Ireland reflects policies, challenges and outcomes that would be familiar to modern DDR scenarios.

Jaremy McMullin has identified a number of challenges that affect the implementation of successful DDR programmes in modern Africa. While the context is very different with regard to place and time, his definitions of security, political, structural and ideational challenges to reintegration serve as a useful methodological approach for analysing the success of the independent Irish state in restoring peace and stability after independence through the award of compensation to those who fought in the revolution.

DDR programmes are often motivated by a desire to neutralise the potential threat to the social, economic and political stability of a post-conflict society posed by veterans, or the 'security challenge' of reintegration (McMullin, 2013: 29). The origin of the 1924 Military Service Pensions Act reflected such a fear from within the pro-Treaty Cumann na nGaedheal government in the immediate aftermath of a mutiny within its own armed forces, and there is very little evidence of revolutionary veterans posing any serious threat to political stability after 1924. The 1924 act provided for the withdrawal of pensions from those convicted of certain criminal offences. This was strengthened in 1925 by an amending act giving the cabinet sole authority to revoke pensions 'if the pensioner commits acts against the constitutional law of the country.' Notice of revocation had to be published in the official state gazette, *Iris Oifigiúil*, and as no such notices appeared during the 1920s or 1930s this would indicate that revolutionary veterans in receipt of military service pensions were law-abiding.

Political challenges to reintegration were especially strong in independent Ireland. In modern day Namibia and Mozambique these include the exclusion of the government's opponents from veterans' benefits and reintegration assistance, in particular the on-going denial of pension rights to Renamo fighters in Mozambique: 'Even though the conflict ended almost twenty years ago, the pension issue continues to be a divisive one' (McMullin, 2013: 102-4, 144-6).

The blatant political bias shown by Cumann na nGaedheal in rewarding its own supporters and actively frustrating the efforts to anti-Treaty republicans to access benefits to which they were legally entitled, militated against the successful reintegration of republicans for more than a decade. As in the case of Renamo in Mozambique today, opponents of the

Anglo-Irish Treaty were denied the legislative right to service pensions until 1934, while the cases of Margaret Skinnider and the RIC officers, John MacCarvill and Patrick Wilcox, illustrate that even where they were entitled by law to compensation the government took a politically-motivated decision to deny it to them. The distribution of land to the supporters of both parties who were in government at different times during the 1920s and 1930s was also an example of the political challenges that hindered the easing of civil war divisions.

These political obstacles were overcome to a significant extent when Fianna Fáil came to power in 1932 and extended veterans' benefits to the majority of republicans who were prepared to accept it. In doing so, and by the willingness of Fine Gael to put aside its previously strong opposition and support such an extension, the political barriers to effective reintegration were broken down much faster in the Irish Free State than in many other post-conflict societies, where it has taken considerably longer than eleven years to admit losers in civil wars to reintegration assistance. The political climate had changed significantly since 1924 to allow Fine Gael adopt a more generous attitude; the majority of anti-Treaty republicans were now part of the constitutional political fold, Fianna Fáil was the democratically elected political representative of many anti-Treaty republicans, and the state's survival was no longer under threat from them.

Post-revolutionary compensation in independent Ireland largely took the form of direct monetary reintegration assistance. The 1924 Military Service Pensions Act established a precedent in this regard. Preferential treatment in civil service employment and the allocation of land were the only significant efforts at non-monetary reintegration. This over-reliance on financial payments is the most noticeable structural challenge, described as 'the

lack of integration opportunities and embedded practices that impede integration' (McMullin, 2013: 37), in the Irish historic context.

The reason for this reliance on monetary compensation lies partly in path dependence in policy regarding compensation that was grounded initially in decisions made by the British government for dealing with its former servants in Ireland. The experience of the RIC in Ireland between 1919 and 1921 resulted in the British government providing generous disbandment terms to them, which in turn was based on a precedent of generous extra-legislative compensation for death and injury as a result of political disturbances in Ireland from the latter half of the nineteenth century. Once the disbanded RIC received these terms from the British government and the new government of the Irish Free State agreed under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty to match them, it could not be seen to be any less generous to those RIC men who had left the force in sympathy with the republican campaign for independence, or subsequently to revolutionary veterans.

The ubiquity of monetary compensation is also explained by a sense of a compensation culture that emerged among those who felt entitled to equal treatment. This is best illustrated by the case of the Connaught Rangers, who demanded parity with the resigned and dismissed RIC. In fact some of the Connaught Rangers were in principle treated better than the RIC in that those who joined after the conscription crisis of 1918 were still awarded gratuities, whereas no claims were admitted from policemen who joined after that date.

While the government had little room to manoeuvre regarding the first compensation programmes for the RIC and national army in 1923, the decision to introduce military service pensions was a hasty one grounded in an effort to stem internal political dissent and not the result of any significant lobbying from veterans themselves. Once this became

established as the standard for compensation it motivated groups like the Connaught Rangers to pursue what they deemed to be equally worthy claims. The financial compensation represented by military service pensions undoubtedly made a significant financial difference to many of the 18,000 recipients, but the system was dogged by excessive bureaucracy, allegations of bias in favour of political supporters, a sense of rejection and alienation among veterans whose claims were not met to their satisfaction, and the generation of demands for similar benefits from groups like the Connaught Rangers.

Reintegration assistance is also affected by ideational challenges: 'ideas and assumptions about ex-combatants themselves' (McMullin, 2013: 40). The effectiveness of reintegration assistance as judged from a public perspective, was clearly affected adversely in Ireland by the 1950s as evidenced by growing public disenchantment with veterans who were depicted as possessing an over-arching sense of entitlement and indulging in an unsavoury scramble for monetary reward for supposedly patriotic actions. In 1957 the *Longford Leader* newspaper was criticised by the Federation of Old IRA for publishing an article alleging that many pensions and service medals had been obtained fraudulently by those who were not entitled to them.¹⁶

Conclusion

How successful was financial reinsertion assistance in restoring peace and stability to post-conflict Ireland after 1922? Military service pensions were a response to the security challenge posed by pro-Treaty veterans in the aftermath of the 1924 army mutiny. There was no subsequent internal dissent, and the provision for payment of pension only on

leaving the army might have purged it of some opponents of the government. If the pensions were successful in countering the security threat, the process created significantly more obstacles to successful reintegration. Political opponents were marginalised and denied rights to which they were entitled by law, although the eventual extension of them in 1934 was a significant factor in healing civil war divisions within a relatively short time. The haste with which the initial military service pensions legislation was drawn up in 1924 resulted in a failure adequately to define the service for which compensation was to be awarded, leading to alienation among many veterans who did not feel they were treated fairly. The overly-bureaucratic adjudication and appeal system also frustrated many veterans.

Over-reliance on monetary compensation, partly the result of adhering too closely to the British precedent for compensating the RIC, created divisions between veterans and the civilian population, inflating the former's sense of entitlement and damaging the public's perception of them as seeking financial reward for what they had always claimed was voluntary patriotism. It also led to demands for the extension of pension eligibility and wider access to compensation from groups such as the Connaught Rangers, exposing the government to a greater financial liability than it had envisaged at the outset. In seeking to curtail the rising cost the government imposed restrictions, such as refusing arrears to the 1936 RIC pensioners, creating further disenchantment among pensioners.

The ubiquity of cash payments to veterans in the case of the Irish military service pensions is a useful historical example that further underlines the argument that post-conflict financial reintegration is less effective if introduced in isolation and not as part of a wider scheme of economic development. The example of post-revolution Ireland conforms largely to

Rolston's argument that 'Ultimately, cash payments do not lead to either reintegration or long-term development' (Rolston, 2007: 264).

The various compensation schemes introduced in the Irish Free State after independence had some success in countering the potential security threat posed by disgruntled veterans and in healing civil war divisions by the mid-1930s. Yet, these successes were offset by the serious structural flaws of over-reliance on monetary compensation, bureaucratic inefficiency, uneven adjudication and political bias, that reflected the haste and lack of planning which attend their introduction, and which prevented them from being fully effective as a reintegration strategy.

Recent scholarly work on DDR has identified its historical origins in the challenges posed by the peaceful demobilization of large armies in the aftermath of the First World War, and some well-known historical examples of successful DDR exist, most notably the post-Second World War American GI Bill. The case of Ireland in the aftermath of its the War of Independence and Civil war that led to partition and the independence of southern Ireland provides another very useful case study to examine the historical origins of DDR and identify successes and failures that could inform some modern conflicts which bear some similarities to Ireland in 1922.

While the post-revolutionary compensation in Ireland was not consciously introduced as a mechanism for transforming or resolving conflict it succeeded in doing so to a great extent within a decade by the extension of veterans' pension benefits to the republican side in 1934. The historical success of the Irish in this regard stands in mark contrast to modern-day post-conflict states where this has yet to happen, most notably Mozambique.

Conversely, the limitations of the Irish case solidify arguments about the limitations of the financial reintegration aspects of DDR schemes. Monetary compensation isolated from a wider framework of economic development has serious limitations in regard to successful reintegration of veterans and the general economic recovery after a period of conflict. The sense that money is being given as a reward to a privileged few creates disenchantment among the civilian population and the initial award to one group generates further demands from those who see themselves as equally deserving, resulting in a significant financial liability, which in turn adversely affects post-conflict economic recovery.

Abbreviations

DD: *Dáil Debates*

DT: Department of An Taoiseach [Prime Minister]

HO: Home Office

IRA: Irish Republican Army

NAI: National Archives of Ireland

RIC: Royal Irish Constabulary

TNA: The National Archives [United Kingdom]

References

Babington, A. (1991) *The Devil to Pay: The Mutiny of the Connaught Rangers, India, July 1920*. London: Leo Cooper

Brennan, N. (1996) "Compensating the Royal Irish Constabulary, 1922-1932", *PaGes: Arts Postgraduate Research in Progress*, vol. 2. Dublin: University College Dublin

<http://www.ucd.ie/pages/95/contents2.html>

Coleman, M. (2013) "Military Service Pensions for Veterans of the Irish Revolution (1916-1923)", *War in History* 20 (2): 201-21

Coleman, M. (2014a) *The Irish Revolution, 1916-1923*. London: Routledge

Coleman, M. (2014b) "Cumann na mBan and the Military Service Pensions", keynote address to the annual conference of the Women's History Association of Ireland, 5 April 2014

Dooley, T. (2006) "IRA Veterans and Land Division in Independent Ireland, 1922-37", F. McGarry (ed.), *Republicanism in Modern Ireland*. Dublin: UCD Press: 86-107

Garvin, T. (1996) *1922: The Birth of Irish Democracy*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan

Hart, P. (2003) *The IRA at War, 1916-1923*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Kissane, B. (2005) *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

McMullin, J. (2013) *Ex-combatants and the Post-conflict State: Challenges of Reintegration*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Malcolm, E. (2006) *The Irish Policeman, 1822-1922: A Life*. Dublin: Four Courts Press

Morrison, E. (2012) "The Bureau of Military History Witness Statements as sources for the Irish Revolution". Dublin: Military Archives

http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/files/Bureau_of_Military_witness_statements%20as_sources%20for_the_Irish%20Revolution.pdf

Muggah, R. (2009) "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration", V. Chetail (ed.) *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: A Lexicon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Regan, J. (1999) *The Irish Counter-revolution, 1921-1936*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan

Rolston, B. (2007) 'Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: the Irish Case in International Perspective', *Social & Legal Studies*, 16 (2), 259-80

Schafer, J. (2007) *Soldiers at Peace: Veterans and Society after the Civil War in Mozambique*.

New York / Basingstoke: Palgrave

Townshend, C. (2013) *The Republic: The Fight for Irish independence, 1918-1923*. London:

Allen Lane

¹ The term 'Irish revolution' will be used here to describe the period from the Easter Rising of 1916 to the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923. Although contested by some scholars who question the revolutionary nature of the period, it remains a widely-accepted umbrella term to describe the events of these years.

² The term 'veteran' is preferred to 'ex-combatant', as some forms of compensation were paid to those who did not take part in actual fighting, such as the women members of the IRA's female auxiliary, Cumann na mBan.

³ Pension applications can be viewed online on the website of the Irish Military Archives

<http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection>

⁴ <http://treaty.nationalarchives.ie/document-gallery/anglo-irish-treaty-6-december-1921/anglo-irish-treaty-6-december-1921-page-3/>

⁵ TNA, HO351(80).

⁶ NAI, DT, S1764 and S2085.

⁷ NAI, DT 2085; *DD*, vol. 4 (30 July 1923), col. 1625.

⁸ NAI, DT S2085.

⁹ NAI, DT S8778.

¹⁰ NAI, DT S1935.

¹¹ Unless stated otherwise the details here are from NAI DT S2000/6/11.

¹² *DD*, vol. 36 (3 Dec. 1930), cols. 931-2.

¹³ *DD*, vol. 36 (3 Dec. 1930), cols. 933.

¹⁴ *DD*, vol. 28 (7 March 1929), col. 1143; vol. 29 (18 Apr. 1929), cols. 602-3.

¹⁵ *DD*, vol. 36 (3 Dec. 1930), col. 936.

¹⁶ *Longford Leader*, 9 March 1957.