

MIRA MILADINOVIĆ ZALAZNIK – DEAN KOMEL
(Eds. | Hrsg.)

EUROPE AT THE CROSSROADS OF CONTEMPORARY WORLD
100 Years after the Great War

EUROPA AN DEN SCHEIDEWEGEN DER GEGENWÄRTIGEN WELT
100 Jahre nach dem Großen Krieg



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Table of Contents | Inhaltsverzeichnis

Foreword	9
Vorwort	13
TOMAŽ ZALAZNIK – DEAN KOMEL	
<i>The Legacy of History and the Understanding of Contemporary World Das Vermächtnis der Geschichte und das Verständnis der Gegenwart</i>	
HARALD HEPPNER	
Rückblicke auf die Zukunft. Europa und sein Südosten	19
MALACHI HAIM HACHOEN	
The Habsburg Monarchy and the Future of Europe	31
ÉAMONN Ó CIARDHA	
Dreary Steeples/Hard Borders: Ireland, Britain, and the Europe, 1918–2018	49
<i>The Diversity in the Common Die Verschiedenheit im Gemeinsamen</i>	
ADRIANO FABRIS	
Patterns of Identity for a Multicultural Europe	71
DRAGAN PROLE	
Witness of the Future. Dušan Vasiljev and the European Turning Points in 2018	81

GERTRUDE CEPL-KAUFMANN Eskapismus und Integration. Kulturmuster im schwierigen Prozess regionaler, nationaler und europäischer Kulturtransfers in der Zeit nach 1945 bis in die Gegenwart. Konnotationen zu Carl Zuckmayers Drama <i>Des Teufels General</i>	99
ELMAR BORDFELD Freiheitserfahrungen mit Gott – Humanismus im Dialog der Meinungen	115
<i>From Stories to History Von Geschichten zur Geschichte</i>	
ROLAND DUHAMEL 1918: Untergang des Abendlandes?	127
MIRA MILADINOVIĆ ZALAZNIK Hundert Jahre nach dem Großen Krieg am Isonzo. Fallbeispiele Maasburg, Schalek, Musil, Kuhar	147
TATIANA SHCHYTTSOVA Emotional Legitimacy of National Consciousness and Literary Imagination (in the Belarusian Context)	165
ZOLTÁN SZENDI Europa an Scheidewegen. Fragen der kulturellen Identität – literarische Fallbeispiele	181

The Prospects of Globalization and the Horizons of Humanism | Die Perspektiven der Globalisierung und die Horizonte des Humanismus

BERNHARD WALDENFELS Europa unter dem Druck der Globalisierung	197
ANĐELKO MILARDOVIĆ Globalization (Migration) and Europe at a Crossroads	231
MARCO RUSSO Humanism Reloaded	243
DEAN KOMEL Ein Jahrhundert der Krise. Europa und der Geist der Philosophie	257
<i>The Crossroads of Politics, Power, and Authority Die Scheidewege der Politik, Macht und Autorität</i>	
ERHARD BUSEK Die Scheidewege der Politik, Macht und Autorität. Die Basis für Europa heute und für die Zukunft	275
JAN BROUSEK Das Scheitern der Demokratie als Scheitern herkömmlicher Konzepte von Verbindlichkeit	283
MIHAEL BREJC Policy Requires Good and Capable People	299

Oh, Europe! | Ach, Europa!

ANDRZEJ WIERCIŃSKI

Learning toward Understanding the Tradition that We Are 315

ION COPOERU

Is Europe's Constitutionalism an Answer to the Problem
of Violence? 337

WERNER WINTERSTEINER

„Europa wird die Tochter des Unwahrscheinlichen sein.
Oder es wird nicht sein.“ Acht Thesen für ein Europa der
Zukunft 351

TOMAŽ ZALAZNIK

Die Mimikry des Verbrechens 371

List of Authors | Liste der Autorinnen und Autoren 385

Name Register | Namensregister 391

Dreary Steeples/Hard Borders: Ireland, Britain, and Europe, 1918–2018

Abstract: After World War I, the final dissection of four European empires and a root-and-branch transformation of the European polity, Britain confronted a more immediate and age-old problem. A triumphant, but resigned Winston Churchill quipped that “the whole map of Europe has been changed ... but as the deluge subsides and the waters fall short we see the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone emerging once again.” As a composite part of one of Europe’s two victorious empires, Ireland found herself excluded from the subject peoples who clamored for recognition at the Paris Peace Conference (1919). Her newly constituted Dáil (Parliament) had rejected Home Rule, proclaimed a republic, set up a rival government to Britain, and dispatched delegates to secure recognition for another small nation. In vain, the Irish-American author Michael J. O’Brien hoped that President Woodrow Wilson, the ultimate arbiter of the post-war settlement, would remember America’s debt to the Irish and guarantee them a rightful place among these newly-emancipated nations of Serbs, Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks.

One hundred years on, the once dreary steeples have re-emerged from the mists and Ireland again finds herself clamoring at Europe’s gates. The continent and context has changed beyond recognition but the problem remains similarly intractable. The small republic’s willingness to take a bullet for the Euro and pay the gambling-debts of European bankers since 2008 may have been exonerated by the centrality of her border in the EU’s blueprint for Brexit; the choreography and mood-music sounds good but the devil will be in the detail. Still, Ireland has come a long way in one hundred years since its peace conference delegation shivered outside Versailles on a cold January in 1919. However, good will, photo-ops on the border, and much-vaunted technology will not wish away the re-imposition of some sort of a border. Breaking down physical and psychological borders has been central to the European project; she needs to deliver on this key issue. Donald Tusk’s “*Nil neart gur chur le chéile* [There is no strength without unity]” will be put to the test in the coming years.

Keywords: Ireland, Paris Peace Conference (1919), partition, border, Brexit

Established and emerging European political figures understood the significance of the great cataclysm that shook the continent in 1914–18. Benito Mussolini, one of its first major political beneficiaries, described the ensuing chaos in *Il Popolo d'Italia*:

The whole earth trembles. All continents are riven by the same crisis. There is not a single part of the planet [...] which is not shaken by the cyclone. In old Europe, men disappear, systems break, institutions collapse.¹

After the same war, the final dissection of four empires, the re-distribution of imperial spoils, and a root-and-branch transformation of the European polity, Britain confronted a more immediate and age-old problem.² Winston Churchill described her conundrum in unashamed and wrong-headed (British) colonial terms:

Then came the Great War. Every institution, almost, in the world was strained. Great empires had been overturned. The whole map of Europe has been changed. The position of countries has been violently altered. The modes of thought of men, the whole outlook on affairs, the grouping of parties, all have encountered violent and tremendous change in the deluge of the world, but as the deluge subsides and the waters fall short we see the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone emerging once again. The integrity of their quarrel is one of the few institutions that have been unaltered in the cataclysm which has swept the world. That says a lot for the persistency with which Irishmen on the one side or the other are able to pursue their controversies.³

However, as Professor Joe Lee, the eminent Irish historian points out:

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- 1 R. Gerwarth and E. Manela, “The Great War as a Global War: Imperial Conflict and the Reconfiguration of World Order, 1911–1923,” in *Beyond 1917: The United States and the Global Legacies of the Great War*, ed. T. W. Zeiler, D. K. Ekbladh, and B. C. Montoya (Oxford, 2017), 196–212.
 - 2 A. Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peace-Making After the First World War*, 3rd ed. (London, 2018), passim.
 - 3 J. J. Lee, *Ireland: 1912–1985* (Cambridge, 1989), 46; for contemporary diplomatic contexts, see C. Clark, *Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York, 2013), 342, 488–90, 493, 545.

there was nothing unique about Fermanagh and Tyrone. The integrity of similar quarrels in Europe was not altered by the First World War. All that happened was that the borders were revised in central and eastern Europe in favour of smaller states. This was precisely what did not happen in Fermanagh and Tyrone.⁴

Partition, or the exclusion of the four predominantly north-eastern counties of Ulster (Down, Antrim, Armagh, Derry) from a proposed Irish Home Rule settlement had been mooted by Thomas Agar-Robartes, a liberal back-bencher, shortly after the passing of the Third Home Rule Bill in 1911. The subsequent Buckingham Palace Conference, convened by King George V in July 1914 to head off civil war in Ireland, facilitated a partition agreement “of sorts,” which invariably meant something different to Nationalists and Unionists.⁵ However, fate had intervened in the most devastating and tragic manner possible. Gavrilo Princip’s assassination of Arch-Duke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, during his ill-fated visit to Sarajevo in June 1914, at once ignited World War I, postponed Irish Home Rule, and prevented a British Army mutiny and possible civil war.⁶ The ranks of the Unionist UVF and National Volunteers, who respectively mobilized to prevent or secure Home Rule, would instead be decimated in the meat-grinders of Flanders for the “Freedom of Small Nations.”⁷ Thus, Home Rule (and partition) would be effectively postponed, thereby allowing both groups to harbor their own illusions as to the nature and permanency of the settlement. The Boundary Commission, a crucial and surprisingly uncontentious clause of the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1920), promised to re-draw the border in line with

4 Lee, *Ireland*, 46.

5 For Carson and Redmond’s varying interpretations/strategies, see Lee, *Ireland*, 7, 15–16; M. Tierney, *Modern Ireland: Since 1850*, repr. (Dublin, 1978), 59–61.

6 K. Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier* (Oxford, 2006).

7 D. G. Boyce, *The Sure Confusing Drum: Ireland in the First World War* (Swansea, 1993); M. Dungan, *Irish Voices From the Great War* (Dublin, 1995); M. Dungan, *They Shall Not Grow Old: Irish Soldiers in the Great War* (Dublin, 1997); D. Fitzpatrick, ed., *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1986); Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Oxford, 2000).

the wishes of the border's inhabitants. This pup, sold to the Irish delegation by Prime Minister David Lloyd-George, "The Welsh Wizard," has grown up in the last one hundred years and may bite its former master's hand during the ongoing Brexit saga.⁸

As a subject people of one of Europe's two victorious empires (Britain and France), Irish Nationalists, who had eagerly embraced a republican settlement for Ireland after the Easter Rebellion (1916), found themselves excluded from among those who clamored for recognition at the Paris Peace Conference.⁹ Inspired in part by the American President Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric on "freedom for small nations," "national self-determination," and "making the world safe for democracy," her newly-constituted Dáil (Parliament) fought an election, set up a rival government to Britain, and immediately dispatched delegates to Versailles to secure recognition for Ireland.¹⁰ The embryonic republic had few allies inside the Hall of Mirrors, but would look instead to "Tammany Hall," the legendary Irish-American Democratic political machine, and the Irish Diaspora to gain entrance to this August, post-war assembly.

Over the preceding century, Irish-America played a key role in Irish affairs, bankrolling and/or supporting military and political campaigns for Catholic Emancipation, Repeal of the British/Irish Union of 1801, Home Rule, and the establishment of an Irish Republic. After the Great Famine in 1845–7, millions of Irishmen and women crossed the Atlantic, many of them animated with a deep hatred of Britain and

8 Arlene Foster and Mary Lou MacDonald on celebrating the centenary of Northern Ireland, "the little unionist statelet." In purely constitutional terms, Northern Ireland is not a country, state, or free-state, but a statelet whose assembly can be dissolved by London at will, as happened in the prime-ministerhips of Ted Heath and Tony Blair.

9 J. C. Walsh, "Ireland and the Paris Peace Conference," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 8, no. 30 (June 1919): 177–88; F. M. Carroll, "American Commission on Irish Independence," *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1985): 103–18.

10 Cf. <https://www.difp.ie/docs/1919/Message-to-the-Free-Nations-of-the-World/2.htm>, (accessed November 11, 2018).

a determination to provide political, military, and financial support for the motherland. The story of Irish-America is a story of two centuries of phenomenal success and abject failure.¹¹ Countless thousands served as laborers, fishermen, carters, and miners in the burgeoning industrial meat-grinders of America's Industrial Revolution. They built and manned the canal networks, they sifted coal, copper, anthracite, and steel in the forges of Birmingham, Alabama; Youngstown, Pennsylvania; and in the infernal shafts of the Anaconda Mining Company of Butte, Montana.¹² They policed the streets of America's industrial cities, doused its fires, and ministered to the educational and spiritual needs of its burgeoning Catholic flocks.¹³ Thousands more fed Mars' insatiable maw in the Union and Confederate ranks during the American Civil War.¹⁴ Others rode the iron horse of colonial expansion and American "Manifest Destiny" through the lands of the Apache, Cheyenne, and Sioux as soldiers, scouts, and Indian "agents." Irish women worked as cooks, cleaners, nannies, and servants in the houses of the "quality" and tended to the pedagogical, physical, and spiritual needs of the young, sick, and infirm. Despite their immersion and incorporation into this enormous industrial, military, and colonial complex, they succeeded in retaining many of their cultural traits and identities, as well as a preoccupation with Irish constitutional and militant nationalist politics.¹⁵ Indeed, many Irish nationalists who scaled the

11 M. Coffey and T. Golway, *The Irish in America* (New York, 1997); K. A. Miller, A. Schrier, B. D. Boling, and D. N. Doyle, eds., *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan: Letters and Memoirs from Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1675–1815* (Oxford, 2003).

12 D. M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish* (Chicago, 1997).

13 J. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame, 1992), *passim*.

14 J. G. Bilby, *The Irish Brigade in the Civil War: The 69th New York and Other Irish Regiments of the Army of the Potomac* (Cambridge, MA, 1997); D. Gleeson, *The Green and the Gray: The Irish in the Confederate States of America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2013); D. Shields, *The Irish in the American Civil War* (Dublin, 2013).

15 M. Glazier, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Irish in America* (Notre Dame, 1999); K.

dizzy heights of national, state, and municipal politics and military life never forgot their love of Ireland and disdain for Britain. More flocked into the ranks of political confraternities, benevolent societies, and revolutionary organizations such as Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, the Ancient Order of the Hibernians, The Fenian Brotherhood, Clan na Gael, and Noraid; the latter two would bank-roll militant Irish republican organizations, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Irish Republican Army (the latter in its various “Old,” “Official,” and “Provisional” re-incarnations), from the 1850s to the 1990s.¹⁶

Thus, the Irish-American writer Michael J. O’Brien’s *Hidden Phase of American History: Ireland’s Part in America’s Struggle for Liberty* (1919) reminded the U.S. president, the ultimate arbiter of the post-war settlement, of America’s debt to Ireland and her rightful place among these emancipated nations:

There is every reason to hope that the great-hearted American people will pay the debt their country owes to Ireland for the part played by her sons in the achievement of our liberty [...] Our President [Woodrow Wilson] has declared that “the small nationalities shall have the right to self-determination and that this question shall be settled at the peace conference” [...] It does not mean to bring freedom to the Poles alone, nor restore freedom to the Serbians alone, but to bring freedom to all oppressed peoples and to all down-trodden nations [...] While Ireland, in its present condition, stands festering like a great sore in the side of England, there can be no security for England or for Europe [...] Justice demands that Ireland should have the same rights given to her as that which is to be given to the other small nations of Europe.¹⁷

Emotional historical blackmail notwithstanding, Irish-America left nothing to chance. Having organized and bankrolled the 1916 Rebellion and financed the Irish Provisional Government’s war against

Kenny, *The American Irish* (London, 2000).

- 16 J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: A History of the IRA, 1916–70* (London, 1970); E. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, repr. (London, 2007); T. P. Coogan, *Wherever Green is Worn: The Story of the Irish Diaspora* (New York, 2000).
- 17 M. J. O’Brien, *Hidden Phase of American History: Ireland’s Part in America’s Struggle for Liberty* (New York, 1919), 386–7.

Britain, they pre-empted the latter by gathering in congress and elected a commission to represent Irish interests at Versailles. To that end, they deployed their formidable political lobby in the U.S. Senate, Congress, and the State Department—a process extensively catalogued in the print media on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁸

As well as attempting to explain “failing” states and “political collapse” in the Middle East and Maghreb,¹⁹ and the consequential, relentless “Trail of Tears”²⁰ across southern and central Europe, a re-visit to the Paris Peace Conference on its centenary year can proffer possible lessons and pointers for its acute, seemingly intractable legacies. This is not to lecture the dead (or the living), but merely to see if their fateful diplomacy can inform us on national (re-)building that might ultimately lead to a Marshall Plan-style re-construction of the so-called failed states on the Mediterranean Rim (or more rightly, those that have been bombed into the Stone Age by NATO and the Russian Federation).²¹ Closer to home, it could also shed light on the post-Brexit period and indeed the future of both the EU and UK.

At this juncture in these protracted Brexit negotiations, the tables would certainly seemed to have turned between Ireland and Britain in the last one hundred years. In 1919, an embryonic cash-strapped Irish provisional government found itself at war with the British Empire,

18 See, for example, *NYT* [*New York Times*], Feb 7, 1919; *NYT*, Feb 13, 1919; *NYT*, Feb 14, 1919; *NYT*, Feb 24, 1919; *NYT*, Feb 25, 1919; *NYT*, Feb 26, 1919; *NYT*, Mar 5, 1919; *NYT*, Mar 8, 1919; *NYT*, Apr 1, 1919; *NYT*, Apr 12, 1919; *NYT*, May 5, 1919; *NYT*, May 28, 1919; *NYT*, June 3, 1919; *NYT*, June 11, 1919; *NYT*, June 11, 1919; *NYT*, June 13, 1919; *NYT*, June 18, 1919; *NYT*, June 19, 1919; *NYT*, June 26, 1919.

19 See, for example, R. Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (New York, 2006).

20 The allusion here is to the forced repatriation of Native American people from their ancestral homelands in the Southeastern United States to the West (west of the Mississippi), to areas designated as “Indian Territory.”

21 J. Agnew and J. Nicholas Entrikin, eds., *The Marshall Plan Today: Model and Metaphor* (London, 2004). One could, for the sake of argument, include Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Somalia.

while at the same time trying to establish its legitimacy and rule its newly-proclaimed republic. As well as being armed and bankrolled by Irish-America, its peace delegation depended on its good offices to gain access to the U.S. President, and neither he nor the ailing French premier Georges Clemenceau had any wish to disoblige their British allies. “The Welsh Wizard,” later the “evil genius” of the Anglo-Irish treaty negotiations, headed a formidable British delegation that determined to keep Ireland in the empire at all costs.²² Britain held all the cards.

Theresa May is no Lloyd-George and the empire is long gone, despite the re-emergence of Brexit-inspired, pseudo-imperial fantasies around the British Commonwealth. Besides, Mrs May presides over a deeply divided union and polity, heads a thoroughly hapless cabinet, and leads a weak, divided minority government in thrall to the hard-line, hard-Brexit Democratic Unionist Party. Despite appearances, however, Arlene Foster, the undisputed leader of Ulster unionism, is in a much weaker political position than either Sir Edward Carson’s or Sir James Craig’s Irish/Ulster Unionist lobby of the early twentieth century. A hard Brexit/border would have serious implications for Mrs May’s “precious” United Kingdom and Northern Ireland’s position therein.

By contrast, the Irish nationalist position would seem to have improved in the interim. In the nineteenth century, Irish national interest evolved from the O’Connellite “Emancipation and Repeal” lobby of the 1820s to 1840s, through a militant Young Ireland and Fenian interlude in the late 1840s and 1850s, to the “Pope’s Brass Band” of the 1860s. Irish constitutional nationalism came to its apogee in the Buttite/Parnellite/Redmondite interest of the 1870s–1910s; their embrace of Home Rule, the Land and University Questions became an irritating side-show which divided Parliament and distracted attention from the serious business of ruling an ever-burgeoning empire.²³

22 The formidable UK delegation included Austen Chamberlain, Sir Hamar Greenwood, F. E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead), Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, Winston Churchill, and, of course, the Prime Minister himself.

23 A. Jackson, *Ireland 1798–1998*, repr. (Oxford, 2000), chapters 3–5.

During the height of the Third Home Rule Crisis (1911–14), Andrew Bonar-Law, leader of the Tory opposition in the British House of Commons, mocked Prime Minister H. H. Asquith's support for Home Rule. Pointing to John Redmond, the Irish Nationalist leader in Westminster, he exclaimed "There sits your conscience," to which Asquith replied, pointing to Sir Edward Carson, leader of Irish Unionism, "And there sits yours."²⁴

For the first time in one hundred years, however, there are no Irish Nationalist MPs in the British House of Commons. The seven Sinn Féin members returned in the last General election (2017) are republicans who will not take an oath to Elizabeth II or take their seats. Thus, the DUP keep the British Prime Minister in power and are calling the shots on Brexit at Westminster, especially with regards to the so-called backstop and, ultimately, Northern Ireland's, Ireland's, and the whole of the UK's relationship with the EU. Sinn Féin, for its part, seems content to pursue its opposition to Brexit in Dublin and Brussels. Meanwhile, Northern Ireland has been without a devolved assembly for nearly two years—despite voting against Brexit and being the UK region set to suffer its worst economic and political fallout.²⁵

In contrast, the Irish Republic's government is relatively stable, has largely weathered the 2008 banking crisis and is wholly united on the Brexit issue. Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Tánaiste Simon Coveney lead a relatively secure, functioning coalition (comprising the Republic's two largest parties) that can depend on little politicking from Sinn Féin, Ireland's largest all-Ireland party on the Brexit issue. Moreover, not one T. D. in Dáil Éireann supports Irexit (I cannot even say it!). Thus, Varadkar's position has overwhelming support across the island; his government worked hard to cultivate friends in Europe

24 "Their Irish Master," poster by G. R. Halkett, 1910, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O76299/their-irish-master-poster-halkett-george-roland/> (accessed November 12, 2018).

25 Despite this, it cannot budge the Kingdom of the Belgians from its berth in the Guinness Book of Records as the country which has functioned for the longest period without a government.

and operates on the principle of hoping for the best and planning for the worst. Despite this, or most likely because of it, he has become a hate-figure, EU lackey, and stooge in the British Press, presumably for attempting to protect the Good Friday Agreement (also based on the “will of the Irish people”). Indeed, the “demonic duo” of Varadkar and Coveney have replaced Adams and MacGuinness as the bogey-men of the Brexiteers and Unionists.

As ever, the American dimension to Irish politics remains crucial, but economics has largely eclipsed politics as the major consideration, especially since Ireland joined the European Economic Community in 1973. Of course, history, politics, and culture dictate that a Janus-headed Ireland invariably flirts between America and Europe, or “Boston and Berlin,” to use the well-hackneyed analogy. It is important to note, however, a fact lost on our Brexiteer friends, that both the U.S. and EU (in that order) are now more important to the Irish economy than the UK, which accounted for a massive 70% of Irish exports when both nations joined in 1973. However, Ireland’s and the UK’s (and particularly Northern Ireland’s) economies could not be more closely intertwined along a disputed, 300-mile border which divides rivers, lakes, fields, and even houses. Furthermore, in 2015 the UK did more trade with Ireland than Russia, India, and Brazil combined.²⁶

The Irish-American political lobby has changed in the last one hundred years, but it is no less important for that. In 1919, the Democrat President (Wilson) despised these “hyphenated Americans” who ultimately joined the Republicans to vote down the Paris Settlement in the U.S. Congress.²⁷ “Tammany Hall” has largely disappeared although the “Four Horsemen,”²⁸ who personified America’s “golden

26 Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_the_largest_trading_partners_of_United_Kingdom (accessed November 12, 2018).

27 John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (Ann Arbor, 1955), 198.

28 Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Senate majority leader; Ted Kennedy, Grand Old Man of the Senate and patriarch of Camelot; “Tip” O’Neill, Democrat Speaker of the

era” of consensus politics in the 1980s, would play a crucial role in engaging Reagan and Clinton in the Peace Process that culminated in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (1998).²⁹ It has, however, become something of an Irish potato in the Brexit stew.³⁰ Irish-America itself has become white, to use Noel Ignatiev’s classic metaphor; they moved to the suburbs, became middle-class and Republican, and voted en masse for Reagan, Bush, and, more recently, Donald J. Trump.³¹ The Irish-American Walshes, Dunnes, and Flynns who championed Ireland’s cause at the Paris Peace Conference are now the American Kellys, Flynns, Pences, Spicers, Conways, and Bannons who surround(ed) an isolationist president who recently repudiated another global deal forged in Paris, wishes to “Make American Great Again,” despises the EU, and strives to undercut Ireland’s low corporation tax and bring American multi-nationals back to the homeland.

This second part of this short paper must, by necessity, forsake the sturdy bark of history for the choppy waters of political conjecture. Nearly one hundred years after Paris and the subsequent Anglo-Irish Treaty (1920) that partitioned Ireland, its composite, complex borders issues have re-emerged in the context of Brexit and at a crucial moment in the EU’s history. “The Big Four” of Orlando, Clemenceau, Lloyd-George, and Wilson have conceded the political stage to May, Macron, Merkel, Varadkar, and Verhofstadt; similarly, the compos-

House of Representative; and Hugh Carey, Governor of New York, exerted a major influence on the Reagan and Clinton White Houses, playing a crucial role in cajoling the former to get Mrs. Thatcher to sign the Anglo-Irish Agreement and engaging the latter in the Peace Process.

- 29 C. O’Clery, *The Greening of the White House: The Inside Story of How America Tried to Bring Peace to Ireland* (Dublin, 1996), passim; R. MacGinty, “American Influences on the Northern Ireland Peace Process,” in *Journal of Conflict Studies* 8, no. 2 (1997). An agreement may indeed have been reached but Nationalists and Unionists still cannot agree on what to call it. Unionists tend to call it the Belfast Agreement, while Nationalists call it the Good Friday Agreement.
- 30 Arlene Foster and the hard-line Brexiteers now claim that this sovereign agreement is not written in stone.
- 31 N. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York, 1995), passim.

ite monarchies and empires of the early twentieth century have been replaced by common markets, global free-trade agreements, international organizations, and political confederations. However, the hitherto stable relationships between near neighbors, economic dependents, and political partners is in flux once more.

The borders, cultural insecurities, identities, immigrants, sovereignties, states, and trade issues of the early twentieth century are coming home to roost, in a less violent but no less real way than in the blood-soaked, colonial constructs of the Levant and Maghreb. Security fencing has replaced Churchill's "Iron Curtain," but his "Dreary Steeples" have re-emerged from the mists. Having been pointed and painted for David Cameron's G8 Conference on Lough Erne, County Fermanagh in 2013,³² they now provide a brooding, uncomfortable reminder of a violent past and a backdrop to a new EU/UK border.³³

This time, however, it seems that Ireland is at the table and Britain clamors at Europe's gates. The continent and context have changed beyond recognition, but the Irish border problem remains seemingly intractable. The small republic's willingness to take a bullet for the Euro, pay the gambling-debts of European bankers since 2008, and take the Troika's hard economic medicine may have been exonerated by the centrality of her border in the EU's blueprint for Brexit; the choreography and mood-music look and sound good but the devil will ultimately be in the detail.³⁴ Still, Ireland has come a long way in one hundred years since Sean T. O'Kelly and George Gavan-Duffy shivered outside Versailles on a cold January in 1919. However, good

32 It has since again become the G7 after Russia's annexation of the Crimea the following year.

33 Cameron has exited the political stage after his Brexit fiasco for a £40,000 garden-shed to pen his memoirs, what will surely be a towering monument to hubris and abject political failure. Only Merkel and Putin remain on the political stage and the former's hitherto unassailable position in German politics may be looking vulnerable for the first time.

34 F. O'Toole, *Ship of Fools: How Stupidity and Corruption Sank the Celtic Tiger* (London, 2009); D. McWilliams, *Follow the Money: The Tale of the Merchants of Ennis* (Dublin, 2010).

will and photo-ops will not wish away a hard border. Breaking down physical and psychological barriers has been central to the European project; the EU needs to deliver for Ireland and Europe on this key issue. Donald Tusk’s “*Nil neart gur chur le chéile* [There is no strength without unity]” will be put to the test in the coming years.³⁵

For all its faults, and it has many, the EEC/EU has been a blessing for the continent, a point lost both among the “Brexiteers” and “Remainers” who fumbled in the Irish poet William Butler Yeats’ greasy till by focusing exclusively on economic matters during the referendum.³⁶ When Ireland joined (with the UK) in 1973, fascist dictators ruled Spain and Portugal; Greece, the cradle of democracy, groaned under army rule; Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Romania, and the Baltic States comprised Soviet satellites; and Northern Ireland had descended into a nasty confessional/colonial conflict (depending on one’s perspective) which poisoned British-Irish relations.³⁷ European “soft” power played an important key role in ending these repressive, undemocratic regimes; it brought Ireland and the UK together on a neutral venue and latterly transformed relations between both countries—whether Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson, or Jacob Rees-Mogg would be prepared to concede the point is quite another matter.³⁸

The nineteenth-century British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston famously quipped that “we have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual and those

35 Cf. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/tusk-s-backing-for-ireland-on-border-could-not-have-been-stronger-1.3312884> (accessed 11/11/2018).

36 “What need you, being come to sense, / but fumble in a greasy till / and add the sixpence to the pence / and prayer to shivering prayer, until / you have dried the marrow from the bone [...]” Yeats, “September 1913,” in <https://www.poetry-foundation.org/poems/57309/september-1913> (accessed November 15, 2018).

37 B. O’Leary, “Mission Accomplished: Looking Back at the IRA,” *Field-Day Review* 1 (2015): 217–46.

38 Jeremy Hunt, the new British Foreign Secretary, did little to ingratiate himself with central, Eastern European, and Baltic EU states, or indeed with Donald Tusk, the Polish-born president of the European Council, by comparing it to the Soviet Union.

interests it is our duty to follow.”³⁹ This applies both in Brussels and Westminster. There are few certainties in Irish and British history except one; the Tory party will never put Irish/Ulster Unionism before their own self-interest. When “the G.O.M” [the Grand Old Man, i.e., Prime Minister Gladstone] went for Home Rule in 1870, Lord Randolph Churchill proposed playing “the Orange Card”; this was in a British not an Irish political game.⁴⁰ Sir Edward Carson harbored no illusions as to his, Ulster’s, and Ireland’s role in British politics during the Third Home Rule debacle:

What a fool I was. I was a puppet and so was Ulster and so was Ireland in a political game that was to get the Conservatives into power. And of all men in my experience that I think are the most loathsome it is those who will sell their friends for the purpose of conciliating their enemies.⁴¹

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour (December 7, 1941) the Irish Prime Minister (Taoiseach) Éamon de Valera ignored Winston Churchill’s “A Nation Once Again” offer to end partition (an offer never actually in the latter’s gift) to entice the Free State into the Allied war effort.⁴² In 1971, Prime Minister Ted Heath’s warm regard for Brian Faulkner, the Northern Ireland premier, did not stop him from dissolving Stormont and imposing direct rule from Westminster.⁴³ Similarly, and despite her famous “Out, Out, Out” response to Garret Fitzgerald’s New Ireland Forum which disavowed any Irish involvement in

39 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191826719.001.0001/q-oro-ed4-00008130> (accessed 9/11/2018).

40 E. Knowles, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (Oxford, 2004), s.v. “Churchill, Lord Randolph,” accessed via Oxford Reference Online (Oxford University Press); M. Tierney, *Modern Ireland since 1850*, repr. (Dublin, 1978), 78.

41 [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1921/dec/14/address-in-reply-to-his-majestys-most\\$5LV0048P0_19211214_HOL_41](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1921/dec/14/address-in-reply-to-his-majestys-most$5LV0048P0_19211214_HOL_41) (accessed 9/11/2018).

42 See Lee, *Ireland*, 246–50. Indeed, Lee perceptively sums the offer up thus: “The British approach was vague, chimerical, histrionic—very Irish! The Irish response was cold, clinical, calculating—very English!” (Ibid., 250).

43 J. Houston, ed., *Brian Faulkner: Memoirs of a Statesman* (London, 1978), 151–8.

Northern Ireland's affairs and her claiming that Northern Ireland was as British as Finchley (her own constituency),⁴⁴ Margaret Thatcher bowed to American (or more accurately Irish-American!) pressure to sign the Anglo-Irish Agreement which infuriated the Ulster Unionists and brought them out on the streets in their thousands.⁴⁵ The DUP supported John Major's government on the Scott Report into illegal arms sales to Iraq in 1992,⁴⁶ the attempted impeachment of the Agriculture Secretary John Gummer over the "Mad Cow" scandal, and (ironically) the Maastricht Treaty, but this did not stop him from lending his support to the Downing Street Declaration (1993).⁴⁷ Thus, we can expect a fudge or sell-out and an ultimatum from Mrs May to the DUP to "back me or sack me" and allow Jeremy Corbyn to become Prime Minister.

Conclusion

One hundred years ago this year, Britain effectively imposed partition as a stop-gap solution to the "Irish problem," a problem which she had herself created and with which Europe did not interfere. The EU's solution to the seemingly intractable border impasse is a border down the Irish Sea, a solution heretofore rejected by Mrs Foster, the self-

44 See G. Fitzgerald, *All in a Life: Garret Fitzgerald, An Autobiography* (London, 1991), 522–7. The high-profile, hard Brexit-supporting MP Jacob Rees-Mogg recently echoed Mrs Thatcher when claiming that Northern Ireland was as British as Somerset (his own constituency). John O'Dowd, the Sinn Féin MLA and former Minister for Education at Stormont, rightly pointed out that unlike Northern Ireland, Somerset will not get the chance to join the Republic of Ireland by referendum.

45 Cf. <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebstimedia/ourrolesandpolicies/northernireland/Anglo-Irish-Agreement-1985-1.pdf> (accessed November 11, 2018).

46 Cf. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/scott-report-the-essential-guide-1319094.html> (accessed 11/11/2018).

47 Cf. <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebstimedia/ourrolesandpolicies/northernireland/peace-process--joint-declaration-1993-1.pdf> (accessed November 11, 2018).

styled keeper of Mrs May's conscience.⁴⁸ While Jacob Rees-Mogg, the pin-up boy of a hard Brexit, felt no need to visit the Irish border to understand its inhabitants' perspectives, and the former Foreign-Secretary Boris Johnson likened it to the border between Camden and Westminster, a suited, wellington-booted Michel Barnier skirting the Armagh/Monaghan frontier evoked the shirtless Monaghan farmer of Patrick Kavanagh's "Epic":

I have lived in important places, times
 When great events were decided, who owned
 That half a rood of rock, a no-man's land
 Surrounded by our pitchfork-armed claims.
 I heard the Duffys shouting "Damn your soul!"
 And old McCabe stripped to the waist, seen
 Step the plot defying blue cast steel—
 "Here is the march along these iron stones."
 That was the year of the Munich bother. Which
 Was more important? I inclined
 To lose my faith in Ballyrush and Gortin
 Till Homer's ghost came whispering to my mind.
 He said: I made the *Iliad* from such
 A local row. Gods make their own importance.⁴⁹

48 There *is*, of course, a border down the Irish Sea when it comes to LGBT rights, abortion, and, more pertinently, for the export of live cattle.

49 Patrick Kavanagh, "Epic," in <http://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/epic/> (accessed November 15, 2018). "Epic" by Patrick Kavanagh is reprinted from *Collected Poems*, edited by Antoinette Quinn (Allen Lane, 2004), by kind permission of the Trustees of the Estate of the late Katherine B. Kavanagh, through the Jonathan Williams Literary Agency.

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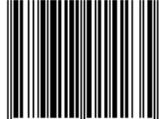
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