Beyond the Balkans

Towards an Inclusive History
of Southeastern Europe

edited by

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LIT

To the memory of Klaus Tenfelde (1944 – 2011)

He was many things, but no Southeast Europeanist.
Yet, without his intellectual curiosity and generous support
this project would never have gotten off the ground.

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The Irish Model

The relevance of the Irish case in the context of a general discussion of south-eastern and eastern European history is by no means obvious.[1] One could start by mentioning a few cases in which eastern Europeans made reference to Ireland and the Irish Question. The 19th-century Czech journalist Karel Havlíček might be taken as an example. In 1922 Robert Seton-Watson recalled "the calculated *camouflage* by which Havlíček [...] wrote of Ireland and O'Connell and Repeal, when he meant Bohemia and her long-lost liberties, and thus for a time was able to evade the censorship of Metternich".[2] Immediately afterwards, Seton-Watson mentioned an opposite example of *Irish* interest in contemporary developments in eastern Europe: *The Resurrection of Hungary: a parallel for Ireland*, published before the First World War by Arthur Griffith, one of the leaders of the radical nationalist party *Sinn Fein*.[3] The book had some resonance in Irish political debates.[4] Research has also shown the connections between Austria-Hungary and Ireland at the beginning of the 20th century.[5]

Eastern European references to Ireland, and Irish references to eastern Europe

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1 I would like to thank for their assistance and advice Paul Bew (Queen's University, Belfast), Alon Confino (University of Virginia), Anthony Gribben (ETF, Turin), Paul Nolan (Community Relations Council, Belfast), Niccolò Pianciola (Lingnan University, Hong Kong), Jože Pirjevec (Univerza na Primorskem, Koper), and Colin Shindler (SOAS, London). The usual disclaimers apply with special force.
2 Robert W. SETON-WATSON, The Historian as a Political Force in Central Europe. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered on 2 November, 1922, London 1922, 32.
3 Ibid., 32. See Arthur GRIFFITH, The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland, Dublin 1904.
4 For the context of Griffith's "Hungarian Policy", see Francis Stewart Leland LYONS, Ireland since the Famine, London / Glasgow ²1973, 251-54. See also the Introduction by Patrick MURRAY to the reissue of Griffith's text (Dublin 2003). I have not been able to consult the essay by Thomas KABDEBÓ, The Hungarian-Irish Parallel and Arthur Griffith's Use of His Sources, Maynooth 1988, but only his subsequent edition of Griffith's Ireland and Hungary: A Study in Parallels. With an Arthur Griffith Bibliography, Dublin 2001.
5 Jérôme Aan DE WIEL, La relation inconnue: L'Autriche-Hongrie et l'Irlande, 1900-1914, in: Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains 1 (2007), 105-120. Jože Pirjevec has pointed out to me that in the interwar period the T.I.G.R. movement in Slovene and Croat-populated areas of northeastern Italy took the IRA as a model.

were certainly significant. Some recent studies have explored connections and
comparisons between Irish issues and eastern Europe.[6] Strangely enough, there
has not been much historical research on the parallels between Ireland and Po-
land, apart from some comparisons argued from a culturalist perspective.[7] On
the other hand, there appears to be a growing interest in analysing aspects of
European history in terms of "internal colonialism", as a way of incorporating
the Irish history in a broader picture.[8] Comparative approaches for Irish history
can also include the case of Finland, which can legitimately be seen as histori-
cally part of eastern Europe.[9] Historians of the Ukraine have also seen analogies
between Ireland and Ukraine.[10]

It is instead striking that Ireland does not seem to have attracted much inter-
est in the Balkan context. There does not seem to have been any comparison be-
tween the Irish Question and Balkan nationalism in studies inspired by the work
of Edward Said,[11] of Maria Todorova and of others.[12] There is no shortage of
studies on the connections between Ireland and India,[13] but for some reason the
issue of Ireland and the Balkans seems to have been left out.[14]

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6   For a useful overview of Irish perceptions of eastern Europe see Róisín HEALY, "Inventing
    Eastern Europe" in Ireland, 1848-1918, in: Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane
    „Gheorghe Şincai" (Târgu-Mureş) 12 (2009), 103-117.

7   See, e.g., Marta PETRUSEWICZ, The Modernization of the European Periphery: Ireland, Po-
    land, and the Two Sicilies, 1820-1870. Parallel and Connected, Distinct and Comparable, in:
    Deborah COHEN / Maura O'CONNOR (eds.), Comparison and History. Europe in Cross-
    National Perspective, New York 2004, 145-164.

8   See, e.g., the conference "Colonialism within Europe: Fact or Fancy?", organised by the
    Humboldt-Kolleg at the Moore Institute, NUI, Galway, 22-23 June 2012. The category of "in-
    ternal colonialism" was developed in Michael HECHTER, Internal Colonialism. The Celtic
    Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966, London 1975. For an extensive discus-
    sion of the category of "colonialism" in the Balkan context see Robin OKEY, Taming Balkan
    Nationalism: The Habsburg "Civilizing Mission" in Bosnia, 1878-1914, Oxford 2007.

9   See Bill KISSANE, Nineteenth-Century Nationalism in Finland and Ireland: A Comparative
    Analysis, in: Nationalism and Ethnic Politics 6 (2000), no. 2, 25-42.

10 See, e.g., Stephen VELYCHENKO, Post-Colonialism and Ukrainian History, in: Ab Imperio 1
    (2004), 391-404.

11 Edward SAID discussed Ireland in his essay Yeats and Decolonization, in: Terry EAGLETON /
    Fredric JAMESON / Edward W. SAID, Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature, Minneapolis
    1990, 69-95. The essay follows a basically culturalist approach.

12 Todorova mentions Ireland in passing in the Introduction to Maria TODOROVA (ed.), Balkan
    Identities. Nation and Memory, London 2004, 7, fn. 18.

13 On connections between Ireland and India in the imperial context see Nicholas MANSERGH,
    The Prelude to Partition: Concepts and Aims in Ireland and India, Cambridge 1978; Thomas
    G. FRASER, Ireland and India, in: Keith JEFFERY (ed.), An Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland
    and the British Empire, Manchester 1996, 77-93; Michael SILVESTRI, "The Sinn Fein of In-
    dia": Irish Nationalism and the Policing of Revolutionary Terrorism in Bengal, in: Journal of
    British Studies 4 (2000), 454-486; Stephen HOWE, Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in
    Irish History and Culture, Oxford 2000; Joseph LENNON, Irish Orientalism: A Literary and In-
    tellectual History, Syracuse 2004, chapter 4, 167-203.

14 One should mention a comparison between Northern Ireland and the Greek-FYROM border:

Irish Nationalism and the Balkan Anomaly

Cultural and religious factors have undoubtedly played (and continue to play) a role in defining attitudes to Ottoman (and post-Ottoman) Europe. This also applied to Irish nationalist commentators throughout the 19th century and on the eve of World War I. They had little difficulty in identifying with Poles, Czechs or Hungarians (who happened to be western Christians and mostly Roman Catholics). Identifying with eastern Orthodox Christians (let alone Balkan Muslims) was quite another matter. As Róisín Healy points out,

> "while English liberals generally endorsed self-determination for the subject nations of the German, Austrian, Russian and Ottoman empires, Irish nationalists went a step further, insofar as they identified with these Eastern Europeans. Their own history, as they understood it, allowed them to empathise with others who suffered the homogenising policies of imperial governments. The influence of Catholicism in Ireland encouraged the formation of a hierarchy of Eastern European nations from Poland at the top, followed by Hungary, to the Orthodox and Muslim peoples of the Balkans at the bottom."

Healy then concludes that

> "Irish views of Eastern Europe were not fixed, as the events of the First World War demonstrate. Radical nationalists were willing to sacrifice the Prussian Poles, for instance, to accommodate an alliance with Germany. Ireland's various 'Eastern Europes' were, like those of other Europeans, inventions that reflected developments at home rather than in the region itself. And given Ireland's own subordinate status, they had precious little impact on the lives of Eastern Europeans."[15]

One might add another dimension to this picture. 19th-century Ireland remained in many respects an integral part of an imperial centre, the United Kingdom. This fact may well have had many drawbacks, but it also offered Irishmen tangible benefits in the wider world. First of all, in the British Empire, where there was no shortage of Irish personnel, at all levels.[16] In the United States, the Irish certainly ranked below White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, but well above southern Europeans, and even more above eastern Europeans. Indeed, as Liam Kennedy has argued,

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Piero VERENI, Il discorso nazionale e le voci di confine: il caso Greco-macedone e quello irlandese a confronto, in: Armando PITASSIO (ed.), L'intreccio perverso: Costruzione di identità nazionali e nazionalismi xenofobi nell'Europa sud-orientale, Perugia 2001. Vereni provides an anthropological rather than a historical comparison between the two areas.

15 HEALY, "Inventing Eastern Europe" in Ireland, 117.

16 On this aspect see JEFFERY, An Irish Empire?.

> "to see the Irish experience as an exemplar of misery and oppression among European peoples, still less against the backdrop of the wider world, is simply an expression of ignorance in relation to the histories of other nations. Whether it is location, climate, land occupancy, political and religious rights, economic welfare or violence, the Irish record is no worse than the modal European experience, and in a variety of respects more fortunate."[17]

Eugenio Biagini has also pointed out that

> "until 1919 most European 'small nationalities' were included in multinational empires, and unless we wish to describe the experiences of, let us say, the Czechs and the Slovenes – not to mention the Catalans – as 'colonial', we need to devise broader and less Anglo-centric models of historical analysis for Ireland. Furthermore, while aspects of that country's economic history may be interpreted through the 'colonial' lens, recent scholarship on the Irish involvement in the British Empire has shown to what extent they were both protagonists and victims of imperial exploitation and expansion."[18]

In short, Ireland was part of a metropolitan system of High Culture: the subsequent solution to the Irish Question, starting from land reform, was going to prove it. It was therefore quite logical that Irish nationalists should identify in eastern Europe with what were termed "historic nations" (i. e. nations with an aristocracy): the Polish and Hungarian nations. As it happens, the only "non-historic" nation (i. e. without an aristocracy) they seemed to accept was the Czech nation, which also happened to be the most advanced "non-historic" nation, in many respects almost an equal to some of the "historic" nations. In point of fact, the identification with Hungary which Arthur Griffith espoused was by far the most significant. Irish nationalists wanted equality in a metropolitan system. In 1921, during the negotiations for the peace treaty with Britain, Arthur Griffith made a point of saying: "we do not feel ourselves to be a colony but a nation."[19] None of this was remotely comparable to the unfolding of Balkan nationalism and the creation of Balkan nation states. It made perfect sense to ignore Balkan Europe.

Finally, it is essential to remember that before World War I the only (partly) successful rebellion against British colonialism was the Boer rebellion, i. e. a rebellion by European settlers, not by „natives". Identification with "anti-colonial" rebellions did not necessarily imply identification with non-Europeans. Irish nationalists were strongly pro-Boer. The concept underlying such a stance was often expressed as "equal rights for all white men the world over".[20]

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17 Liam KENNEDY, Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland, Belfast 1996, 221.

18 Eugenio BIAGINI, British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876-1906, Cambridge 2007, 25.

19 Thomas JONES, Whitehall Diary, III: Ireland 1918-1925, London 1971, 132, quoted in John WHYTE, Interpreting Northern Ireland, Oxford 1990, 178.

20 On this aspect see Bruce NELSON, Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race, Prince-

Irish Questions and European Observers

The history of the Irish Question as seen from outside Ireland and Great Britain remains an interesting topic.[21] It ranges from Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont, to John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.[22] The leading theoretician of the early SPD, Karl Kautsky, published a significant essay on Irish history.[23] He was one of a wide-ranging group of German-speaking observers (from the early 19th century until the aftermath of World War I) who were at some point interested in Ireland.[24] In the second half of the 20th century German historians such as Erhard Rumpf have made important contributions to the historiography of the Irish Question (or Irish Questions).[25] This interest may be connected to the fact that Germany was (and is) a confessionally divided

ton 2012, 147-148, and chapters 5 and 6, 121-147, 148-181.

21 For a general introduction to European views of the Irish Question see Nicholas MANSERGH, The Irish Question, 1840-1921, London 1965, originally published in 1940. For more recent surveys of the topic see Gary K. PEATLING, "Continental Crossings": European Influences on British Public Opinion and Irish Politics, 1848-2002, in: History of European Ideas 27 (2001), no. 4, 371-387; and Séamas Ó SÍOCHÁIN (ed.), Social Thought on Ireland in the Nineteenth Century, Dublin 2009.

22 For discussions of the views of Marx and Engels on Ireland see MANSERGH, The Irish Question, 83-110; Ellen HAZELKORN, Some Problems with Marx's Theory of Capitalist Penetration into Agriculture: The Case of Ireland, in: Economy and Society 10 (1981), no. 3, 284-315; Jie HYUN LIM, Marx's Theory of Imperialism and the Irish National Question, in: Science & Society 56 (1992), no. 2, 163-178; Chandana MATHUR / Dermot DIX, The Irish Question in Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' Writings on Capitalism and Empire, in: Ó SÍOCHÁIN (ed.), Social Thought on Ireland, 97-107; Gian Mario BRAVO, Marx ed Engels, Riflessioni sull'Irlanda e su Beaumont, in: Manuela CERETTA / Mario TESINI (eds.), Gustave de Beaumont. La schiavitù, l'Irlanda, la questione sociale nel XIX secolo, Milano 2011, 298-315. Engels' contribution was discussed at the conference: "Friedrich Engels' 'Geschichte Irlands' (1869/70) im Kontext der deutsch-irischen Beziehungen im 19. Jahrhundert", conference organised under the auspices of the *Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Berlin, 11-12 August 2011. The papers have been subsequently published in: Marx-Engels Jahrbuch, 2011 (2012). These include Jürgen HERRES, Marx und Engels über Irland. Ein Überblick. Artikel, Briefe, Manuskripte und Schriften, 12-27; and Gisela HOLFTER, Friedrich Engels im Kontext der deutschsprachigen Irlandrezeption im 19. Jahrhundert, 28-48.

23 Kautsky's essay was first published in 1880, cf. Karl KAUTSKY, Irland. Kulturhistorische Skizze, *Volksfreund* 1/9 (1880), nos. 5, 7, 8 (5 March, 5 and 20 April); and reprinted as: Irland, Berlin 1922. An English translation was published by Athol Books in Belfast in 1974, under the title Ireland (1922).

24 For an overview of recent German research see Marzia PONSO, Oltre Beaumont: l'immagine dell'Irlanda in Germania, tra esotismo e *Realpolitik*, in: CERETTA / TESINI (eds.), Gustave de Beaumont, 217-242.

25 Erhard RUMPF, Nationalismus und Sozialismus in Irland, Meisenheim/Glan 1959, translated and expanded (with Anthony C. HEPBURN) as Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth-Century Ireland, Liverpool 1977.

country, or simply to the historic rivalry with Great Britain.[26] Another confessionally divided country, the Netherlands, has also contributed to the historiography of Ireland.[27] In the 19th century, some prominent Italians had provided important commentaries on Irish affairs, Camillo Cavour, Giuseppe Mazzini and Carlo Cattaneo.[28] Up to the time of the First World War, comparisons between the Southern Question in Italy and the Irish Question were frequently debated by Italian observers.[29]

The Northern Ireland Model

From the 1970s onwards, many observers started to discuss the Northern Ireland conflict in terms of conflict resolution (or conflict management) perspectives. Using this kind of approach, many argued that the case of Northern Ireland (1921-1972, and beyond) was comparable to the cases of Algeria, South Africa and Israel/Palestine: these are (or were) all settler states, therefore they could be analysed together.[30] The analogy has been contested.[31] Historically informed comparative research on Ireland and other regions is quite scarce, and still at a tentative stage.[32] In this respect, Hugh Roberts' work on Algeria in a

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26 German historians have also made contributions in this field. See, e.g., Hans-Dieter KLUGE, Irland in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft, Politik und Propaganda vor 1914 und im Ersten Weltkrieg, Frankfurt / Bern 1985; Wolfgang HÜNSELER, Die irische Frage in den deutschbritischen Beziehungen und ihre Beurteilung in der zeitgenössischen Presse und Publizistik, Frankfurt / Bern 1978; Id., Das deutsche Kaiserreich und die irische Frage, Frankfurt / Bern 1978.

27 See, inter alia, Marcus Willem HESLINGA, The Irish Border as a Cultural Divide, Assen ²1971; Joost AUGUSTEIJN, From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916-1921, Dublin 1996.

28 For a discussion of Cavour's and Mazzini's views on the Irish Question see MANSERGH, The Irish Question, chapter 2. For a brief overview of recent research on this topic see Guido FRANZINETTI, Le questioni irlandesi viste da esponenti del movimento nazionale dell'Ottocento: Cavour, Cattaneo e Mazzini, in: CERETTA / TESINI (eds.), Gustave de Beaumont, 264-271.

29 Rosario ROMEO, „L'Irlanda e noi" (1974), in: Id., Scritti storici, 1951-1987, Milano 1990, 197; and FRANZINETTI, Le questioni irlandesi, 271, fn. 23.

30 See, e.g., John McGARRY / Brendan O'LEARY, The Political Regulation of National and Ethnic Conflict, in: Parliamentary Affairs 1 (1994), 94-115; Id., Explaining Northern Ireland. Broken Images, Oxford 1995, 330-336.

31 See, e.g., Paul BEW, Ireland. The Politics of Enmity, 1789-2006, Oxford 2007, 505.

32 For a more historically oriented comparative approach (covering, inter alia, Algeria, Prussian Poland, the southern states of the USA) see Frank WRIGHT, Northern Ireland: A Comparative Analysis, Dublin 1987. For an approach based on religious cultures see Donald H. AKENSON, God's Peoples. Covenant and Land in South Africa, Israel, and Ulster, Ithaca 1992. For a comparison at the level of historiographies of Ireland and of Israel/Palestine see Stephen HOWE, The Politics of Historical "Revisionism": Comparing Ireland and Israel/Palestine, in: Past and Present 8 (2000), 227-253. For a comparison with Upper Silesia after World War I see Timothy K. WILSON, Frontiers of Violence. Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper

comparative perspective remains relevant.[33] Many studies attempting to apply historical analogies to Ireland simply reproduce embellished versions of traditional nationalist narratives.

A discussion of the merits of the policy options connected to approaches of this kind are beyond the scope of this paper. The Northern Ireland peace process has often been presented in an idealized and inaccurate fashion. Its applicability in other contexts has been strongly contested.[34]

A flawed perception of the Northern Ireland peace process, in itself, would not invalidate the policy options proposed for other contexts. Ernest Gellner once said that a highly flawed theory (such as relativism) in some circumstances might be „doing good in encouraging compromise".[35] Similar considerations may apply to the possible uses of inaccurate analogies during a peace process. It would, however, call into question the reliability of historical and sociological assumptions on which many "conflict resolution" paradigms are based. As Elie Kedourie used to say, "experts should be on tap but not on top".[36]

The Israel/Palestine Connection to Ireland

There has been a steady flow of mainly policy-oriented research (originating from the Israeli context) comparing the Northern Ireland conflict with the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.[37] In the 1990s, following the transition to post-apart-

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Silesia, 1918-1922, Oxford 2010; and Julia EICHENBERG, The Dark Side of Independence: Paramilitary Violence in Ireland and Poland after the First World War, in: Contemporary European History 19 (2010), no. 3, 183-194.

33 Hugh ROBERTS, Northern Ireland and the Algerian Analogy: A Suitable Case for Gaullism?, Belfast 1986. Roberts has in fact made important contributions in the field of the social anthropology of the Berbers and of the political sociology of contemporary Algeria. He was the director of the International Crisis Group's North Africa Project from 2002 to 2007 and from February to July 2011. His policy-oriented papers include Understanding Islamism, ICG Middle East/North Africa Report No. 372, March 2005.

34 See John BEW / Martyn FRAMPTON / Inigo GURRUCHAGA, Talking to Terrorists. Making Peace in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country, London 2009; for an analysis focussed specifically on comparisons between conflicts in Northern Ireland and in Israel/Palestine see John BEW / Martyn FRAMPTON, Talking to Terrorists: The Myths, Misconceptions and Misapplication of the Northern Ireland Peace Process, in: Jerusalem Viewpoints 566 (August-September 2008), Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

35 Ernest GELLNER, Postmodernism, Reason and Religion, London 1992, 96.

36 For an analysis of Kedourie's views on the relationship between expert opinion and policy options see Peter ROBERTS, History: Puzzle and People or Prescription and Prophecy?, in: Middle Eastern Studies 5 (2005), 735-767.

37 See, e.g., Sammy SMOOHA, The Model of Ethnic Democracy, ECMI Working Paper 13, Flensburg, October 2001; Id., The Viability of Ethnic Democracy as a Mode of Conflict Management: Comparing Israel to Northern Ireland, in: Todd M. ENDELMAN (ed.), Comparing Jewish Societies, Ann Arbor 1997, 267-312; Ian LUSTICK, Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza, Ithaca 1993; Guy

heid South Africa, and the apparent successes of the moves towards peace set-
tlements in Israel/Palestine and in Northern Ireland, the conflict resolution
model was transformed into a policy paradigm, based on an idealized vision of
the different peace processes, including a no less idealized version of Truth
Commissions. Belinda Bozzoli has pointed out that the South African Truth
Commission was established as a result of an *already existing* political settle-
ment. The settlement was reached because of the willingness of the white mi-
nority to live under black majority rule. Equivalent conditions have never ex-
isted in Northern Ireland or in Israel/Palestine.[38] In Israel, however, the North-
ern Ireland analogy has been present in public debate for many decades, perhaps
on the basis of an idealized view of the South African experience.[39] Unsurpris-
ingly, the analogy has also surfaced in Palestinian debates.[40]

There are instead some *real* connections between the Israel/Palestine conflict
and Irish conflicts. John Bowyer Bell noted many years ago that "in the 1940s,
the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Group in Palestine, learning from the [Black
and] Tan War [in Ireland, 1920-21], waged a similar campaign against the Brit-
ish". He then added that "this interfertilization went full circle when the IRA in
the fifties read, almost as a text, Menachem Begin's *The Revolt. Story of the Ir-
gun* (New York, 1951)".[41] Colin Shindler has provided a wider framework for
understanding the connection between the Israeli Right and Ireland.[42] This is

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BEN-PORAT (ed.), The Failure of the Middle East Peace Process? A Comparative Analysis of
Peace Implementation in Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland and South Africa, New York 2008.
For a fairly representative example of the "colonialist" approach applied to Zionism see Uri
RAM, The Colonization Perspective in Israeli Sociology: Internal and External Comparisons,
in: Journal of Historical Sociology 6 (1993), no. 3, 327-350.

38 Belinda BOZZOLI (University of Witwatersrand), speaking during the discussions at a confer-
ence on "Memory and Violence" held in Cortona on 14-15 June, 2002.

39 Alon Confino has pointed out that Meron Benvenisti (former vice-mayor of Jerusalem) "noted
the analogy between Ireland and Palestine long ago and attempted to draw lessons from it".
Cf. Alon CONFINO, [Review of] Joe Cleary, Literature, Partition and the Nation State [2001],
in: Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History 3 (2002), no. 3.

40 See Ali ABUNIMAH, One Country. A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse,
New York 2006; and Id., Finkelstein, BDS and the Destruction of Israel, *Aljazeera*, 26 Febru-
ary, 2012, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/02/20122271 11759-
385177.html>, 24 September, 2012.

41 John Bowyer BELL, The Secret Army. A History of the IRA, 1916-1970, London 1970, 149
and 164. See also Id., Terror Out of Zion. Irgun Zvai Leumi, Lehi, and the Palestinian Under-
ground, 1929-1949, New York 1977.

42 See Colin SHINDLER, The Triumph of Military Zionism. Nationalism and the Origins of the
Israeli Right, London 2006, chapter 8, 143-147; Id., The Irgun Zvai Leumi as the Zionist Sinn
Fein (unpublished lecture at SOAS, London, 26 November, 2007) [copy of the text provided
by the author]. Shindler has pointed out that Ze'ev Jabotinsky was initially unenthusiastic
about the Irish nationalist movement, and always remained cautious on this point. The enthu-
siasm for the Irish model was in fact more typical of the generation of Menachem Begin and
Itzhak Shamir.

quite unsurprising. It is also likely that these attitudes were (and are) by no means confined to the Israeli Right, but exist also in the Israeli Left (however defined), since Israeli political culture has always had a strong imprint of 1940s "anti-imperialism".

A more specific and contemporary reference to the Irish Question during Mandatory Palestine has been pointed out recently by Rory Miller.[43] He quotes from an essay by Richard Koebner (a historian coming from what was then known as Breslau), who demonstrated a sound understanding of the Irish historical context:

> "The question now arises whether we, the Yishuv of Palestine and the Zionist Movement, have something to learn from it [the Anglo-Irish conflict]. First, we must make up our minds which of the nationalist parties of Ireland we are going to liken to ourselves, the 'Irish' Irishmen, the Celts of the South, or the Ulstermen, the Anglo-Irish who predominate in the Northern counties. Our nationalist interpreters of history are thinking of the former, who now have their independent state. Bernard Shaw, however, once complained that the Balfour Declaration created a new Ulster. The truth of the matter is that both these comparisons are accurate in some minor points only. With the Ulster Irish we have this much in common that we constitute an enclave in a world of different nationality, and that we are interested in British protection of our national existence. But the conditions which ensure such protection in the case of the Ulster Irish are lacking in ours. We are not a kindred people to the English, and our country is separated from theirs, not by mere narrow straits, but by the whole Mediterranean and Continental Europe."[44]

A Kurdish Analogy

Analogies with the Irish context are not confined to Mandatory Palestine, but can also be found in other parts of the Middle East. For example, in his recent memoirs, Bernard Lewis refers to a conversation he had with a Turkish friend some decades ago: "I asked why the Turks and Kurds couldn't live together in Turkey like the Scots and the English in the United Kingdom. He replied im-

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43 Rory MILLER, "An Oriental Ireland". Thinking about Palestine in Terms of the Irish Question during the Mandatory Era, in: Id. (ed.), Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years, Farnham / Burlington 2010, 157-174.

44 Richard KOEBNER, Ireland – the False Analogy [originally published in Hebrew in 1945], in: Martin BUBER / Judah L. MAGNES / Ernst SIMON (eds.), Towards Union in Palestine. Essays on Zionism and Jewish-Arab Cooperation, Jerusalem 1947, 45. For the context of Koebner's essay see Klaus HOFMANN, "Canaanism", in: Middle Eastern Studies 2 (March 2011), 273-294. For his historical work see KOEBNER, Geschichte, Geschichtsbewußtsein und Zeitwende: Vorträge und Schriften aus dem Nachlaß, hg. vom Institut für Deutsche Geschichte der Universität Tel Aviv et al., Gerlingen 1990.

mediately, 'The Kurds aren't Scotch, they're Irish'." Lewis considers the re-
mark inaccurate, since "the Turks and the Kurds are both Muslims; the English
and the Scotch [sic] are both predominantly Protestants".[45] In reality, while
Lewis was right from a nominalist point of view, he missed the substantive
point: Irish Roman Catholics are no more (or no less) distinct from the English
(and the British, however defined) than the Kurds are from "ethnic" and Sunni
Turks. Indeed, the complex mixtures of connection and separateness between
Irish and English, and between Kurds and Turks, are actually quite similar in
the two cases, despite the obvious historical differences (starting with the differ-
ent role of the language issue).

The Kohn Dichotomy

The connection between Ireland, Mandatory Palestine and eastern Europe can
be extended further, by examining the role of Hans Kohn (Bohemian, dissident
Zionist in the Yishuv, and finally a US citizen). Recent Israeli research proposes
a radical revision of the interpretation of Hans Kohn's theory of nationalism,
through a proper historical contextualization of his experience in Mandatory
Palestine. It now appears that Kohn did not really believe in what has been
called the "Kohn dichotomy".[46]

The dichotomy as it has been traditionally understood is a classification of
western European vs. eastern European nationalisms, and thereby basically of
"good" vs. "bad" nationalism.[47] The dichotomy has been repeatedly proclaimed
as dead, but in fact it has been regularly resurrected under a variety of guises.[48]
As André Liebich has pointed out, "several recent critiques have specifically ad-
dressed the Kohn dichotomy" (Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman, Stephen

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45   Bernard LEWIS (with Buntzie E. CHURCHILL), Notes on a Century. Reflections of a Middle
     East Historian, London 2012, 68.
46   See the papers from the conference "The Legacy of Hans Kohn", Jerusalem, Hebrew Univer-
     sity, 11-12 March, 2009, subsequently published in the Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 55
     (2010), and especially Adi GORDON, The Ideological Convert and the "Mythology of Coher-
     ence": The Contradictory Hans Kohn and his Multiple Metamorphoses, 273-293; Noam
     PIANKO, Did Kohn Believe in the "Kohn Dichotomy"? Reconsidering Kohn's Journey from
     the Political Idea of Judaism to the Idea of Nationalism, 295-311. See also Adi GORDON, The
     Need for West: Hans Kohn and the North Atlantic Community, in: Journal of Contemporary
     History 46 (2011), no. 1, 33-57; and Arie M. DUBNOV, What is Jewish (If Anything) about
     Isaiah Berlin's Philosophy?, in: Religions 3 (2012), no. 2, 289-319.
47   Kohn himself seemed to acquiesce in the popularization of the dichotomy, as proposed by
     Louis L. Snyder. See the Foreword which Kohn wrote for Louis L. SNYDER, The Meaning of
     Nationalism, New Brunswick/N.J. 1954. The book contains a chart (118-20) illustrating the
     dichotomy between western and eastern nationalism, which presumably Kohn endorsed.
48   For an overview of the development of Kohn's work and current debates see André LIEBICH,
     Searching for the Perfect Nation: The Itinerary of Hans Kohn (1891-1971), in: Nations and
     Nationalism 12 (2006), no. 4, 579-96.

Shulman, Bernard Yack, Rogers Brubaker), but it "has been entertained very seriously indeed" by a series of influential authors who have been "indebted to Hans Kohn": Isaiah Berlin, John Plamenatz, Michael Ignatieff, Liah Greenfeld, Ernest Gellner, Will Kymlicka, Yael Tamir.[49] In 1976 Ken Wolf had singled out Kohn as "the only major student of nationalism who argued, even after 1945, that 'liberal nationalism' was not an oxymoron", and that "enlightened nationalism and liberalism were compatible, that such a nationalism could promote individual liberty and world unity".[50]

The traditional "Kohn dichotomy" is therefore alive and well. This is due to two basic reasons. The first is that the policy-oriented shift in social science research in the 1990s (following the end of the Cold War) required a quick answer to the apparent "ethnic" revival of that period. However much it may be contested, the Kohn dichotomy (embellished and refashioned) was available, and it could be rapidly used to assert that nationalism was not necessarily a negative phenomenon, provided it was of the "civic" rather than the "ethnic" kind.

The effectiveness of this paradigm from a policy point of view is not addressed in this paper, but it is highly contestable from a historical and conceptual point of view. Any serious historical understanding of nationalism requires a unitary approach to the phenomenon. E. H. Carr put the issue succinctly in his 1939 report: "the term [nationalism] is used in such a sense that Mazzini, Gladstone and Woodrow Wilson can be described as exponents of nationalism as well as Herr Hitler".[51]

The Irish Context

The second part of this paper intends to provide a brief overview of some key passages in Irish history from the Home Rule Crisis to the Irish Revolution(s) of 1918-1921, and up to the end of Stormont (the Northern Ireland Assembly) and the Good Friday Agreement of April 1998. It must be stressed that this paper is not based on any original research on the history of the Irish Question. At best, it is based on a highly selective reading of the historiography on this topic, and it does not aim to be in any way comprehensive.[52] On the other hand, it is based on two decades of research in east central Europe (together with a fairly wide experience in southeastern Europe) which has always made implicit reference to the history of the Irish Question.

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49 Liebich, Searching for the Perfect Nation, 583.
50 Ken Wolf, Hans Kohn's Liberal Nationalism: The Historian as Prophet, in: Journal of the History of Ideas 4 (1976), 651 (quoted in Liebich, Searching for the Perfect Nation, 583).
51 Edward H. Carr et al., Nationalism: A Report by a Study Group of Members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London 1939, xx.
52 For a general overview of the historiography of the Irish Question see Paul Bew, Ireland. The Politics.

Eastern Europe and Ireland: the Parallels

The clearest parallel between Ireland and eastern Europe was provided by the Galician historian Lewis Namier in an article published in 1955 (but probably written at the end of the 1940s). Namier was considered, by admirers and detractors alike, a true conservative, indeed a reactionary. He single-handedly overturned the prevailing orthodoxies of British historiography, belittling the role of ideologies and stressing the importance of individual and family interests.[53] He certainly did not share the reassuring assumptions of the British liberal establishment of the day. He managed to dominate British 18th-century historiography for at least a generation. Yet he always remained "English History's towering outsider".[54]

This explains why his work on eastern Europe has been neglected, despite a few exceptions. In many respects, Namier had a lot in common with two other outsiders in British historiography and social anthropology: Elie Kedourie and Ernest Gellner (who made two of the most important contributions to the nationalism debate in the 1960s).[55]

In *Basic Factors in 19th-Century European History* (based on a lecture he delivered in 1952) Namier outlined in the following way the process of national formation in eastern Europe:

> "In linguistically mixed regions delimitation is a thorny problem even where
> there is mere juxtaposition of national groups. But in Europe intermixture
> was as a rule the result of past conquests, political and cultural, which had
> reduced the original group to a state of social inferiority. Conquests created
> Ulsters, and over further, wider regions spread the network of an 'ascen-

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53 See H. T. DICKINSON, Namier, Lewis Bernstein, in: John P. CANNON (ed.), The Blackwell Dictionary of Historians, Oxford 1988, 295-96; and Linda COLLEY, Lewis Namier, London 1989.

54 CARR, English History's Towering Outsider, *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 May, 1971, 577-8, reprinted as "Lewis Namier" in: Id., From Napoleon to Stalin and Other Essays, London 1980, 184-191. For a brief overview of the literature on Namier see Amy NG, Nationalism and Political Liberty. Redlich, Namier, and the Crisis of the Empire, Oxford 2004; Guido FRANZINETTI, Scoprire Namier, in: Contemporanea 1 (2006), 172-81, and Andrea GRAZIOSI, Il mondo in Europa. Namier e il Medio Oriente europeo, 1815-1948, in: Contemporanea 2 (2007), 193-229.

55 Kedourie came from an Iraqi background; his approach to nationalism and his conservatism had obvious affinities to Namier's views. Gellner came from a Bohemian background. He was not influenced by Namier's work, but rather by Kedourie's. On Kedourie's views see Sylvia KEDOURIE (ed.), Elie Kedourie CBE, FBA 1926-1992, in: Middle Eastern Studies 33 (1997), no. 4, supplement; and the special issue "The Actions and Thoughts of Living Men: Elie Kedourie's Approaches to History and Political Theory", Middle Eastern Studies 41 (2005), no. 5. On Gellner see Ernest GELLNER, Contro il relativismo, in: L'indice dei libri del mese 6 (1990), 24-25 (published in the original English version as "Interview: Ernest Gellner", in: Scottish Affairs 16 (1996) 41-48; Guido FRANZINETTI, Gellner and the Historians (forthcoming).

dancy' primarily based on the landowning classes and the town population, alien to, or alienated from, the peasantry which retained its own language or religion, or both. Self-government meant, in the earlier stages, the rule of the big landowners and their retainers in the countryside, and of the upper middle-class and the intelligentsia in the towns; their language or religion determined the national character of the country (Grattan's Parliament, composed of Anglo-Irish Protestants, deemed itself representative of the Irish nation). Hence in the numerous Irelands scattered all over Europe turmoil and strife were bound to result from the rise of the lower classes, and especially of the peasantry, to political consciousness and action. National and religious conflicts interlocked with agrarian movements, envenoming each other: war was waged for both the national and the personal ownership of the land, and either side felt that it was fighting not for private interests only. An educated upper class, for centuries accustomed to consider the country its own, would not easily allow itself to be reduced to the position of alien interlopers, while peasants rooted in the land, as only they can be, fought the long-drawn battle with an obstinacy unsurpassed by any other class. Moreover the dominant minority invariably had the backings of its Ulster and of its homeland: even under a democracy. With the progressive widening of the political nation, the underprivileged orders, one by one down the social scale, were taking over the quasi-proprietary claims of dynasties and feudal oligarchies to territorial dominance; they became ideological partners or heirs of their *quondam* rulers, and frequently their actual partners by being settled on the land or in government posts in the disputed territory. Peasant-settlers planted as a garrison to keep down the subject race, school-teachers sent to spread the language of the minority, and a host of petty officials, constituted a master-nation whose rule was much harder to bear, and more galling, than that of a dynasty or of a remote oligarchy. Consider the amount of disturbance which during the 19th century was caused in the political life of this country [i.e. Great Britain] by an Ireland geographically isolated and not subject to any further encroachments; and you can gauge the effect which ten dozen Irelands were bound to have on the life of 19th-century Europe as borderlands between contending nations, especially while attempts continued to be made to complete conquest and conversion."[56]

Namier's picture of the nature of eastern European history as seen in an Irish perspective (and, even more, the eastern European perspective on Irish history) is powerful and effective. It cannot, however, stand as an adequate account, even in a brief overview. Namier established his reputation as a historian of 18th-century England, hence the references to Grattan's parliament (1782-1800).

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56 Lewis B. NAMIER, Basic Factors in 19th-Century European History [1952], in: Id., Personalities and Powers, London 1955, 106-107.

More ominously, he uses interchangeably "Ulster" and "Ireland(s)", a fact which suggests a somewhat cursory acquaintance with the historical and political realities of Ireland in the first half of the 20th century; he would never have made a mistake of that kind when writing, say, of Poland in the 1930s.

He had proved to be on safer ground in 1922, when he had sketched a general picture of the division between the agrarian history of western and eastern Europe, explaining the revolutionary inclinations of eastern European peasants.[57] But even in this other case, the relevance of Namier's analysis is not its accuracy in historical detail, but the general insight it provides for a genuinely comparative approach to both eastern European and Irish history.

The crucial point is the mutual intelligibility of the social structure of eastern Europe and Ireland, and in particular the creation of "Ulsters" (i. e. settlements of groups which were culturally distinct from the peasants of the surrounding areas), the consequent establishment of a complex hierarchy in which the social and the cultural ("ethnic") affiliations are interwoven but never perfectly matched. In fact, it is the assumed "western" European social structure (based on an idealized version of the French model) which needs to be explained, historically speaking. The intelligibility is demonstrated by the fact that an eastern European such as Namier had noticed it immediately, almost unthinkingly: indeed, his picture of the Irish context is clearly a transference of his own Galician context.

More importantly, the Irish analogy had been pointed out already by Franciszek Bujak in 1908. Bujak, the leading Polish economic historian, saw Polish prospects in eastern Galicia (where there was a Ruthenian or Ukrainian majority) as unfavourable, and added: "The fate of the English nationality in Ireland, of the German in Czech lands, and the probable fate of the German nationality in Upper Silesia, serve us as a bad augury."[58] Bujak did not even consider possible cultural, let alone confessional, affinities between Polish and Irish national identities; he had pointed out the structural analogy between Anglo-Irish landowners, the Germans of Bohemia and the Poles of eastern Galicia. In 1917 Henry Brailsford, a keen observer of eastern Europe and the Balkans, had actually used the term "Ulster" (rather than "Ireland") in a discussion on the future of Austria-Hungary, as a metaphor for the problems which national states would have encountered after independence:

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57 Id., Agricultural Revolution, *Manchester Guardian Commercial. Supplement on Reconstruction in Europe*, August 1922 (reprinted in Id., Skyscrapers and Other Essays, London 1931, 150-51).

58 Franciszek BUJAK, Galicya, I., Lwów 1908, 94, as quoted in Ivan L. RUDNYTSKY, The Ukrainians in Galicia under Austrian Rule, in: Austrian History Yearbook 3 (1967), 394-429. See also Guido FRANZINETTI, The Austrian Littoral in a Cisleithanian Perspective, in: Acta Histriae 14 (2006), no. 1, 8.

"Austria-Hungary has the merit of existing. One cannot make a substitution at will. The 'independence' promised to these nations would be at best illusory. These little states would be forced, as they always have been, to oscillate between the German and Russian systems [...]. And what of their internal harmony? Most of these national states would include an 'Ulster'. There is in Bohemia a German minority which amounts to 35 per cent of the population (the Irish Ulster is only a quarter of the whole) and it has the superiority in wealth and education. In the whole province of Posen, three sundered fragments are to be reunited, the Germans form a considerable minority. A just and skilful redrawing of frontiers might somewhat reduce the numbers of the German minority in the case of Bohemia and Posen [...]. The drawing of frontiers, in short, is the least part of a solution of the problem of nationality [...]. Each of these little states would reproduce in little the hatreds and confusions of Europe. Our continental strife would simmer within them as a provincial civil war. The practical conclusion is as easy to state as it is difficult to realize. Peace in Europe cannot be achieved merely by a settlement of the national problems – the various 'Ulsters' stand in the way [...]."[59]

Namier may well have picked up his analogy between Ulster and eastern Europe from Brailsford's work (which he is bound to have read at the time, since he was working for the Political Intelligence Department within the Foreign Office). This does not mean that he shared Brailsford's perspective, since he was later to take pride in having materially contributed to the final collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy.[60] Once again, it must be stressed that what is relevant is not the compatibility of the views of Bujak, Brailsford and Namier, or indeed the historical accuracy of their different perspectives on Irish and eastern European history, but rather the structural analogy which they suggest.

In concluding this brief survey of historical analogies, one may also mention, in passing, the resolution of the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party, which urged a Central Asian policy which should avoid "the shadow of Ulster" (i. e. the possibility of a secession of territory from Soviet Turkestan organised by Russian settlers). On 31 December 1921, on the basis of a report presented by Stalin, the Politburo decided to send immediately Sokolnikov to Turkestan, instructing him to carry out "a policy in Turkestan, in which there should be nei-

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59 Henry N. BRAILSFORD, A League of Nations, London, November [2]1917 [orig. ed. February 1917], 109-112. Brailsford's most important book was Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future, London 1906; it is still widely quoted in scholarly literature. For the evolution of Brailford's position see Fred M. LEVENTHAL, The Last Dissenter: H. N. Brailsford and His World, Oxford 1985.

60 On this point see Julia NAMIER, Namier. A Biography, London 1971, chapter VII. For Namier's role in the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy see Isaiah BERLIN, Lewis Namier (1966), in: Id., Personal Impressions, London 1980, 75.

ther the shadow of Ulster, nor, at the same time, the shadow of the extremes to which Safarov had fallen".[61] The shadow of Ulster went quite far.

It is perhaps significant that on the eve of the Second World War an Irish commentator wrote that "we know in Ireland, and probably know in Poland, in Slovakia and in Russia, and a score of other countries where revolution has succeeded what is the cost of victorious hate".[62] The "revolution" he was referring to was by no means limited to the Soviet revolution, but the broader phenomenon of nationalist revolutions in eastern Europe. He clearly assumed that the Irish revolution was connected to them.

The Home Rule Crisis and Beyond, 1912-1916

Any starting-point in history is inevitably arbitrary, so there is no need to justify starting a brief historical overview of the Irish Questions with the Home Rule Crisis of 1912, which, strictly speaking, ends with the outbreak of the Great War. It is instead necessary to point out that for many decades historical and especially political reflections on the emergence of the Ulster problem were dominated by a simple "divide and rule" explanation: the problem was due to imperial machinations to prevent Irish independence, just as any idea of a conflict between Indian Muslims and Hindus was. For example, at a London conference in 1911 Robert Lynd was confidently asserting that

> "'Divide that you may govern' is an old settled imperial policy, and subject peoples are only kept subject by a constant excitement of all their worst passions in a way that recalls the degradations, without the heroisms, of civil wars [...]. In other words, in order to further an imperial policy, Ireland was to be kept like India, 'a geographical expression', a scene of civil hatreds, and to be prevented by hook or by crook from becoming a nation [...]."[63]

This sort of crude paradigm was of course present on the Irish nationalist side, with its liberal supporters, and with the various strands of the political Left in Britain and elsewhere. It is a remarkably resilient sort of paradigm, by no means

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61 Vladimir L. GENIS, Deportacija russkich iz Turkestana v 1921 godu ("Delo Safarova") [The deportation of Russians from Turkestan (the "Safarov affair")], Voprosy istorii 1 (1998), 56. Georgi Safarov had been the previous Bolshevik plenipotentiary in the region, and he had carried out in the previous months violently "anticolonial" policies, involving the expulsion of thousands of Slav colonists in the Central Asia region of Semireche, which was inhabited by Kazak and Kyrgiz pastoralists. Niccolò Pianciola provided this reference and translated this excerpt.

62 Stephen GWYNNE, Fond Opinions (1938), 37, quoted in BEW, Ireland. The Politics, 578. The reference to "Slovakia" must have been intended for Czechoslovakia, since the text was published before the creation of a Slovak entity.

63 Robert LYND, Preface. On Nationalism and Nationality, in: Nationalities and Subject Races: Report of Conference Held in Caxton Hall, Westminster, 28-30 June, 1910, London [1911], ix-x.

confined to the Irish context; it can be easily found in the Habsburg context of the Dualist period, for example in the Austrian Littoral and in Galicia (with the reference to the presumed manipulation by the Austrians of Slovene and Ukrainian or Ruthenian nationalism against the Italians and the Poles, as part of an Austrian "divide and rule" policy).[64]

In the context of Irish historiography there is also a more sophisticated paradigm, which might be termed "partitionist history", i. e. a historiography which sees the partition of Ireland in 1921 as inevitable (from a negative or positive point of view). It is important to keep in mind that this paradigm can be accepted by both sides of the "sectarian" divide.[65] In 1921 Eamon De Valera, the president of Sinn Fein, still argued that

"the difficulty of the problem was not the attitude of Ulster but the attitude of England. It is to the interest of no section of Irishmen to keep their differences alive, but it is to the interest of certain English politicians and statement who desire these differences as a cloak to screen their own imperial greed."[66]

These examples show the strength of these ideological constructs. Traditional Irish nationalist historiography is of course against partition as such, but this does not prevent it from being "partitionist" from the methodological point of view. As Paul Bew has pointed out,

"the partition of Ireland in 1921 has inevitably had a major effect on subsequent interpretations. Historians have concentrated with great skill on either the development of southern nationalism, with its agrarian and cultural dimensions, or on the internal dynamics of unionist resistance to home rule. Much has been achieved by the best recent scholarly work, though the understanding of Ulster unionism, in particular, has been hindered by its treatment as merely a negative appendage to nationalism. But what has been lost is not just the sense of a thirty-two-county perspective which the police reports [of the British administration in Dublin] attempt to give, not just, in other words, the sense of an administrative order's ability (albeit a fading one) to hold the country together, but also – and this is a rather more profound problem – the full scope of the actual interaction of Ulster unionism and Irish nationalism. Knowledge of the internal dynamics of the 'two traditions' has increased, but there has been less progress made in understanding

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64 See Franzinetti, The Austrian Littoral, 3.
65 In Irish contexts, the expression "sectarian" is synonymous to "confessional", but it refers to what in European (and especially eastern European) contexts would be termed "national" or "ethnic".
66 Eamon De Valera, *Weekly Freeman*, 26 March, 1921, quoted in Paul Bew, Moderate Nationalism in Ireland 1916-1923, in: Historical Journal 3 (1999), 734.

their interplay: certainly there has been no attempt to combine them in a scholarly analysis based on primary sources for both north and south."[67]

The approach of Bew and many others has been labelled as "revisionist", although it is misleading to see the "revisionist" camp as a compact entity.[68]

If Irish history of this period is to be linked to some kind of comparative framework, there are two main starting-points. The first is the economic and social context on the eve of the last Home Rule Crisis. Between 1870 and 1903 – the period which began with the recognition of customary tenant right and culminated in the Wyndham Land Act – the land issue had been solved. As Tom Garvin has put it:

> "The agrarian property system was revolutionized between 1880 and 1910, as the land was transferred from a mainly Anglo-Irish landlord class to a newly dominant stratum of small- and medium-sized owner-occupier farmers. The class system was also transformed in other ways as well; whereas in 1830, most of Ireland comprised a subsistence-peasant economy dominated by a huge landless rural proletariat, by 1890 commercial agriculture had made inroads, and the primary pattern of ownership was owner-occupier, the rural proletariat having largely melted away."[69]

So the subsequent national conflicts take place despite the fact that the most important economic and social issue of modern Irish history had *already* been solved. This distinction is relevant in any comparison with eastern European regions. Furthermore, the end of the land question meant that pre-existing social differentiation in the Irish agrarian context acquired more visibility and relevance. This was particularly true for the Catholics of Ireland:

> "In Ireland as a whole, the period 1861-1911 saw a substantial *embourgeoisement* of the Catholic population. Despite a slight fall in the percentage of Catholics in the total population of Ireland between 1861 and 1911, the percentage of Catholic doctors, lawyers, and engineers steadily grew, as, of course, did the percentage of schoolteachers [...]. But in the north-eastern counties there was rather less Catholic advance [...]. The process of agrarian reform in the period 1870-1909 – which had involved a shift of national resources in favour of the Irish farming classes and their children – had opened up major professional opportunities for the children of the Irish Catholic

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67 Paul BEW, Ideology and the Irish Question. Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism 1912-1916, Oxford 1994, x-xi.

68 For a representative selection of texts from both sides of the debate on "revisionism" see Ciaran BRADY (ed.), Interpreting Irish History. The Debate on Historical Revisionism 1938-1994, Dublin 1994, and David G. BOYCE / Alan O'DAY (eds.), The Making of Modern Irish History. Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy, London 1996.

69 Tom GARVIN, The Anatomy of a Nationalist Revolution: Ireland, 1858-1928, in: Comparative Studies in Society and History 69 (1986), no. 3, 469.

middle-class farmer throughout most of the island. This group has also benefited from the gradual displacement of the landed Protestant ascendancy. But
in the north-east the same process had worked out differently. Here, the main
beneficiaries had been the Protestant farming classes and their offspring.
Owing in part to the inherited advantages of capital and land, they had been
in the decisive position to take advantage of new educational opportunities
[…]. […] this social gulf contributed to a Protestant tone of hostility mixed
with obscure fears of Catholic revenge."[70]

The social and economic background to Home Rule and Partition was therefore
slightly more complicated than would appear in the traditional nationalist narrative, which is still present in European historiography. This applies also to the
financial relationship between Dublin and London, which had changed, to Ireland's benefit, especially after the application of welfare reforms to Ireland:

> "[…] by 1910-11 Irishmen received over 1 million [pounds sterling] more in
> benefits, mainly for old-age pensions and land purchase, than they paid in
> taxes […] under pressure from Joe Devlin [Nationalist leader in the North]
> dependence was further increased when the Irish party accepted the applica
> tion of National Insurance in Ireland."[71]

This much is unsurprising. What is instead innovative and revealing in the "revisionist" approach, and in Bew's work especially, is the rediscovery of the precise *political* context, which had previously tended to be absorbed in a tunnel
vision, leading from the Home Rule Crisis to the Easter Rising to Partition. For
a start, it is important to remember that

> "the conflict of Ulster unionism and Irish nationalism was much more sus
> tained than its earlier phases (1886 and 1893). Yet it remained predomi
> nantly peaceful and constitutional, which is not to deny the occasional out
> break of violence and, more frequently, the orchestrated threat of force by
> both sides, played an important role. There was nothing like the violence of
> the epoch of 1920-23, a period so marked by bloody events and intercom
> munal atrocity as to render almost impossible any attempt at a relatively dis
> passionate focus on political and ideological discourse."[72]

In short, Bew's approach leads to a simultaneous re-evaluation of the policies of
both John Redmond (the Nationalist Leader) and Edward Carson (the Unionist
leader). The outcome of the Home Rule Crisis was by no means predetermined.
Indeed, the outbreak of the Great War deprived the Ulster Unionists of much of
their bargaining power. Redmond's support for the war effort was inevitable,
and in the short term it strengthened his position in London. Undoubtedly the

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70 BEW, Ideology, 38-39.
71 Ibid., 125.
72 Ibid., xi.

evolution and the protraction of the war made the situation more difficult, as did the Easter Uprising of 1916 and the panicked British reaction to it. The growing fear of conscription in the Irish countryside undoubtedly made it even more difficult. It is important to keep in mind that conscription was never actually introduced in Ireland, although it continued to be felt as a threat up to 1918.[73] Only after the elections of that year did Redmondism collapse – and even then the extent of the electoral defeat was certainly overstated by the Westminster electoral system (simple majority), by the number of seats returned unopposed to Sinn Fein, perhaps assisted by some electoral malpractice and intimidation. The actual distribution of votes at the election of 1918 was as follows: Nationalists (Irish Parliamentary Party) 223,557; independent Nationalists, 8,619; Conservative/Unionists 293,304 (including 30,304 Labour Unionists); independent Conservative/Unionists, 9,531; independents and others, 509,930 (including Sinn Fein, 497,107 votes, plus 23 unopposed seats returned for Sinn Fein). Total votes were 1,046,941.[74] Unsurprisingly, the majority of Catholics in the North did not vote for Sinn Fein, but remained loyal to the Irish Parliamentary Party.

Irish Revolutions, 1918-1921

The second chapter of Irish history concerns the Irish Revolution, in other words the war against Britain (1919-1921). Once again, the standard view of traditional (Nationalist and Unionist) "partitionists" has constructed a highly deterministic scenario of the years of war against the British, of revolutions and civil wars, culminating in the signing of the Treaty which established the Irish Free State and the Northern Ireland State, and the subsequent civil war in the Free State. Once again, "revisionist" approaches to this period have been able to offer a much less preordained and intentionalist view of events. The Easter Rising was most certainly not the inevitable outcome of the years which preceded it, nor was the collapse of Redmondism (moderate Irish Nationalism) a foregone conclusion. So there is no need to assume any inevitability of the Irish revolutions.

A comparative approach might instead find of interest current discussions on the *nature* of the Irish wars of 1919-1921: were they liberation wars, civil wars or "ethnic" conflicts? Unsurprisingly, there has been a substantial shift in emphasis in historical research over the last forty years, especially since the re-

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73 For the experience of the Great War in Ireland see David FITZPATRICK, The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918, in: Historical Journal 38 (1995), no. 4, 1017-1030, and Keith JEFFERY, Ireland and the Great War, Cambridge 2000.

74 Figures taken from T. W. MOODY / F. X. MARTIN / F. J. BYRNE (eds.), A New History of Ireland, vol. IX: Maps, Genealogies, Lists, Oxford 1984, 641. Slightly different figures are given in BEW, Moderate Nationalism in Ireland, 735 (references to electoral malpractice, 735, fn. 28). See also Id., Ireland. The Politics, 390-91.

newal of violent conflict in Northern Ireland. Historians have begun to produce an infinitely more detailed picture of these years. As Peter Hart has pointed out,

> "Ireland's may be the best documented modern revolution in the world [...]. Almost any actor can be identified, profiled, and tracked through time. Events can be reconstructed through the eyes of multiple observers. A great range of social and political phenomena can be accurately identified. Practically the only limit to inquiry is that created by the historian's imagination."[75]

On the basis of these sources and of a growing body of historical research on these Irish wars, Hart offered a picture which is both new and familiar to contemporary readers: a series of wars which mix social, local and "ethnic" motivations, and which produce conflicts which appear remarkably similar to the "new wars" which were discovered by conflict management theorists in the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War.[76]

> "The most important bonds holding Volunteers together were those of family and neighbourhood. Indeed, IRA companies were very often founded upon such networks [...]. Judging by the recollections of Cork veterans, the Treaty itself and republican ideology were rarely discussed within their ranks."[77]

Perhaps "new wars" never were so "new"; as Kalyvas points out, "detailed research about these wars conducted years later tends to be ignored by analysts of contemporary civil wars who keep relying on the flawed depictions produced when the old civil wars were ongoing".[78] For this reason, old historiographical myths are perpetuated, and new myths are created on this basis, with predictable results.

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75 Peter HART, A New Revolutionary History, in: Id., The I.R.A. at War 1916-1923, New York 2003, 5-6. For reasons which are unclear, Steven Howe says that "Irish historians have been fortunate in not having such an overwhelming weight of primary sources [as Israeli historians have]. Perhaps the patron saint of the Irish historical profession should be Rory O'Connor, for blowing up the Four Courts Public Record Office in 1922!", cf. HOWE, The Politics of Historical "Revisionism", 244.

76 For a classic instance of the discovery of "new" wars see Mary KALDOR, New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era, Cambridge 1999. For a critical discussion of such theories see Stathis N. KALYVAS, "New" and "Old" Civil Wars. A Valid Distinction?, in: World Politics 54 (2001), no. 1, 99-118, and Id., The Logic of Violence in Civil War, Cambridge 2006; Charles KING, The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States, in: World Politics 54 (2001), no. 4, 524-552; and Christopher CRAMER, Civil War is Not a Stupid Thing. Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries, London 2006.

77 Peter HART, The I.R.A. and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923, Oxford 1999, 209, 264, quoted by KALYVAS, "New" and "Old" Civil Wars, 108.

78 KALYVAS, "New" and "Old" Civil Wars, 109.

Peter Hart's work aroused intense controversy, both in Northern Ireland and in the Irish Republic. There are two quite distinct, but interrelated, historical issues. The first is related to Hart's use of historical evidence. Hart was accused of having used oral testimonies misleadingly or improperly. Since Hart died prematurely in 2010, aged 46, the issue cannot be adequately settled.[79] The controversy was centred on the interpretation of IRA killings as being of a "sectarian" nature, rather than as political or military reprisals. The second, broader issue, is whether Hart was justified in affixing the label "ethnic cleansing" to some aspects of the Irish Wars of Independence (1919-1921). Hart had written:

> "All the nightmare images of ethnic conflict in the 20th century are here: the massacres and mysterious death squads, the burning homes and churches, the mass expulsions and trains filled with refugees, the transformation of lifelong neighbours into enemies, the conspiracy theories and the terminology of hatred."

He then pulls back from a drastic judgement, arguing that

> "we must not exaggerate. The Free State government had no part in persecution. Cork [the southern Irish county where some Protestants were killed] was not Smyrna, nor Belfast. Nevertheless, sectarianism was embedded in the vocabulary and the syntax of the Irish revolution, north and south."[80]

So ultimately Hart argued that "what happened in southern Ireland did not constitute 'ethnic cleansing'". This was because "there were at least four necessary factors missing to make it so: (1) a state with its resources and authority, in the hands of one group or another; (2) a plan or an enabling or mobilizing racial or sectarian ideology; (3) any real threat or provocation on the part of the target group; and (4) violence at totalizing or eliminationist levels".[81]

Both aspects of the controversy are revealing. In the first aspect, one can see the crucial importance of the label "sectarian". The term, in its use in Northern Ireland and in the Irish Republic (but in no other part of Europe), denotes a strictly religious and confessional definition: Catholics and Protestants (all Protestant denominations are considered part of the same entity). Over the past two centuries, Irish nationalists have tended to adopt a non-confessional political vocabulary (derived from the age of the French Revolution), so they shy away from any religious terminology, and have always stressed the inclusive, "non-sectarian" nature of their movements, open to Protestants who accept that they are Irish. Protestant nationalists tend to call themselves "Loyalists", with reference to their loyalty to the British monarchy. They are, however, more inclined

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79 For a detailed critique of Hart's use of sources see John M. REGAN, The "Bandon Valley Massacre" as a Historical Problem, in: History 325 (2012), 70-98.
80 HART, The I.R.A. at War, 240.
81 Ibid., 246.

to use the confessional label of "Protestants" as their historical identity as a community goes back to the 17th century, when identities were defined first and foremost in religious terms.[82] In practice both groups have been socially defined by their confessional origins, despite the inevitable exceptions. So if a bomb killed a group of "Loyalists", that meant a group of Protestants. If a "Nationalist" was brutally killed, that meant a Roman Catholic. Because of their different ideological lineages (or political pedigrees), Irish nationalists are much more sensitive to accusations that an individual or collective assassination might have been "sectarian" than Loyalists are.

In the case of the "Bandon Valley massacre" (in West Cork) the issue does not concern the fact that 13 Irish Protestant Loyalists were killed, nor the identity and political affiliation of the killers (who were members of the I.R.A.). The issue is simply whether the Loyalists were killed essentially *because they were Protestants* (as Hart basically argues), or *because they had acted as informers* for the British forces (as Hart's critics allege).

Leaving aside the respective merits of the two sides of the argument, what is striking is that the distinction which is being made (almost a century after the event) in the Irish context would be quite difficult to understand in any other European country. Any national liberation movement will spend a greater part of its energies in killing or intimidating civilians, and in particular civilians who are potentially on *their* side, for two of obvious reasons: (i) civilians are easier to target than soldiers or even policemen; (ii) civilians must be prevented from cooperating with the (foreign) enemy.[83] In fact, Hart argued that "by 1921 both the IRA and the Crown were shooting civilians more often than they shot each other. Unorganised or informal violence was flourishing as well, particularly in Belfast."[84] If the 13 men in West Cork had been Roman Catholics, that would have presented no problem for Irish Nationalists, since it would have been taken as given that they must have be "traitors" or "collaborationists". Since the men were Protestants, it creates a problem in terms of Irish Nationalist ideology, so it is essential to prove that they had acted as informers.

In fact, in the context of the Irish wars of 1919-1921 the distinction between a political and a "sectarian" (i.e. "ethnic") killing is of little historical value. It is sufficient to imagine the equivalent of the "Bandon Valley massacre" in the

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82 For a descriptive account of the construction of Irish Catholic and Irish Protestant identities see Marianne ELLIOTT, When God Took Sides: Religion and Identity in Ireland. Unfinished History, Oxford 2009. For an analysis of political discourse in the Northern Irish context see Richard BOURKE, Languages of Conflict and the Northern Ireland Troubles, in: Journal of Modern History 83 (2011), no. 3, 544-578.

83 The issue of collaborationism is extensively discussed in KALYVAS, The Logic of Violence, 87-110; and Id., Micro-Level Studies of Violence in Civil War: Refining and Extending the Control-Collaboration Model, in: Terrorism and Political Violence 24 (2012), no. 4, 658-668.

84 Peter HART, Definition: Defining the Irish Revolution, in: Joost AUGUSTEIJN (ed.), The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923, Basingstoke 2002, 25.

context of ethnic or national conflicts anywhere in Europe in the 20th century. The point is not that the distinction between the kind of killings is irrelevant in the context, but that it is not possible to make the distinction which critics of Hart would like to establish. This is because of the nature of the conflict, which is inevitably a mixture of civil war, "ethnic" war, ideological war, and perhaps "confessional" war. The picture which emerges from Hart's work is one of a complex interplay of conflicts: an anti-British "communal" ("sectarian" or "ethnic") and then "intra-nationalist" (i. e. the "Civil War" between the pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty forces) one.[85]

Far from over-emphasizing the importance of the massacre, Hart appears to have had a highly idealized vision of the process which has been labelled "ethnic cleansing".[86] Cork was certainly not Smyrna, and there are good reasons for abandoning the use of the label, but the historical substance remains unaffected. The Irish Wars were by no means *exclusively* "ethnic", but they certainly were *also* "ethnic".

Why has it taken so long for these "ethnic" (or "sectarian") aspects of the Irish Wars to emerge in historical narrative? Why did the obvious analogies with Balkan national conflicts not emerge in historical narratives? In fact, some contemporary observers *did* see the parallels: Henry Brailsford stands out for the clarity of his vision of the Kosovo problem, for which (in 1906, one should note) he proposed as a solution a partition between Serb and Albanian lands.[87]

The Northern Ireland State, 1921-1972

This issue has proved to be one of the most controversial, since it is connected with the Northern Ireland conflict, which is not entirely solved. Once again, the most interesting historiographical developments (at least from a comparative perspective) have emerged from the "revisionist" approach.

The two key issues are: (i) the discriminatory nature of the Northern Ireland state, and (ii) the implications of the British connection. The "sectarian" nature of the Northern Ireland state (from the 1920s to the introduction of British Direct Rule in 1972) is no longer seriously disputed. The debate concerns instead the attempts to explain Unionist discriminatory policies against the nationalist Catholic minority. The process which led to these policies was the result of a complex interaction of factors, ranging from the attitude of the Irish Free State (and later the Irish Republic), and the different churches, political parties and social classes. This obviously applies to any historical context, and it is especially relevant in the Northern Ireland context, to establish not just a "narrative",

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85 HART, The I.R.A. at War, 20; see also Id., Definition, 26.
86 Hart's work has developed in direct contact with Kalyvas's work, to which he makes explicit reference (and vice versa).
87 BRAILSFORD, Macedonia, 280-281.

but an actual historical *explanation* of the creation of the "sectarian" state. Without an explanation of this kind, the field is taken over by the deductive logic of "primordialist" interpretations ("ancient hatreds") or the more sophisticated "conflict management" interpretations. As Henry Patterson has pointed out,

> "a self-serving 'conflict resolution' paradigm has been imposed on Northern Ireland's recent history. From this perspective the violence flowed ineluctably from structural inequalities, discrimination and oppression of the Northern Ireland state in its heyday. This provides a convenient denial of any significant responsibility on the part of the paramilitary organizations that practised violence. It also has the distorting effect of treating the history of Ireland, North and South, before 1969 as little more than an antechamber to the 'Troubles'."[88]

Marc Mulholland has argued that if the Irish Republic had acknowledged earlier the principle of unity by consent "orchestrated discrimination to maintain a one-party state would have been much less virulent".[89] The implications of the British connection have been analysed more clearly on the basis of documentation which started to be accessible to historians from the 1970s (thanks to the thirty year rule, introduced in 1967).[90] First of all, on the British side the essential point was the desire to keep a certain distance from the internal affairs of Northern Ireland. Secondly, and most importantly, the extension of welfare entitlements to the province undermined any serious aspirations to unification which the Irish Republic nurtured. Irish unity was simply economically unfeasible for the Republic; hence its progressive distancing from the original irredentist aspirations.

The Good Friday Agreement

The final stage of the Northern Ireland conflict was marked by the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, and eventually by the power-sharing agreement reached in 2007 between the two most radical parties on both sides of the sectarian divide:

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88 Henry PATTERSON, Ireland since 1939: The Persistence of Conflict, Dublin 2006, xv-xvi.

89 Marc MULHOLLAND, Why did Unionists Discriminate?, in: Sabine WICHERT (ed.), From the United Irishmen to Twentieth-Century Unionism: A Festschrift for A.T.Q. Stewart, Dublin 2004, 206, quoted in BEW, Ireland. The Politics, 579. See also MULHOLLAND, Northern Ireland: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford 2002, chapter 2, 31-54.

90 Paul BEW / Peter GIBBON / Henry PATTERSON, Northern Ireland 1921-1996. Political Forces and Social Classes, London 1996, originally published as The State in Northern Ireland, 1921-1972, Manchester 1979; PATTERSON, Ireland since 1939.

Sinn Fein (the political wing of the Irish Republican Army) and the Democratic Unionist Party (led by the hardline Protestant Rev. Ian Paisley).[91]

Understandably, participants and beneficiaries of this final settlement have been inclined to stress the "happy ending" of the conflict, and now present it as a model ready for conflict resolution elsewhere in the world. In fact, some observers argue that this settlement was only reached at the price of the political marginalization of the moderate Unionist and Nationalist parties (which actually worked out and signed the Good Friday Agreement), at the price of further deaths in terrorist atrocities after the signing of the Agreement, at the price of acquiescence to forms of politicized criminality, and to a permanent "Balkanisation" of society.[92] It has been termed "Peace without consensus".[93]

The Balkan Connection and the Northern Irish Panacea

With the Yugoslav wars of dissolution (1991-1999) one might have expected commentators to spot more easily the analogies between the historical heritage of Northern Ireland and that of the successors of the Yugoslav federation. There was, however, a significant time-lag: "conflict management" specialists began to address the issue only after the end of the Bosnian war (1995), and even more after the Kosovo war (1999).

There are two basic reasons for this. The first is the fact the peace process in Northern Ireland seemed to be set to make progress at the beginning of the 1990s. The "conflict resolution" paradigm therefore began to be developed by seeking analogies with the Oslo Peace Accords for Israel/Palestine (1993) and the South African settlement (1994). The prospects for the states and regions emerging from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, even after the Dayton agreements and the Kosovo war, were far less promising. So the incorporation of the ex-Yugoslav regions into the "conflict resolution" paradigm was much slower and tentative. After the signing of the Good Friday Agreement the paradigm became a more marketable commodity, and consequently presentable as a ready-made solution for Bosnia and Kosovo. As two authors put it:

> "The GFA [Good Friday Agreement] provides a modern and previously multilateral intergovernmental regime solution to the sovereignty issue. It

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91 For overviews of the peace process see PATTERSON, Ireland since 1939, chapter 10, 312-358; BEW, Ireland. The Politics, 531-555; and Ian MCBRIDE, The Shadow of the Gunman: Irish Historians and the IRA, in: Journal of Contemporary History 46 (2011), no. 3, 686-710.

92 For an informed analysis of the effectiveness of the peace process see Paul NOLAN, The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report, no. 1, Belfast, February 2012, and Id., The Long War Gets Longer: The Campaign of Violent Dissident Republicans, Open Security, 7 August, 2012, available at <www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/paul-nolan/long-war-gets-longer-campaign-of-violent-dissident-republicans>, 25 September, 2012.

93 Mary-Alice CLANCY, Peace without Consensus. Power Sharing Politics in Northern Ireland, Aldershot 2010.

follows that the nature of the power-sharing arrangement reached or the 'modality of compromise' is dependent upon the nature of institutional mechanisms created to regulate the conflict, policy learning, the historic or path dependent impact of previous institutional arrangements implemented, and legitimacy."[94]

Another author adds, in a similar vein, that "there is a clear trend of conflict resolution practice that points in the direction of complex power-sharing settlements".[95] Even such qualified optimism might be queried, when the Northern Ireland peace process is being proposed as a model for other countries.

There is in fact an additional dimension which sheds further light on the limited attention paid to the conflicts in what has now been labelled as the Western Balkans. Back in 1972, a controversial observer of the Northern Ireland conflict made a bleak prophecy (depicted as the "malignant model", as opposed to a more "benign" model). He prophesied that, following a pull-out of the British troops, civil war would break out. Eventually the United Nations would be called in to ratify a cease-fire line, the new border:

> "Ireland would be left, once more, with two States, but of even more virulent shades of green and orange than before. The Orange [Unionist] State would be smaller than before [...], but would be homogeneously Protestant, without the tiniest Catholic crack or crevice for a new I.R.A. to take root in. The Green [Irish Nationalist] State with its massive indigestion of embittered and displaced Ulster Catholics would be an uncongenial environment for Protestants, most of whom would probably leave [...]. Both states would be under rightwing governments, scruffily militarist and xenophobic in character. The principal cultural activities would be funerals, triumphal parades, commemorations, national days of mourning, and ceremonies of rededication to the memory of those who died for Ulster."[96]

Conor Cruise O'Brien, the author of this passage, got this prophecy wrong, at least as far as Northern Ireland was concerned, although his "benign" model turned out to be a roughly accurate prophecy of what happened three decades later. The "malignant model", however, turned out to be a fairly good description of what happened in the Yugoslav wars of dissolution.

The issue is not whether Cruise O'Brien was accurate in his prophecies. What lies behind their accuracy is what did *not* happen, and that is the fact that the British military did *not* pull out, as was in fact advocated by many in Britain, across a wide political spectrum. The Northern Irish conflict was remark-

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94 Roberto BELLONI / Shelley DEANE, From Belfast to Bosnia: Piecemeal Peacemaking and the Role of Institutional Learning, in: Civil Wars 7 (2005), no. 3, 243.

95 Stefan WOLFF, Complex Power-Sharing and the Centrality of Territorial Self-Governance in Contemporary Conflict Settlements, in: Ethnopolitics 8 (2009), no. 1, 40.

96 Conor Cruise O'BRIEN, States of Ireland, London 1972, 301.

able not just for its duration, but also because of what has been described as "the coexistence of low-intensity civil war with a basic level of social cohesion":

> "Northern Ireland remained a profoundly un-revolutionary society. Members of the Provisional IRA planned operations while they collected their unemployment benefit, nurtured sentimental attachments to the bleak council estates of West Belfast while they regularly bombed the city centre, arranged for NHS [National Health Service] ambulances to pick up the victims of vicious punishment shootings and fought legal actions against wrongful imprisonment, all at the expense of the British taxpayer."[97]

Needless to say, this kind of society was far removed from the realities of the wars of Yugoslav dissolution. This made quite a difference.

Conclusions

This paper is not an exercise in what is called "imagology", that is to say "the cultural construction and literary representation of national characters".[98] It is not specifically concerned with the "image" of Ireland and the Irish Questions (the classical Irish Question and the Northern Ireland problem). These issues are touched upon only tangentially. It is not even intended as a summary of current historiographical debates on the Irish Questions, which can be found elsewhere.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. It is to suggest, in the study of eastern European history, *new questions*, through the prism of Irish debates. The wealth of Irish historiography and of Irish historical sources is a good starting-point. History is always, implicitly, about what did not happen. As Eric Hobsbawm once put it,

> "why is Albania not as rich as Switzerland? Both countries were, after all, thinly populated, mountainous, resource poor, weak but fiercely independent, providers of mercenary soldiers, and backwaters for much of their histories".[99]

These are questions historians need to address again. The second objective is to argue for a renewal of *comparative approaches to history* (regardless of the la-

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97   McBRIDE, The Shadow of the Gunman: Irish Historians and the IRA, 689.

98   Joep LEERSSEN, Imagology: History and Method, in: Manfred BELLER / Joep LEERSSEN (eds.), Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey, Amsterdam 2007, 17-33.

99   This is in fact a paraphrase of a remark made by Eric J. Hobsbawm at a conference in Bellagio (June 1985), as summarized in Daniel CHIROT, Causes and Consequences of Backwardness, in: CHIROT (ed.), The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe. Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages Until the Early Twentieth Century, Berkeley 1989, 3.

bel we may want to attach to it nowadays). Comparative history has been in a defensive mode since the 1980s, when it was challenged from all sides, from conservative historiography on the Right and from the agents of the "cultural turn" on the Left.[100] In fact, historical actors (who include historians) always base their actions on implicit or explicit comparisons of their context to other contexts. The Irish and the eastern Europeans are no exception to this rule, as this paper has tried to demonstrate.

The relevance of the Irish Question for historians of eastern Europe does not, however, consist in the fact that historians can find threads connecting events and individuals across countries and continents. It consists in two crucial points: (i) that some of these connections *are* relevant for current historiographical debate; and (ii) that these connections were historically *visible and meaningful* for some historical actors.

As it happens, Ireland found itself in the immediate proximity of Great Britain, the country which was leading the industrial revolution, and many other historical processes besides. It was also the country which established one of the greatest imperial systems known in human history. These elementary factors, and many others besides, guarantee the relevance of the Irish Question for historians, well beyond the borders of British history. Even in terms of intellectual history, the role and the weight of Irish questions are obvious, starting with history of political economy as a discipline.[101]

This paper has also attempted to address the interpretation of specific passages of Irish history, from the Home Rule Crisis to the creation of the Northern Ireland state, avoiding the straitjacket of nationalist teleology in any direction. The fact that Ireland was part of one of the most advanced state systems of the world has ensured an availability of sources and allowed a sophistication of analysis which is rarely equalled in other historiographies. What is still lacking is an adequate comparative framework, which is not helped by the neglect of comparative history by successive generations of historians.

The paper has also tried to address the issue of how to study nationalism. Nationalism needs to be seen as a *unitary* phenomenon. In historical terms, nationalism is always *singular*, not plural. What matters is the actual historical process: the economy, society and, last but not least, politics. The distinction between "ethnic" and "civic" nationalism (just as the earlier "Kohn dichotomy") is a short cut which leads to a dead end.

Finally, historians need to abandon the temptation of using history to solve conflicts, least of all nationalist conflicts. Nationalism is about choices, and

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[100] For the effects of the "cultural turn" on social history in general see the remarks by Jürgen Kocka in the Forum on "Class in German History", in: German History 30 (2012), no. 3, 429-431.

[101] On this point see Robert D. COLLISON BLACK, Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-18, Cambridge 1960.

choices are what make politics. Irish historical debates have not solved any con-flict. Research and historical debates may serve many functions, but solving conflicts is not one of them. Only *politics* can solve conflicts. This much is clear from Irish historical experience.

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