The nineteenth-century struggle to preserve Irish culture in the context of cultural security

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Abstract— **This review article focuses on the issue of internal security and cultural identity, using Ireland as an example. National and cultural identity contribute to social cohesion and can also influence social stability. The analysis of the struggle to protect Irish identity during turbulent times illustrates the important role of collective identity in maintaining cohesion within society and thus ensuring internal security. The idea of cultural security is central to the preservation of culture. The theme is analyzed in terms of various initiatives in nineteenth-century Ireland aimed at preserving tradition, culture and Irishness.**

Keywords— internal security, cultural identity, Irish identity, cultural security, Irish history

I. INTRODUCTION

The discussion of cultural identity and nationality has become a central topic in many public debates around the world, especially in the last few decades. This is due to two related processes. On the one hand, the phenomenon of globalisation has led to an increase in the interconnectedness of societies in economic, cultural and political terms, which has exposed societies to a variety of influences that are potentially threatening to their social and cultural coherence. At the same time, a second parallel process is taking place, seemingly in response to globalisation, which involves the revival of the roots of national cultures. This process involves the preservation of national myths, the defence of local and national identity, collective memory and historical politics (Biernat, 2014, p. 4)

It is of paramount importance to explore issues of continuity and change, tradition and modernity within national identities in a nuanced way. The deliberate act of returning to the past or perpetuating national symbols is interpreted through the prism of Irish identity and the preservation of Irish culture in the nineteenth century. This sheds light on the dynamics of initiatives taken to preserve and nurture a culture at risk of Anglicisation. Such an examination is crucial to understanding the nuanced interplay between global forces and the preservation of cultural identity more broadly. It highlights the relevance of these considerations within the framework of the idea of cultural security. Bélanger (1999, p. 679) identifies this problem stating that cultural interpenetration, such as the dominant influence of one culture over another, presents both tangible and perceived challenges. These challenges can affect the identity of societies, influencing their sense of belonging and self-perception.

The intersection of cultural dynamics and cultural identity with internal security, or societal security, is crucial. It is also important in terms of cultural security. It is vital to maintain a balanced approach to these issues. As nations face the challenges of globalization and the resurgence of local identities, the implications of internal security become apparent. The tensions between global interdependencies and the preservation of local identities can manifest in security threats. Attempts to defend cultural and national identity are often linked to internal security issues. The concept of societal security refers to a community's ability to maintain its identity over time, as summarised by Theiler (2009, p. 106). Maintaining community unity and protecting cultural values can be seen as important elements of national stability and cultural security. National and cultural identity can contribute to strengthening the cohesion of society, which can affect political and social stability. When considering Irish identity, it is important to acknowledge the significant role that history has played. The struggle for independence has shaped the history of

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Ireland and as a result, Irish national identity remains strong and enduring. It is important to mention that this identity is not being weakened in the current era of globalization (Biernat, 2014, p. 90).

It is important to note the unique situation in which Ireland found itself throughout its history. The unearthing of human remains in County Wexford in 1928 indicates that the earliest inhabitants of Ireland may have resided there as far back as 9,000 BC. Climate warming over 9,000 years ago caused the island to separate from Britain (Ranelagh, 2012, p. 1). However, this connection with Britain, due to its proximity to its imperial neighbor, was to become one of the significant factors in Ireland's future history. The Norman invasion and the lordship of Henry II in the 12th century were significant events in England's claims to Ireland. Although the Normans did not impose obedience on Ireland, they did exert significant influence over the country in terms of law and military traditions. (Ranelagh, 2012, pp. 37-47). Since the Norman invasion of the 12th century, arguments for invasion have been based on the assumption that the Irish are inferior and alien. What is worth noting is that the descendants of the early Norman settlers started to associate themselves with Ireland rather than England. This situation continued until the Statutes of Kilkenny (1366), which prohibited mixed marriages, the use of the Irish language by settlers. In the 17th century, the English decided to subjugate Ireland through settlements similar to those carried out concurrently in Virginia. Decades later, the natives slaughtered the colonists, leading to the Cromwell invasion as a response (Hickman, 1995, pp. 22-25).

The Act of Union in 1800 marked the final incorporation of Ireland into the British kingdom. It is worth noting that during this period, one of the most significant events in Irish history occurred: the Great Famine. This famine lasted from 1845 to 1852 and resulted in the deaths of over one million people, with two million more emigrating. The disaster affected three million people who relied on potatoes, comprising the poorest segment of Irish society at the time (Whelan, 2005, p.137). The famine had a dual impact. Firstly, it led to mass emigration. Secondly, it caused a significant decline in the number of Irish speakers, which had fallen to 25% of the population according to the 1851 census (Tuathaigh, 2005, p. 43).

II. IRISH IDENTITY DYNAMICS

This part briefly describes the phenomenon of Irish identity by highlighting some of its crucial elements and the role of different initiatives aimed at the preservation of Irish culture, especially in the face of its history and British influences. This analysis will consider language, sport, and religion as important parts of Irishness. The expressions of identity analysed in this text are dynamic rather than static systems that influence the formation of Irish identity. These elements are interrelated, forming a complex network of identity exponents. We will also briefly examine the Celtic Tiger and its influence on cultural identity. The ongoing replication and reinterpretation of the symbols, values, myths, memories, and traditions that constitute

a nation's unique heritage is carried out by individuals within the national community. This process also involves the identification of individual community members with such cultural elements (Smith, 2010, p.20). National identity is the continuous reproduction and processing of the 'legacy of the nation'. This includes cultural elements such as national mythology, traditions, and language, as well as socio-political aspects related to the idea of the nation.

Language is essential in creating a sense of unity within a community while also setting it apart from others. Utilising a shared language and fostering mutual understanding are essential aspects of group identity, cultivating a feeling of community belonging (Sztompka, 2007, pp. 290-291). Due to the increasing British influence in Ireland, the significance of the English language has grown rapidly. It can be argued that a linguistic shift occurred by the end of the 18th century. Moreover, "by the late eighteenth century, Irish was already considered the language of the past and of the poor" (Tuathaigh, 2005, p. 42). But times were hard. The Great Famine of 1845-1852 left its mark on the society. The aftermath of the famines is shortly described by Declan Kiberd (1996, p.115): "Ireland after the famines of the mid-nineteenth century was a sort of nowhere, waiting for its appropriate images and symbols to be inscribed in it. Its authors had no clear idea of whom they were writing for. Many of the native Irish were caught between two languages". We can see the impact of historical events, such as famines, on cultural identity and expression. The emphasis is on the tension between the preservation of the native language and the adoption of the language of the colonisers.

The revivalist initiatives became more apparent in the late nineteenth century, mostly thanks to Douglas Hyde, who along with others, founded The Gaelic League in 1893, which main goal was to preserve and extend Irish as the national language. A particular concern was to preserve Irish as a living language among those who still used it as a vernacular. Those communities included the areas in the western counties. Hyde and his enthusiasts were concerned that the cultural continuity expressed through language would be broken. The Gaelic League viewed language shift as a threat to national identity and therefore attempted to revive the Irish language (Tuathaigh, 2005, pp. 46-48).

Attempts to protect the Irish language were also one of the tasks of the ruling party in the first years after independence. However, it was not until the 1950s that greater successes were achieved in this field. Gaelic schools were established, and in 1972, the first radio station broadcasting in Irish was founded. In 1995, the Irish language television station TG4 was launched (Tuathaigh, 2005, pp. 53-54). Today there are areas in Ireland where the Irish language is still widely spoken. The term 'Gaeltacht' refers to areas in Ireland where the Irish language has traditionally been the primary spoken language among the majority of the community, either currently or until recently. These regions are officially recognised by the government and include large areas of counties Donegal, Mayo, Galway, and Kerry, as well as sections of counties Cork, Meath, and Waterford. Additionally, six of Ireland's inhabited islands are located in the Gaeltacht (Údarás na Gaeltachta).

Sport is a sphere of social life that brings people together and fosters a sense of community. Additionally, it provides a platform for expressing national identity. Sport has contributed to the development of a unique Irish identity. Along with other cultural practices, such as the promotion of the Irish language, traditional music, and dance, the Gaelic games have been instrumental in constructing and reproducing a particular understanding of Irishness (Bairner, 2005, p. 204). A significant part in the restoration of traditional Irish sports was played by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) founded in 1884. "The GAA was founded at the dawn of an era when Ireland, having emerged from the misery of famine years, was once again ready to assert itself both politically and culturally" (Prior, 1997, p. 27). Michael Cusack, the founder of the GAA, saw English sports (rugby, soccer and cricket) as a means of imperialistic domination over Irish society (Inglis, 2008, p. 134). It was important to revive traditional sports as a means of preserving Irish culture, distinct from British culture. This served as a defence of Irish identity. The relationship between sports and identity is significant and should not be underestimated, as Inglis (2008, p. 137) mentions: "participation in the GAA is about identity and belonging". Bairner (2005, p. 204) mentions that sports have played a significant role in shaping the unique identity of the Irish people. Along with other cultural activities, such as promoting the Irish language, traditional music, and dance, the Gaelic games movement holds considerable importance in forming and perpetuating a specific interpretation of Irish identity.

It is also worth mentioning the importance of Irish sports in maintaining the identity of the diaspora members. Gaelic games hold significant importance in the experiences of many Irish immigrants. Their social and economic influence, along with their capacity to mitigate the feelings of dislocation and alienation commonly experienced by newcomers, is profound. Participation in Gaelic football, hurling, or camogie, whether as a player, administrator, or spectator, has played a crucial role in fostering a sense of continuity for these individuals (Darby, 2005, p.101). Sport is a significant aspect of social life for Irish people. It allows them to express their identity through inter-county rivalries and is considered an essential element of Irish culture. Additionally, it fosters a sense of community among Irish people and their descendants living abroad (Biernat, 2014, p. 90).

Sport and religion are closely linked in terms of identity in Ireland. Religious affiliation in Ireland influenced many areas of life, including participation in various sports. Traditional Irish games such as hurling and Gaelic football were seen as sports associated with the Catholic tradition, while rugby and cricket were regarded as sports associated with the Protestant environment (Bairner, 2001, p. 30). Sport was frequently used as a distinguishing factor between groups, as was religion.

Religion was a significant factor in dividing the island into two distinct areas - the Catholic world and the Protestant world. The border between the two states, Ireland (Eire) and Northern Ireland (a dependency of the British Crown), generally reflected the division between Catholics and Protestants, with the former dominating the south and the latter dominating the north. For the past two centuries, identifying as either Catholic or Protestant has significantly influenced the actions and expressions of the Irish people. This affiliation has played a crucial role in various aspects of life, including family dynamics, educational pursuits, healthcare choices, and social welfare decisions. It has left its imprint on the schools individuals attended, the friendships they formed, and even influenced their choices of marriage partners (Inglis, 2005, p.59). The twentieth century marked a significant period in the history of the Catholic Church in Ireland. It gained a dominant role in society before losing it in recent decades. Following Irish independence, the Catholic Church became the dominant institution in many fields, holding a monopoly on moral issues, social principles, and politics. However, this situation changed dramatically from the 1950s onwards. The transition from a traditional to a free market economy based on industry and services has led to a decline in the value and role of the Catholic Church in Irish life. Irish society is gradually becoming more secular (Inglis, 2005, pp. 67-73). In recent years, the Catholic Church has lost its position as the main bearer of moral norms and principles in Irish society, as noted by Inglis (1998, pp. 243-259).

Also noteworthy in Ireland's modern history is the economic boom known as the Celtic Tiger. It has created a new type of personality. Wilson and Donnan (2006, p. 91) enlist the factors that stimulated changes within the Irish identity. They are as follows: globalization, Europeanization, the economic boom, the peace process and secularization. These factors have propelled Ireland towards a more liberal, cosmopolitan, and diverse society. The contrast with the earlier perception of Ireland as predominantly Catholic and rural highlights the significant societal evolution. This commentary suggests that Ireland has undergone a transformative journey, embracing a multiplicity of identities and breaking away from a more homogeneous and traditional past. The Riverdance is an excellent example of changes in the approach to Irishness. It gained popularity in the 90s and contributed to the debate on Irish identity and the concept of Irishness. The short dance performance by a group during the break of the Eurovision Song Contest in 1994 gave rise to a two-hour cultural event that has brought the Irish dance tradition closer to many people worldwide (Biernat, 2014, p. 127). It marks a pivotal point in the portrayal of Irish identity and dance. Positioned at the crossroads of the local and global, it serves as a compelling demonstration of the complex interplay that shapes the understanding of Irish identity (Wilson & Donnan, 2006, p. 96). What is more, "the Celtic Tiger has increased the money in many people's pockets, it has also offered a positive identity that has boosted the confidence and esteem of those who see themselves as part of it" (Wilson & Donnan, 2006, p. 69-70). The identity created by the Irish Celtic Tiger, globalization, and consumerism is not inherently superior or inferior to the previous identity. Rather than replacing the traditional identity, it has enriched it and demonstrated the strength of Irish identity to the world

The Irish example demonstrates the coexistence of tradition and modernity. Despite being one of the youngest countries in

Europe, Ireland boasts one of the oldest cultures in the region. By remembering and embracing its past, Ireland has not regressed but rather progressed towards modernity while preserving its rich cultural heritage. Modern Ireland maintains a strong connection to its traditions and history. While this connection may sometimes be viewed as purely commercial or marketing-driven, it demonstrates that a balance between traditional and modern values can create a modern state and society (Biernat, 2014, p. 129). Rather than viewing tradition and modernity as opposing forces, they should be seen as complementary tendencies that can support each other. It is possible to foster tradition without abandoning modernity. The term 'Celtic Tiger' implies a connection between tradition (Celtic) and modernity (in comparison to the Asian tigers, countries that have undergone remarkable growth in recent decades) (Biernat, 2014, p. 129)

III. CONCLUSIONS

Manuel Castells (2004, p. 1) wrote: "Our world and our lives are being shaped by the conflicting trends of globalization and identity. The information technology revolution and the restructuring of capitalism, have induced a new form of society, the network society." He also added that in the past 25 years, there has been a widespread surge of powerful expressions of collective identity. These expressions promote cultural distinctiveness and individual agency over one's life and surroundings, resisting the homogenizing forces of globalization and cosmopolitanism. The expressions are diverse, reflecting the unique characteristics of each culture and the historical underpinnings of each identity. In addition, there are reactive movements that build strongholds of resistance in defence of concepts such as God, nation, ethnicity, family and locality, perceived as essential pillars of human existence, now under simultaneous and conflicting attack from techno-economic influences and transformative social movements (Castells, 2004, p. 2).

Bauman (2004, p. 21) states that national identity "was from the start, and remained for a long time, an agonistic notion and a battle cry. A cohesive national community overlapping with the aggregate of state subjects was destined to remain not just perpetually unaccomplished, but forever precarious; a project calling for continuous vigilance, gigantic effort and the application of a lot of force to make sure that the call is heard and obeyed." The statement highlights the difficulty of achieving and maintaining unity, presenting it as a goal that is hard to reach and always at risk of being disrupted. The idea of a unified national identity is depicted as both desirable and challenging, necessitating ongoing dedication and occasionally assertive actions to uphold its values.

Perhaps this is why issues of national and cultural identity are important for ensuring security. They serve as a mobilising element for society, while a threat to identity poses a risk to the stability, integrity, and security of the collective. The article highlighted the importance of supporting, developing and maintaining cultural and national identity. The brief analysis of selected elements of the culture presented, and the description of attempts to revive the language and Irish sport, show the importance of maintaining one's identity in the face of threats from the dominant culture (in this case, the British). It is worth adding that religion was an important element of differentiation for the indigenous people of the island at this time. While the example discussed relates primarily to the struggle to preserve culture during British colonisation, the article also cites examples from the post-independence period and the crucial initiatives taken to preserve Irish culture. The paper's main analysis highlights the crucial role of identity in community building and the promotion of collective identity.

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