

From Dublin to Dacca: The Irish Republican Army and India's Freedom Struggle

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Abstract—This paper investigates the underexplored links between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and various strands of the Indian anti-colonial movement from the 1916 Easter Rising through the Chittagong Uprising to the Indian National Army's (INA) formation. It argues that Irish revolutionary ideals, texts, and mutiny traditions provided both inspiration and tactical blueprints for Indian revolutionaries who sought revolutionary alternatives to Gandhian non-violence. By examining case studies—Dan Breen's influence on Surya Sen's Indian Republican Army, the Connaught Rangers Mutiny of 1920, and Subhas Chandra Bose's INA, this study situates these transnational exchanges within broader historiographical debates on imperial resistance and nationalist narratives.

Index Terms—Irish Republican Army (IRA), Indian Freedom Struggle, Transnational Nationalism, Easter Rising, Indian Republican Army, Dan Breen, Connaught Rangers Mutiny, Surya Sen, Subhas Chandra Bose, Revolutionary Fusion

I. INTRODUCTION

The Irish Republican Army's struggle for independence culminated in the 1916 Easter Rising, a defining moment that resonated deeply beyond Europe's shores. Indian revolutionaries, frustrated by the perceived limits of constitutional and non-violent protest, turned to the IRA's example for ideological guidance and operational tactics. Texts such as Dan Breen's *My Fight for Irish Freedom* circulated secretly in Bengal, while reports of the Connaught Rangers Mutiny in India reinforced the possibility of armed revolt within colonial military ranks. These transnational currents fed into seminal events like the Chittagong Armoury Raid of 1930 and the formation of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's INA, underscoring the global dimensions of anti-imperial rebellions.

II. HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Scholarship on Indian revolutionary movements has traditionally privileged Gandhian non-violence or localized subaltern agency, leaving the IRA's influence undervalued. Early nationalist narratives acknowledged revolutionary heroes but framed them as indigenous phenomena. Post-colonial studies began probing international linkages, yet comprehensive analyses of Irish–Indian insurgent connections remain scarce. Recent interdisciplinary work, drawing on military history, diaspora studies, and comparative revolutions, calls for deeper exploration of how IRA literature, personnel exchanges, and mutiny traditions shaped Indian revolutionary nationalism.

III. TRANSNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY EXCHANGES

Irish Texts and the Bengal Revolutionaries
Surya Sen, leader of the Chittagong Armoury Raid, openly credited Dan Breen's *My Fight for Irish Freedom* as the model for his Indian Republican Army, Chittagong Branch. He named his organization after the IRA and declared that the revolutionaries' aim was to awaken the masses through striking blows against British power, rather than merely courting martyrdom. British intelligence records labelled Breen's memoir work a "terrorist textbook," reflecting colonial anxieties about its radical impact on Bengal's youth.

Connaught Rangers Mutiny in India
In June 1920, Irish soldiers of the Connaught Rangers in British Army rebelled at Jalandhar and Solan barracks, striking over the British government's repressive measures in Ireland. Their mutiny demonstrated the bleed-through of Irish grievances to India's colonial military, inspiring Indian nationalists to consider similar insubordination among the Indian

ranks. Newspapers in Calcutta and Dublin alike hailed the mutineers, forging solidarity across thousands of miles.

Subhas Chandra Bose and the INA

Subhas Chandra Bose's study in Irish revolutionary literature during his Europe visit influenced his vision for the INA. He met Irish republicans in Germany in

1936, adopting their guerrilla tactics and propaganda methods. The INA adopted symbols, songs, and organizational structures like the IRA, emphasizing martial discipline and direct action to compel British withdrawal. Bose's declaration, "Give me blood, and I will give you freedom," mirrored the revolutionary ethos of his Irish counterparts.

Case Studies and Comparative Analysis

Indian Movement	IRA Parallel	Key Features	Impact
Connaught Rangers Mutiny (1920)	IRA soldiers' mutinies	Military insubordination over political causes	Demonstrated potential for army-wide sympathy
Chittagong Armoury Raid (1930)	Easter Rising (1916)	Raid on arsenals; coordinated urban insurrection	First major attempt to militarize Indian revolt
Indian National Army (1943–45)	IRA's guerrilla warfare	Provisional government; foreign alliances	Questioned Indian troops' loyalty to Britain

IV. ANALYSIS

Irish revolutionary blueprints offered Indian militants both strategic and symbolic resources. Texts like Breen's provided narratives of sabotage, prison resistance, and peasant mobilization tactics were adapted in Bengal and Punjab. The Connaught Rangers Mutiny revealed that colonial troops could act on political desires, a lesson Indian leaders observed when infiltrating the RIN in 1946. Bose's INA, while larger in scale, followed similar principles of transnational military cooperation and propaganda. Together, these exchanges challenge narratives of the Indian struggle as purely indigenous, revealing a complex matrix of global anti-imperial unity.

V. CONCLUSION

The IRA's legacy in India underscores the global interconnectedness of anti-colonial movements. Irish experiences of armed revolt, mutiny within imperial forces, and secret publishing helped shape a generation of Indian revolutionaries who sought militant alternatives to non-violent protest. By tracing these transnational networks, this paper contributes to a more exact understanding of India's freedom struggle as part of a wider history of colonial resistance and ideological exchange.

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