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HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEWS

SOUTHERN IRISH NATIONALISM AS A HISTORICAL PROBLEM*

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ABSTRACT. *To what extent has the recent war in Northern Ireland influenced Irish historiography? Examining the nomenclature, periodization, and the use of democracy and state legitimization as interpretative tools in the historicization of the Irish Civil War (1922–3), the influence of a southern nationalist ideology is apparent. A dominating southern nationalist interest represented the revolutionary political elite's* realpolitik *after 1920, though its pan-nationalist rhetoric obscured this. Ignoring southern nationalism as a cogent influence has led to the misrepresentation of nationalism as ethnically homogeneous in twentieth-century Ireland. Once this is identified, historiographical and methodological problems are illuminated, which may be demonstrated in historians' work on the revolutionary period (c. 1912–23). Following the northern crisis's emergence in the late 1960s, the Republic's Irish governments required a revised public history that could reconcile the state's violent and revolutionary origins with its counterinsurgency against militarist-republicanism. At the same time many historians adopted constitutional, later democratic, state formation narratives for the south at the expense of historical precision. This facilitated a broader state-centred and statist historiography, mirroring the Republic's desire to re-orientate its nationalism away from irredentism, toward the conscious accommodation of partition. Reconciliation of southern nationalist identities with its state represents a singular political achievement, as well as a concomitant historiographical problem.*

Since 1968, historians of Ireland have laboured under the burden of an ethno-religious civil war that has been legitimized by insurgents, reactionaries, and states on all sides by competing historical interpretations. Hitherto, however, historians have not sufficiently evaluated the influence of this war on historical writing.[1] The absence of a critical

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[1] Although Tom Dunne wrote of the northern war that '[i]t was to overshadow all our lives, and to influence profoundly the kind of history my generation would write', he did not develop this claim in the ensuing essay: Tom Dunne, *Rebellions, memoir, memory and 1798* (Dublin, 2004), p. 55. In recent articles, Roy Foster has offered more explicit analysis of the conflict's influence on historical scholarship; see '"Colliding cultures": Leland Lyons and the reinterpretation of Irish history', in Foster, ed.,

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literature, not to mention critical debate, seemingly suggests that the northern war did not influence scholarship unduly.[2] This unconvincing inference stands in contradiction to an, as yet modest, body of scholarship that has recently started to address this issue. If it is accepted that historians are both products of their research and their context, it seems both ahistorical and illogical to assume the northern war's irrelevance. By contrast, since 1968 it has been impossible to practise the writing of Irish history, both in Ireland and elsewhere, without relating it to contemporary events, either consciously or unconsciously.

It would be disingenuous to suggest that this issue has not exercised historians. Although not all participants accepted its importance, the northern war formed a subtext to the so-called 'revisionist debate' that divided the Irish historical community in the mid-1970s. It should be recognized, however, that the term 'revisionism', as applied to Irish historiography, was often undefined and was also widely employed as a term of abuse for those who challenged more traditional interpretations of Irish nationalism. Whilst the terminology remained both ill-defined and contentious, the major fault line in the debate remained the relationship between nationalism and historical scholarship. 'Anti-revisionists' claimed that a cynical anti-nationalism agenda informed much academic writing. This claim was summarily dismissed by so-called 'revisionists' who insisted that rewriting the past in the light of new evidence and new techniques was simply the ordinary duty of professional historians.[3] Although the controversy extended into the 1990s, the 'anti-revisionist' case, which attracted little open support in academic circles, seemed to score an own goal by the publication in 1989 of an essay by Brendan Bradshaw entitled 'Nationalism and historical scholarship in modern Ireland' in *Irish Historical Studies*. In a wide-ranging critique, Bradshaw claimed that revisionist historians employed 'evasion' or 'normalization', or were guilty of 'the simple expedient of ignoring the evidence' in their approaches to the trauma of Anglo-Irish relations from the early modern period onwards.[4] Even more contentious was Bradshaw's argument for a public history that embraced present-centred history and serviced interpretations of the Irish nation and Irish

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The Irish story: telling tales and making it up in Ireland (London, 2001), pp. 35–57; Foster, 'Something to hate: intimate enmities in Irish history', *Irish Review*, 30 (2003), pp. 1–12. Subtle and reflective treatment is supplied in D. G. Boyce, 'Revisionism and the Northern Ireland troubles', in D. G. Boyce and Alan O'Day, eds., *The making of modern Irish history: revisionism and the revisionist controversy* (London, 1996), pp. 216–38.

[2] Amongst the most influential of the emergent generation of historians working on the revolutionary period (c. 1912–23), Peter Hart argued, in an exchange with the present author, that he did not think that the recent 'troubles' in Northern Ireland had 'warped' historiography. See Hart's response to my review of Peter Hart, *The IRA at war* (Oxford, 2003) in *Reviews in history*, http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/hartresp.html (2004). More recently, Hart clarified his position in March 2005, stating that the northern war did indeed colour historical research on the revolutionary period, but adding a caveat that such influence was largely confined to British and Irish historians ('Hart to heart', *History Ireland*, 13 (Mar./Apr. 2005), pp. 48–51 at p. 51.

[3] Whilst confines of space prevent justice being done to the range of argument articulated in this debate, the revisionist v. anti-revisionist dichotomy appropriated by, among others, Brendan Bradshaw, offers a less-than-useful tool to approach the debate. Most of the key contributions appear in two edited collections: Ciaran Brady, ed., *Interpreting Irish history: the debate on historical revisionism, 1938–1994* (Dublin, 1994), and Boyce and O'Day, eds., *The making of modern Irish history*. See also the overview and elegant response to Brendan Bradshaw by L. P. Curtis, Jnr, 'The greening of Irish history', *Eire / Ireland*, 29 (1994), pp. 7–28.

[4] Brendan Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and historical scholarship in modern Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 26 (1989), pp. 329–51 at pp. 340–1.

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nationalism. Thereafter the case against 'revisionism' became associated with advocating a political nationalism that was contemptuous of aspirations towards historical objectivity. Whilst the case against 'revisionism' achieved its apogee in Bradshaw's essay, its defenders only needed to cite the endorsement of 'purposeful unhistoricity' to expose the ahistorical basis of his critique.[5]

What remains striking about the 'revisionist debate' is the ambiguous role played by the northern war. Ciaran Brady's interpretative essay makes only cursory references to the 'intractable "troubles" in the north', assuming that such 'extraneous influences doubtless exerted their sway'.[6] By contrast, Desmond Fennell, one of revisionism's most vociferous critics, argued in the 1980s for the conflict's centrality, asserting that the approach followed an establishment (British and southern Irish) 'counter-revolutionary' agenda.[7] More recently, J. J. Lee observed that much subsequent scholarship 'reverted to being a variety of war propaganda', deeming it 'one of the sadder features of the intellectual history of the past generation that the standards of use of evidence set in the first generation of the *Irish Historical Studies* school lapsed so lamentably'.[8] Lee did not, however, elaborate on such grave charges.

Since 1968, historians of the Irish revolutionary period from around 1912 to 1923 (variously also deemed a period of 'state formation' or 'rebellion' as preferred) found themselves arbitrating on issues critical to a contemporary conflict, particularly competing legitimations of government authority and the use of armed violence to overthrow such authority.[9] Complicating this situation, at least in Ireland, was the southern state's origin in unmandated violence and a public history that until the 1970s celebrated this origin, particularly by identifying the Easter 'rising' as the state's moment of genesis. After 1968, Northern Ireland remained, for the British at least, a manageable, if chronic, vexation. By contrast, radicalized nationalism and any form of violence spreading over the border posed more immediate concerns for the Republic's security and stability. In Ireland, the historical interpretation both of state formation and of the rights of minorities to rebel patently extended beyond solely academic interest. This situation was further complicated, since the onset of violence coincided with the first determined attempts by professional historians, alongside political scientists, to address Irish contemporary history.[10]

[5] Ibid., p. 348.

[6] Ciaran Brady, '"Constructive and instrumental": the dilemma of Ireland's first "new historians"', in Brady, ed., *Interpreting Irish history*, p. 23.

[7] Desmond Fennell, 'Against revisionism', in Brady, ed., *Interpreting Irish history*, p. 186.

[8] J. J. Lee, '"The cannon of Irish history – a challenge" – reconsidered', in Toner Quinn, ed., *Desmond Fennell, his life and work* (Dublin, 2001), pp. 59–60. *Irish Historical Studies*, first published in 1938 and edited by T. W. Moody and R. Dudley Edwards, became the focus for the professionalization of historical research in Ireland. 'School' is Lee's coinage.

[9] In recent scholarship, the term 'Irish revolution' has gained wide acceptance with David Fitzpatrick, for example, applying it to the process of Irish state formation in *The two Irelands, 1912–1939* (Oxford, 1998), p. 4. Peter Hart recently made a case for interpreting the Irish experience from 1916 to 1923 alongside other revolutions 'in the analytical pantheon', such as France, Russia, China, and Iran (*IRA at war*, p. 4). As Charles Townshend cautions, however, there is not as yet consensus about this conceptualization, since scholars also apply terms such as 'rebellion', 'takeover', 'Troubles' and 'War' to the same period and its processes ('Historiography: the telling of the Irish revolution', in Joost Augusteijn, ed., *The Irish revolution, 1913–1923* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 2).

[10] See, for example, T. Desmond Williams, ed., *The Irish struggle, 1916–1926* (London, 1966); Owen Dudley Edwards and Fergus Pyle, eds., *1916: the Easter rising* (London, 1968); D. W. Harkness, *The restless dominion: the Irish Free State and the British commonwealth of nations* (London, 1968); Maurice

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This historiographical review examines nationalist identities in the Republic and their influence on discourses between historical research on the revolutionary period and the contemporary war in the north. *Per se*, the revolutionary period is both too inchoate a subject and too amorphous a concept for meaningful discussion. The Civil War in the south from 1922 to 1923, however, offers a case study better suited to historiographical analysis, whilst deconstructing interpretations of this conflict potentially opens a discussion that could be expanded to the whole revolutionary period. Initially, this review undertakes an examination of nomenclature, periodization, and the use of both democratization and governmental legitimization as analytical tools in the historicization of the southern Civil War. Essential to the argument is recognition of a cogent, southern (twenty-six county) nationalist ideology, defined against a pan-nationalism inclusive of nationalists in Northern Ireland. In both the literature on modern Irish nationalism and twentieth-century historiography, existence of a southern nationalist ideology is, however, largely unrecognized. Accordingly, it is argued that lack of awareness had led to analytical imprecision in interpreting not only the revolutionary period, but also political nationalism in modern Ireland.[11]

It is self-evident that northern and southern nationalists are identifiable communities, separated physically by the border and culturally divergent experiences.[12] Historically, intra-nationalist relationships have been confused by assumptions of common bonds and shared interests. Such interpretations received some revision during the 1980s, notably in John Bowman's pioneering *De Valera and the Ulster question* (1983), which argued that the most influential revolutionary leader adopted a policy of pragmatic partition, in the absence of tangible alternatives.[13] Subsequently, Claire O'Halloran's equally important *Partition and the limits of Irish nationalism* (1987) examined southern responses more widely.[14]

Manning, *The blueshirts* (Dublin, 1970); F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine* (London, 1971); Brian Farrell, *The founding of Dáil Éireann: parliament and nation building* (Dublin, 1971), and *Chairman or chief? The role of the taoiseach in Irish government* (Dublin, 1971).

[11] Nationalism in the Republic has been discussed in a short series of papers published by the Institute for British-Irish Studies at University College, Dublin. Contributions by the politician, Desmond O'Malley, and the political scientist and historian, Tom Garvin, offer critiques that emphasize its development towards more pluralist manifestations since 1950. Both treat nationalism in southern Ireland, but do not identify southern nationalism as a separate ideology; Desmond O'Malley, and Tom Garvin, *Redefining southern nationalism*, Institute of British and Irish studies: working paper no. 1 (Dublin, 2001). Elsewhere, Roy Foster has also written about some of the implications and possibilities associated with what he recognizes as divergent strains of northern and southern nationalism; see Foster, '"Colliding cultures"', pp. 52–4. For discussions of Irish pan-nationalism without reference to southern nationalism, see D. G. Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (London, 1982; 2nd edn, 1991); Michael Gallagher, 'How many nations are there in Ireland?', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 8 (1985), pp. 715–39; R. V. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003); Brian Girvin, 'Nationalism and the continuation of political conflict in Ireland', in Anthony F. Heath, Richard Breen, and Christopher T. Whelan, eds., 'Ireland north and south: perspectives from the social sciences', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 98 (Oxford, 1999), pp. 369–99.

[12] Adding a refinement to his 'clash of cultures' thesis, in 1978, F. S. L. Lyons argued for greater sensitivity to the regional identity of Ulster and for full account to be taken of the separateness that had developed after partition; F. S. L. Lyons, 'The burden of our history', in Brady, ed., *Interpreting Irish history*, p. 102. See also his *Culture and anarchy in Ireland, 1890–1939* (Oxford, 1932), and Foster, '"Colliding cultures"', pp. 53–4.

[13] John Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster question, 1917–1973* (Oxford, 1983).

[14] Claire O'Halloran, *Partition and the limits of Irish nationalism: an ideology under stress* (Dublin, 1987).

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Like Bowman, O'Halloran contended that partition was essentially a unionist construct, reluctantly accommodated by southerners in the absence of alternative solutions. Whilst both interpretations offered more realistic evaluations of southern responses to partition, they still subscribed to an underlying, if modified, belief in irredentism among southern nationalists. By contrast, this review argues that partition was both equally and mutually a joint southern nationalist and northern unionist ideological imperative on which both states have been co-dependent since 1920. Even in the revised interpretations offered by Bowman and O'Halloran, pan-nationalism denies a proactive southern interest in the border's construction and maintenance. What commentators have been reluctant to recognize is the extent to which partition defined southern nationalists, not as a sub-group of an island-wide nationalism, but as a separate community, with an exclusionary nationalist ideology. According to Friedrich Meinecke's classic formulation, after 1920, southern political elites invested in the twenty-six counties *staatsnation*, whilst simultaneously professing a thirty-two counties *kulturnation*.[15]

As Eric Hobsbawm reminds us, '[g]etting history wrong is part of being a nation' – an interpretation, one might fairly expect, with which few historians of Ireland would seek to dispute.[16] Consequently, that southern nationalism is unidentified in the historical literature would suggest that either it is a non-issue or, alternatively, that its invisibility may be symptomatic of a historical problem of prime importance. Equally, if it does exist as a historiographical problem, then it must be possible to identify its presence in distortions in both method and interpretation.

I

In the decades that followed Irish independence, the Civil War dominated public political culture and framed the party system, as well as much of its nationalist rhetoric.[17] The war began on 28 June 1922, when forces supporting the Anglo-Irish treaty of December 1921, together with the Provisional government it had established, attacked an 'anti-treatyite' IRA garrison in Dublin. The war concluded with the defeated anti-treatyites dumping their arms after 24 May 1923. Conventionally, this is understood as an intra-nationalist conflict that ostensibly derived from imperial clauses within the treaty: notably, the oath of faithfulness to the British monarch and continued inclusion within the British empire. Despite the central importance of this cleavage for political life in southern Ireland, attempts to identify the reasons underpinning the revolutionary movement's bifurcation have proved unsatisfactory.[18] In contrast to this ongoing uncertainty, the war is generally interpreted as a southern event, periodized between 1922 and 1923, and fought between

[15] Freidrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the national state*, trans. Robert B. Kimber (Princeton, 1970).

[16] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1790* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 12. For the original argument, see Ernst Renan, *Qu'est-ce que une nation?: et autres écrits politiques* (Paris, 1882).

[17] See Ann Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2003).

[18] See, for example, G. W. Maguire, 'Political and military causes of the division in the Irish nationalist movement, January 1921 to August 1923' (D.Phil. dissertation, Oxford, 1985); Jeffrey Prager, *Building democracy in Ireland: political order and cultural integration in a newly independent nation* (Cambridge, 1986); Tom Garvin, *1922: the birth of Irish democracy* (Dublin, 1996); John M. Regan, *Irish counter-revolution, 1921–1936: treatyite politics and government in independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1999); Nikolaus Braun, *Terrorismus und Freiheitskampf: Gewalt, Propaganda und politische Strategie in Irischen Bürgerkrieg, 1922–1923* (Munich, 2003).

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anti-treatyites defending the revolutionary republic and treatyites defending the right of Irish electorates to decide their own future.

Accordingly, it is the assumption of a historiography heavily influenced by southern nationalism that there was only one 'Irish' civil war during the revolutionary period. By definition, the violence to 1922 in the six counties of north-east Ulster was internecine and intensely sectarian. Unlike the IRA campaign in the south and west, inter-communal street fighting, 23,000 house evictions, 9,000 workplace expulsions, and 409 associated deaths between 1920 and 1922 are not celebrated in nationalist memorialist literature.[19] According to Peter Hart, Belfast accounted for 23 per cent of all victims of the revolutionary strife between 1917 and 1923 and it seems reasonable to conclude that the city provided a focus for an identifiably separate pattern of warfare, in terms of chronology, intensity of violence, and a heightened importance attached to ethnicity.[20] Nevertheless, inter-communal fighting, partly ignited by loyalist reaction to militarist-republican advances was both a product of, and integral to, southern state formation and its violence. More overtly sectarian than the conflict elsewhere, northern violence is often treated as a sideshow in narratives of southern state formation which tend to focus on the guerrilla struggle in the south and west and on personalities like Michael Collins and Harry Boland, who were supposedly untainted by sectarianism.[21] The concomitant of any war of 'national liberation', and particularly any fought in the name of an ecumenical republic, was ethno-sectarian warfare that intensified in Ulster and was concentrated in Belfast.[22] This remains uncomfortable for nationalists in general, and for southerners in particular. The long-standing solution has been to partition northern violence within the jurisdiction of another narrative. By way of example, after taking account of Belfast's experience, Michael Laffan wrote in 1983 that, '[t]he Anglo-Irish war [1919–21] was fought in the twenty-six counties'.[23] Such hard distinctions are deployed to segregate the southern state's purportedly non-sectarian formation from experiences in the north. Yet although very different in texture, the northern and southern wars are of a piece with one another.

If southern nationalism is a demonstrable problem, how then should it be defined? What can be identified from the first home rule crisis of 1885–6 are two increasingly incompatible interests within the broader nationalist community. It soon became apparent

[19] For an example of the slippage between conceptualization and experience, see Ernie O'Malley's synopsis of 1919–21 which makes no reference to Ulster or Northern Ireland, despite his spending part of the revolutionary period there; 'The Anglo-Irish war to July 1921', in O'Malley, *The singing flame* (Dublin, 1978), pp. 11–13. For O'Malley's experiences as an IRA volunteer in Ulster see O'Malley, *On another man's wound* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 87–95, 107–8.

[20] Hart, *IRA at war*, p. 47.

[21] Studies focusing on northern nationalism represent a growth area in the last decade. See, for example, Eamon Phoenix, *Northern nationalism: nationalist politics and the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, 1890–1940* (Belfast, 1994); Jim McDermott, *The old IRA and the Belfast pogroms, 1920–1922* (Belfast, 2001); Enda Staunton, *The nationalists of Northern Ireland, 1918–1973* (Dublin, 2001); Ronan Gallagher, *Violence and politics in Derry city, 1920–1923* (Dublin, 2003); Robert Lynch, *The northern IRA and the early years of partition, 1920–1922* (Dublin, 2006).

[22] With the notable exception of Peter Hart, the sectarian dimensions of the revolutionary period have received little scholarly attention. For an account of murders of west Cork Protestants in April 1922 and subsequent historiographical amnesia, see Hart, *The IRA and its enemies* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 273–93, together with 'The protestant experience of revolution in southern Ireland' and 'Ethnic conflict and minority responses in Hart, *IRA at war*, pp. 223–40, 241–58. See also Meda Ryan, *Tom Barry: IRA freedom fighter* (Cork, 2003), pp. 156–70.

[23] Michael Laffan, *The partition of Ireland, 1911–1925* (Dundalk, 1983), p. 75.

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that Ulster's Catholic minority would bear the brunt of unionist reactions to any concessions to nationalism.[24] In turn, this may contribute to understanding why the nationalist revolution was, in terms of proactive violence, predominantly a southern affair, centring on Dublin and the south-western province of Munster. Located in Dublin, its leadership also drew disproportionately on personnel from the south-west, whilst northerners were under-represented among both the political and the military elites.[25] As late as two months before the truce of July 1921, no volunteer from Ulster had been appointed to the staff of IRA general headquarters.[26] Similarly, no volunteer from the six counties that formed Northern Ireland in 1921 was appointed prior to the IRA's division over the treaty in March 1922. The revolutionaries were not, however, either informed in detail, or particularly exercised by, the implications of a war for a republic on the security of minorities.[27] When partition was implemented in June 1921, it provoked no military challenge from southerners. On 23 August 1921, when de Valera subsequently proposed partition on a county opt-out basis to the revolutionary assembly (the Dáil), there was general acquiescence.[28] Nor did partition find significant opposition in the Dáil debates following the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty.[29]Although the Irish Free State was formally established in December 1922, a silent consensus already prevailed among revolutionaries that some form of partition was the price of southern independence. Hence the outline of a distinctive southern nationalism is first delineated in these non-events, silences, and bold contradictions of stated intent.

Prioritization of southern over northern nationalist interests, together with an implicit acceptance of partition, crystallized inside the southern revolutionary movement during the IRA northern divisions' offensive in Northern Ireland in May 1922. Locally it was referred to as the 'rising'.[30] Initially sanctioned by both wings of the southern IRA – which co-operated on a 'joint Ulster policy' until April 1922 – there was no significant intervention to support the beleaguered northern IRA inside the border, once the offensive

[24] A. T. Q. Stewart, *The narrow ground: the roots of conflict in Ulster* (London, 1977), pp. 140–1.

[25] Tom Garvin, *Nationalist revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858–1928* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 7–8.

[26] As IRA assistant chief-of-staff from 1921 to 1922, J. J. O'Connell recorded that he was the one member at general headquarters 'who had ever lived in the North of Ireland for any length of time or who had any first hand knowledge of social conditions there. This was not so important a consideration at first as it became later' (National Library of Ireland, O'Connell papers, MS 22, 117(1), J. J. O'Connell to D. McKenna, 13 Aug. 1936). The Ulster appointment was Eoin O'Duffy from Co. Monaghan; see Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self-made hero* (Oxford, 2004), p. 75.

[27] As assistant under secretary in Dublin castle, A. W. 'Andy' Cope was on good personal terms with leading Sinn Féiners in August 1921. When challenged about their attitude to Ulster, Cope commented to a colleague that 'the Shinns regard that as a minor matter' (Michael Hopkinson, ed., *The last days of Dublin castle: the Mark Sturgis diaries* (Dublin, 1999), p. 211.

[28] Regan, *Irish counter-revolution*, p. 10; see also Bowman, *De Valera*, p. 54.

[29] Maureen Wall, 'Partition of the Ulster question (1916–1926)', in Williams, ed., *The Irish struggle*, pp. 79–93; Regan, *Irish counter-revolution*, pp. 35–49.

[30] The precise objective of the offensive remains a matter of dispute. Following Michael Hopkinson, Jim [McDermott] states that 'the offensive was not designed to overthrow the northern government', but concedes that some volunteers understood it was 'a fight to the finish' (Jim McDermott, *Northern divisions: the old IRA and the Belfast progroms, 1920–1922* (Belfast, 2001), pp. 237, 236–43; see Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green: the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), pp. 84–5). In the most authoritative study to date, Robert Lynch argues that '[o]n paper at least, the offensive involved a virtual full scale invasion of Northern Ireland' (*Northern IRA*, p. 140).

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had started.[31] Within five weeks, the offensive had been suppressed by the northern authorities' numerically superior security forces. Arguably, southern non-intervention in May 1922, thereby averting the possibility of a cross-border conflict, marks one of the decisive moments of the revolutionary period's consolidation. On the cusp of their own civil war, the southerners chose to protect power positions inside the *staatsnation*, rather than press for the irredentist *kulturnation*. Beyond this, the failed offensive identifies opposite interests within revolutionary nationalism on both sides of the border. No matter how inept, sporadic, or uncoordinated its execution, the northern offensive defined a common southern interest that encompassed both pro- and anti-treatyite IRA members in opposition to the ideology of one nation and a single cause. By threatening another catastrophic war that risked British re-intervention, or even perhaps reconquest, northern nationalists jeopardized the southern revolutionaries' net gains.[32]

At no other time were so many armed nationalists to straddle the border as in May 1922. All were equipped with the licence to act independently, afforded to volunteers by revolutionary armies. In the southern nationalist imagination, Ulster did not exert in 1922 (nor, for that matter, again in 1968–97) the mobilizing power of a 'Kosovo' or a 'Kashmir'. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that self-interest trumped any ethnic loyalty. In the circumstances, southern inactivity appears remarkable and illuminates not only an instructive moment in the revolutionary period, but also a point at which, arguably, twentieth-century Irish political history may be usefully surveyed. What can be discerned from southern non-interventions are the defining tenets of an unspoken, but nevertheless implicit, southern nationalist ideology. Chief among these tenets is the defence of the southern state against involvement in a cross-border civil war. Essential to that outcome are the stabilization of the 1920 border and the pacification of the Catholic minority inside Northern Ireland. Whilst southern nationalism remains protean by definition, these core values remain a constant.

It has long been a truism of southern politics that any modification of the border threatened to upset vested domestic interest and, potentially, the island's stability. This was tacitly recognized in the ratification of the 1920 border by the British, Ulster unionist, and Free State governments in 1925–6. Despite being sometimes presented as a crisis for the Free State, the collapse of the boundary commission and the subsequent consolidation of the border was received on all sides by an acquiescence that was, once again, defined by inaction, if not opportunism.[33] Northern nationalism represented an enduring concern for the southern state since resurgent pan-nationalism theoretically posed the greatest long-term threat to its security after 1923. All southern political elites recognized the critical importance of managing both partition and intra-nationalist relations towards the neutralization of this threat. It was a Fianna Fáil government under de Valera that, in conjunction with the government at Stormont, introduced internment in 1957 to suppress an IRA border campaign, thereby acknowledging the co-dependent relationship of the two states in security matters that had started, covertly, as early as

[31] The situation was complicated by the configuration of IRA factions on the border. Until September 1922, there were small-scale cross-border incursions by neutral, sometimes anti-treatyite and 'joint army' IRA volunteer factions (Lynch, *Northern IRA*, chs. 6–8).

[32] At the London negotiations in October 1921, Winston Churchill outlined a similar scenario to Michael Collins; see Keith Middlemass, ed., *Thomas Jones's Whitehall diary: Ireland, 1918–1925* (3 vols., Oxford, 1971), III, p. 132.

[33] Regan, *Irish counter-revolution*, pp. 254–8.

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1922.[34] After returning to power in 1932, de Valera's policy attempted to monopolize the national question by investing its resolution in the state, in his party, and, ultimately, in himself. Concomitant to this policy was the swift repression of republican dissidents trying to mobilize around the national question. A concern to segregate and to isolate helps to explain why all parties refused northern nationalists 'rights of audience' in the Republic's parliament in 1951 and again in 1954.[35] It may also account for the south's decision not to transmit radio, and later television, across the border.[36] By maintaining the island's ethnic stability, de Valera's management of partition not only served the interests of southern nationalism, but also those of interdependent relationships with Britain and with Ulster unionism.

As far as the state's irredentist rhetoric went, exclusionary nationalism was counter-intuitive, if not abhorrent. Southern nationalism's *realpolitik* nevertheless demanded that partition was rationalized as a matter of self-preservation. Both the Sunningdale power-sharing initiative of 1974 and the Republic's sponsorship of the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985 were presented to nationalist audiences partly on the grounds of their quasi-irredentist credentials. A north–south inter-parliamentary council of Ireland was promised in 1974, whilst Dublin was conceded a consultative role in Northern Ireland's internal affairs in 1985.[37] From the Republic's perspective, both initiatives were inspired primarily by a need to forestall the further radicalisation of northern nationalists during the early years of civil strife and, again, following the republican hunger strikes of 1980–1.[38] Since 1920, southern nationalism's relationship to Ulster unionism had been one of mutual, if sometimes grudging, self-interest. After the imposition of direct rule by Westminster in 1972, however, unionism became incapable of delivering the core southern security requirements. Accordingly, when drafting and implementing the Anglo-Irish agreement, unionists were not consulted by the London and Dublin governments and the resulting legislation was imposed in the face of violent resistance from within the unionist community. The decision to foist on Ulster unionism a policy that had been initiated in Dublin, by Taoiseach Dr Garret FitzGerald, abandoned the consensual approach to north–south politics and respect for the Protestant tradition that had informed the Republic's rhetoric after 1970.[39] Since the shared British policy interest in both stabilizing the border and

[34] Robert Lynch has identified intelligence about republicans exchanged between the Dublin and Belfast government in the second half of 1922 (*Northern IRA*, p. 201). See also Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: the Irish state and its enemies since 1922* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 299–300.

[35] Staunton, *The nationalists of Northern Ireland*, pp. 165, 191.

[36] Robert Savage's study of the south's television broadcasting services concluded that 'where television was concerned, the border defined the nation' (Savage, *Irish television: the political and social origins* (Cork, 1996), p. 135). See also the 'Feasibility study: extension of RTE reception to the six co[unties and other] areas, 26 September 1969' (National Archives, Dublin (hereafter NAD), D/T 2001/6/553).

[37] As the Republic's minister for foreign affairs from 1973 to 1977, Dr Garret FitzGerald asserted that, when drafting the Sunningdale initiative, significant opposition emerged from within the Republic's senior civil service to the council of Ireland proposal (author's interview with Dr Garret FitzGerald, Dublin, 12 Sept. 2005).

[38] Garret FitzGerald, 'The origins and rationale of the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985', in Dermot Keogh and Michael H. Haltzel, eds., *Northern Ireland and the politics of reconciliation* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 189–202.

[39] 'Memorandum for the information of the government: policy in relation to Northern Ireland', 7 Sept. 1970 (NAD, D/T 2001/6/517); see also John [Jack] Lynch, *Speeches and statements on: Irish unity; Northern Ireland; Anglo-Irish relations August 1969–October 1972* (Dublin, n.d. [?1972]).

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containing the Catholic minority became solely dependent on Dublin's ability to manage both issues on the island, FitzGerald can be identified, in the mid-1980s, as de Valera's unlikely successor.

Southern nationalism defined itself against pan-nationalism and developed into a fully formed, if clandestine, ideology during the revolutionary period's consolidation.[40] By definition, it is also a historical problem. Contrary to Peter Hart's recent suggestion, the narrative of the Irish Civil War *singular* is not simply a nationalist conceptualization.[41] More precisely, it is part of a linear, teleological narrative of the revolutionary period that is dominated by southern preoccupations and a statist historiography. The broad parameters of such a historiography may be crudely sketched in a chain of causation that links the settlement in the democratic Free State to the 1922–3 (southern) 'Civil War' to state formation, to the 1919–21 (southern) 'War of Independence' or 'Anglo-Irish War' to the Easter 1916 'rising' (often neglecting the First World War),[42] to the failure to implement home rule. Despite southern nationalism and pan-nationalism being confused, the distinction remains more substantial than a matter of nuance.

Whilst many experiences, northern and southern unionist among them, are diminished in the southern nationalist narrative, so too are those of northern nationalists. By way of illustration, the testaments of northern IRA volunteers to the southern bureau of military history in the 1940s and 1950s reveal that they were incapable of conceiving their 'War of Independence' terminating with the truce of July 1921, as the bureau's remit had demanded. No truce was observed in Northern Ireland where the war spilled into the chronology of the southern Civil War, which the bureau proscribed to protect southern sensibilities.[43] Unsurprisingly, one size does not fit all. Yet historians have been slow to challenge the underlying assumptions of the nomenclature and chronology that were, in the first instances, bequeathed to them by southern revolutionaries. Self-evidently, such nomenclature and chronology service nationalist prejudices, not least by writing northerners out of the 'national story'. Accordingly, any analysis of modern Ireland, especially in its post-partition existence, that assumes a monolithic pan-nationalism rests on a fundamental misapprehension. After 1920 – or indeed, at any time – there is no necessity to

[40] A regional southern nationalism predating 1920 seems a logical precursor. Seamus Heaney suggests that Ulster's exclusion from the nationalist literary imagination anticipated political partition's geographical and social contexts. Joyce's bourgeois Dublin, the revivalists' western peasants and Anglo-Irish ascendancy literature 'prepared cultural paths for the political fact of Irish independence' (Heaney, *The redress of poetry: Oxford lectures* (London, 1995), pp. 193–5). At the very least, Heaney's interpretation recommends further consideration of a second *kulturnation*.

[41] David Fitzpatrick, Charles Townshend, and Peter Hart identify multiple civil wars in the period 1920–3 (Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands*, pp. 117–36; Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland since 1848* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 365–405, and Hart, *IRA at war*, pp. 8–9, 12–14).

[42] Ben Novick, *Conceiving revolution: Irish nationalist propaganda during the First World War* (Dublin, 2001), pp. 15–16.

[43] The bureau of military history was established by the southern government in 1947 'to assemble and co-ordinate material to form the basis for the compilation of the history of the movement for Independence from the formation of the Irish Volunteers on 25th November 1913 to the 11th July 1921' (bureau of military history (hereafter BMH) (Dublin, 1947), pp. 1–2). For examples of northern IRA witness statements referencing events outside this chronology, see NAD, BMH witness statement 609 (Feidhim S. MacGuill) and witness statement 492 (John McCoy).

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assume a nationalist Ireland *singular*, in either political or cultural terms.[44] This persists, however, as a much laboured obsession.

Southern nationalism's ability to imagine itself, and to project a national consciousness, exclusive of the north, whilst simultaneously to appropriate pan-nationalist linguistic constructions, has been disarming. This readily imposes upon analyses where terms such as 'Irish' and 'Ireland' are applied exclusively to southern contexts. Such instances might perhaps be dismissed as semantic irritations, were they not to lead to significant interpretative problems. For example, an attempt to explain phenomena such as an 'Irish' counter-revolution, or the success of 'Irish' democracy, or commemoration of 'Irish' civil war', where 'Irish' relates to the southern state alone is, from the outset, methodologically compromised.[45] Had unionist counter-revolution in Northern Ireland failed, as was indeed plausible in May 1922, the configuration of Ireland after 1922 would, as likely as not, have assumed a very different appearance. Similarly, the 'success' of southern democracy cannot be understood without taking into account the export, and concentration, of the Irish ethnic problem inside Northern Ireland. Few would disagree that the ethno-religious composition of the two Irish states was a critical factor, both for the relative success of democracy in the south and for its abject failure in the north.[46] Likewise, to study the commemoration of civil war in Ireland arguably demands an expansive interpretation of what constituted 'Irish' – and for that matter 'British' – civil *wars* in twentieth-century Ireland. The violence of the revolutionary period, whether periodized in the south from 1919 to 1921, or in the north from 1920 to 1922, was civil and domestic in both their Irish contexts and also, under the Union, in their British contexts. It has suited nationalists in both islands to ignore this and thus to apply names that at once distort and mislead. If the United Kingdom has had Irish 'troubles' during the twentieth century (from c. 1916 to 1922 and from 1968 to 1997), and not civil wars, it is for the purpose of twice denying the collapse of the British constitution under the Union.

What is evidenced here is complacency regarding nomenclature and the application of analytical contexts it may prescribe. Mary E. Daly's *Industrial development and Irish national identity, 1922–1939* and Dermot Keogh's *Twentieth-century Ireland: state and nation* offer treatments exclusive to the southern state, but what remains wilfully obscure in both texts is the 'nation' to which their titles refer.[47] If it is to be conceded that a separate 'Irish' national identity exists within the southern state, it must necessarily be identified as corrupting of historical method. Only when this is achieved can twentieth-century historicization be examined with the critical tools fit for the purpose.

Free of the constructions of southern nationalism, the revolutionary period's interpretation offers new and challenging vistas. Like many civil wars, the Irish and British experiences of 1919–23 cannot be fully understood in domestic isolation. Revolutionary violence was framed by United Kingdom, and imperial, contexts that are all too often overlooked. For British governments, Ireland was both a domestic issue under the Union

[44] A study of regionalist variations of nationalist consciousness remains a deficiency in the literature on Irish nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; see n. 11.

[45] For more on this, see Regan, *Irish counter-revolution*; Bill Kissane, *Explaining Irish democracy* (Dublin, 2002) and Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War*.

[46] For studies of southern democracy's success, see Kissane, *Explaining Irish democracy*, and Garvin, *1922*.

[47] Mary E. Daly, *Industrial development and Irish national identity, 1922–1939* (Syracuse, 1992); Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth-century Ireland: nation and state* (Dublin, 1994).

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and, once secession from the empire threatened in 1918, a complex imperial question. In policy terms, the Irish problem essentially became one of precedent. Militarist-republican struggle threatened to incite radical nationalists throughout the empire, not least in India, Egypt and South Africa.[48] Persuading Sinn Féin's plenipotentiaries to accept the 1921 treaty and thereby to risk schism over inclusion in a new-styled commonwealth marked an initial triumph for British imperial policy. Its major achievement was to be intra-nationalist civil war. Treatyite Sinn Féin successfully crushed republican resistance in 1923, where crown forces had previously failed. This process was wholly contingent on threats of British military re-intervention directed at both the revolutionary leadership and, subsequently, at Irish electorates. Although this coercive explanation is obscured, or entirely denied, in many accounts,[49] the concept of compulsion nevertheless is critical to any understanding of how the Free State's constitution was reached and remains equally essential in attempts to comprehend republican reaction.

By focusing on the southern context of the Civil War, British use of coercion in defence of its imperial interests is obfuscated, generating a narrative wherein the new state's defence of democracy often becomes the central theme. An opposing argument, in simple terms, suggests that both Irish revolutionaries and electorates alike were not given a free hand to resolve their differences in 1922. The problem with a non-democratic causation is ideological, rather than evidential, primarily since it resonates too closely with contemporary radical-republican interpretations in 1922, as well as, even more problematically, those of recent decades. Accordingly, if historians are, at the very least, prepared to consider the fact of British coercion, then every aspect of the traditional interpretation of state formation must be challenged. Not least among these aspects is the Irish Civil War which, when placed in an imperial context, assumes the appearance of a quasi-colonial war wherein Michael Collins and the treatyite leadership fought, however extraneously, in the empire's interest. Such a leap in historical imagination requires not only the vigorous debunking of a consolatory history, but also recognition that Collins's position as an icon of southern nationalism deserves serious reinterpretation. Historiographical responses to recent developments in Ireland, however, offer little indication that Irish historians at this juncture are ready to engage in such a revision.[50]

[48] Regan, *Irish counter-revolution*, pp. 3–34.

[49] Garvin, *1922*, p. 48; Sheila Lawlor, *Britain and Ireland, 1914–1923* (Dublin, 1983), p. 193.

[50] Collins's most recent biographer, Peter Hart, writes: 'He must have been a wonderful person to have a drink with, and one of the most exciting friends you could ever imagine having' (Peter Hart, *Mick: the real Michael Collins* (London, 2005), p. 426). Elsewhere, Hart's approach is more analytical, but remains determined to place Collins within historiographical orthodoxy. For example, 'Collins almost always made the right decision' (ibid., p. 422). This contrasts with earlier, more critical, evaluations of militarist-republicanism. For example, in 1998: 'IRA plans called for an ever more rigorous reign of terror … As Michael Collins put it, "my chief desire is not to single out any particular Institution, but to get at them all". Protestant hostages would, it was hoped, hold mass executions in check' (Hart, *IRA and its enemies*, p. 110). The Provisionals' ceasefire of 1997 may suggest a terminal date for historiography influenced by state-sponsored counter-insurgency. David Fitzpatrick's tone, when treating anti-treatyites, contrasts between the amicable in his 2003 biography of Harry Boland, 'Ireland's least hated and most loved "Irregular"' and the altogether more acerbic tone adopted in *The two Irelands* (1998): 'Irregular successors were forced to rely primarily on intimidation' (Fitzpatrick, *Harry Boland's Irish revolution* (Cork, 2003); Fitzpatrick, *Two Irelands*, p. 132). Similarly, compare Richard English's interpretation of anti-treatyite democratic subversion in his 1996 biography of Ernie O'Malley with his view in 2003 that 'there remains no simple equation possible between the 1921 Treaty and democracy on one side and anti-Treatyite politics and opposition to democracy on the

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Explicit influence of the contemporary conflict on the revolutionary period's historicization is not difficult to demonstrate. Garvin suggests conceptualizations of the southern Civil War's causation in terms of treatyite 'civic nationalism' versus anti-treatyite 'ethnic nationalism' which, self-evidently, demands the identification of the ethnicity associated with the anti-treatyites' nationalism.[51] As the northern offensive of May 1922 so effectively demonstrates, for pragmatic purposes, most anti-treatyites, like the treatyites, eschewed any ethnicity including northern nationalists.

Conflation of radical-republicanism with ethnic pan-nationalism in 1922 clearly demands further explanation. Garvin's interpretation is derived more from rhetoric, than from action.[52] It is also difficult to escape the conclusion that such an approach involves the erroneous assumption that militarist-republicanism unequivocally equates with irredentist-nationalism. In identifying this analytical confusion, we trespass on two further problems in the revolutionary period's historicization. First, contemporary experience has undoubtedly influenced interpretations of historical process. Notably, the nationalism of present-day militarist-republicanism has, it seems fair to conclude, been superimposed on the anti-treatyites of 1922. Secondly, and equally importantly, the period in general, and especially the southern Civil War, provides a battlefield on which contemporary ideological conflicts are fought at some cost to historical accuracy.

Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the consensual endorsement of the Civil War as a struggle between the democratic state and anti-democratic republicanism. Though Sinn Féin divided on the treaty's oath of faithfulness to the British crown, later electoral mandates defined the conflict – for the treatyites at least – on the right of majorities. After 1980, this interpretation began to make a claim for academic orthodoxy with, it should be noted sensitively, varying degrees of commitment. Joseph M. Curran's *The birth of the Irish Free State* (1980) led the way, claiming that '[w]hether the state was to be ruled by the people or by a revolutionary junta was the most important question confronting 1922 … [civil war] firmly established democratic rule'.[53] In 1989, Lee saw the cause of the Civil War was 'the basic conflict in nationalist doctrine between majority right and divine right … once the issue surfaced the choice lay between democracy and dictatorship'.[54] In 1994, Keogh argued that 'IRA acts of intimidation and vandalism [in 1922] prefigured what was to happen in fascist Italy and Germany in the 1930s.'[55] For Garvin in 1996, '[d]emocratic government … came to most of the island of Ireland for the first time in the crucial years of 1921–23 – the "Long 1922"',[56] whilst O'Halpin claimed in 1999 that '[t]he twenty-six county Irish state was established as a parliamentary democracy, and it has remained one'.[57] Also in 1999, Laffan insisted that '[i]ndependence had been achieved largely by military means, and so had democratic, majority rule during the civil

other' (Richard English, *Ernie O'Malley: IRA intellectual* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 84, 88, and English, *Armed struggle: a history of the IRA* (London, 2003), p. 33). Whilst there is no requirement for consistency, some acknowledgement is due when such reorientations are responses to either historiographical innovation or to current affairs.

[51] Garvin, *1922*, pp. 142–4. See Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798–1998: politics and war* (Oxford, 1999), p. 270, and R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: a life: the arch-poet, 1915–1939* (2 vols., Oxford, 2003), II, p. 213.

[52] Garvin, *1922*, p. 143.

[53] Joseph M. Curran, *The birth of the Irish Free State, 1921–23* (Alabama, 1980), p. 280.

[54] Lee qualifies that '[i]t did not necessarily follow that all Free Staters were instinctive democrats, and all Irregulars [anti-treatyites] autocrats' (J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912–85: politics and society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 67; see also pp. 174, 176).

[55] Keogh, *Twentieth-century Ireland*, p. 5.

[56] Garvin, *1922*, p. 2.

[57] O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p. 350.

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war',[58] whilst Townshend deemed the Civil War 'a struggle of democracy against militarism'.[59] Finally, Girvin claimed in 2002 that '[t]he Irish Civil War … reinforced Ireland's commitment to parliamentary sovereignty, weakening anti-democratic forces in the society'.[60]

Whilst there is some dissent over this issue of democratic state formation, there is no debate. Michael Hopkinson's authoritative politico-military study, *Green against green: the Irish civil war* (1988), does not endorse democratic versus anti-democratic causational explanations.[61] Studies of individual counties by Peter Hart, Michael Farry, and Marie Coleman between 1998 and 2003 provide interpretations of mentalities and motivations that transcend singular ideological explanations of the war.[62] Bill Kissane's *Explaining Irish democracy* (2002) argued, as I have done, for anti-democratic tendencies on all sides.[63] Over the last forty years, surveys by J. C. Beckett, Oliver MacDonagh, F. S. L. Lyons, Roy Foster, K. Theodore Hoppen, and Alvin Jackson have rejected the interpretation of democratic polarities,[64] though nowhere is it made clear why this should be so.[65]

One obvious answer may be that democracy and revolution make unusual bedfellows. Historians employing the formula 'democratic state versus anti-democratic republicanism' do so at the risk of confusing potentially antithetical interpretations of democracy and revolutionary struggle, for whereas electoral freedom is inalienable to the former, use of violence is nearly always integral to the latter.[66] There is necessarily considerable latitude to define what 'democracy', or even 'revolution', might have meant in 1922, though it is also the case that few historians attempt to define what they mean in their application of either term.[67] Without adequate definitions of what 'democracy' meant in revolutionary

[58] Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party, 1916–1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 434.

[59] Charles Townshend, *Ireland: the 20th century* (London, 1999), p. 115.

[60] Brian Girvin, *From union to union: nationalism, democracy and religion in Ireland: Act of Union to EU* (Dublin, 2002), p. 63.

[61] Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 111 and passim; see also Lawlor, *Britain and Ireland*, chs. 6 and 7.

[62] Hart subsequently defined the IRA as 'ademocratic', without making clear what he meant by the term, and conceived the treatyites' civil war as being fought in the defence of democracy: '[t]he threat to democracy finally ended when the revolution did, with the IRA ceasefire in April 1923' (Hart, *IRA and its enemies*), pp. 112–26, 262–9; Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution: Sligo, 1921–1923* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 39–49; Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 143–7 and passim; Hart, *IRA at war*, p. 27.

[63] Kissane, *Explaining Irish democracy*, pp. 224–8; Regan, *Irish counter-revolution*, pp. 373–83.

[64] J. C. Beckett, *The making of modern Ireland, 1603–1923* (London, 1966), pp. 458–61; Oliver MacDonagh, *Ireland* (New Jersey, 1968), pp. 96–9, and Oliver MacDonagh, *Ireland: the Union and its aftermath* (London, 1977), pp. 102–5; Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, pp. 452–62; R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1603–1972* (London, 1988), pp. 510–11; K. Theodore Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800: conflict and conformity* (London, 1989), pp. 174–80, and Jackson, *Ireland, 1798–1998*, pp. 264–74.

[65] See Bill Kissane, *The politics of the Irish Civil War* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 202–40.

[66] Hart, for one, suggests Tilly's 'multiple sovereignty' thesis wherein competing groups make incompatible demands for state control in order to define 'revolution' though, it should be noted that Tilly does not identify a 'classic' Irish revolution (Hart, *IRA at war*, pp. 10–11; see Charles Tilly, *Popular contention in Great Britain, 1758–1834* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), p. 237, and Tilly, *From mobilization to revolution* (London, 1978)). Fitzpatrick argues that '[t[he means by which two revolutionary elites secured local power ranged from violence and threat of violence to collective protest, propaganda, parliamentary and diplomatic struggle, and negotiation … [and] were sufficiently lasting and profound to merit the term "revolution"' (*Two Irelands*, p. 4).

[67] Lee and Garvin, alone among historians advocating democratic state formation, offer definitions. For Lee, it is sufficient that an Irish electorate be allowed to determine their future 'according to their

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Ireland, the question remains not its utility as an interpretative tool, but why it should be applied in the first place. During the 1980s, the southern Civil War increasingly came to be understood by specialists as the nexus between the revolutionary period and the consolidation of the democratic state. At the same time, the war in Northern Ireland was being defined by the British and the Republic's governments as a struggle between the liberal democratic state and militarist-republicanism.[68] If historiography is to be read in context, this detail may not be easily overlooked.

II

The chief argument against the 'democratic state formation' thesis is that there was no functioning constitution of any order in which democracy – however extravagantly defined – could be said to exist. In Ireland, the British constitution faltered, following the failure to implement home rule after 1912, to its eventual collapse in the counterinsurgency campaign of 1920. Sinn Féin's counter-constitution disintegrated along with its institutions during the first six months of 1922. Throughout, what determined political outcomes were not electoral mandates but the abilities of parties to influence decision-makers through the application of threat and force. Nowhere is this more exaggerated, or better demonstrated, than during the course of 1922.

The influence of British coercion was identified by the anti-treatyites as corrupting constitutional processes and, for some at least, it justified their use of force to defend the republic.[69] This interpretation forms what David Fitzpatrick alone has identified as the 'classic republican argument'.[70] As already noted, historians have largely dismissed, or censored through omission, this interpretation whilst Fitzpatrick, for his part, offers no evaluation of the argument. The best critique available is Richard English's 1996 biography of Ernie O'Malley wherein English argues that the will of the people was only acceptable to republicans when it coincided with theirs: '[t]he 1921 Treaty provided the clearest instance of this tendency, with clear popular majorities in favour of the agreement being brushed aside by the 'anti-Treatyites'. In any event, British coercion is deemed by English to be irrelevant by virtue of republican elitism, explained as 'historical right, trumping the opinions of the contemporary Irish people and overruling the coerced acceptance of the 1921 agreement'. Ultimately, for English, this same elitism 'carried with it distinct traces of the anti-democratic'.[71] Whilst English's analysis is more nuanced than most, he is determined to remain faithful to historiographical orthodoxy by reconciling compulsion with democratic outcomes. To other historians, this might recommend a course of enquiry that avoided, rather than engaged with, the classic argument.

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own judgement of existing circumstances' (Lee, *Ireland, 1912–1985*, p. 67). This, precisely, was Collins's position in 1922 (Michael Collins, *The path to freedom* (Dublin, 1922), ed. Tim Pat Coogan (Wales, 1996), p. 32. For Garvin, democracy is 'government by a group of people elected by the adult population of the community and subjected to regular electoral testing' which is, to say the least, vague (Garvin, *1922*), p. 2).

[68] For an eloquent exposition of this position, see Conor Cruise O'Brien's speech to the Republic's senate on the second reading of the Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Bill, *Seaned Eireann debates* 79 (12 Mar. 1975), cols. 791–8.

[69] Liam Mellows, *Dáil treaty debates* (4 Jan. 1922), p. 229; Eamon de Valera, *Dáil treaty debates. Vol. 2* (27 Apr. 1922), p. 295; Mary Macswiney, ibid., p. 338; and David Ceannt, ibid. (19 May 1922), p. 469.

[70] Fitzpatrick, *Boland's Irish revolution*, p. 307.

[71] English, *Ernie O'Malley*, pp. 84, 88.

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No matter how disturbed the conditions in 1922, it can be argued that a democratic culture, if not quite democracy itself, was exemplified by the treatyites upholding the majority decisions of the Sinn Féin cabinet, Dáil, and subsequent electoral support for the treaty. By way of complication, however, it should also be recognized that Collins assumed powers best described as dictatorial between the middle of July and his death in an ambush on 22 August. This claim lies at odds with both orthodox interpretations of state formation and the southern nationalist hagiography that now envelops Collins. Whilst the treatyites had previously given every expectation of building liberal democratic institutions, this is qualified by the central role played in the emergent regime by Collins and the secret Irish Republican Brotherhood.[72] In any case, any liberal democratic ambitions were eclipsed by the mounting crisis.[73] By early August 1922, Collins controlled civil, military and – through the influence of the IRB – extra-constitutional powers within the emergent Free State.[74] At the very least, this argument challenges narratives of independence achieved through constitutional and democratic processes.[75] Even if Collins's dictatorial leadership is recognized, it may be put forward, as a last line of defence, that the treatyites best represented the ''people's'' will and their interests. By this version, the revolutionary period's

[72] See John M. Regan, 'Michael Collins – the legacy and the intestacy', in Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh, eds., *Michael Collins and the making of the Irish state* (Cork, c. 1998), pp. 117–26.

[73] Regan, *Irish counter-revolution*, pp. 80–1.

[74] In mid-July, the Provisional government surrendered executive powers to a treatyite army autonomous of any civil authority and controlled by Collins. Two factors distinguished a benign military government from a military dictatorship. The first is Collins's decision, confirmed on 21 August, not to allow the Provisional parliament to meet on 2 September. The second is the IRB's position within the regime. Under its constitution, the IRB's supreme council (dominated by treatyites) assumed the governmental sovereignty of the Irish republic from the Dáil. It should be noted that this claim is a far less equivocal claim regarding Collins's dictatorial powers than the one I made in 1999 in *The Irish counter-revolution*, pp. 80–1. The more emphatic interpretation proposed here results partly from new research, but also, pointedly, from the revision of earlier conclusions constricted by self-censorship. On the transfer of powers to the military, see Fitzpatrick, *Boland's Irish revolution*, p. 313; on the army's autonomy, see Ronan Fanning, *Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1983), pp. 44–6, and 'Constitution of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, revised to 1920' (National Library of Ireland MS 27,628).

[75] Hart's biography of Collins refutes the suggestion that Collins, as commander-in-chief, dominated the civilian government in July and August 1922. Instead, Hart argues that the cabinet asserted its authority: '[d]ecisions were made in his [Collins] absence, his wishes were sometimes denied – as on appointments – and he was given orders, which were pressed in spite of his objections' (Hart, *Mick: the real Michael Collins*, pp. 404–5). In respect of Northern Ireland, Hart claims that ministers unilaterally formed a policy committee. Furthermore, he postulates that, where the conduct of the war was concerned, ministers demanded the execution of prisoners caught under arms and removed censorship from military control. In rebuttal, Collins wrote on 23 July 1922: 'Meanwhile, I'll ask the Government for an indication of the lines of further policy toward the Northern Government.' On the summary execution of prisoners, Collins wrote in response to government requests: 'I am against shooting down unarmed men in any circumstances when it is known the men are unarmed.' No such policy was authorized prior to Collins's death on 22 August. On censorship, it was Collins's initiative to have it removed from military control: 'At all times … censorship was too strict for my liking … Please get for me Government sanction … and I will see that the Military Censor is advised' (Collins to Richard Mulcahy, 23 July 1922, quoted in a 'confidential and secret' memorandum on Northern Ireland prepared for Desmond FitzGerald, minister of defence, 26 July 1927, University College Dublin Archives Department (hereafter UCDAD), P80/457(16); Collins to W. T. Cosgrove, 29 July 1922, (UCDAD, Mulcahy papers P7/B/29(156); Collins to FitzGerald, 26 July 1922 (UCDAD FitzGerald papers, P/80/283(2))).

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democratic consolidation rests on the interpretation of electoral mandates: chiefly, the June 1922 'pact' general election.

It is necessary to look at the general election in detail, albeit briefly, given its centrality to the democratic state formation thesis, as well as its contrived format. From February onwards, the election campaign suffered disruption and intimidation from the anti-treatyites and it soon became clear that a plebiscite was impossible without their co-operation. On 20 May, negotiations between Collins and de Valera brokered a 'pact' proposing re-election of the existing Dáil from a combined pro- and anti-treaty Sinn Féin panel. The 'pact' envisaged a reunited Sinn Féin cabinet with a president elected by the Dáil, together with five treatyite and four anti-treatyite ministers. The crucial minister of defence would be nominated by the combined pro- and anti-treaty IRA. De Valera almost succeeded in sidelining any consideration of the treaty as an electoral issue, except for Collins's insistence that non-Sinn Féin panellists be permitted to stand ensuring an electoral test of public opinion, at least in those constituencies that were contested.

Polling day, 16 June, was noteworthy for its lack of incident and also marked the first general election to be held under proportional representation in southern Ireland. Of the contested constituencies, panel candidates secured 94 (59·7 per cent), comprising 58 treatyites (38·4 per cent) and 36 anti-treatyites (21·2 per cent), Labour 17 seats (21·3 per cent), Farmers 7 (7·8 per cent) and Independents 10 (10·6 per cent). Non-panel candidates almost uniformly endorsed the treaty, although by doing so, they did not necessarily support a treatyite Provisional government. Collins's abandonment of the pact on the eve of election, together with ongoing British coercion, renders virtually impossible a conclusive reading of voter intentions and motivations. Notwithstanding, most historians agree that the result marked a majority for the treaty, which was supported both by treatyites on the panel and the non-Sinn Féin candidates. Murphy, for example, claimed that 'the results indicated beyond doubt popular approval of the treaty', whilst Curran insisted that 'without doubt the treaty was the overriding issue in the election and its opponents were decisively repudiated'.[76] For Fanning, the election 'conferred and, in Ireland at least, was perceived as conferring upon the provisional government a democratic mandate which, however attenuated by the pace, enabled them to claim that a majority of people supported the treaty'.[77] Similarly, Lawlor insisted that 'the Irish people had voted for the treaty' and Townshend concluded that the election produced 'a substantial majority of public opinion in … [the treaty] favour – or at least in favour of not rejecting it'.[78] Some equivocation in reconciling the results with majoritarian, or even democratic, outcomes, may be detected. Others, meanwhile, remain wilfully obscure. Lee, for example, claimed that '[t]he verdict of the people, whatever their mixture of motives, and whatever the constraints under which they voted, was clear', whilst Keogh claimed that '[t]he outcome was a victory for the Provisional Government'.[79] For reasons which are not forthcoming, Fitzpatrick eschewed any reference to the general election result in his 1998 analysis.[80]

The critical issue is the anti-treatyites' claim that votes for panel candidates mandated coalition government and reconciliation and not the Provisional government and civil war. Rejecting the former interpretations, historians have opted, presumably on majoritarian

[76] John A. Murphy, *Ireland in the twentieth century* (Dublin, 1975), p. 53; Curran, *The birth of the Irish Free State*, pp. 221–2. [77] Fanning, *Independent Ireland*, p. 14.

[78] Lawlor, *Britain and Ireland*, p. 191, and Townshend, *Ireland: the 20th century*, p. 113. See also Hart, *IRA at war*, p. 25. [79] Lee, *Ireland, 1912–1985*, p. 62; Keogh, *Twentieth-century Ireland*, p. 7.

[80] Fitzpatrick, *Two Irelands*, p. 113.

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grounds, for the treatyites' interpretation that they themselves deployed in 1922, both to legitimize the settlement and, subsequently, to prosecute the Civil War. Writing in the 1960s, this approach was rejected by T. Desmond Williams, who identified republican defeat only, F. S. L. Lyons, who claimed that a significant proportion of the electorate rejected Sinn Féin's panel as a whole, and J. C. Beckett, who claimed that 'the government interpreted' the result as 'an endorsement of the treaty'.[81] Neither of the two non-academic studies of the southern Civil War, both published in the late 1960s, chose to endorse the treatyite interpretation.[82] Until the early 1970s, historical writing remained careful to avoid partisan interpretations, thereby implicitly acknowledging the ambiguity and manipulation of the result by vested interests.[83] By 1972, however, the current affairs broadcaster and leading light of an emerging generation of Irish political scientists, Brian Farrell, set an emphatic tone in claiming that the 'outcome of that 1922 "Pact" Election was a decisive victory in terms of votes and seats for the pro-treaty wing of Sinn Féin'.[84] Since Farrell, few have deviated from what is effectively the reassertion of treatyite proapaganda, presented as scientific analysis.[85]

In his study of revolutionary Sinn Féin, Michael Laffan rejected the validity of any interpretation incorporating a contrary anti-treatyite interpretation, arguing that this was a 'minority view' and 'in whole or in part everyone calculated the results in terms of votes for or against the treaty'.[86] 'Everyone', it should be noted, dismissed not only the treaty's opponents (and, indeed, some supporting it), but also the Irish Labour party and vocal elements in what Kissane has described as the civil society outside party politics.[87]

What remains disputed is how votes were cast, rather than counted. In 1979, Michael Gallagher's psephological study concluded that the 'pact' was observed 'more in the rule than in the breach'. Over 70 per cent of anti-treatyite transfers went to treatyite panel candidates when there were no more anti-treatyites left to vote for. Treatyites

[81] T. D. Williams, 'From treaty to civil war', in Williams, ed., *The Irish struggle*, p. 121; Lyons, *Ireland since the famine*, p. 457, and Beckett, *The making of modern Ireland*, p. 458.

[82] Eoin Neeson, *The Civil War in Ireland* (Cork, 1966), pp. 64–5, and Carlton Younger, *Ireland's Civil War* (London, 1968), pp. 31–4.

[83] There are exceptions and contradictions. The treatyite majoritarian interpretation was endorsed in the Republic's first television history by the economist Patrick Lynch ('Ireland since the Treaty', in T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin, eds., *The course of Irish history* (Dublin, 1966), p. 325). The treatyite position also found its way into a school textbook in 1969, and quickly out of another, by the same author, in 1972 (Mark Tierney and Margaret MacCurtain, *The birth of modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1969), pp. 158–9; Tierney, *Modern Ireland, 1850–1950* (Dublin, 1972), p. 144).

[84] Brian Farrell, 'First Dáil and after', in Brian Farrell, ed., *The Irish parliamentary tradition* (Dublin, 1973), p. 215; first broadcast as the Thomas Davies lecture series on RTE radio from January to April 1972. In the same year, Robert Kee argued that 'Collins now had unmistakable democratic sanction for the treaty' (*The green flag* (London, 1972), p. 738) and Marie and Conor Cruise O'Brien claimed that 'General elections [sic] (June 1922) produced a parliament with a safe pro-Treaty majority which elected a government headed by Arthur Griffith [sic]' (*Ireland: a concise history* (1972) (London, 1999), p. 150).

[85] Roy Foster is a notable exception; see Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 509–10.

[86] Laffan, *Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 400; see, more broadly, pp. 399–411.

[87] Bill Kissane, 'Civil society under strain: intermediary organisations and the Irish civil war', *Irish Political Studies*, 15 (2000), pp. 1–24. For further refutation insisting that 'You voted for PEACE/They gave you WAR/In your name, Griffith and Collins began this War' (Anti-treatyite handbill (c. 1 July 1922), UCDAD, De Valera papers, P150/1633); see also *The Voice of Labour*, 12 Aug. 1922.

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reciprocated generously in equal measure.[88] One in three transfers from non-panellists went to anti-treatyites. Although Gallagher's analysis remains the most authoritative, the conclusions he drew from panel transferable votes (when there were no candidates left on the same side) is too small to be applied with certainty to the whole election.[89] Neither, however, may it be ignored.

Transfers between panel candidates indicate significant voter solidarity on the issue of coalition government which, in the absence of any superior authority, undermines interpretations suggesting a mandate for the treaty, treatyites, the Provisional government, or any democratic premise for the Civil War. From the available evidence, it can be concluded correctly that a significant, but undeterminable, proportion of panel votes, and perhaps even a majority, were cast supporting the pact's obligation to form a coalition. Accepting the primacy of transfer patterns over any other available evidence, it is unsound to interpret the combined pro-treaty panel and non-panel vote as a majority endorsing the Provisional government. Precisely what voters intended remains a matter for conjecture. To extrapolate a mandate for anything, however, least of all a war, imposes impossible demands on both evidence and definitions of democracy. Such, however, is the exacting requirement of the democratic state formation thesis. Of equal importance is the way in which Gallagher's main conclusions have been rejected by historians without satisfactory refutation.

III

'Nationalism', John Breuilly argues, 'remains distinctive only so long as it is unsuccessful.'[90] By 1998, public opinion in the Republic had evolved to the point where the irredentist clauses of de Valera's 1937 constitution could be amended and partition, if not embraced, was at least recognized by 94 per cent of voters.[91] Achieving such an overwhelming endorsement was most probably attributable to reaction to the northern situation, though the role of historians in conditioning public consciousness through teaching, broadcasting, and writing also deserves further consideration. If commentators marvel at a perceived sea-change occurring in public opinion in the Republic since 1968, they should also reflect on southern nationalism's quiet advancement from the state's founding credo, to public recognition by its citizens.[92] This has long been a success story, albeit an indistinct one.

[88] Michael Gallagher, 'The "pact" general election of 1922', *Irish Historical Studies*, 21 (1979), pp. 418, 419.

[89] In the most anti-treatyite of the contested constituencies, Sligo–Mayo East, Michael Farry's analysis identified anti-treatyites as observing the pact more rigorously than treatyites (Farry, *Aftermath of revolution*, pp. 71–3).

[90] John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the state* (Manchester, 1982), p. 374.

[91] Nineteenth Amendment of the Constitution Bill, 1998. Turnout: 55·6 per cent. Yes: 1,442,583 (94·4 per cent); No: 85,748 (5·6 per cent); invalid 17,064. For a survey of public opinion identifying significant support for irredentist values in the late 1970s, see E. E. David and R. Sinnott, *Attitudes in the Republic of Ireland relevant to the Northern Ireland problem* (Dublin, 1979).

[92] For a comparative sociological analysis of attitudes in the Republic to Northern Ireland comparing samples from 1972–3 and 1988–9, see Micheál MacGréil, *Prejudice in Ireland revisited* (Maynooth, 1996), ch. 8. For the evolution of the Republic's descriptive language and policy from irredentism to more conciliatory and pluralist modes of expression, see Katy Hayward, 'The politics of nuance: Irish official discourse on Northern Ireland', *Irish Political Studies*, 19 (2004), pp. 18–38.

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In the mid-1960s, the embryo of a revised twentieth-century Irish historiography, new methodological innovation, and political science's emergence as a discipline in Ireland (and surrogate for contemporary history) held the promise of the future.[93] It was not delivered. What followed over three decades was informed, or some might say retarded, by a preoccupation with the state as a legitimizing project, rather than as a historical subject. It is progressively more difficult to deny that the northern war played an important role in shaping this development. By the mid-1970s, governmental concern with counter-insurgency demanded that the northern war's combatants be clearly categorized: terrorist and legitimate, criminal and lawful, democratic and anti-democratic. This process, and the ensuing public debate in the Republic, as well as in the United Kingdom, left its mark on the southern Civil War's historicization. Once imprinted on the historical imagination, the contemporary war's binary oppositions readily found expression in analogies and comparisons with earlier conflicts. As we have seen, these are easily identified in interpretations of the southern Civil War, as well as in the retrospective scramble to democratize the southern state.

Against this backdrop, the epicentre of the southern state's creation narrative slowly migrated between from 1916 to 1922.[94] Ronan Fanning's monumental *The Irish department of finance, 1922–1958* (1978) was followed by Joseph Curran's *The birth of the Irish Free State, 1921–1923* (1980), and John McColgan's *British policy and the Irish administration, 1920–1922* (1983). While the impact of these research monographs is difficult to evaluate, subsequent surveys that used the departments of state as a means to explore southern Irish society found far wider audiences. Fanning's *Independent Ireland* (1983), Keogh's *Twentieth-century Ireland* (1994), and Garvin's *1922: the birth of Irish democracy* (1996) proved accessible, sometimes influential, interpretations. Institutional histories were, in turn, augmented by the prodigious output of departmental studies, including Mary E. Daly's research on local government and agriculture, Eunan O'Halpin's on the defence services and Keogh's diplomatic histories.[95] Weighed with a good measure of graduate research, the writing up of the state's archive and ancillary collections accounts for a significant sum of historical endeavour over the last thirty years.[96] Over the same period, it may be observed that the

[93] See Roy Foster, 'Theme-parks and history', in Foster, ed., *The Irish story*, p. 27.

[94] In the context of the peace process and Provisional Sinn Féin's encroachment into southern politics, there is evidence of further revisions to this position. Addressing an Easter 1916 commemoration at Fermoy, Co. Cork, in April 2004, for example, the Republic's minister for finance, Charlie McCreavy, observed that the founders of the state 'were not the surviving occupants of Government Buildings on a December day in 1922' and the 1916 Proclamation is 'the noble founding charter of an independent Ireland based on pride in a truly Irish nationality'. See also Martin Mansergh, 'Padraig Pearse and the creation of an Irish national democracy', delivered to the Ireland Institute, Dublin civic museum, 5 November 1998, published in Mansergh, *The legacy of history* (Cork, 2003), pp. 230–40; see also D. de Bréadún, 'Why it is becoming acceptable to speak of 1916 again', *Irish Times*, 12 Apr. 2004.

[95] Mary E. Daly, *The buffer state: the historical roots of the department of the environment* (Dublin, 1997); Mary E. Daly, *The first department: a history of the department of agriculture* (Dublin, 2002); O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*; Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919–1949* (Dublin, 1988); Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and the Vatican: the politics and diplomacy of church–state relations, 1922–1960* (Cork, 1995).

[96] This southern focus may indicate neglect of Northern Ireland's history in southern universities. Surveying the pre-'troubles' literature, Boyce has reflected that 'whatever the reasons, the north was to most southern historians what Africa has been to the Victorians: a largely blank map, with few guiding features, and inhabited by unknown, and possibly unknowable, beings' (Boyce, 'Revisionism and the Northern Ireland troubles', p. 223). In a review article on the recent peace process in Northern Ireland, Eunan O'Halpin made a similarly striking observation that 'of the total of 35 authors

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1922 state increasingly, though never completely, replaced the revolutionary republic as the geographical medium for examining twentieth-century 'Ireland'.

What is apparent in the 1970s and 1980s is a revision in both academic historiography and the state's public history that shifted nationalist narratives away from the *kulturnation* (nowhere better exemplied than in Dorothy Macardle's 1937 polemical classic *The Irish republic*) to the *staatsnation*. This reorientation was reflected in the Republic's downscaling of the Easter 'rising' commemorations, once the 1916 republic's claim to unite Irishmen and women under arms became a profound embarrassment to the political establishment.[97]

During this period, specialist historians mapped an approach to state formation that borrowed from, or at least coincided with, treatyite propaganda from 1922 and later.[98] Among the more polemical accounts, historical analysis appears a mere parody of the Civil War's rhetoric. In 1923, for example, Kevin O'Higgins interpreted anti-treatyite republicanism as 'a great deal of greed and envy and lust and drunkenness and irresponsibility … we are dealing with anarchy under cover of a political banner', whilst Garvin wrote of the same subject in 1996 that '[u]nder cover of its political status, many [IRA] individuals and units engaged in looting, house-burning, land grabbing, murder and occasionally, rape'.[99] Among others, Curran, Fanning, Lee, Keogh, Laffan, O'Halpin, and Girvin broadly accept a revivified treatyite analysis in their explanations of the southern Civil War's causation. This is a statist interpretation and services at least three ideological constructions that have come to prominence in historical writing since 1970 to reinforce southern nationalist mythologies. First, the state emerged primarily from a popular nationalist struggle and not a settlement imposed by the British. Secondly, the legal provenance of the new state originated from revolutionary institutions and not from British statute.[100] Thirdly, and arguably most importantly, adherence to constitutional, otherwise democratic politics remained constant among the treatyite founders of the state. At its most reductive, the statist approach to contemporary southern history is merely an expression of southern nationalist ideology. It often follows historical contours that elide the more problematic aspects of the revolutionary period, such as its unmandated and sectarian violence or the gerrymandered partition of 1920, or at least avoids their recognition.

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represented … thirteen are based outside the island, and just one, John Coakley, researches in the Republic of Ireland … [which] begs the awkward question of what the rest of us down here are up to' (Eunan O'Halpin, 'Northern Ireland: the troubled peace process', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 12 (2001), p. 247.

[97] Declan Kiberd, 'The elephant of revolutionary forgetfulness', in Maírín ni Dhonnchadha and Theo Dorgan, eds., *Revising the rising* (Derry, 1991), pp. 1–20; D. G. Boyce, 'No lack of ghosts: memory, commemoration and the state in Ireland', in Iain McBride, ed., *History and memory in modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 254–71.

[98] For analysis of treatyite propaganda, see Regan, *Irish counter-revolution*, p. 67 and passim; see also P. S. O'Hegarty, *The victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924), pp. 141–5 and passim, and Kevin O'Higgins, *The Civil War and the events which led to it* (Dublin, 1923).

[99] Kevin O'Higgins, 'Confidential memorandum on the situation in the Free State', c. 11 Jan. 1923 (UCDAD, Mulcahy papers, P7b/96(7-10); Garvin, *1922*, p. 54.

[100] For a teleological interpretation that traces the state's legitimacy through revolutionary institutions, see Laffan, *Resurrection of Ireland*, pp. 410–11, 416. For a dualist interpretation that incorporates both British and southern Irish arguments, see J. L. McCracken, *Representative government in Ireland* (London, 1958), pp. 54–6. For an interpretation that locates the legal origins of the Free State in British statute, see Fitzpatrick, *Two Irelands*, pp. 112–14.

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Approaches may vary, but all share the common foundation narrative of a 'democratic revolution'.[101]

In what one suspects was an off-guard moment, Eamon de Valera commented in the early 1960s that 'France was France without Alsace and Lorraine … Ireland is Ireland without the north.'[102] This remains the most succinct exposition of the southern nationalist outlook on who belongs, and more importantly who does not, to their 'Irish' nation. The same 'double-think' was writ large across the institutions of the southern state and most explicitly expressed in the Republic's constitution which, until 1998, claimed jurisdiction over the whole island and its people.[103] For pragmatic reasons, it has long been understood, at least by the state, that 'Ireland' ended at the border. Southern separatists thus not only appropriated the language of pan-nationalism, but also institutionalized a conceptualization of modern Ireland wherein the partitioned northern counties and their peoples increasingly became irrelevant, unknown, and, perhaps, unknowable.

Intrinsic to the mediation of historical research in the Republic to the needs of southern society has been the avoidance of probing and problematic questions. This has partly been facilitated by a reluctance to engage with research on the revolutionary period. Projects begun in southern universities on revolutionary republicanism in the 1960s and 1970s were, in some instances, delayed for decades or abandoned altogether. Some historians diverted into social and cultural history or, indeed, migration studies. Of itself, this may have resulted from the normal distractions that visit academic life. It is, however, worth noting that in the years between 1970 and the Provisionals' ceasefires of 1994 and 1997, only one extensive synthesis of the revolutionary period came from within the Republic's history departments.[104] Moreover, apart from the coterie of research students gathered by David Fitzpatrick in Trinity College Dublin, revolutionary violence remained a subject largely reserved for historians working outside the Republic.[105] It has sometimes been mooted that this pattern arose because scholarly objectivity became impossible in light of events in the north. Alternatively, and even less convincingly, it has been argued that certain histories could not be written for fear they would be skewed to the purposes of 'terrorists' which would not only appear to prejudice the kind of history which might be written, but also simultaneously to surrender the right to write such history. The influences exerted on

[101] Though not employed by historians, the term 'democratic revolution' is now established in the Republic's political lexicon as the government attempts, once again, to include the Easter 1916 'rising' in its ongoing revision of the state's formation. Discussing the re-establishment of the state's commemoration of the 1916 'rising', the Republic's minister of justice, equality, and law reform, Michael McDowell, commented that 'I believe we should commemorate 1916, because 1916, whatever the rights and wrongs of the IRB who organized it, was chosen by the Irish people in 1918 as a starting point of the democratic revolution towards independence in Ireland, and it was retrospectively adopted by Dáil Éireann as the starting point' (*Questions and answers*, RTE broadcast, 7 Nov. 2005); see also the speech by the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, at the Arbour Hill (Easter 1916) commemoration, Dublin; Department of Taoiseach press release, 24 Apr. 2005.

[102] Quoted by Bowman, *De Valera*, p. 312.

[103] The constitution of Ireland (1937) defined the Irish nation and the national territory in articles 2 and 3 as being of the whole people and land of the island of Ireland, but confined its jurisdiction to the southern and western twenty-six counties 'pending the re-integration' of the six counties of Northern Ireland. The new constitution styled the southern state 'Ireland', or '*Éire*' in Irish, rejecting 'Irish Free State' as designated under the 1922 constitution (*Bunreacht na hÉireann* (*Constitution of Ireland*) (Dublin, 1937), p. 6).

[104] Lee, *Ireland, 1912–1985*.

[105] A notable addition is David Leeson's 'The black and tans: British police in the first Irish war, 1920–1921' (Ph.D. dissertation, McMaster University, Canada, 2003).

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historical scholarship in the Republic and elsewhere require much better articulation than they have hitherto received. Even starting to address these issues demands, however, a candour and openness that is, as yet, nowhere to be seen. The hallmark of a vital community of historians is the faithful application of historical method to one another's work. The conscious political nationalist, together with his fellow traveller, the accidental nationalist, strive for, or carelessly trail, those consensual representations of the past that tend to ignore the uncomfortable, challenging, or inexpedient. By such thought processes, whole communities may disappear, territories can go unseen, wars are forgotten, and unfamiliar histories will not be referenced.

As a result, those histories that are not written also play a critical role in shaping historiography. The northern state bequeathed a rich archival record rendering it, on purely historical grounds, equally as worthy of study as its southern counterpart. Even for comparative purposes, however, its departments attract few scholars. If the state occupies a central place in modern Irish historiography, it is as an expression of southern national identity, rather than as an expression of intellectual enquiry. It remains the case that attempts to overlay a nationalist ideology on to research agendas should be handled with care: there are no easy fits. Those practising outside Ireland, as well as within, those of varied nationalities and Irish nationalities, of varying religious and ethnic backgrounds are as likely as not to be influenced by southern nationalism. Nevertheless, the longer one reflects on these matters, the more striking the synergy appears between contemporary Irish history, as practised in the Republic and a neo-nationalist historiography. As may already be apparent, that relationship is most acute in the colleges of the National University of Ireland. Southern nationalism will remain a challenge to us all, but it is also appropriate to recognize that it finds singular expression as an engrained institutional problem.

IV

In 1969, as Northern Ireland went into freefall, the Republic contemplated revolution and the state's defence. Allegations of involvement of its military intelligence and cabinet ministers, in importing arms for northern nationalists, contradicted, in an unprecedented manner, the central tenets of southern nationalism.[106] These events, as yet not fully explained, have sometimes been interpreted as part of an aggressive irredentist drive within the Republic's government. Motivations were complex, doubtless even confused, but military support for northern nationalists, and an emphasis on pan-nationalist rhetoric, may also be read as part of a challenge to the leadership within the government party. Arguably, it formed part of an attempt by 'hawks' (led by Neil Blaney) inside the Fianna Fáil to manoeuvre Taoiseach Jack Lynch into denying military aid (or its contingency) to northerners during the first months of the crisis.[107] As with accounts of May 1922, this

[106] The ministers involved were Charles Haughey (Finance) and Neil Blaney (Agriculture and Fisheries); for a speculative overview, see Justin O'Brien, *The Arms trial* (Dublin, 2000).

[107] Reports by the British ambassador to Dublin, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, in the late summer and autumn of 1969, offer rare insights into the Fianna Faíl government's constellation and Lynch's position in cabinet. A conversation on 5 September 1969 with cabinet minister Erskine Hamilton Childers (who, in Gilchrist's estimation, was not a 'hawk') suggested that the British decision to deploy troops in Northern Ireland three weeks previously may have been influenced by the mobilization of the Republic's army on the border. 'When I inserted a comment that this [the Republic's government]

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interpretation invokes the northern nationalists becoming a tool, rather than a cause, in southern power-struggles.

What may be said with more certainty is that any co-operation between government ministers and paramilitaries (some of the latter having transmogrified into the Provisional IRA by early 1970) raised the possibility of the Republic becoming embroiled in a cross-border war. Mobilization of irredentism, whether for political advantage or from genuine concern for the northern minority, identified the potentially catastrophic contradiction existing between the *staatsnation* and the *kulturnation*, within the Republic's citadel. Renewed northern violence provided the context for the revision of public history in the south as well as for the temporary marginalization of pan-nationalism and militarist-republicanism. It is, however, difficult to escape concluding that it was the momentary abandonment of southern nationalism's founding principles that provided the initial impetus within the state.

By far the most eloquent assault on pan-nationalism and militarist-republicanism came in Conor Cruise O'Brien's *States of Ireland* (1972). Cruise O'Brien focused on public complacency, both towards the Provisionals' violence and to the British and Irish states' counterinsurgency efforts and addressing these themes became established as his major preoccupation in public life over the following decades. Having already been elected a Labour party deputy in the Dáil, in 1973 Cruise O'Brien took portfolios in Liam Cosgrave's Labour–Fine Gael coalition, with responsibilities for communication and for Northern Ireland policy. In office, he thus put into action the ideological offensive he had rehearsed in print.[108] When it came to challenging republican violence on grounds of its illegitimacy, however, the problem remained concerning the state's own origins in an unmandated revolutionary struggle.

All nationalist post-revolutionaries had been obliged to address this anomaly. Among the first was Liam Cosgrave's own father – William T. Cosgrave – in the Free State governments he led during the first decade of independence. One solution, proffered by his most able minister, Kevin O'Higgins, was to write the 1916 'rising' out of the state formation narrative. O'Higgins's history of the 'revolution' thus attributed the legitimacy of Sinn Féin's rise to power to the results of the 1918 General Election and thus ignored Easter week in 1916.[109] Whatever its provenance, this interpretation (that downplayed, if not entirely expunged, 1916) became the adopted strategy of Liam Cosgrave's coalition, as well as of subsequent Dublin governments to 2005.[110] On the sixtieth anniversary of the 'rising'

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restrained attitude was not altogether supported by Lynch's mobilisation of his army on our borders, Erskine Childers at first replied that if a need for intervention across the border for humanitarian reasons had developed, perhaps because as a result of continued exposure of the population to the "B" Specials and a hesitation to use British troops, then Lynch would have been guilty of a dereliction of duty' (National Archives, Kew, CJ 3/100, Gilchrist to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 5 Sept. 1969).

[108] Conor Cruise O'Brien, *States of Ireland* (London, 1972), p. 323; see also 'The water and the fish', in ibid., pp. 281–303.

[109] UCDAD, Eoin MacNeill papers LA 1/F/305, 'Typescript of address by Mr. Kevin O'Higgins', Irish Society at Oxford University, 31 Oct. 1924'.

[110] On 16 April 2006, the Republic's government held the first military parade in Dublin for the Easter 'rising' commemoration since 1971. An estimated 120,000 spectators attended. For a statement indicative of this policy, see the remarks by Mary McAleese, president of Ireland, entitled '1916 – a view from 2006', reprinted in the *Irish Times*, 28 Jan. 2006.

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in 1976, the state held no major public commemoration. In protest, the Provisionals organized a rally in central Dublin, which was duly proscribed by the government, but which was attended by between 6,000 and 10,000 people. In the weeks prior to the anniversary, cabinet papers relating to the foundation of the Free State were released in Dublin and related government papers made available in Belfast.[111] Whatever motivated the timing of such releases (and coincidence cannot be entirely ruled out), the papers provided the primary sources necessary for institutional histories of state formation that centred around 1920–2.

After 1969, what the Republic preferred were creation narratives moulded to its specific requirements. The treatyites' interpretation of 1922 offered both the state, and its historians, conceptualizations that appeared to reconcile the contradictory claims to both revolutionary and constitutional inheritances. At least for a southern audience, narratives that were confined to the south also served to emphasize the achievements of southern nationalism in the material reality of the state and not least in its enduring stability. Easter 1916 and subsequent unmandated republican violence could not be conjured from existence and the Provisionals' commemoration in 1976 confirmed the folly of abandoning the state's alternative history to its enemies. As a historian and government minister, Cruise O'Brien was better placed than most to modify the problem. The Cyril Foster lecture on 'Liberty and Terror', delivered at Oxford University in May 1977, afforded an opportunity to solve the old conundrum of the state's democratic formation and its revolutionary violence:

> The men with whom Lloyd George negotiated in 1921 were all elected representatives and members of a political party with a large majority on the territory on which the state which emerged from negotiations was based. That democratic and representative capacity – not the rather meagre armed force behind them [the IRA] – was the real strength of their position. And when they had negotiated their new state … then they had to defend it against the pure Republicans and the pure gunmen, indifferent then as now to the democratic concept. Nor is the struggle over yet.[112]

Cruise O'Brien synthesized components of a 'democratic formation' thesis in teleological constructions of the state's borders and its legitimacy. In doing so, he conflated the

[111] 'Cabinet papers, north and south'; supplement to the *Irish Times*, 21 Apr. 1976; see also 'Unionist reaction: bitterness and hostility', *Irish Times*, 19 May 1976.

[112] Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Herod: reflections on political violence* (London, 1978), p. 32. Assumptions that the Free State was established as a fully fledged democracy in 1922 can be traced in Cruise O'Brien's writings from 1972 (see *States of Ireland*, pp. 112, 321). In 1975, he argued 'against the legitimacy of the State was the concept of its own imperfection: that the whole island of Ireland was the real unit and that a Government elected by the people of the twenty-six counties was not the Government of Ireland' ('Shades of republicanism', *Irish Times*, 27 Mar. 1975). This was aimed at mainstream republican irrendentism. A year later, he refined this position claiming that 'the foundation of the Irish State … can be said to have been founded through a deal with IRA terrorists [but] men with whom Lloyd George negotiated in 1921 had a democratic mandate from a great majority of the population of the new state – not a mandate for violence, but a mandate to negotiate. No [contemporary] group of terrorists in these islands had any democratic mandate from anyone' ('The bombings: four views'; edited transcript from 'Opinion', Granada television broadcast, February 1976, *New Review*, 2 (Mar. 1976), p. 10). None of the above refuted the importance of IRA violence in establishing Sinn Féin's negotiating position in 1921–2, unless Cruise O'Brien was suggesting that Irish secession from the union would have been conceded on an electoral mandate alone. The state formation process Cruise O'Brien described could not be divorced from the Provisional IRA's justification of its military campaign, the object of his historical reconstruction.

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southern Civil War with the contemporary conflict. Without wishing to argue that his interpretation, and official government accounts defined the historiographical developments that emerged soon afterwards, it is clear that they shared much common ground. For some historians working on the revolutionary period, objectivity, and the interests of the state, were compromised by the onset of the northern war. Most graphically, the Republic's political elite facilitated what can now be identified as a symbiotic relationship through archival provision – a relationship that historians have been slow to question. Furthermore, the state's assault on public ambivalence towards militarist-republicanism, which was central to Cruise O'Brien's broadcasting ban of proscribed organizations in 1976,[113] can be traced in the eradication of ambiguity and nuance in treatments of the Civil War's causation, republican protest, as well as more generally in the historicization of the state's creation.

As elsewhere, nationalism in Ireland is no plodding beast and its influence, in all its many guises, still pervades Irish historical scholarship.[114] As such, in recent decades the state's veneration has become integral to the development of southern nationalism. Though it is often pretended to be otherwise, this approach provides the motor for a nationalist historiography, the influence of which informed that which became known, however inexactly, as 'revisionism' in Irish historical studies. This was clearly identified by northern nationalists, as Stephen Howe has demonstrated, although many historians continue to ignore the existence of southern nationalism as an ideology, and still less as an interpretative problem.[115] To underline the point, it is worth reflecting once more on criticisms levelled by Brendan Bradshaw at those he labelled 'revisionist' in the context of the case study supplied here. Mitigating British coercion in 1922, a highly selective reading of the 'pact' general election result and ignoring Collins's brief ascendancy under what can fairly be described as a military dictatorship all speak to the 'normalization' of Anglo-Irish relations, the 'evasion' of problematic interpretation, and 'the simple expedient of ignoring the evidence'. Of itself, southern nationalism may not decode what Irish historians were debating in recent decades and nor can it explain the full meaning of 'revisionism' in the Irish vernacular. It remains nevertheless an indispensable tool for self-analysis which was the starting-point of this review.

Uncritical use of evidence is not easily explained and nor, for that matter, is the concomitant unwillingness among Irish historians of the twentieth century to engage each other in constructive debate on issues where fundamental divergences of interpretation exist. That the development of a southern nationalist identity, through the agency of a statist historiography, was the product of a conscious, or perhaps unconscious, enterprise between intellectuals and the state, remains open to further investigation. As ever, Cruise O'Brien provides possible openings for further discussions. In 1966, he reflected on scholarship in Cold War America, in the context of intellectuals censoring their work to placate government-sponsored anti-communism. Accordingly he identified '[t]he real danger here and now as to scholarly integrity as to much else, comes not from revolutionary subordination – of which in one form or another we hear much – but from

[113] Seanad debates 79 (cols. 791–8); D. Dunne and G. Kerrigan, *Round up the usual suspects: the Cosgrave coalition and Nicky Kelly* (Dublin, 1984), p. 182.

[114] See, for example, my review of Hart's *IRA at war* in *Reviews in history*; http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/regan.html (2004).

[115] Stephen Howe, *Ireland and empire: colonial legacies in Irish history and culture* (Oxford, 2000), p. 91.

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counter-revolutionary subordination of which we hear almost nothing'.[116] After 1970, an assertive southern nationalism leaned heavily on earlier counterinsurgency narratives and applied them in a new historiography which, post-war, is again undergoing rapid and expedient revision.[117] To some, it may appear as a minor irony of modern Irish historical scholarship that many attempting to challenge nationalism and its mythologies endeavoured to invent them anew in support of a political cause: namely, the enhancement of a nationalist consciousness in the Republic, whilst stemming support for militarist republicanism. For others, not least for the state itself, Irish neo-nationalism's triumphs over historical method have long been apparent and are likely to continue providing some 'secret consolation'.[118] To quote Bradshaw, 'this may constitute a beneficent legacy – its wrongness notwithstanding'.[119]

[116] Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Politics and the morality of scholarship', in Max Black, ed., *The morality of scholarship* (1967) (New York, 1969), p. 72. Cruise O'Brien was Schweitzer Professor of Humanities at New York University from 1965 to 1969.

[117] See n. 110.

[118] Ronan Fanning, '"The great enchantment": uses and abuses of modern Irish history', in James Dooge, ed., *Ireland and the contemporary world: essays in honour of Garret FitzGerald* (Dublin, 1988), pp. 142–3; as early as 1977, Fanning wrote, 'Now, when academic historians question the myths of the old, "official history" … they find they are no longer crying in the wilderness, but rather they are part of a much larger and louder chorus – a sort of Irish intellectual establishment. And, while the passing of the old myths must afford them satisfaction, the growing consensus affirming the strength of the democratic tradition in Irish politics must make them ponder whether new myths are not being conjured up in place of old' ('Leadership and transition from the politics of revolution to the politics of party: the example of Ireland 1914–1939', in *Reports – 14th International Congress of Historical Sciences* (New York, 1977), III, 1743; see also, Fanning, *Independent Ireland*, p. 212).

[119] Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and historical scholarship', p. 348.

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