THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IRISH COMMERCIAL BANKS AND THE IMPACT OF THE CURRENT CRISIS ON THEIR ARCHIVES

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Southern Ireland (also known as the Irish Free State) gained its monetary independence from Britain through the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Within Southern Ireland, the legacy of British administration was reflected in a banking system dominated by joint stock banks rather than the investment banking model of much of continental Europe.[2]

The Irish commercial banking sector in 1922 encompassed the Bank of Ireland (established 1783), Northern Bank (1824), Provincial Bank (1825), Hibernian Bank (1825), National Bank (1835), Ulster Bank (1836), Royal Bank (1836), and the Munster and Leinster Bank (1885). All of these institutions, with the exception of the Dublin centred Royal Bank, operated on an all-Ireland basis in 1922. The Belfast Bank (1827) also operated on an all-Ireland basis up to 1923 when, as a result of the uncertainty caused by partition, it sold its Southern Ireland banking operations to the Royal Bank.

The City of London, at least through emerging Irish eyes, remained the empire upon which to model the nascent monetary structures of the Irish Free State in the 1920s. It is a legacy which continues to influence the structure of the Irish commercial banking sector today notwithstanding Ireland's 40 year membership of the European Union (EU) and its adoption of the Euro currency in 2002.

This article considers the experience of the Irish banks in an independent Southern Ireland and highlights the inherently Protestant, pro-union nature of these institutions in the decades following the attainment of Irish independence. It also identifies a high level of operational and institutional continuity in the Irish banking system, a degree of continuity which persisted until the outbreak of the current economic crisis in 2008. Finally, this article also assesses the impacts of the current crisis on the archival sources of three important Irish financial institutions: Bank of Ireland; Allied Irish Banks; and Ulster Bank.

Characteristics of the Irish commercial banks

The attainment of Southern Irish monetary independence (and a large degree of political autonomy) did not impact significantly on the operations of the Irish commercial banks. This, in itself, was a remarkable achievement given the real dislocation caused by the Irish War of Independence (1919-21) and subsequent Civil War (1922-3).

The Irish commercial banks were firmly embedded in British financial structures by 1922 and held the vast majority of their investments in sterling assets. This latter characteristic, underpinned by the relative dearth of large scale industrial opportunities in Ireland (particularly in Southern Ireland), resulted in a clear dependence upon the City of London as both a depositor and investment location for Irish bank deposits.

In 1926 the eight Irish commercial banks held 96.7 per cent of their investments outside of the Irish Free State (all in London) with further significant balances held on call and in cash with British financial institutions.[3] Similarly, Irish public administrative bodies inherited the principle of Treasury primacy over public expenditure decisions. A concept willingly retained by the fledgling Irish Free State financial administration.[4]

Total Irish bank deposits rose from £54.9 million in 1910 to £194.4 million in December 1921 underpinned by wartime British demand for Irish agricultural exports.[5] Notwithstanding unsettled political conditions Irish bank deposits still increased on a year by year basis between 1919 and 1921.[6] June 1922 proved the high water mark with bank deposits reaching £196.4 million. By the end of December 1923 they had fallen by 9.3 per cent to £178.2 million.[7] Thus the attainment of significant economic and political independence by the Irish Free State in 1922 coincided with the high point of Irish banking expansion.

All the Irish banks displayed the characteristics of savings banks in terms of a conservative preference for liquid investments.[8] The Irish preference was for deposit/savings accounts, as opposed to current accounts, requiring easily realisable and secure banking assets.[9] 82 per cent of commercial banking resources were held in deposits/savings accounts in Ireland in the 1930s compared to 47 per cent in England and Wales.[10] This reflects the traditional emphasis placed by the agricultural community on savings rather than longer term investments. For example, in December 1939 only 20.5 per cent of total deposits in Ulster Bank's southern branches were held in current accounts.[11]

The actual role of the Irish commercial banks as *quasi* savings banks is consistent with how the banks viewed themselves during this period. ‘We receive deposits, and look to it as our first duty to safeguard them’ as in Ireland ‘more probably than in any other country, our deposits are the reserves and savings of the people’.[12]

The migration of Irish capital into other investments, primarily in Britain, and the degree of causality associated with the lack of investment in Southern Ireland was a key point of discussion in the Irish press during this period. Sources reference an estimate for Irish foreign investment of £250 million in the early 1920s with £100 million of this accrued in the 1914-21 period.[13] Some historians have taken the view that such capital movements represented a ‘wasteful use of capital by savers, investors, businessmen’.[14] However, later research has shown that such capital movements were at least partially attributable to the lack of investment opportunities in Ireland and the potential of higher returns abroad.[15]

North and South

The partitioning of Ireland into Southern and Northern Ireland in 1922 also posed particular difficulties for the commercial banks whose operations were established on both sides of the new border. While Northern Ireland remained firmly committed to the British crown, in Southern Ireland a concerted policy was undertaken that succeeded in developing the Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion within the wider British Empire.

The positioning of the commercial banks was further complicated by the fact that only four (Bank of Ireland, Munster and Leinster, Royal and Hibernian) of the Irish banks were actually headquartered in the Irish Free State. The National and Provincial banks were based in London (with majority British shareholders) while the Ulster, Belfast and Northern banks were based in Belfast. Northern Ireland in the 1920s remained the only highly industrialised part of the island of Ireland. The existing historiography supports the view that it was not attitudes towards industry which differentiated Ulster from non-Ulster banks, but rather the relative lack of industrial investment opportunities in the Irish Free State compared to the Ulster region.

The commercial banks based in Belfast also faced a campaign of economic and religious bias aimed at Ulster businesses undertaken during the 1920-2 period. Although framed as a protest against sectarian disturbances in Ulster the Belfast Boycott aimed, somewhat mistakenly, to illustrate the importance of the south to the northern economy.[16] In addition to the boycott, the Irish commercial banks were confronted with the imposition of direct taxes on bank customers by the anti-Treaty Irish Republic Army (IRA) in 1922-3. However, even after the end of the civil war in May 1923 anti-Treaty forces continued to enforce 'fines' on individuals who had continued to do business with the Belfast banks during the boycott period.[17]

Commercial banking in Southern Ireland remained a solidly Protestant industry in an overwhelmingly Catholic state. Protestants accounted for at least 53 per cent of all bank officials in the Irish Free State in 1926 (but only 7.4 per cent of the total population).[18] The ethos of the vast majority of the Irish commercial banks was firmly based on the Protestant, unionist principles which underpinned their operations from well before the attainment of Irish independence in 1922.

The strongly Protestant nature of the commercial banks complemented the strong Protestant representation in the Irish Free State industrial establishment. The Protestant firms of Guinness's, Jameson's and Jacob's ranked among the largest industrial enterprises in the state.[19] However, while the banking and commercial establishment may have provided a network for the employment of Southern Irish Protestants, it did not provide for a clear bias in favour of bank lending to Protestant firms or individuals.

Within this context, the stability of the Irish banking sector during the 1920s and 1930s reflected their conservative lending operations, large and expanding sterling assets and the rapid accumulation of customer deposits in the decade to the early 1920s. The accumulation of deposits was so large, and lending so conservative, that the challenging economic environment of the 1930s and 1940s did not have an appreciable impact on the overall financial soundness of the Irish commercial banking sector.

The conservative nature of the Irish banks was also reflected in the fact that they did not play a leading role in financing the real industrial expansion evident in the Irish Free State in the 1930s. The banks' reluctance to finance larger scale (and riskier) industrial projects forced the Irish government to establish the Industrial Credit Corporation (ICC) in the early 1930s. Devoid of the large scale industrial lending evident in Northern Ireland, it was advances to Southern Ireland's farmers that dominated the banks rising bad and doubtful debt provisions in the period to the mid-1940s.

How did the Irish banks maintain overall net profit levels in this environment? A key factor was the increasing importance of investment income as a profit generator. Surplus cash was more readily available due to the restriction of advances from 1932 on, particularly in Northern Ireland. Overall profit maintenance was further enhanced by the dramatic expansion of the banks published and unpublished reserves in the decade to 1932.

In this context, the low interest rate environment facilitated by the Bank of England from 1931 onwards impacted just as much on bank profitability as did declining branch profits in Southern and Northern Ireland. Ulster Bank may have had reserves 'quite out of proportion to our probable requirements' in late 1932, but that did not mean it could invest this surplus cash profitably elsewhere.[20] This was a difficulty faced by all the Irish commercial banks in the 1930s.

Structure in an independent Ireland 1922-32

The day to day operations of the Irish commercial banks post-1922 were largely controlled by the Irish Banks Standing Committee (IBSC) which was formed in 1920 on an all-Ireland basis. The IBSC contained representatives of all banking institutions and acted as a de facto cartel in setting interest rates, bank charges and loan security requirements.[21] The partitioning of Ireland in 1922 did not impact significantly on the operations of the IBSC as the Irish Free State continued to operate a currency system based on parity with sterling (which remained the currency of Northern Ireland).

The introduction of distinctive Irish currency notes in 1927 and the establishment of the Irish Currency Commission in the same year thus had no impact on existing banking operations. The new Free State authorities reassured the British cabinet, as early as November 1922, that currency issues were not 'a point of urgency, there being no steps immediately in contemplation for currency innovation in the Free State'.[22]

The IBSC formalised and widened the informal agreements between the main Belfast-based banks (Ulster, Northern, Belfast) introduced from the 1860s onwards.[23] These agreements can be traced back to arrangements which commenced as early as 1839.[24] Although the Provincial Bank joined the Belfast Banks agreements in 1888 attempts to organise a broader all-Ireland cartel failed in the period up to 1920.[25]

The IBSC was dominated by the Bank of Ireland which remained, up to the 1980s, Ireland's largest and most important financial institution. Meetings of the IBSC were chaired by the Governor of the Bank of Ireland and its quarterly meetings were held in its College Green headquarters. Bank of Ireland was the oldest of the Irish commercial banks and boasted significant operations on both sides of the border post-1922.

Bank of Ireland may have trailed the London-based National Bank in terms of both deposits (£30.8 million against £36.1 million) and branches (158 versus 273) by 1938 but it remained the Irish largest financial institution in terms of investments (£16.8 million against £13.0 million).[26] The importance of College Green in the banking system was partially attributable to its historic development as the official bank to the British administration in Ireland pre-1922.

Notwithstanding the underlying nationalist agenda of Southern Ireland's leaders in the period 1922-43, the leading position of the Bank of Ireland in the Irish economy was not seriously challenged. One of the first actions of the Irish Provisional Government in January 1922 was to appoint the Bank of Ireland as their financial agents.[27] However, such an appointment did not render the solidly pro-union Bank of Ireland more sympathetic to the newly established Irish administration. It was only after the Irish bankers had tried, and failed, to persuade the Bank of England to provide financial guarantees to the government in Dublin that the Irish banks reluctantly agreed to provide financing to the new Irish state.[28]

The existing historiography highlights that Threadneedle Street (Bank of England) regarded the Bank of Ireland as a 'kind of satellite central bank' in the 1920s and 1930s.[29] The Bank of England correspondence from 1923 indicates that Threadneedle Street viewed the Bank of Ireland as the *de facto* Central Bank of the Irish Free State in the period immediately following independence.

The Transactions of the Court of Directors (TCOD) of Bank of Ireland provide clear evidence of the Bank of England's view of College Green as the central banking institution of the Irish Free State. In April 1924, the Bank of Ireland agreed to participate in a consortium of banks providing Germany with £5 million credit on the basis that 'the Bank of England want the Bank of Ireland as a Central Bank to accept participation in the loan'.[30]

However, notwithstanding the difficult political relations between the

Irish Free State and Britain in the 1922-43 period it was not until the outbreak of war in 1939 that Southern Ireland sought to further increase Irish monetary and banking independence. The Irish Banking Commission of 1926 (under the chairmanship of the American economist Professor Henry Parker-Willis) recognised that the Irish Free State 'is now, and will undoubtedly long continue to be, an integral part of the economic system at the head of which stands Great Britain'.[31] Within this narrative, an Irish currency at par with sterling was complemented by the implicit assumption that an Irish central bank was not required given the scale of Irish banking reserves in the City of London.

Banking in De Valera's Ireland 1932-44

Prior to assuming power in 1932, the nationalist Fianna Fáil (Soliders of Destiny) party sought to link the Irish commercial banks, the Bank of England and the Irish Department of Finance as impediments to the further development of the Irish economy. In 1931, Seán MacEntee (Irish Minister for Finance 1932-9) bemoaned the role of the Irish banks in 'crushing Irish industry'.[32] Similarly, he viewed senior finance civil servants as 'unalterably and fanatically attached to the English interest'.[33] As late as November 1931, Eamon de Valera (Irish Prime Minister 1932-48, 1951-4, 1957-9) viewed the link with sterling as a key obstacle to operating an independent monetary policy.[34]

Politically, the election of Fianna Fáil to power in early 1932 was not welcomed by the Irish commercial banks. As early as 1927 Ulster Bank informed Westminster Bank that de Valera was 'impossible as a politician'.[35] However, notwithstanding their pre-election rhetoric, the Irish commercial banks overestimated the courage and ability of Fianna Fáil to undertake dramatic monetary change.

Fianna Fáil's primary concern focused more on providing relief to distressed farming accounts in light of the impact of the Great Depression on Southern Ireland's predominantly agrarian economy. De Valera viewing that in light of agriculture's problems 'the banks should not expect to get their full pound of flesh'.[36]

Although Fianna Fáil embarked on a politically motivated economic conflict with Britain in the 1930s (the Anglo-Irish trade dispute 1932-8) the position of the Irish commercial banks in the Irish economy remained unchanged. As previously noted, the Irish government was forced to establish the ICC in order to drive industrial development owing to the banks' reluctance to countenance longer-term investments in unproven enterprises.

The Commission of Inquiry into Banking, Currency and Credit 1934-8 was established by Fianna Fáil but did little to alter the conservative structure of the Irish banking system. Although its final report (published in 1938) did recommend the creation of an Irish central bank no change was envisaged in general currency or banking policy. The final report also provided clear criticisms of Fianna Fáil's approach of financing increased social expenditure through higher taxation and deficit financing.

Even the final report of the Banking Commission in 1938 did not spur the Irish government into establishing more autonomous state banking structures. In August 1939, just days before the outbreak of war, the Bank of Ireland approached Threadneedle Street regarding the provision of financial support should an emergency arise. The Bank of England's response, that the Bank of Ireland should start to look to Irish state institutions for assistance, marked the formal end of the 'long and intimate relations' enjoyed between the Irish commercial banks and the Bank of England.[37] The Central Bank of Ireland was subsequently established and eventually came into operation in 1943.

Post-1943: consolidation and collapse

The establishment of the Central Bank of Ireland in 1943 marked another step in the development of state monetary institutions in Southern Ireland. However, it did not signify a fundamental restructuring of the Irish banking system nor a large scale re-orientation away from the City of London. Similarly, Southern Ireland's decision to leave the British Commonwealth in 1949 (and declare a Republic) did not alter the key characteristics of the Irish commercial banking sector.

Post-1949, Irish interest rates continued to be determined by reference to the Bank of England rate (apart from a disastrous experiment in the mid-1950s), the Irish pound remained at par with sterling and the Irish commercial banks remained embedded in the London markets. The balances of the Irish commercial banks outside of Ireland totalled over £326 million in 1966 with the vast majority still held in the City of London.[38]

Institutionally, the Bank of Ireland was a key figure in driving the rationalisation of the commercial banking system in the 1950s and 1960s. Its purchase of the smaller Hibernian Bank in 1959 and its key rival, the National Bank, in 1966 gave College Green a dominant position in the Irish market, both north and south.[39] Several other commercial banks responded to this challenge and by the early 1970s the Munster and Leinster, Royal and Provincial Banks had amalgamated under the banner of the Allied Irish Bank (AIB). This effective duopoly, complemented by the continuing operations of the smaller Ulster and Northern Banks, remained a key feature of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy in the decade to 2008.

The collapse of the Celtic Tiger economy during the 2008-10 period is a story of four crises. It commenced with a property market crisis, triggered banking and fiscal crises and ultimately resulted in a full-scale financial crisis.[40] The decision of the Irish government in September 2008 to guarantee the liabilities of the Irish banks, Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Bank included, has resulted in significant government ownership of Irish banking institutions.[41] In addition it forced the Irish state to seek external funding support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank (ECB).

The Anglo-Irish parity currency link may have been severed by Ireland's decision to join the European Monetary System without Britain in 1979, but as the events of 2008-10 have illustrated the level of banking co-dependence between Ireland and Britain remains significant. This is a level of co-dependency which has persisted notwithstanding Ireland's adoption of the Euro currency in 2002 and 40 years of EU membership.

In October 2010 Britain granted Ireland a £7 billion bilateral loan in order to ensure the stability of the Irish economy.[42] This was funding provided in spite of on-going fiscal retrenchment by the British government. In defending the loan to the House of Commons, the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne was explicit in acknowledging that:

> We export more to Ireland than to Brazil, Russia, India and China put together…our two banking sectors are also interconnected…two of the four largest high street banks operating in Northern Ireland are Irish-owned, accounting for almost a quarter of personal accounts. The Irish banks have an importance presence in the UK. What's more two Irish banks are actual issuers of sterling notes in Northern Ireland. So it is clearly in Britain's interest that we have a growing Irish economy and a stable Irish banking system.[43]

British ownership of Irish financial institutions has resulted in a significant and direct cost to the British taxpayer. Ulster Bank, owned by the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) which itself was partly nationalised by the British government in 2008, was an important player in commercial and residential property lending in Ireland (both north and south) in the decade to 2008.[44] Up to early 2013 the British government (via its 81 per cent shareholding in RBS) provided direct capital support totaling over £15 billion to Ulster Bank.[45]

Notwithstanding the prosperity of the Irish economy from the mid-1990s to 2008 no non-British financial institution attempted to establish a full-service commercial banking operation in Ireland. Only the Bank of Scotland, part of the Lloyd's Banking Group since 2009, commenced a traditional high street banking operation in Ireland during this period. Trading in Ireland as 'Halifax', with 44 branches nationwide, the operation was closed down in early 2010 due to mounting financial losses.[46] Institutionally, the major commercial banks operating in Ireland in 2013 can still trace their roots to the emergence of the joint-stock banking model in pre-independence Ireland. This is a remarkable level of institutional continuity having regard to the economic crises impacting Ireland in the period since 2008.

Ireland has been successful in using membership of the EU to diversify its economy away from economic dependence on Britain. However, in a banking context the historical co-dependence of the Irish and British commercial banking systems remains intact. Bank of Ireland, Allied Irish Bank and Ulster Bank continue to operate as all-Ireland financial institutions. As referenced by George Osborne, the Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Bank continue to issue sterling notes in Northern Ireland. Britain also represented, by far, the most popular non-Irish location for property investment associated with the Celtic Tiger economy.[47]

Banking, as a British Parliamentary Commission recently concluded, was traditionally regarded as 'a great British strength'.[48] In the context of the events since 2008, it is a strength which has been noticeably eroded by its historic relationship with the Irish commercial banking system.

Impact on archival sources

The economic crises evident in Ireland since 2008 have had a negative impact upon the availability of archival sources in the Irish commercial banking sector. The Bank of Ireland Archive is no longer open to external researchers and has ceased to exist in its traditional form. The Archive is now held away from its traditional College Green base in an off-site storage location. Unlike AIB, Bank of Ireland is not majority owned by the Irish state and its current management are focussed on reducing costs in order to return the bank to profitability. As a result of this strategy the Archive is not currently catering for visitors and it is not anticipated that it will re-open in the medium term.

As noted, Bank of Ireland was the largest and most important financial institution in Ireland for much of the twentieth century. Its Archive represents the most important archival source for business and economic historians examining Irish economic history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its collections, including papers relating to the Hibernian Bank, provide a detailed account of the development of the Irish economy, both north and south, since its establishment in 1783.

The Bank of Ireland Archive has underpinned academic research in Irish economic history and played a valuable role in informing important works such as Ronan Fanning, 'The impact of independence' (1983). This was instrumental in highlighting the role of the British Treasury in encouraging the Bank of Ireland to support the newly independent Irish government in 1922-3.[49]

Similarly, Cormac O'Gráda, *Ireland: a new economic history 1780-1939* (1994) utilised the Bank of Ireland Archive extensively to identify the absence of change as the predominant characteristic of both Irish monetary policy and the Irish banking sector following the attainment of independence in 1922. O'Gráda's analysis highlighted the embedded nature of the Irish banks in the City of London and the '*cordial, informal relations*' enjoyed between the Bank of Ireland and the Bank of England, a relationship which, has noted, was maintained until the outbreak of war in 1939.[50]

Within the wider banking sector, the AIB and RBS Archives provide important information on the evolution of Irish monetary and banking structures during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The former Archive includes partial collections of the Munster and Leinster Bank, Provincial Bank and Royal Bank archives. The importance of these collections has been magnified in light of the current unavailability of the Bank of Ireland Archive.

Although AIB is under significant commercial pressure to return to profitability its Archive remains accessible to academic researchers, although it no longer employs specialist archivists to maintain and protect its holdings. Examples of important collections held in this archive for the 1922-43 period include, but are not limited to, Munster and Leinster Bank

Secretary's Office letter books, minutes of IBSC meetings (1920-30), Reports of the Provincial Bank Directors (from 1927), Provincial Bank Annual Reports (from 1927) and various letter books from the Royal Bank.

The RBS Archive currently holds a comprehensive collection of Ulster Bank papers owing to Ulster Bank's positioning in the RBS group. As a result, the Ulster Bank records benefit from the facilities and professional archival resources of the RBS Archive in Edinburgh. The Ulster Bank collection represents, apart from the unavailable Bank of Ireland records, the most comprehensive record of any commercial bank in Ireland.

These records cover the period from the establishment of Ulster Bank in the 1830s up to the late twentieth century. They also chart its development across both Northern and Southern Ireland, provide invaluable information on its operations in an independent Irish Free State post-1922 and chart the development of its banking businesses in a post-1945 environment.

The Ulster Bank papers include corporate records (Directors and Secretary's letter books, shareholder circulars, correspondence with its owners from 1917, Westminster Bank), financial records (Annual Reports) in addition to a variety of staff records, head office documentation and property information. The RBS Archive also holds an important, but more fragmented, collection of National Bank records dating from its establishment in the early nineteenth century up to its acquisition by the Bank of Ireland in the 1960s.

The impact of the current economic downturn in Ireland on banking archives is not limited to the Irish commercial banks. The archive of the Irish Currency Commission (1927-43) and the Central Bank of Ireland (1943 onwards), both held in the headquarters of the Central Bank of Ireland in Dublin, are also unavailable owing to the current retrenchment in the Irish public service.

The unavailability of these collections, allied to the closure of the Bank of Ireland Archive, has seriously hindered the ability of historians to provide robust analysis of the historic development of Ireland's banking infrastructure. This represents a highly unsatisfactory position having regard to Ireland's recent economic history and the centrality of the Irish commercial banks in bringing about the turbulent end of the Celtic Tiger economy in 2008.

Conclusion

This article has provided a broad summary of the development of the Irish commercial banks in an independent Southern Ireland post-1922. It highlights that the establishment of the Irish Free State, the election of Fianna Fáil to power in 1932, the outbreak of war in 1939 and even Southern Ireland leaving the British Commonwealth in 1949 had limited impacts on the embedded nature of the Irish commercial banks in the London markets.

This high level of banking dependency upon Britain pre-dated the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 and reflected overwhelming Irish trade dependence upon Britain. This was a level of trade dependence which only began to moderate following Ireland's accession to the then European Economic Community (now the EU) in 1973.

The level of continuity in Anglo-Irish banking affairs post-1922 was remarkable in light of the significant political difficulties which characterised wider Anglo-Irish relations for much of the twentieth century. The legacy of the co-dependent nature of Anglo-Irish banking affairs is still reflected in an Irish banking system heavily influenced by the City of London. It is also characterised by a long-standing institutional continuity in which the vast majority of the Irish joint-stock banks founded in the early nineteenth century (or their direct successors) continue to operate in Ireland today.

This article also highlighted that the economic crises impacting upon Ireland since 2008 have had a direct and negative impact upon the availability of important banking archives. This is a highly unsatisfactory position in light of the centrality of the Irish commercial banks in the near collapse of the Irish economy in 2008.

Notes

1 Irish Research Council Postgraduate Scholar. This paper was facilitated by the award of the Business Archives Council Bursary for Business History Research 2012.

2 Identified clearly by J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and society*, (Cambridge, 1989), p.89.

3 Response to Irish Banking Commission 1926, File Ms 26, 236, Joseph Brennan Papers, National Library of Ireland (henceforth NLI).

4 R. Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance 1922-1958,* (Dublin, 1978), pp.45-8, 101-5.

5 'Irish Banking Returns', *Irish Trade Journal*, 5 (1930), p.87.

6 K. O'Rourke, 'Monetary Data and Proxy GDP Estimates: Ireland 1840-1921', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 102 (1988), 27-8.

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8 J. Meenan, *The Irish economy since 1922* (Liverpool, 1970), p.353.

[9] T.A. Smiddy, 'Some reflections on commercial banking with special reference to the balance sheets of banks operating in an Saorstat', *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, 25:6 (1935), 53-5.

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[11] Ulster Bank Monthly Return to the Irish Currency Commission, December 1939, File Ms 358, Joseph Brennan Papers, NLI.

[12] Memorandum entitled "Commercial Banking", prepared by M.J. Cooke for the *Commission of Inquiry into Banking, Currency and Credit,* 14 Jan. 1935, G 40, Per Jacobsson Papers, University of Basel (henceforth UB).

[13] L.M. Cullen, *Economic history of Ireland since 1660*, (London, 1972), p.169.

[14] J.J. Lee, 'Capital in the Irish economy' in L.M. Cullen (ed.), *The formation of the Irish economy*, (Cork, 1969), p.62.

[15] C. O'Gráda, *Ireland: a new economic history 1780-1939*, (Oxford, 1994), pp.350-1.

[16] D.S. Johnson, 'The Belfast Boycott, 1920-1922' in J.M. Goldstrom and L.A. Clarkson (eds.), *Irish population, economy and society, Essays in honour of the late K.H. Connell,* (Oxford, 1981), p.287.

[17] See for example letter from Bernard Fagan (Ulster Bank customer) to the Department of Finance, 5 October 1923, Fin 1/3471, National Archive of Ireland (henceforth NAI).

[18] K. Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic State: Ireland's privileged minority,* (Kingston, 1983), p.88. A. Bielenberg, 'Exodus: the emigration of Southern Irish Protestants during the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War', *Past and Present*, 218 (2013), 199-233 provides a detailed discussion of the decline in the Protestant population in Southern Ireland in the 1919-26 period.

[19] Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic State,* p.91.

[20] Internal Ulster Bank Correspondence, 6 December 1932, ULS/452/5, Royal Bank of Scotland (henceforth RBS).

[21] O'Gráda, *New economic history*, pp. 366-8.

[22] Draft Conclusions of British Cabinet Committee on Irish Affairs, Technical Department Sub-Committee Meeting with Ministers of the Provisional Government of Ireland, 9 November 1922, Ms 26, 198, Joseph Brennan Papers, NLI.

[23] L. Gallagher, *The Ulster Banks story*, (Belfast, 1998), pp.78-80, 107-8.

[24] Ollerenshaw, 'The Business and politics of banking in Ireland', p.53.

[25] P. Ollerenshaw, *Banking in nineteenth century Ireland: The Belfast Banks 1825-1914*, (Manchester, 1987), pp.154-5.

[26] Journal of the Institute of Bankers, 47:12 (1939), 134.

[27] R. Fanning, 'The impact of independence' in F.S.L. Lyons (ed.), *Bicentenary essays: Bank of Ireland 1783-1983*, (Dublin, 1983), p.65.

[28] Fanning, 'Impact of independence, pp.77-8.

[29] O'Gráda, *New economic history,* p.373.

[30] Transactions of the Court of Directors (TCOD), No. 47, 17 April 1924, Bank of Ireland (henceforth BOI).

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34 Irish Parliament debates, 6 November 1931, 40:125.

35 Letter from Stanley Ferguson (Director, Ulster Bank) to John Rae (Chief General Manager, Westminster Bank), 26 October 1927, ULS/452/3, RBS.

36 Memorandum of meeting between Eamon de Valera, Lingard Goulding (Bank of Ireland) and J.J. McElligott (then Secretary of the Department of Finance), 31 March 1933, ULS/361, RBS.

37 O'Gráda, *New economic history*, pp.374-5.

38 D. O'Mahony, *The Irish economy*, (Cork, 1967), p.80.

39 A. Bielenberg and R. Ryan, *An economic history of Ireland since independence*, (Abingdon, 2013), p.148.

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41 The Irish government currently owns approximately 99.8% of Allied Irish Bank and 15% of Bank of Ireland.

42 The only other country to provide Ireland with a bilateral loan was Sweden.

43 United Kingdom Government, 'Statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon George Osborne MP on financial assistance for Ireland, 22 Nov. 2010', (www.gov.uk/government/speeches/statement-by-the-chancellor-of-the-exchequer-rt-hon-george-osborne-mp-statement-on-financial-assistance-for-ireland),(28 June 2013).

44 *Royal Bank of Scotland Annual Report and Accounts 2012*, (Edinburgh, 2013), pp.64-6 notes outstanding Ulster Bank residential and property loans totalling £34.5 billion as at December 2012.

45 D. White, 'Osborne needs Ulster Bank for RBS Sale', *Irish Independent*, 9 June 2013.

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47 *National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) Annual Report and Financial Statements 2012*, (Dublin, 2013), p.21 notes that, at December 2012, 33% of NAMA's property portfolio was located in either London (21%) or the rest of Great Britain excluding Northern Ireland (12%).

48 British Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards, 'Fifth Report: Changing Banking for Good', 12 June 2013, Conclusions, (http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201314/jtselect/Jtpcbs/27/2704.htm), (29 June 2013).

49 Fanning, 'The impact of independence', in F.S.L. Lyons (ed.), *Bicentenary essays: Bank of Ireland 1783-1983*, (Dublin, 1983), p.68, 73-4.

50 O'Gráda, *New economic history*, pp. 373-5.

Select further reading

Bielenberg, A. and R. Ryan, *An economic history of Ireland since independence*, (Abingdon, 2013).

Donovan, D. and A.E. Murphy, *The fall of the Celtic Tiger: Ireland and the Euro debt crisis*, (Oxford, 2013).

Fanning, R., 'The impact of independence' in F.S.L. Lyons (ed.), *Bicentenary essays: Bank of Ireland 1783-1983*, (Dublin, 1983), pp.53-96.

Gallagher, L., *The Ulster Bank story*, (Belfast, 1998).
O'Gráda, C., *Ireland: a new economic history 1780-1939*, (Oxford, 1994).
Ollerenshaw, P., 'The business and politics of banking in Ireland' in P.L. Cottrell, A. Teichova and T. Yuzawa (eds.), *Finance in the age of the corporate economy*, (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 2-78.

The magnitude of the response must match the scale of the crisis -- large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive, with country and international responses being guided by the World Health Organization. And it must be multilateral, with countries showing solidarity to the most vulnerable communities and nations. The message of the report we are issuing today is clear: shared responsibility and global solidarity in response to the impacts of COVID-19. It is a call to action. We must see countries not only united to beat the virus but also to tackle its profound consequences. McKinsey research has documented the disproportionate effects of the crisis on ethnic minorities, both in the United States and elsewhere. Our latest report on the topic looks at the United Kingdom. Key findings: over the past two decades, every ethnic minority group has made progress, in both absolute terms and relative to the white majority, on a range of economic indicators (exhibit). But the COVID-19 crisis threatens that progress; not only do all ethnic-minority groups have higher age-adjusted COVID-19-related death rates than white people do, but Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, in particula