Introduction: a global history of the Irish Revolution

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ABSTRACT. *How might the history of Ireland's revolution be reassessed if viewed within a transnational, comparative or global framework? Drawing attention to recent writing on the subject, this introduction considers the conceptual and historiographical issues at stake in reframing the history of the Irish Revolution, as well as considering potential limitations to these approaches. We assess what topics in particular lend themselves to a fresh perspective focusing on Irish nationalism, while also indicating areas where there is considerable scope for new lines of inquiry. In this era of intensive commemoration of the events that unfolded between 1912 and 1923, this special issue serves to remind us that the history of the revolution should not be confined to the island of Ireland. We argue that thinking transnationally and comparatively can promote a more inclusive and diverse global history of Irish Revolution.*

W hat insights into Ireland's revolution might transnational, comparative, and global methodologies provide? This question has provoked surprisingly robust responses from some of Ireland's most distinguished historians. The late David Fitzpatrick, in characteristically forthright style, questioned whether the mantra that Irish history 'needs to be rescued from its lingering "insularity" by the application of a "transnational perspective" – fresh, flexible, cosmopolitan, and marketable' might, in fact, represent one of 'the boldest academic deceptions of our time'. With the exception of local studies, Fitzpatrick complained, 'it is difficult to point to a single sector of modern Irish history which has lacked a "transnational perspective"'.[1] Writing, like Fitzpatrick, in *Irish Historical Studies*, Theo Hoppen wondered whether the reasons for the current historiographical shift from the national to the transnational, like those responsible for the nineteenth-century shift from clean-shaven faces to luxuriant beards, might amount to much more than 'the inexplicable modishness of the times'.[2]

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What might be said to allay sincere suspicions that, behind the recent turn towards the global, lies a grant-chasing faddishness with overblown claims to methodological

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[1] David Fitzpatrick, 'We are all transnationalists now' in *I.H.S.*, xli, no. 159 (May 2017), p. 123.
[2] K. Theodore Hoppen, rev. of Shane Nagle, *Histories of nationalism in Ireland and Germany: a comparative study from 1800 to 1932* (London, 2017) in *I.H.S.*, xlii, no. 161 (May 2018), p. 194.

novelty? Before pressing the case for a wider lens, the limitations of more narrowly-framed historiographical approaches ought to be identified.[3] Although Fitzpatrick is right to note the extent to which historians of Irish settlement such as D. H. Akenson have been 'at the forefront of transnational studies', their research has not always informed analyses of Ireland's island story. As one of the present authors has observed, on leaving Ireland, emigrants become the preserve of a separate sphere, that of diaspora history, leaving a disconnect between two otherwise sophisticated fields of historiography.[4]

This gap certainly exists within the literature on revolutionary nationalism. While scholars understand modern nationalism as an internationally-constructed phenomenon, shaped profoundly by transnational influences, studies of nationalism by historians are generally rooted within national frameworks. Despite observing that up to half of Ireland's revolutionary leadership 'had lived outside Ireland for considerable periods, usually in Britain or the United States',[5] Tom Garvin's influential study – as its title suggests – explores *Nationalist revolutionaries in Ireland*. Likewise, George Boyce's seminal study assesses *Nationalism in Ireland*.[6] Although acknowledging the influence of Irish America, the focus of *Irish freedom* (London, 2007), Richard English's authoritative survey of Irish nationalism, is indicated by its subtitle: *a history of nationalism in Ireland*.

Much the same is true of studies emanating from the other side of the Atlantic where a large body of work has explored diasporic Irish nationalism largely in isolation from its domestic context. While drawing attention to 'the enormous impact of long-distance nationalism on the course of nationalism back in Ireland', the subject of David Brundage's pioneering study, as its title makes clear, is *Irish nationalists in America*.[7] Nor is there necessarily anything wrong with any of this; all historians root their studies within particular spatial (and chronological) frameworks. But it does suggest the need for approaches that might enable us to better explore how the important connections within the 'Irish world', identified by many of these studies, operated across that world. A further important rationale for tracing the significance of these connections is provided by the contention of transnational historians that historical processes are not merely 'made in different places but constructed in the movement between places, sites and regions'.[8]

While Fitzpatrick rightly cautioned against sweeping accusations of insularity, some periods of Irish historiography, such as the early-modern era, tend to be

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[3] For a more detailed elaboration of some of these points, see Fearghal McGarry, 'Reframing Ireland's revolution' in Enda Delaney and Fearghal McGarry (eds), *The Irish Revolution, 1919: a global history* (Dublin, 2019), pp 8–12; idem, '"A land beyond the wave": transnational perspectives on Easter 1916' in Niall Whelehan (ed.), *Transnational perspectives on modern Irish history* (New York, 2015), pp 165–88.

[4] Enda Delaney, 'Directions in historiography: our island story? Towards a transnational history of late modern Ireland' in *I.H.S.*, xxxvii, no. 148 (Nov. 2011), pp 599–621.

[5] Tom Garvin, *Nationalist revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858–1928* (new ed., Dublin, 2005), p. 54.

[6] D. G. Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (2nd ed., London, 1991).

[7] David Brundage, *Irish nationalists in America: the politics of exile, 1798–1998* (Oxford, 2016).

[8] C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol and Patricia Seed, 'AHR Conversation: on transnational history' in *American Historical Review*, cxi, no. 5 (Dec. 2006), pp 1441–64.

framed more broadly than others.[9] Even within the revolutionary period particular episodes, such as the Easter Rising, are often interpreted in a broader context than others, such as the guerrilla war that proceeded therefrom. Although historians have long noted the importance of the First World War in shaping Ireland's revolution,[10] recent historiography has placed increasing emphasis on its centrality to the rebellion and its consequences. As the late Keith Jeffery, in an important study which assessed the Irish rebellion alongside contemporaneous wartime developments across Europe, Asia, Africa and the United States, argued: the Easter Rising 'can *only* be properly understood in the context of the Great War'.[11]

Jeffery's claim inverts traditional nationalist historiographical framings of the rebellion in which the Easter Rising, unfolding against the distant background of the First World War, provided the revolutionary fulcrum upon which Irish history pivoted. The same trend can be identified in other national historiographies, such as that of Korea whose March First uprising of 1919 shares parallels with Easter 1916.[12] Previously analysed 'within the framework of Korean national history', an event understood in terms of 'earlier resistance to the Japanese occupation', the historian Erez Manela observed how, viewed within a different context, March First could be seen to form part of a wider wave of anti-colonial resistance that swept post-war Asia: if you 'expand your frame of reference spatially rather than temporally, an extraordinary confluence of events comes into view'.[13] In other words, historians should look across, as well as back, to understand sudden political change, particularly when – as is so often the case in Ireland – revolutionary upheavals at home coincide with broader international crises.

A valuable example of this shift towards interpreting the Easter Rising within contemporaneous global perspectives is provided by the volume of essays *1916 in global context: an anti-imperial moment*. Its editors, Enrico Del Lago, Róisín Healy, and Gearóid Barry, quote approvingly Richard Bessel's claim that Easter 1916 'needs to be understood not just in an Irish or European context, but in a broader global framework'.[14] Representing an international 'tipping point for the intensification of protests, riots, uprisings and even revolutions',[15] the rebellions of 1916 'collectively represent a global anti-imperial moment', analogous to the political revolutions of the 'Wilsonian moment' that swept Asia (and Europe) in 1919.[16] Even if one is sceptical about the extent to which Easter 1916 inspired anti-imperial forces in Europe and beyond during this period, which the editors see as culminating in Russia's October Revolution, the 'contemporaneity of multiple anti-imperial occurrences' suggests the need for analysis of 'the peculiarities and

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[9] Fitzpatrick, 'We are all transnationalists now', p. 124.

[10] R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600–1972* (London, 1988), p. 471.

[11] Keith Jeffery, *1916: a global history* (London, 2015), pp 103–04.

[12] Fearghal McGarry, '"The Ireland of the Far East"? The Wilsonian moment in Ireland and Korea' (forthcoming).

[13] Erez Manela, 'The Wilsonian moment in east Asia: the March First movement in global perspective' in *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies*, ix, no. 1 (Apr. 2009), p. 12.

[14] Richard Bessel, 'Revolution' in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge history of the First World War*, ii: *the state* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 139. Enrico Del Lago, Róisín Healy and Gearóid Barry, 'Globalising the Easter Rising: 1916 and the challenge to empires' in eidem (eds), *1916 in global context: an anti-imperial moment* (London, 2018), p. 4.

[15] Klaus Weinhauer, Anthony McElligott and Kirsten Heinsohn, 'Introduction' in eidem (eds), *Germany 1916–23: a revolution in context* (Bielefeld, 2015), p. 21.

[16] Del Lago, Healy & Barry, 'Globalising the Easter Rising', p. 3.

commonalities, alongside the mutual connections' of revolutionary episodes which clearly influenced each other in a variety of significant ways.[17] Such an approach leads naturally to comparative questions. Why did violent challenges to imperial authority, or the rise of popular self-determination movements, play out differently in one region than another during the same period?

In comparison with these recent publications on Easter 1916, accounts of the conflict that followed – with some notable exceptions such as Maurice Walsh's *Bitter freedom* – are framed within less expansive contexts.[18] As a result, that conflict is often narrated, as Walsh has observed, 'in a claustrophobic Anglo-Irish setting, with the global war a mere backdrop to the drama in Ireland'.[19] In contrast, the Easter Rising in 2016 was not merely regarded, but in some cases commemorated, as forming part of Ireland's experience of the Great War.[20] More often, though, major anniversaries accentuate an already strong demand by the public (and publishers) for interpretations that explain historical change as the culmination of a longer national struggle, one shaped more by local agency than 'the inconstant fate of fluctuating empires'.[21] For example, the timeline of significant historical events proposed by the Irish state's Expert Advisory Group to mark 'The independence struggle, 1919–1921' – beginning with the convening of the Dáil in January 1919 and ending with the burning of the Custom House in May 1921 – lists only events that occurred within Ireland or the U.K.[22] In Britain, where the role of republican violence in shaping the current contours of the U.K. state stimulates remarkably little official or public interest, the absence of commemoration of the Irish conflict provides potentially as great a distortion as its selective remembrance. In a revealing indication of the pressures which shape official commemoration, historians on the U.K. government's First World War centenary advisory board who pressed for the extension of the commemorative programme to include British postwar violence in Ireland and India found themselves sidelined.[23]

While most historians of Ireland are conscious of the importance of external factors, particularly the role of international diplomacy and propaganda, in shaping

[17] Ibid., p. 4.

[18] Maurice Walsh, *Bitter freedom: Ireland in a revolutionary world, 1918–1923* (London, 2015). Richard Grayson's military study, *Dublin's great wars: the First World War, the Easter Rising and the Irish Revolution* (Cambridge, 2018), also demonstrates the potential for reintegrating Irish experiences of war and revolution.

[19] Walsh, *Bitter freedom*, p. 11. This may be changing. A recent *Irish Times* supplement ('Century 1919: war and peace', *Irish Times*, 21 Jan. 2019) featured articles on the global ambitions of the Dáil, the global context of the revolution, the Amritsar Massacre, the Paris peace conference and Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy. However, this supplement coincided with the centenary of the most internationalised period of the War of Independence, when Irish republicans looked to the Paris peace conference as providing a route to independence.

[20] On this see, in particular, Heather Jones, 'Romantic Ireland's dead and gone? How centenary publications are reshaping Ireland's divided understanding of its decade of war and revolution, 1912–1923' in *First World War Studies*, ix, no. 3 (2018), pp 344–61.

[21] Richard Bourke, 'Introduction' in idem and Ian McBride (eds), *The Princeton history of modern Ireland* (Princeton, 2016), p. 15.

[22] For the Expert Advisory Group's guidance, see https://www.decadeofcentenaries.com/publication-of-decade-of-centenaries-second-phase-guidance-2018-2023-by-expert-advisory-group/ (2 Jan. 2020).

[23] 'Row over bid to extend centenary events to cover Ireland and India' (https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/apr/01/british-row-over-call-extend-centenary-events-cover-ireland-india) (23 Dec. 2019).

the War of Independence, their narratives usually confine analysis of that conflict within Irish borders. An obvious example is the ubiquity of county studies which, partly due to the lasting legacy of David Fitzpatrick's ground-breaking *Politics and Irish life, 1913–1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* (Dublin, 1977), remain the predominant means of analysing Ireland's revolution. Drawing on one of the richest source bases for any modern revolution, such studies offer a valuable means of anatomising revolutionary processes such as political mobilisation and violence. The most sophisticated and innovative of them, such as Peter Hart's agenda-setting exploration of the revolution in Cork, use a small scale to investigate large problems, engaging with, and informing, broader scholarly debates such as the nature of political violence.[24]

All scales – whether local, national, imperial, or global – have their limitations. Describing how revolutionary change unfolded within a particular area – whether an Irish county, the island of Ireland, or the U.K. state – is not necessarily the same thing as analysing the causes of that historical change. 'However skilful and illuminating in themselves', Fitzpatrick has observed, the proliferation of localised studies has 'yielded no general pattern beyond the infinite variety of revolutionary activity' and the 'importance of local peculiarities'.[25] If many of the reasons why the aspiration to achieve an Irish republic, if necessary through violent means, became credible by January 1919 lay in political and ideological changes occurring beyond the island – such as the rise of self-determination as the gold standard of political legitimacy – local studies may not provide the most effective means of analysing how, and why, political expectations in Ireland altered so radically over the course of the First World War. If, as studies such as Erez Manela's *The Wilsonian moment: self-determination and the international origins of anticolonial nationalism* (Oxford, 2007) suggest, we accept that the strength of post-war nationalism was largely a consequence of the discrediting of imperial power, an analytical framework that allows us to consider the forces of historical change from the 'outside-in' might prove as useful as studies which place republican agency at the centre of their analyses. Whether the Easter Rising, the 1918 conscription crisis, or the establishment of the revolutionary Dáil, many of the catalysts driving revolutionary change in Ireland stemmed directly from the wider First World War and its destabilising aftermath. Transnational, comparative, and global approaches provide additional ways of assessing the impact of these changes on Ireland.

II

The product of a workshop held at the University of Edinburgh in June 2018, this special issue forms part of a three-year U.K. Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded research project, 'A global history of Irish Revolution, 1916–1923' (2017–2020). Contributors to the workshop, comprising early-career researchers and more established scholars, were invited to analyse aspects of the

[24] Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork, 1916–23* (Oxford, 1998); Ian McBride, 'The Peter Hart affair in perspective: history, ideology and the Irish Revolution' in *Hist. Jn.*, lxi, no. 1 (Mar. 2018), pp 249–71; Stathis Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war* (Cambridge, 2006).

[25] David Fitzpatrick, 'The geography of the War of Independence' in John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, Mike Murphy and John Borgonovo (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2017), p. 534.

Irish Revolution in transnational, comparative or global contexts. The broader project, a collaboration between Queen's University Belfast, the University of Edinburgh and Boston College, comprises two interlocking research strands.[26] The first assesses the significance of external influences on political events within Ireland. The second is concerned with analysing the impact of the Irish Revolution beyond the island. The project focuses on two central research questions: how did transnational influences shape the revolution within Ireland, and what impact did Ireland's revolution exert beyond Ireland? Both themes address the same fundamental question: to what extent is it necessary to understand revolutionary change within a global, as well as nation-state, framework? By integrating two well-developed but largely distinct historiographical fields, centring on the Irish Revolution and diasporic Irish nationalism, the project aims to develop an analytical framework that will enable a better understanding of how external pressures shaped modern Ireland. The key methodology is provided by a transnational approach prioritising investigation of interactions across national boundaries. The project contributes to a growing body of transnational scholarship on Ireland, including publications such as Niall Whelehan's edited volume *Transnational perspectives on modern Irish history* (London, 2015).[27] It seeks also to provide a platform for research by the many scholars now working on transnational and global approaches to the Irish Revolution.[28]

What topics might be better brought into focus through a wider lens? Patterns of violence – particularly questions of scale and form – may be more productively assessed through comparative analysis than ever more detailed reconstructions of incidents of Irish revolutionary violence. As comparative work by scholars such as Robert Gerwarth, John Horne and T. K. Wilson emphasises, the experiences of the Irish part of the U.K. share much in common with central and eastern Europe, where imperial power gave way to the challenges of democratisation, national self-determination and ethnic nationalism.[29] But in other respects, such as the more restrained scale and nature of violence in Ireland, the differences are as striking. 'Decentring' Irish nationalism, as advocated by D. H. Akenson, might allow us to consider in more imaginative ways the processes by which ideas about Irish nationalism and identity evolved.[30] Irish nationalism was shaped by contingency, with attitudes to class, gender, and race reflecting the environments in which the Irish found themselves. That Irish nationalism could mean different things in different places, more bound up with labour politics in the U.S. or Australia than at home, raises questions about the conservatism of post-

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[26] For further details, see https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FP00914X%2F1 (23 Dec. 2019).

[27] See Whelehan (ed.), *Transnational perspectives*, and also the recent special issue, 'Ireland and Finland, 1860–1930: comparative and transnational histories', *I.H.S.*, xli, no. 160 (Nov. 2017).

[28] The first publication to emerge from this project was Enda Delaney and Fearghal McGarry (eds), *The Irish Revolution, 1919–21: a global history* (Dublin, 2019). Research by project staff and other contributors can also be accessed via the 'Global Irish Revolution' major theme on R.T.É. and Boston College's 'Century Ireland' website: https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/global-irish-revolution/.

[29] Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds), *War in peace: paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012); T. K. Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918–1922* (Oxford, 2010).

[30] Elizabeth Malcolm and Dianne Hall, *A new history of the Irish in Australia* (Sydney, 2018).

revolutionary Irish nationalism. Political thought; radical networks; cultures of militarism and violence; masculinity; varieties of nationalism; ethnicity and identity; minorities; the varying roles of women; the movement of emigrants, activists, officials and politicians across the Irish and British worlds: the possibilities are endless. Rather than seeking to further delineate these here, the articles that follow demonstrate how transnational, comparative and global perspectives, complementing an already rich body of research on the Irish at home and abroad, can advance our understanding of the Irish Revolution.

Why was Ireland's revolution not more violent? Ranging widely over time and space, Anne Dolan demonstrates the possibilities afforded by a wider canvas. Her article convincingly suggests that the dynamics of violence were, at least in part, driven by culturally-determined ideas about the morality of violence which transcended national boundaries. Several plausible reasons for comparatively low levels of violence are identified: the restraints imposed by politicians and officers; the lack of ideological fervour felt by British forces; ideas of soldierly propriety; and propagandistic concerns. Pointing to the importance of racial thinking, few of these constraints applied to the conduct of British colonial warfare. However, questions of scale should not overshadow the significance of other aspects of violence such as its ability to instil fear within communities: how selective acts of violence were experienced, perceived and remembered (in Britain, and elsewhere, as well as Ireland) was important. Whether in terms of cultural, moral and ideological influences or, more prosaically, propaganda imperatives, what was – or was not – considered acceptable was not fully determined by attitudes within Ireland. As a result, Dolan concludes, new approaches are required to understand the social mechanisms which constrained violence in Ireland. Any convincing attempt to write this 'history of restraint' demands consideration of the interplay between the personal, local, national and universal.

Lili Zách opens up a new perspective on the transnational and global history of Irish nationalism by exploring how central eastern Europe in particular was referenced by Irish nationalists during the Revolution. Famously, Arthur Griffith drew comparisons with the Austro-Hungarian Empire in his earlier writings, but Zách's detailed account demonstrates how knowledge of the fate of other 'small nations' influenced the world view of Irish nationalists and featured prominently in political rhetoric. Equally significant is how this reference point of 'small nations' was used to shape the foreign policy of the independent Irish state after 1922. This article nicely complements the work of other scholars such as Gerard Keown on the early history of Irish foreign policy, both before and after independence.[31] It also reminds us that the transnational perspective can be equally employed with obvious benefits to Ireland's European context, and is not simply a transatlantic or transoceanic framework, as is so often assumed. Irish nationalism, from its inception in the O'Connellite campaign of the 1830s and 1840s, served as an inspiration to other European nationalists, and was also part of a wider European nationalist movement.[32]

Darragh Gannon takes us in an entirely different direction in his account of de Valera's famous 'Cuban' interview in February 1920, in which the self-styled

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[31] Gerard Keown, *First of the small nations: the beginnings of Irish foreign policy in the inter-war years, 1919–1932* (Oxford, 2016).

[32] See, for instance, Geraldine Grogan, *The noblest agitator: Daniel O'Connell and the German Catholic movement, 1830–50* (Dublin, 1991); and for a recent comparative account, see Nagle, *Histories of nationalism in Ireland and Germany.*

'President of the Irish Republic' seemed to suggest that Sinn Féin would accept something less than full Irish sovereignty. Piecing together the intellectual hinterland with fascinating detail, it emerges that this was no casual slip of the tongue to a journalist but a well-considered position. At this time de Valera, who had been in the United States since June 1919, had arguably become disconnected from the day-to-day realities of the war in Ireland. However, Gannon demonstrates how de Valera's transnational experiences shaped his political ideology as he criss-crossed the United States to mobilise support for the campaign at home. It also becomes evident that the experience of Irish revolutionaries outside of Ireland was not simply about raising funds, but also provided the possibility to absorb ideas and ideologies. In this important respect, Gannon's findings underscore the point that the transnational history of the Irish revolution was about ideas as well as money and guns.

Attitudes to ethnicity and race, a more important dimension of early twentieth-century thinking about nations and empires than we now recall, come into sharper focus when the Irish question is viewed through a wider lens. In his survey of Irish republican attitudes to Jews and anti-Semitism, Brian Hanley observes suggestively that all the issues that accompanied the re-emergence of the 'Jewish question' in post-war Europe were present in revolutionary Ireland. Rooted in external ideas and outlooks, particularly Catholic thought, anti-Semitism – Hanley suggests – cannot be divorced from its transnational context. His article presents a complex view of Irish attitudes to Jews which were informed by sympathetic coverage of anti-Semitic pogroms, as well as conspiratorial tropes about the nature of the Jew, whether as an agent of communist revolution or global capitalism. Beyond Ireland, Jews and Irish nationalists often found common cause in nationalist and progressive struggles. Given the importance of transnational dimensions of the Irish Revolution, whether in terms of the republican strategy of internationalising the conflict, the centrality of fundraising, or the influence of global propaganda and diplomacy in shaping British policy on Ireland, further efforts to integrate research on the diaspora and the Irish at home offers a promising agenda for future research.

The analysis of violence is a field of inquiry particularly suited to transnational and comparative analysis. As with Anne Dolan's research, Gemma Clark's article on gendered violence during the Irish Civil War grapples with issues of scale. Her conclusion that revolutionary violence in Ireland was characterised by the 'relatively humane treatment of women' and 'relative scarcity … of interpersonal violence' chimes with Dolan's arguments about the comparative lack of political violence in Ireland, and the importance of understanding the restraints that might account for this. Ireland's civil war, Clark finds, was not as 'civilianised' as other contemporaneous civil wars. She notes the relative absence of the ideological and class hatreds that heightened conflicts in Finland, Spain, or parts of eastern Europe, where more easily 'othered' enemies were not seen to form part of the national community. The issue of (para)military discipline, closely linked to soldierly ideals and the I.R.A.'s perception of itself as a conventional army, was also important. Lower levels of gendered violence may also reflect the existence of more clearly defined gender boundaries in a conservative Irish society. None of this, though, is to underplay the traumatic experience of violence for those on whom it was inflicted. Drawing on the historiography of other conflicts, Clark – like Dolan – suggests that the limited extent of extreme violence may, in part, reflect the effectiveness of non-lethal violence in terrorising individuals and communities.

Edward Madigan also explores the acceptability of violence. British attitudes to violence were greatly influenced by the First World War, particularly the belief that the conflict was justified as a struggle for international justice and freedom.

Consequently, the 'jarring moral dissonance' resulting from apparent parallels between German 'frightfulness' on the continent and shocking press reports of Black and Tan reprisals in Ireland eroded popular support for hard-line British security policies in Ireland. The severity and extent of criticism of British policy in the mainstream press, at Westminster, and among church leaders is striking. Violence in Ireland may have been comparatively low compared to other contemporaneous conflicts, but it was perceived in Britain, as Dolan also notes, as shocking in a way that imperial violence in far-off places was not.

The juxtaposition between the laying to rest of the Unknown Soldier, unveiling of the Cenotaph and the mass funerals of the Bloody Sunday fatalities inflicted by the I.R.A. – events usually falling into separate historiographies but experienced contemporaneously by the British public – provides a good example of the need for historians to think in synchronic as well as diachronic terms. Madigan's article points to a notable omission in our understanding of the factors determining the outcome of the Irish Revolution. While numerous local studies have detailed a complex range of varying attitudes to violence across Ireland, the more influential (in terms of its impact on British political and security policy) role of British popular perspectives has been largely overlooked. In thinking about the conduct of the military struggle in Ireland, historians of the War of Independence ought to be as familiar with British cabinet papers, military and intelligence reports, and sources of British popular opinion, as the more accessible Bureau of Military History and Military Service Pensions Collection.[33] Why, for example, have Irish historians focused so intensely on the circumstances and morality of I.R.A. violence when British forces accounted for a higher proportion of civilian fatalities?

Síobhra Aiken shows how a transnational approach can recover histories written out of the mainstream historical narrative. Only in recent years has the role of women in the Irish Revolution been acknowledged, let alone become the subject of intensive research. Using an impressive array of source materials, including the records of the Military Service Pensions Collection and the Bureau of Military History, the migratory worlds of these Cumann na mBan volunteers are reconstructed with great precision and with rich biographical detail. The post-revolutionary experience for those who left centred on the United States in the 1920s. The discussion of the return migration of these women from the United States presents a number of important findings, particularly on the complex issue of resettlement in independent Ireland, which was sometimes a disruptive and fraught experience. Aiken's article also contributes to what may be termed collective transnational biographies, tracing the lives of groups of people across borders, and using a range of documentary evidence to reconstruct their experiences. Collective biography has been used to great effect in studying revolutionary experiences within Ireland, and this article demonstrates how such an approach can also yield important findings within a transnational context.[34]

Finally Niall Whelehan explores the infamous case of the Italian anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti to establish the extent and depth of radical transnational connections during the 1920s. Whelehan reconstructs the world view of an overlooked activist, Mary Donovan, to explore the web of connections within radical labour activism in the United States, analysing how these came together in

[33] A notable exception is D. G. Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish troubles: British public opinion and the making of Irish policy, 1918–22* (London, 1972).
[34] R. F. Foster, *Vivid faces: the revolutionary generation in Ireland, 1890–1923* (London, 2014).

the global campaign opposing the death penalty imposed on the Italian anarchists. Painstaking research provides an insightful consideration of the role of networks in mobilising Irish labour activists in the United States to support pleas for clemency in this notorious case. What is evident from this article is that a transnational approach underlines how the world that radical Irish revolutionaries inhabited was, in many respects, shaped less by nationality than an internationalist political outlook. The same is true of many radical Irish-Americans drawn to support Ireland's cause during the revolutionary era.[35] This article complements Aiken's piece in that it deploys an individual's experiences to explore a broader story about the limitations of Irish nationalist activism, and equally the post-revolutionary conservative climate that characterised the Irish Free State.

Naturally there are areas that have not been explored in these articles, which only represent a taste of the pioneering work being undertaken on the transnational and comparative history of the Irish Revolution, the most obvious being the imperial context. Our contributors have largely focused on the North American and European transnational dimensions. In recent decades the Irish role within the British Empire has been the subject of intensive inquiry by historians generating what is now a sophisticated historiography in its own right.[36] We hope that future studies can explore interactions between sites of Irish settlement across the British Empire and the history of the Irish Revolution.

<div align="center">III</div>

In this era of intensive commemoration of the events that unfolded between 1912 and 1923 this special issue serves to remind us that the history of the revolution should not be confined to the island of Ireland. The revolution involved people, Irish and non-Irish, across the world in what can be rightly described as one of the great transnational moments in Irish history, taking in a diverse range of actors, objects, places and ideas. To frame this event as taking place solely within Ireland flattens out the complexity of this global revolutionary movement, and privileges the political entity that later became the independent Irish state. Such an approach would impose ahistorical boundaries which few contemporaries would have recognised or understood. These articles demonstrate how thinking transnationally and comparatively can promote a more inclusive and diverse global history of Irish Revolution.[37]

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[35] Brundage, *Irish nationalists*, pp 153–4.

[36] The pioneering work was Keith Jeffery (ed.), *'An Irish empire'? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996). Other collections that contain rich studies include Kevin Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2004) and Timothy G. McMahon, Michael de Nie and Paul Townend (eds), *Ireland in an imperial world: citizenship, opportunism, and subversion* (London, 2017).

[37] The editors would like to thank Professor Robert Gerwarth (U.C.D.) and Dr Patrick Mannion (Edinburgh) for acting as expert commentators at the workshop held in Edinburgh in June 2019, and the editors of *Irish Historical Studies* and the anonymous peer reviewer for very helpful and constructive comments.