

Imperial Nationalism of Minority Soldiers. Italian-Speaking Tyroleans and Irishmen in the First World War

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In the First World War, national minorities fought on all sides. How did these soldiers negotiate their identity as a national minority with their loyalty to and identification with the state for which they fought in the severest war of nations in modern times until then? This paper explores the complex landscape of this question by comparing Irish soldiers in the British Army and Italian-speaking Tyrolean soldiers in the Habsburg forces. Using a sample of war diaries from combatants on both sides and drawing on the more recently upcoming literature on minorities in the First World War, perceptions of these groups about their nationality are examined. The analysis will show how combatants were integrated into a network of loyal relationships to the respective empire through factors such as culture, language and emotions. This is made productive through the analytical category of imperial nationalism. The article emphasises the importance of regiments bridging national identity and imperial loyalty. Italy's entry into the war (1915) and the Easter Rising (1916) were critical events for soldiers of each side regarding their national self-image. The soldiers' reactions show the broad spectrum of individual national identity, ranging from increased identification with the Empire to disintegration. Subsequently, both groups increasingly faced discrimination, to which they reacted differently. While the Italian-speaking Tyroleans tended to gradually distance themselves from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Irish soldiers mostly maintained their imperial loyalty. These different results illustrate the complex interplay of allegiance, identity and nationality of minority soldiers and the impact of changing circumstances on these factors during the Great War.

Keywords: First World War, minority soldiers, imperial nationalism, Irish soldiers, Italian-speaking soldiers.

Introduction

The mail arrived from home, and I received among other things a green flag with a harp and the words Erin Go Bràth [=Ireland forever] put on by my Mother in large Gallic letters. [...] Our Colonel watched us on horseback by the roadside as we marched past, and called out jokingly 'Where is the Crown?' when he saw my green flag.¹

In 1917, the Irish soldier Antony R. Brennan described this incident on the Western front. His flag, with the Irish national symbol and text in Gaelic spelling, clearly stood out in the setting of the British Empire. After all, the content of the flag clearly referred to Irish claims of national self-determination. Hence, Brennan's superior, who could decipher the message, raised the question of the implicit conflict of loyalties: Was the missing crown the sign that would have given imperial legitimacy to the nationalist symbol of Ireland? Or was the flag evidence for various imperial understandings of nationality that Brennan, like all minority soldiers in the First World War, had to negotiate?

Although, during 1914 and 1918, national minorities served in all European armies, they remained the 'dimenticati della Grande Guerra'² for a long time. Only recently, research on the First World War has dedicated itself more intensively to this topic. Nevertheless, many questions about minority soldiers remain unanswered.³ It is therefore even more worth taking a comparative look at two combatant groups who fought on opposite sides but whose situation at the beginning of the Great War, as well as their deployment, showed similarities: Irish soldiers in the British Army and Italian-speaking Tyroleans in the Austro-Hungarian Army.

Around the turn of the century, the questions of political, cultural, and social nationalism had gained momentum in both countries. In the immediate pre-war period in Ireland, the political landscape was characterised by the growing demand for Irish self-government and

increased tensions between nationalist and unionist factions. The *Home Rule Bill* of 1912, which aimed to grant certain self-governance to Ireland, faced fierce opposition from Irish unionists, who feared it would undermine their ties to Britain. This deteriorated as both factions founded paramilitary organisations, the Protestant-unionist *Ulster Volunteer Force* and the Catholic *National Volunteers*.⁴ Although the start of the war prevented further escalation, mistrust of Irish Catholic volunteers prevailed among the British military,⁵ especially when *National Volunteers* formed the *16th Irish Division* to show that the Irish were willing to take their share of the burden for the Empire to ultimately get rewarded with more self-governance for their nation.⁶ The situation was less divided in Tyrol and the mainly Italian-speaking South Tyrol, the so-called Trentino or Welsch Tyrol. Tyrol consisted of both ethnic Germans and ethnic Italians, with a significant portion of the population identifying strongly with their region. At the same time, the relationship to the Habsburg Empire varied, as some saw themselves as an integral part of the multi-ethnic empire, while others aspired for greater autonomy. Overall, regional and religious rather than political identities prevailed before 1914.⁷ Nevertheless, a national affiliation debate — although not nearly as fierce as in Ireland — was part of the public discourse.⁸

Since the Italian-speaking Tyroleans were partly drafted for military service and the Irish volunteered, comparing their motivation seems somewhat misguided. Instead, the article wants to analyse their variety of perceptions of national belonging and their conditioning factors, as both groups were united by the fact that political developments forced them to deal with the question of their perceptions of nationality. On the one hand, Italy intervened on the side of the *Entente* on 23 May 1915, partly motivated by the *Irredentismo*, the ideological claim to recapture Welsch Tyrol and Trieste from Austria-Hungary to reunite Italian speakers with their mother nation.⁹ As the military situation of the Dual Monarchy remained precarious from this point on, Italy's entry into war also impacted the Italian-speaking Tyroleans serving in the ranks of the Habsburg army: They were accused of a lack of loyalty by politicians and

militaries.¹⁰ On the other hand, the fundamental question of Irish loyalty arose with the *Easter Rising*. On the morning of 24 April 1916, to the surprise of the British administration, up to 1,600 radical Irish nationalists — including some *National Volunteers* — occupied several buildings in Dublin and proclaimed the Irish Republic. The superior force of around 16,000 soldiers from mainly Irish regiments, in conjunction with British units and colonial troops, quickly put down the uprising.¹¹ Its suppression and the following repressions further strengthened Irish cultural and political nationalism across the island, with the consequence that the call for national autonomy became louder.¹² Consequently, military service to the British Empire increasingly appeared as a betrayal of the Irish nation, which again increased reservations about Irish soldiers on the part of the British.

Despite these similarities, it is interesting to note how differently the two groups were perceived as national minorities within the armies and how they reacted to Italy's entry into the war and the *Easter Rising*, respectively: while neither of the events led to problems regarding morale and discipline, but instead caused the opposite by provoking incomprehension, rejection or criticism,¹³ the reactions of both, the British and Austro-Hungarian military authorities were broadly similar. As early researchers on minorities in the Great War showed, they countered with strong mistrust, reprisals, and a reduction of minority soldiers in their units — with ambivalent responses from those affected.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the integration and identification of minority soldiers with the respective empire was surprisingly strong initially, but it eroded in the end. This observation will be examined in more detail using war diaries of combatants, which thus serve as historical probes.¹⁵ As argued here, the fighters, through national points of reference within the military, understood themselves primarily as a particular minority, only secondly belonging to the overall imperial structure. After the events of 1915 and 1916, however, combatants found it increasingly difficult — and partly impossible — to maintain a corresponding sense of imperial nationalism.

Before dealing further with the topic, special attention should be given to *imperial nationalism*, the analytical basis of this paper. As Roger Brubaker has pointed out in his classic 'National Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe', nations and nationalism are not natural or immutable entities but are shaped by intertwined social processes and political decisions. Therefore, they must be understood as multidimensional categories considering different facets, such as political, cultural and social aspects, and their performative side regarding affirmation or rejection.¹⁶ This is especially true for multinational or -ethnic empires, which supply a variety of imperial affiliations to different groups within their domain to offer propositions of national belonging. Therefore, individuals develop their ideas of national belonging to the empire alongside other forms of identity. This national self-perception can range from strong identification with the empire and its cause to national indifference, as Tara Zahra has soundly shown.¹⁷ As nationalism is, therefore, a multi-layered analytic category, it shall be focused in this article on the question of cultural nationalism — what characterised them culturally: language, tradition, customs, habits, etc. — and the criteria of seemingly objective national criteria.

For the soldiers concerned here, the nationalism we find is mainly in the 'field of tension between the two main poles [...] participation and aggression',¹⁸ as Dieter Langewiesche describes. Participation is offered to imperial subjects through various symbolic identifications, such as songs, role models or uniforms. In contrast, seemingly objective criteria like skin colour or language aggressively determine nationhood without one's own doing.¹⁹ Although contradictory at first glance, this contrast dissolves on closer examination, or how Krishan Kumar framed it: '[N]ational identity and empire have not always stood on opposite sides'.²⁰ Imperial nationalism demands loyalty regarding specific identifiers, such as the dynasty or the imperial project, while it tolerates different objective criteria of nationality, such as language or clothing.²¹ This enables the identification with the empire's goals on a nationwide basis.²² This concept is particularly interesting for Ireland, since, unlike the other British nationalities, identification with imperial Britishness

did not occur easily and across classes.²³ The same applied to Welsch Tyrol: Since around 1910, the Italian-speaking population was one of the most minor ethnic groups in Austria-Hungary, accounting for only about 2.8 per cent of the people.²⁴ But simultaneously, they had a neighbouring nation-state laying claim to them. Subsequently, this national field of tension in which the soldiers found themselves will be examined.

Minority Soldiers as Parts of Imperial Armies

Most volunteers in Ireland joined three divisions formed at the start of the conflict. The *36th (Ulster) Division* comprised mainly *Ulster Volunteer Force* members, including Protestant unionists in the British Army.²⁵ The *10th (Irish) Division* consisted of Irish and Irish-born recruits from the United Kingdom, while the *16th (Irish) Division* comprised 98% of Catholic Irish, overwhelmingly members of the Catholic *National Volunteers*. Thus, highly politicised, almost none of these Irish was made to be officers, reflecting the 'stigma of questionable loyalty'²⁶ expressed from the outset.²⁷ Consequently, recruitment of *National Volunteers* was relatively slow after initial enthusiasm, keeping a low profile during the war, gradually reducing the percentage of Irish within the division.²⁸ The *10th (Irish) Division* was destroyed as a distinctly Irish unit at Gallipoli in August 1915. The *16th (Irish) Division* was deployed to France in March 1916, where it was wiped out two years later by the last German spring offensive.²⁹

While the army generally remained a 'vague legal abstraction' for soldiers,³⁰ and only loose loyalty existed with the divisions,³¹ their relationship to the regiments and battalions was shaped daily.³² Thus, in the context here, the six Southern Irish regiments, which formed the nucleus of the *10th* and *16th (Irish) Division*, acted as loyalty takers.³³ For instance, the close connection of the units to their recruiting districts often tipped the balance in favour of reporting to a particular regiment.

This explained the emphasis on the regiments' Irish roots and simplified identification.³⁴

On the Habsburg side, Italian- and German-speaking Tyrolians were drafted into the four regional — and thus, compared to the Irish not predominantly linguistic homogeneous — light infantry regiments (*Kaiserjäger*). Half of the 55,000 conscripts called up during the war took part in the offensive in Galicia in autumn 1914. In it, they lost more than four-fifths of their strength — losses the regiments could not recover.³⁵ Especially in the months after Italy entered the war in May 1915, deliberate measures were taken: Reserve units, so-called *Standeschützen*, composed of very young and old volunteers from Tyrol, played a crucial role in promptly securing the southern border when few regular troops were available.³⁶ Concurrently, Italian-speaking *Kaiserjäger* were distributed among various other regiments so that they would no longer be grouped in larger units. For the same concern regarding their putative disloyalty to Austria-Hungary, the army withdrew them from critical frontlines.³⁷ Whereas in the Tyrolean regiments, they had made up around 40% alongside 60% German speakers, in the other units, they were generally among the smallest minorities.³⁸ As a result, most Italian-speaking Tyrolean soldiers experienced the end of the war in ethnically and linguistically mixed units in the southern and eastern theatres.³⁹

Perceptions of Nationalities by Italian-Speaking Tyroleans and Irishmen

For a long time, research on the two minority groups was shaped by the narrative of the respective nation-state: either they were excluded as traitors, as in the case of the later Irish Republic, or it was limited to the Austro-Hungarian deserters or *irredentisti* in Italy.⁴⁰ This often resulted in the retrospective glorification of a nationally homogeneous group.⁴¹ Although this has changed in recent decades, the issue of nationality is still contested, as John Regan recently criticised concerning Northern

and Southern Irish narratives.⁴² These different interpretations were made possible due to the combatants' multi-layered and interwoven understanding of nationality, which the following essay seeks to address. Since some sources show such apparent gaps concerning nationality,⁴³ the question of *national indifference* must also be examined in this context.

An essential part of the perception of both others and oneself was formed by stereotypes, which — as forms of 'collective self-insurance'⁴⁴ — enabled consolidating group identity at the front.⁴⁵ This was particularly relevant for the self-perception and self-construction of minority soldiers, especially since both study groups suffered from intense social, partly religious and racist discrimination.⁴⁶ This can be illustrated by the example of religion and self-perception in differentiation from other ethnic groups.

For both groups, the topic of religion played a formative role.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, this had different consequences for their self-image. For the Italian-speaking Tyroleans, Catholic festivals continued to structure the year and established a connection to everyday life before the war.⁴⁸ Accordingly, there was great resentment about terminating these traditions through military service when holidays were ignored, or mass attendance was prevented.⁴⁹ However, first-person documents show continuous faith, for example, in prayers,⁵⁰ although a gradual decline in religiosity set in under the impressions of the war, especially among former city dwellers, as Brigitte Strauß notes.⁵¹ However, their Catholicism did not distinguish them from the vast majority of the Austro-Hungarian soldiers, thus allowing them to demonstrate their affiliation with the multinational state performatively.

Contrary to this, Catholicism and Irishness were essentially synonymous in the British Empire and had negative connotations from the middle of the 19th century onwards.⁵² This strengthened the Irish sense of cultural difference and weakened the connection to the imperial nation. Accordingly, this had an identity-forming effect on the Irish, for example,

when Sergeant Denis J. Moriarty noted that Catholic field chaplains would go to the front line, unlike their Protestant counterparts.⁵³ This unique feature within the British Army on the part of the Irish, and in contrast to the Italian-speaking Tyroleans, reinforced their self-perception as a national minority.⁵⁴ For them, religion could not even begin to transcend their divergent nationality and function — as it did for the Scots and Welsh — as a unifying characteristic of imperial nationality.⁵⁵

While the Irish religion offered an apparent characteristic either for their self-perception or in their perception by others, both groups were united in their demarcation from other ethnic groups in the imperial armies. It is paradigmatic here that both minorities displayed a variety of ambivalent and situational self-perceptions, which became particularly virulent in contact with ethnic soldiers of the imperial or colonial empire.

For the Italian-speaking Austrians, the eastern theatres of war, with their socio-economic otherness, triggered strong feelings of foreignness.⁵⁶ They were also critical of the eastern and south-eastern ethnicities of the Habsburg monarchy, about whom they had the same stereotypes — such as work-shyness, racial inferiority or otherness — as the ones they could be exposed to.⁵⁷ For example, the infantryman Antonio Giovanazzi reported that in his unit ‘Italiano, Slavo, Ungherese, Boemo e Tedesco’ was spoken, whereby ‘i lavoratori però son Italiani Tirolesi e Tedeschi. Il resto son tutti sorveglianti[,] direttori e capi’.⁵⁸ Moreover, it becomes clear that the soldier’s language served as an objectivist nationality category.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Fabrizio Rasera and Camillo Zadra show that while this strengthened their self-perception as an Italian-speaking group, it did not clearly affect their imperial nationalism.⁶⁰ It was instead seen as a form of belonging, especially when cultural differences and perceptions of their own superiority, i.e. in Galicia, were perceived.⁶¹

This is even more true for the case of the Irish, who seemed to have only defined themselves as British units when confronted with colonial troops or the enemy. For instance, this became evident when the *10th*

(Irish) Division landed on Gallipoli in the second half of 1915. Sergeant J. McIlwain complained about the *Australian and New Zealand Expeditionary Force* (ANZAC): they were 'unwilling that we [the 5th Connaught Rangers] should get a share of the glory. They will not be relieved by British Tommies'.⁶² In the conflict with the ANZAC troops, McIlwain distinguished himself as a continental British soldier, thus referring to the group that dominated the British Empire.⁶³ Although he identified himself through his *Britishness*, how he did it ran counter to how (British) imperial nationalism worked. This emphasised precisely not ethnicity but the unifying elements, such as the same language, the monarchy or the worldwide empire.⁶⁴ The fact that an Irish soldier actively differentiated between British continental and British imperial troops underlined how belonging to the *United Kingdom* was situationally perceived and deployed. A fine demarcation that, according to Linda Colley, resulted from the burdened history of the chronic contrast of Irish- and Britishness and yet left room in specific situations for this important differentiation of identity and self-image of Irish units.⁶⁵

Stratifications of National Imperialism

Categories such as religion and language shaped the foreign and self-image of the combatants in question here. Nevertheless, the assumption that Ireland or Italy as a nation was a recurring reference point in their understanding of nationality seems overdrawn; instead, it played a subordinate role.⁶⁶ As with other minorities in the Great War, the concept of homeland was expressed less politically than emotionally.⁶⁷

Since the issue of national independence was a minority position among Irish nationalists before 1916, the average Irish soldier associated home primarily with family and Ireland as an emotive place of longing.⁶⁸ Private A. R. Brennan, for example, on his departure from Ireland, wrote: 'given half a chance, I would cheerfully have responded to the call of

“Come back to Erin”.⁶⁹ As a point of desire, Ireland had more than just emotional significance. It also competed with military loyalties, such as when Irish soldiers resisted transfer to regiments from other British recruiting districts.⁷⁰ At the same time, Britain did not represent its own emotional national reference for them. If addressed, it served as a point of comparison with other ethnic groups, such as the Scots or the Welsh, and their similar divergent national identities regarding language, traditions and history. However, the main point of reference remained the *Irishness*. It not only manifested itself through adopting stereotypes applied to them, such as heavy alcohol consumption or disciplinary problems, but also in a unique fighting spirit. As Heather Streets pointed out, this reputation as a ‘martial race’ intensified ‘a regimental and institutional culture [...] that supported and strengthened’⁷¹ the ties to the British Empire. At times, it could even develop performative power,⁷² resulting in a deliberate self-presentation as ‘fighting Irish’, strengthening their awareness as a special national group on the front lines, as Sergeant J. McIlwain proudly noted: “We’ll show them how the Irish can fight”, someone said earlier’.⁷³

The same was true for the Italian-speaking Tyroleans. As Lawrence Cole emphasises, the majority’s sense of national belonging was expressed neither as a solid attachment to the Austro-Hungarian Empire nor as a national desire to belong to the Kingdom of Italy, although there were strong sympathisers for both. Instead, national feelings primarily emerged as a strong regional identification with Welsch Tyrol and its sub-regions. If the soldiers spoke of ‘patria’, one can assume they meant their valley or the Trentino region.⁷⁴ Furthermore, Hans Heiss’s observation should be added, according to which the irredentism that existed in Tyrolean cities acted as a reinforcement since it worked as an integrative moment for the otherwise rather disparate rural population: the nationalist annexation semantics strongly contradicted the regional autonomy as well as the cultural traditions of the Tyrolean countryside.⁷⁵ This strong autonomy within the multi-ethnic state and the resulting regional identity was the foundation on which imperial loyalty was grounded, rather than ethnicity or language.⁷⁶ The previously described

experiences of foreignness intensified regional identification. Accordingly, the consequences of the war were not discussed at the national level but negotiated on an emotional and, at the same time, de-individualised level of the region. The infantryman Fioravante Gottardi, for example, complained: 'Nella mia compagnia siamo rimasti in 50 e certe compagnie, distrutte completamente! Povero Trentino, di quanti figli ti ha privato questa guerra[?]'.⁷⁷ Both groups thus demonstrate that it was not nationalistic considerations in a political sense that shaped their understanding of nationality but rather emotional bonds based on origin, culture and personal relationships. This could ideally be superimposed by imperial loyalties, as the following example of the regiments shows.

The factors above resulted in a strong identification with the regiments in both minority groups. This combined national and regional references through the cultivation of tradition, in the Irish case language, and comradeships. For example, the six southern Irish regiments looked back on a partly centuries-old history. This tradition was cultivated, for instance, at training courses or made visible through symbols on the uniform, such as the Irish harp, thus displaying the affiliation to third parties.⁷⁸ The four Tyrolean light infantry regiments, although having a more recent history at the end of the 19th century, also used symbols or flags to establish loyalty and cultivated their elite reputation — similarly routed in a 'martial race' discourse —, which, according to Manfred Rauchensteiner, had a strong influence on their combat performance as well as loyalty to their units.⁷⁹ In addition, the *Kaiserjäger* were directly subordinate to the emperor, making it possible to establish a closer connection with this abstract but strong loyalty taker.⁸⁰ As it was common for mixed regiments in the Austro-Hungarian Army, there was a second service language in addition to German, in this case, Italian, which the officers had to master,⁸¹ thus integrating the minority soldiers and offering identification and loyalty. In addition, the same national origin could cushion the relationship with superiors, which was strained from the outset by hierarchical distance, massive privilege, and severe discipline.⁸² Thus, the minority status, together with the regional bond,

connected the combatants to the units on an emotional and cultural level, which is particularly evident *ex negativo*. After the massive losses in Galicia in 1914, compulsory bilingualism could no longer be maintained in the predominantly German officer corps, which was then perceived negatively. Accordingly, sapper Massimiliano Segà lamented that he overcame his isolation and alienation only after being transferred to a unit with comrades of the same language.⁸³

Through this emotional identification with the regiments, manifested in the cultivation of traditions, linguistic-emotional references and personal loyalties — in some cases also to officers — the unit could act for both minority groups as a link between their particular national identity and the Empire's imperial nationalism.

Moments of Conflict: Italy's Entry into the War (1915) and the *Easter Rising* (1916)

The diary entries of the infantryman Rudolfo Bolner provide a detailed example of the reactions to the run-up to and the declaration of war by Italy in the spring of 1915:

24 marzo Due grandi novità affannano oggi, con differente effetto, ogni cuore: 'Il Trentino è ceduto all'Italia' [...] La prima diceria è accolta da noi Italiani [!] con una esplosione di gioia; [...] [L'altra] novità; tristissima questa: Il Reggimento dei Landeschützen è decimato. [...]

20 maggio Novità sensazionale; l'Italia dichiarerà prestissimo guerra all'Austria! Altro che pace!

21 maggio Il Parlamento italiano ha già deciso la guerra. Che avverrà dei nostri paesi così prossimi al confine politico? Che anche laggiù si deva sentire la voce del cannone? Che anche i

nostri paesi devano veder gli orrori della guerra? Questi pensieri mi turbano e mi addolorano.⁸⁴

It shows that Italy's entry into the war on the side of the *Entente* on 23 May 1915 seemed to force Italian-speaking subjects of the Habsburgs to take sides. Bolner's description shows the ambivalence that characterised the relationship of the Italian-speaking citizens of Tyrol to the national question. In his case, the news of Welsch Tyrol's possible affiliation to Italy led to collective enthusiasm, only to be followed by an empathetic expression of loyalty given the heavy losses of one of the Tyrolian regiments. This demonstrates how different national loyalties could be, how they overlapped, and that a positive attitude towards Italy did not necessarily preclude loyalty to the Dual Monarchy.

The reason for the latter is likely to be found in the Habsburg Empire's lack of a fierce integration policy in the decades before the Great War. Instead, it granted regional autonomy to the Italian minorities, strengthening regional and religious identifications.⁸⁵ As a result, the irredentist claims by Italy were primarily met with indifference or rejection.⁸⁶ Italy's declaration of war nevertheless irritated the balance of existing identities,⁸⁷ leaving the imperial affiliation to the Habsburg Empire to retain the upper hand. Lawrence Sondhaus has proven this numerically: neither did the number of desertions increase significantly after Italy entered the war, nor was there any resistance to further recruitment.⁸⁸ In this context, a comparison with the loyalty of the Irish to their regiments suggests itself. The reputation of the regionally recruited and rooted *Kaiserjäger* was similarly one of a particular boldness and courage,⁸⁹ which could have, in turn, contributed to creating a special identification and loyalty that strengthened against foreign national claims.

Ultimately, Bolner's entries reveal that the hostilities between Italy and Austria-Hungary that began in the spring of 1915 were a price he would not have been willing to pay for Welsch Tyrol to become Italian. The infantryman Ezechiele Marzari was even more explicit, stating that the

local patriotism of the people of Trentino could, in turn, contribute to imperial legitimacy: For it were 'i Trentini che tornano dal fronte romeno e dalle città austriache devono lottare con la fiumana che sale dalle valli del Mezzogiorno'.⁹⁰ Thus, they would have had to defend their 'carra patria' — here clearly referring to his home region — against the 'i[n]fame'⁹¹ Italian war efforts as part of the imperial Austro-Hungarian Army. Indirectly, however, this shows that many Italian-speaking Tyroleans conscripts integrated imperial references into their understanding of national belonging.⁹²

At the same time, there were irredentist currents on the part of the Italian-speaking soldiers but hardly any sympathy for the ultra-nationalist movement among Irish soldiers. After all, while the Irish volunteered for military service for a complex variety of reasons — composed of economic, social, or political factors, the latter especially in the case of the *16th Irish Division*-troops⁹³ — the Austro-Hungarian soldiers mainly were called up. Accordingly, Fioravante Gottardi, for instance, criticised his conscription: 'il giorno 14 [August 1914] andai a giurare fedeltà alla Patria. Di una patria non mia. Ma se non si voleva venir fucilati bisognò giurare per forza'.⁹⁴ While Giuseppe Passerini, after voluntarily going into Russian captivity in July 1916, recorded: 'La partita con l'Austria è liquidata'.⁹⁵ This shows that forms of imperial nationality were not always part of the national identities of the soldiers but may have been in clear contrast with their strong regional identifications, as Laurence Cole suggests.⁹⁶ On the side of the war opponents, there were corresponding efforts to use these existing or assumed nationality conflicts to instrumentalise prisoners-of-war: Germany allowed the republican nationalist Sir Roger Casement (1864–1916) to enlist Irishmen in POW camps for the so-called '*Irish Brigade*', while Italy was recruiting Italian-speaking Austrian POWs in Russian.⁹⁷ Although representatives of these nationalist currents have been intensively researched — in part echoing the respective national narrative⁹⁸ — they did not represent the majority among the minority soldiers on either side nor can their motivation be attributed solely to their understanding of nationality. Instead, the specific conditions, such

as war fatigue, war trauma or captivity, must be considered. The small number of nationalistic soldiers shows that most combatants seemed to have accepted the offers of imperial nationalism and retained them despite the conditions of captivity.⁹⁹

As the *Easter Rising* remained a 'propaganda of the deed',¹⁰⁰ word of it quickly reached the Irish divisions at the front. The attitude of its combatants was mainly indifferent, as Private A. R. Brennan described in retrospect: 'It was while we [the *2nd Royal Irish Regiment*] were stationed in one quiet little hamlet that the news came through of the Irish Rebellion. Although we were all mildly interested, nobody took the thing very seriously[!]'.¹⁰¹ He confirmed no discernible expressions of sympathy for the rebels among the Irish front-line soldiers.¹⁰² This was most likely because the insurgents were a minority of national extremists within the Irish national movement. In contrast, until that time, mainstream Irish political nationalism had been predominantly focused on achieving political sovereignty within the empire rather than independence.¹⁰³ The subsequent lack of interest, as reported by Brennan, complements Christopher Jahr's finding that the riot did not affect the Irish's discipline or morale.¹⁰⁴ Although personal attitudes are only partly reflected in personal papers — or not even that — and will indeed have differed within the troops, in practice, the consequence was to prioritise loyalty to the British Empire, while the references to the Irish nation and any existing Irish nationalisms were deliberately reduced. Contributing to this may have been the discourse surrounding the Irish reputation as 'martial race'-units, which, according to Heather Streets, helped to construct them as a bulwark 'to keep their "disloyal" [national] counterparts in line', providing an 'imperial antidote to [Irish] nationalism' at the same time.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, against this background, the silence concerning the *Easter Rising* by both contemporary and retrospective sources needs to be explained.¹⁰⁶

Three interpretative approaches can be put forward: firstly, a non-written approval of the uprising, which is often proven wrong by the frequent evidence of imperial nationalism appearing elsewhere in the

same diaries.¹⁰⁷ Secondly, parallel to the case of the Italian-speaking Tyroleans, there could be a general disinterest in political developments or national issues among the ranks and officers.¹⁰⁸ The reason may be found in the autumn of 1914, when Major General Lawrence Parsons, the first commander of the *16th (Irish) Division*, decided to exclude all members of the Irish Republican *National Volunteers* from officer positions.¹⁰⁹ In contrast to the Protestant unionist *36th (Ulster) Division*, the lack of politicised officers may have been reflected in their indifferent attitude towards the *Easter Rising*.¹¹⁰ But it is still striking that the events mostly form a blank space in the personal papers on both the Irish and Italian-speaking sides. Even the infantryman Giuseppe Passerini, who did not hold back his sympathies for Italy in his war diary, did not express irredentist views regarding Italy's entry into the war.¹¹¹ Was this indirect evidence of the ultimately low significance of national affiliation in the soldier's everyday life and an expression of national indifference? Coined by Tara Zahra and Pieter Judson, this is based on the realisation that national discourses are often irrelevant in daily life.¹¹² According to them, multinational empires must include these 'nonnational and nationally ambivalent populations'.¹¹³ But the Irish, more so than the Tyroleans, were made precise offers for national loyalty, primarily through their regiments. At the same time, however, the interest in political issues gradually declined given the strains of everyday life at the front--symptomatic of soldiers, especially on the Western Front, from the middle of the First World War onward.¹¹⁴ Based on this, a third explanation stands to reason: The soldiers could not or did not want to concern themselves with the *Easter Rising* due to their concrete situation at the front. While the Italian speakers may not have wanted to think about the substantial consequences for their home region, as this came with corresponding emotional costs,¹¹⁵ the Irish either completely ignored the rebellion or appeared shaken and bitter.¹¹⁶ The feeling of having been betrayed by their countrymen was particularly strong among the *16th (Irish) Division*, as it concurrently suffered its heaviest losses on the front in the gas battles at Hulluch between 27 and 29 April 1916.¹¹⁷

Consequently, the events revealed a spectrum of individual national identities that were affected, ranging from shock to indifference. For the most part, the episodes did not lead to a renunciation of the respective imperial nationalism but rather to a strengthening of loyalty on the Irish and Austro-Hungarian sides – for the present.

Consequences

This was about to significantly change due to the reactions by the army commands. On the Habsburg side, the Italian participation in the war changed the view of the Italian-speaking troops, resulting in severe discrimination.¹¹⁸ Similar to other Austro-Hungarian nationalities, they had already been hit by the insinuation of disloyalty on the part of the military when the Galicia offensive in 1914 failed.¹¹⁹ After Italy declared war, the military extended its emergency measures to Tyrol, forcibly deported apparently politically unreliable Italian speakers, and partially evacuated citizens of the frontline to refugee camps. This disillusioned the population, which had previously been widely considered — by others and themselves — loyal subjects to the Empire.¹²⁰ As John Deak and Jonathan Gumz can show, this transformation of Austria-Hungary's constitutional rule of law into military law under military administration eroded loyalty relations between the regional inhabitants and the empire.¹²¹ By the war's end, most Italian-speaking Welsch Tyroleans rejected the idea of remaining part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹²² This development also regularly triggered emotional concerns among soldiers about the fate of their families, their hometowns and regions while at the same time eroding their loyalties to the state and its army due to the felt withdrawal of their national minority privileges.¹²³ Simultaneously, the combatants themselves encountered both coordinated and arbitrary measures by the military apparatus: their recruitment into the regionally rooted regiments was terminated, they were assigned to so-called '*PU*'-units ('politically unreliable') or were withdrawn from critical sections of the front; measurements, Rodolfo

Bolner perceived as “epurazione” di elementi trentini’.¹²⁴ In addition, there was also an increase in daily discrimination. In particular, the Austrian-dominated officer corps transferred images of the enemy and aversions against Italy to their Italian-speaking soldiers.¹²⁵ The same Rudolfo Bolner, for example, described an encounter with a colonel during the swearing-in ceremony for the new Emperor Karl I., which culminated in public humiliation:

Nel pomeriggio [November 22, 1916] adunata generale di tutti i soldati qui residenti, sul gran piazzale delle Terme. [...] Noi italiani – una quindicina circa – veniamo spinti sempre più alla periferia del piazzale e veniamo a trovarci, quasi a contatto, con un gruppo di Bosniaci. Vediamo un Colonnello a cavallo passare di gruppo in gruppo e sostare alquanto. [...]

– [Colonel:] Chi sono quei soldati lì?

– Italiani!

– [Colonel:] Verfluchte Rasse! Weg!

Noi non ce lo facciamo ripetere due volte e via a gambe!¹²⁶

On the one hand, the officer revealed an ethically motivated, objectivist understanding of nationality, with which he equated Italian linguistic identity with belonging to the Italian nation. On the other hand, the report testifies to the disintegration of soldiers from the Austro-Hungarian Army, which was already well advanced by the end of 1916 and led to this unit’s unopposed breaking off of the oath ceremony.¹²⁷

It seems that discrimination was mainly practised by higher-ranking military officers and less in daily life at the level of platoons, companies or battalions. Massimiliano Sega, for instance, was still able to describe his new platoon comradeship with the following positive words at the beginning of 1917: ‘Al fronte ssono rivatto giorno 28 febrajo qui in questa Conpagnia mi trovo proprio bene he tutti parlla he ssi puo in tendde E anhca riquardo innostri ssuperiori ssono Buoni il mio Zucomandant

sono il Rosaro del Costa'.¹²⁸ This affirmative interpretation of hierarchical relations based on national categories like the language or regional origin also existed among other Habsburg nationalities, such as Czech troops.¹²⁹ But even beyond Segà's daily reference point of the company, it is evident that the degree of disintegration from the Austro-Hungarian Army could individually vary. For example, Giovanni Lorenzetti, a sapper who was surprisingly deployed on the south-western front, was pleased about the Caporetto offensive at the end of 1917, understanding it as a success for his side: 'i nostri [!] ano incominciato lofensiva ed esendo andati avanti'.¹³⁰ These examples show the ambivalence, reduction and variety of imperial nationalism. While the overall disintegration of the army and the multi-national state increased,¹³¹ imperial loyalties could persist to various degrees at an individual level. As Oswald Überegger remarked, this development was not without a certain irony, according to which the alienation sought to be combated was actually homemade by the military leadership.¹³²

Even if the Irish units understood the *Easter Rising* predominantly as a breach of loyalty, downplayed it, or even sought to demonstrate their attachment to the empire accordingly,¹³³ the military leadership tightened its treatment. Not least, because at the same time, republican support in Ireland increased due to the harsh British reaction to the rebellion. Sergeant J. McIlwain recorded in his diary: 'Wind up about the Sinn Fein agitation. Confined to barracks. Mobile column under orders [...] Packing up. All Irish regiments to leave for England'.¹³⁴ As this journal entry indicates, the *Easter Rising* confirmed anti-Irish resentments of the British military leadership and the loyalty of Irish soldiers as British troops came under general suspicion.¹³⁵ However, this assertion must be viewed cautiously in light of the empirical data. Neither the source sample studied nor the evaluations of military court records — as an indicator of troop morale — extensively analysed by Timothy Bowman revealed cases of sympathy with the rebels, an increase in refusals to obey orders or a general demoralisation.¹³⁶ In their reactions expressing loyalty to the empires, both minority groups resembled each other even

if the reference to imperial nationalism differed and varied within the groups.

The withdrawal of loyalty by the British leadership manifested itself in similar measures as on the Habsburg side: increased surveillance and mixing of formerly predominantly national units. By 1918, the proportion of Catholic Irish in their regiments was successively reduced to around 45%, mainly affecting the *16th (Irish) Division* due to its particular recruitment history.¹³⁷ As a non-intended inverse correlation, this could have reinforced the soldiers' loyalty to their regiments — while disintegrating them from the army as a whole — such that there is no evidence that troop morale and performance suffered from the decline.¹³⁸ It was only towards the war's end that the disbanding of entire Irish regiments led to the final disintegration of minority soldiers, as Timothy Bowman pointed out, a peculiarity of their wartime experience in the British Army.¹³⁹ Until then, most Irish remained somehow integrated in imperial nationalism through their regiments,¹⁴⁰ although the developments upset and unsettled many.¹⁴¹ After all, they repeatedly saw their loyalty — especially on the part of the loyalty taker — unfairly put to the test.

This clearly distinguished the Irish from the Italian-speaking Austrians. Their concentration in the same regiments was quickly broken up after the spring of 1915 — in 1918, the four Tyrolean light infantry regiments had only less than 6% Italian-speaking soldiers¹⁴² —, and thus the units disappeared as a means of identification with the Habsburg monarchy. The fact that imperial nationalism among most of the two minority groups developed in such different directions by the end of the war had, therefore, two causes: for the Irish, the regiment remained one of the central points of reference for their imperial loyalty until the spring of 1918, helping them to withstand various forms of discrimination. As this quickly vanished among the Italian-speaking Tyroleans and the military administration curtailed their region's autonomy in the multi-national state, they increasingly detached themselves from their loyalty to the Dual Monarchy.

Conclusion

Irish minority soldiers and their Italian-speaking counterparts from Welsh Tyrol experienced a similar shift in their perception of nationality during the war. The degree to which their experience of foreignness in the armies varied, e.g. with Catholicism, negatively distinguished Irish from other British soldiers but reinforced affiliations on the Tyrolean side. Besides that, both groups used stereotypes to demarcate themselves from other ethnic groups in the imperial army. The Irish soldiers emphasised their British-imperial or Irish identity in the face of opposition or against third parties. In contrast, this played a minor role for the Italian-speaking soldiers due to greater variance in terms of national identity throughout the Habsburg army. Overall, this ambivalent and situational self-perception helped to reinforce their connection to imperial nationalism.

Moreover, their connection to their cultural nationality as part of their imperial nationalism was meaningful. Thereby, both groups had an emotional and cultural understanding of their nationality rather than a political or even nationalistic one — either by a strong regional identification with the Welsch Tyrol region or a concept of home, primarily associated with family and positive-turned-stereotypes by the Irish. The links to imperial nationalism were the regiments, which combined national and regional references through tradition, language, and comradeship, thus resulting in emotional identification and loyalties to the empires, playing a much more vital role on the Irish side due to the development of the war.

Italy's declaration of war irritated the balance of multiple national identities but seemed to have left imperial nationalism to retain the upper hand with regard to troop morale. The *Easter Rising* had little impact on the Irish front-line soldiers, who, at least in their papers, gave the impression that they prioritised loyalty to the British Empire and did not support radical Irish nationalism. These attitudes were compromised by the reactions of the military leadership on both sides.

The Italian-speaking Tyroleans were discriminated against based on their language and assumed ethnicity, which eroded their loyalties to the multi-national state and towards the Austro-Hungarian army. In the British army, the *Easter Rising* gave rise to suspicion of Irish loyalty, resulting in disintegrative measures. Nevertheless, these were less successful than those deployed towards the Tyroleans, allowing the Irish minority soldiers to retain a robust imperial nationalism until the last year of the war. Regardless of their efforts and struggles in dealing with their imperial nationality, the war's end left combatants on each side in new nation-states that both excluded their service from national memory and put it to long oblivion.

Endnotes

¹ London, Imperial War Museum [IWM], P262: A. R. Brennan, *Papers*, 22 (8 /1-2/ 1917).

² Quinto Antonelli, *I dimenticati della Grande Guerra. La memoria dei combattenti trentini (1914–1920)* (Trent: Il Margine, 2008); for the Irish, see: Terence Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War, 1914–1918* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992), 7.

³ Recently new editions try to correct this, e.g. *Minderheiten-Soldaten. Ethnizität und Identität in den Armeen des Ersten Weltkriegs*, ed. by Oswald Überegger (Paderborn: Brill | Schöningh, 2018); or Sylvain Gregori & Jean-Paul Pellegrinetti, *Minorités, Identités Régionales et Nationales en Guerre (1914–1918)* (Rennes: PUR- Les Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2017).

⁴ David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁵ Christoph Jahr, *Gewöhnliche Soldaten. Desertion und Deserteure im deutschen und britischen Heer 1914–1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 287–289, 291, 294–295.

⁶ Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland. World War 1 and Partition* (London/ New York: Routledge, 1998), 86–89.

⁷ The analytical inclusion of religious identities would go too far, cf. Brigitte Strauß, 'Kirche und Religiösität', in *Katastrophenjahre. Der Erste Weltkrieg und Tirol*, ed. by Herman Kuprian & Oswald Überegger (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 2014), 241–258.

⁸ Elena Tonezzer, 'I trentini in Austria. La costruzione di un'identità nazionale', *Contemporanea* 12/3 (2009), 471–494.

⁹ Matthew Stibbe, 'Italian Irredentism' <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/italian_irredentism> [accessed 10/9/2023]

¹⁰ Quinto Antonelli, 'Kriegserfahrungen: Trentiner Soldaten', in Kuprian & Überegger, *Katastrophenjahre*, 401–419 (405–407).

¹¹ Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising. Ireland: Easter 1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 120–209; Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 47–61.

¹² Richard English, *Irish Freedom. The History of Nationalism in Ireland* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2006), 260–284.

¹³ Jane Leonard, 'The Reaction of Irish Officers in the British Army to the Easter Rising of 1916', in *Facing Armageddon. The First World War Experienced*, ed. by Cecil Hugh & Peter Liddle (London: Pen and Sword Military, 1996), 256–268.

¹⁴ Oswald Überegger, 'Der Intervento als regionales Bedrohungszenario', in *Der Kriegseintritt Italiens im Mai 1915*, ed. by Johannes Hürter & Gian Enrico Rusconi (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2007) 117–137 (130–132); Jahr, *Soldaten*, 290–291.

¹⁵ Ulrich Herbert, *Best. Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft. 1903–1989* (Bonn: C.H.Beck, 1996), 25.

¹⁶ Roger Brubaker, *National Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 5–7, 13–20.

¹⁷ Tara Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis', *Slavic Review* 69/1 (2010), 93–119 (98–105).

¹⁸ Dieter Langewiesche, *Nationalismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: zwischen Partizipation und Aggression. Vortrag vor dem Gesprächskreis Geschichte der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Bonn am 24.1.1994* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1994),

¹⁹ Christian Jansen & Henning Borggräfe, *Nation, Nationalität, Nationalismus* (Frankfurt/ New York: Historische Einführungen, 2007), 17–19.

²⁰ Krishan Kumar, 'Nation and Empire: English and British National Identity in Comparative Perspective', *Theory and Society* 29/5 (2000), 575–608 (579).

²¹ See Philippe Ther, "Imperial Nationalism" as a Challenge for the Study of Nationalism', in *Nationalizing Empires*, ed. by Stefan Berger & Alexei Il'ič Miller (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015), 573–592 (577, 588); Krishan Kumar, 'Nation and Empire', 579–580.

²² Kevin Colclough, *Imperial Nationalism: Nationalism and the Empire in Late Nineteenth Century Scotland and British Canada* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2006), 70–72.

²³ See: Ben Wellings, 'Empire-Nation: National and Imperial Discourses in England', *Nations and Nationalism* 8/1 (2002), 95–109 (99, 103–104).

²⁴ Andrea di Michele, "Italiani d'Austria". Italienischsprachige Soldaten der Habsburgermonarchie im Ersten Weltkrieg', in Oswald Überegger, *Minderheiten-Soldaten*, 45–68 (46–47).

²⁵ See Timothy Bowman, 'Ireland and the First World War', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History*, ed. by Alvin Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 604–616 (608–610).

²⁶ Christoph Jahr, “England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity”. The Irish in the British Army of the First World War and the Problem of Multiple Loyalties’, in Überegger, *Minderheiten-Soldaten*, 103–118 (109).

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²⁸ Fergus Campbell, *Land and Revolution: Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland, 1891–1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 197.

²⁹ Denman, *Unknown Soldiers*, 167–175; David Murphy, *Irish Regiments in the World Wars* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2007), 14, 18.

³⁰ See David French, *Military Identities. The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People. 1870–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.

³¹ Thomas Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers? The Times and World of a Southern Catholic Irish Man (1876–1916) Enlisting in the British Army During the First World War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), 196.

³² David Weston, “The Army: Mother, Sister and Mistress: the British Regiment’, in *The Defence Equation. British Military Systems: Policy, Planning, and Performance*, ed. by Martin Edmonds (London/ Washington: Potomac Books, 1986), 139–156 (144, 146–147).

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³⁵ Antonelli, *I dimenticati*, 21–22.

³⁶ Manfred Rauchensteiner, *The First World War. And the End of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1914–1918* (Göttingen: Böhlau, 2014), 333.

³⁷ Oswald Überegger, *Der andere Krieg. Die Tiroler Militärgerichtsbarkeit im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 2002), 269–273.

³⁸ Chista Hämmerle, 'Die k. (u.) k. Armee als "Schule des Volkes"? Zur Geschichte der Allgemeinen Wehrpflicht in der multinationalen Habsburgermonarchie (1866–1914/18)', in *Der Bürger als Soldat. Die Militarisierung europäischer Gesellschaften im langen 19. Jahrhundert: ein internationaler Vergleich*, ed. by Christian Jansen (Essen: Klartext, 2004), 175–214 (180).

³⁹ Antonelli, 'Kriegserfahrungen', 414–417.

⁴⁰ Cf. endnote 2 and Maria Garbari, 'Der Irredentismus in der italienischen Historiographie', in *Grenzregionen im Zeitalter der Nationalismen. Alsace-Lorraine/Trent-Trieste, 1870–1914*, ed. by Angelo Ara & Eberhard Kolb (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1998), 25–53.

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⁴⁴ Hans-Henning Hahn, '12 Thesen zur Stereotypenforschung', in *Nationale Wahrnehmungen und ihre Stereotypisierung. Beiträge zur historischen Stereotypenforschung*, ed. by Hans-Henning Hahn & Elena Mannová (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2007), 15–24 (22).

⁴⁵ Hahn, '12 Thesen zur Stereotypenforschung', 21–23.

⁴⁶ Jahr, 'England's difficulty', 103–118 (106–107).

⁴⁷ Strauß, 'Kirche und Religiosität', 241–258 (247–248).

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⁵² Charles Townshend, 'Religion, War, and Identity in Ireland', in *The Journal of Modern History* 76/4 (2004) 882–902 (884–886); Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *Journal of British Studies* 31/4 (1992), 309–329 (313, 317).

⁵³ IWM, 01/58/1: D. J. Moriarty, *Papers*, 16 (5/26/1915).

⁵⁴ Peter Howson, *Muddling Through. The Organisation of British Army Chaplaincy in World War One* (Solihull: Helion & Company, 2013), 149 chart 2.

⁵⁵ Hartmut Kaelble, Martin Kirsch & Alexander Schmidt-Gernig, 'Zur Entwicklung transnationaler Öffentlichkeit und Identitäten im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine Einleitung', in *Transnationale Öffentlichkeiten und Identitäten im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Hartmut Kaelble, Martin Kirsch & Alexander Schmidt-Gernig (Frankfurt/ New York: Campus Fachbuch, 2002), 7–36 (17); Colley, 'Britishness', 314–315.

⁵⁶ Rasera & Zadra, 'Patrie Lontane', 330, 339.

⁵⁷ Antonelli, *I dimenticati*, 59–61.

⁵⁸ Antonio Giovanazzi, 'Memorie di mio servizio', in *Scritture di Guerra 7*, ed. by Quinto Antonelli, Giorgia Pontalti (Trent: Museo storico, 1997), 80–127 (105 (8/13/1915)).

⁵⁹ Jansen & Borggräfe, *Nation*, 12–13.

⁶⁰ Rasera & Zadra, 'Patrie Lontane', 329–332, 339.

⁶¹ Hans Heiss, 'I soldati trentini nella prima guerra mondiale. Un metodo di determinazione numerica', in *Sui Campi*, 253–267 (256).

⁶² IWM, 96/29/1: J. McIlwain, *Diary. Part II*, 4 (8/9/1915)

⁶³ Kumar, 'Nation and Empire', 589–590.

⁶⁴ Krishan Kumar, 'Empire, Nation and National Identities', in *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Andrew Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 298–329 (303–304).

⁶⁵ Colley, 'Britishness', 313–317, 322–325.

⁶⁶ This can also be seen in other sources, e.g. in its absence in Irish trench journals. See: Graham Seal, *The Soldiers' Press. Trench Journals in the First World War* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 181.

⁶⁷ E.g. the Italian-speaking soldiers from Istria in Bari, 'La patria e il nemico per i soldati trentini nella I Guerra Mondiale', *Archivio trentino di storia contemporanea* 40/1 (1991), 67–90 (71–73, 75).

⁶⁸ George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 283–290.

⁶⁹ IWM, P262: Brennan, *Papers*, 1 (7/29/1915).

⁷⁰ This was even the reason for the only mutiny of Irish soldiers in the First World War. See: Timothy Bowman, *Irish Regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale* (Manchester/ New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 170–171.

⁷¹ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture; 1857–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 218.

⁷² Joanna Bourke, “Irish Tommies”: The Construction of a Martial Manhood 1914–1918’, *Bullán* 4/1 (1998), 13–30 (15–19); using the example of the Highlanders, see: Streets, *Martial Races*, 201–211.

⁷³ IWM, 96/29/1: McIlwain, *Diary. Part I*, 16 (9/14/1914).

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⁷⁵ Elena Tonezzer, ‘I trentini’, 483–485; Hans Heiss, ‘Andere Fronten. Volksstimmung und Volkserfahrung in Tirol während des Ersten Weltkrieges’, in *Tirol und der Erste Weltkrieg*, ed. by Eistener Klaus & Rolf Steininger (Innsbruck: Haymon, 1995), 139–177 (169–170); Laurence Cole, ‘Militärische Loyalität in der späten Habsburgermonarchie’, in *Treue. Politische Loyalität und militärische Gefolgschaft in der Moderne*, ed. by Nikolaus Buschmann & Karl Borromäus Murr (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 360–370.

⁷⁶ Tonezzer, ‘I trentini’, 471–485.

⁷⁷ Fioravante Gottardi, ‘Ricordi della Grande mondiale di Fioravante Gottardi 1914–1920’, in *Scritture di Guerra 3*, ed. by Quinto Antonelli (Trent: Museo storico, 1995), 132–219 (140, 9/12/1914).

⁷⁸ Emanuel Steinbacher, “The Hero of the Hour”. Regimentsloyalitäten irischer Soldaten im Ersten Weltkrieg’ <https://portal-militaergeschichte.de/steinbacher_regimentsloyalitaeten> [accessed 10/9/2023].

⁷⁹ Rauchensteiner, *The First World War*, 333.

⁸⁰ Christian Haager, Paul Hoffmann, Franz Huter e.a., *Die Tiroler Kaiserjäger. Die Geschichte der Tiroler Eliteregimenter: Gründung – Einsätze – Ausrüstung* (Cremona: Persico, 1996).

⁸¹ Hämmerle, ‘Armee’, 181–182.

⁸² However, this contact was very unlikely, since only about 1% of the soldiers and 0.7% of the officers were Italian-speaking. See: Lawrence Sondhaus, *In the service of the emperor. Italians in the Austrian armed forces, 1814–1918* (Boulder/ New York: East European Monographs, 1990), 104–105.

⁸³ Massimiliano Segà, 'Notazione della vitta del Segà Massimiliano 12 Agosto 1914', in *Soldati. Diari della grande guerra*, ed. by Gianluigi Fait, Diego Leoni, Fabrizio Rasera e.a. (Rovereto : La Grafica, 1986), 102–117 (106, 2/28/1917).

⁸⁴ Bolner, *Il mio diario*, 97 (3/24/1915), 114–115 (5/20–21/1915).

⁸⁵ Stephen Beller, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1815–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) chap. 5 and 6, esp., 170–171, 177–178.

⁸⁶ Eberhard Kolb, 'Elsaß-Lothringen/Trient-Trieste – umstrittene Grenzregionen 1870–1914. Einige Beobachtungen und Bemerkungen', in *Grenzregionen im Zeitalter der Nationalismen. Elsass-Lothringen/Trient-Trieste, 1870–1914*, ed. by Angelo Ara & Eberhard Kolb (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1998), 301–304 (302–303).

⁸⁷ Jana Osterkamp & Martin Schulze Wessel, 'Exploring Loyalty', in *Exploring Loyalty*, ed. by Jana Osterkamp & Martin Schulze Wessel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 1–16 (6–7).

⁸⁸ Sondhaus, *In the service*, 108.

⁸⁹ Rauchensteiner, *The First World War*, 333.

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⁹³ Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United. Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 154–160, 189–194; David Fitzpatrick, 'The Logic of Collective Sacrifice. Ireland and the British Army, 1914–1918', *Historical Journal* 38/4 (1995), 1017–1030 (1021–1029).

⁹⁴ Gottardi, *Ricordi*, 135 (8/14/1914).

⁹⁵ Giuseppe Passerini, [“E dopo tanta irrision/...”], in *Soldati*, 152–173 (158, 7/15/1916).

⁹⁶ Cole, ‘Militärische Loyalität’, 347–377 (360–374).

⁹⁷ Around 4,000 Italian-speaking POWs were recruited by Italy in Russia. See: Antonelli, ‘Kriegserfahrungen’, 407, 411–414; Roger Casement only recruited 56 out of 3,000 Irish POWs in Germany: Jahr, *Soldaten*, 292.

⁹⁸ Cf. endnote 40.

⁹⁹ Andrea di Michele, *Tra due divise. La Grande Guerra degli italiani d’Austria* (Bari: Laterza, 2018), 91–103.

¹⁰⁰ Fearghal McGarry, ‘Easter Rising (Great Britain and Ireland)’, <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/easter_rising_great_britain_and_ireland> [accessed: 10/9/2023].

¹⁰¹ IWM, P262: Brennan, *Papers*, 7 (3/1916).

¹⁰² Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge/ New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 54.

¹⁰³ Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, 19–41, 139–144.

¹⁰⁴ Jahr, ‘England’s difficulty’, 113–115.

¹⁰⁵ Streets, *Races*, 158–159, 168–172, quotes 158.

¹⁰⁶ Almost half of a sample of seventeen private papers, hold by the IWM, completely ignore the rebellion regardless of the military rank.

¹⁰⁷ For instance, Jeffery, *Ireland*, 54–55; Bowman, *Irish Regiments*, 160, 205–206.

¹⁰⁸ McGarry, ‘Easter Rising’, 168–169.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army. The Raising of the New Armies, 1914–16* (Manchester: Manchester University press, 1988), 224.

¹¹⁰ Murphy, *Irish Regiments* 18–19; Leonard, 'Reaction', 259; also true for Tyroleans: Bari, 'La patria e il nemico', 77, 91.

¹¹¹ Passerini, 'E dopo tanta irrision', 155 (9/1/1915).

¹¹² Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis', *Slavic Review* 69/1 (2010), 93–119.

¹¹³ Zahra, 'Noncommunities', 96–98, 101–102, 106, quote: 98; also Roger Brubaker, 'Ethnicity without Groups', *European Journal of Sociology* 43/2 (2002), 163–189.

¹¹⁴ Hew Strachan, 'Training, Morale and Modern War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 41/2 (2006), 211–227 (221).

¹¹⁵ E.g. Giovanazzi, *Memorie*, 108 (8/21/1915).

¹¹⁶ Sandford, *Unionist*, 185; Denman, *Unknown Soldiers*, 262.

¹¹⁷ Johnstone, *Orange*, 209–212.

¹¹⁸ Sergio Benvenuti, 'Il Trentino durante la guerra 1914–1918', in *Storia del Trentino. V: L'età contemporanea 1803–1918*, ed. by Maria Garbari & A. Leonardi, 5 vol. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), 193–223 (201).

¹¹⁹ For the Tyroleans see: Überegger, *Krieg*, 266, 268; for the Czechs: Rudolf Kučera, 'Entbehrung und Nationalismus. Die Erfahrung tschechischer Soldaten der österreich-ungarischen Armee 1914–1918', in *Jenseits des Schützengrabens. Der Erste Weltkrieg im Osten: Erfahrung – Wahrnehmung – Kontext*, ed. by B. Bachinger & W. Dornik (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2013), 121–137 (128–129).

¹²⁰ Überegger, *Krieg*, 99–100, 402.

¹²¹ John Deak & Jonathan Gumz, 'How to Break a State: The Habsburg Monarchy's Internal War, 1914–1918', *The American Historical Review* 122/4 (2017), 1105–1136 (1122–1125).

¹²² Tonezzer, 'I trentini', 486–489.

¹²³ E.g. Giovanazzi, *Memorie*, 100 (8/1/1915); Heiss, 'Fronten', 144–151; Brubaker, *National Reframed*, 5–6.

¹²⁴ Bolner, *Il mio diario*, 152 (4/4/1916); further Heiss, 'I soldati', 262. Nevertheless, due to recruitment problems, Italian-speakers sometimes made up 60% of the units, see Sondhaus, *In the service*, 108–109.

¹²⁵ Überegger, *Krieg*, 274–275; Antonelli, *I dimenticati*, 23.

¹²⁶ Bolner, *Il mio diario*, 170 (11/22/1916).

¹²⁷ Überegger, *Krieg*, 264, 273; Cole, 'The Construction', 37–38.

¹²⁸ Sega, *Notazione*, 106 (2/28/1917).

¹²⁹ Kučera, 'Entbehrung', 130–131, 136–137.

¹³⁰ Giovanni Lorenzetti, '1915 1916 1917 1918. Diario dal Campo Jäger Lorenzetti Giovanni', in *Scritture di Guerra 8*, ed. by Quinto Antonelli, Manuela Broz & Giorgia Pontalti (Trent: Museo storico, 1998), 68–148 (121 (10/25/1917)).

¹³¹ Antonelli, 'Kriegserfahrungen', 408.

¹³² Überegger, *Krieg*, 276.

¹³³ John Halimton Maxwell Staniforth, *At War with the 16th Irish Division 1914–1918. The Staniforth Letters*, ed. by Richard Grayson (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2012), 104 (5/1/1916).

¹³⁴ IWM, 96/29/1: McIlwain, *Diary*, vol. 2, 20 (11/3–4/1916).

¹³⁵ Denman, *Unknown Soldiers*, 180–181; Jahr, *Soldaten*, 291, 294–295.

¹³⁶ Bowman, *Irish Regiments*, 160, 198, 205–206.

¹³⁷ Perry, 'Nationality', 84; to a lesser degree this also occurred with Scottish and Welsh regiments, see: Jahr, 'Englands difficulty', 109.

¹³⁸ Bowman, *Irish Regiments*, 182–184.

¹³⁹ Bowman, 'Ireland', 613.

¹⁴⁰ Steinbacher, 'Hero'.

¹⁴¹ Denman, *Unknown Soldiers*, 150–151; e.g. Staniforth, *At War*, 134–135 (3/14/1917).

¹⁴² Sondhaus, *In the service*, 108.