

# **CONFLICT IN CITIES AND THE CONTESTED STATE**

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### **From Empires to Ethno-National Conflicts:**

**A framework for studying 'divided cities' in 'contested states' -  
Part I**

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**When this paper was going to press we were shocked and saddened by the death of Professor A.C. (Tony) Hepburn. Tony was Professor of Modern Irish History at the University of Sunderland. He was very supportive of our earlier *Conflict in Cities* projects and contributed to a workshop in 2006. His book *Contested Cities in the Modern West* was a key source in formulating the present project; and shortly before his death he had made a range of helpful comments on a draft of this paper. Our condolences to his family.**

**Editorial note**

This Working Paper relates directly to Research Module B1.1 – ‘The geopolitical context and categories of city’ – providing the first part of a general comparative framework for studying the ‘linked cities’ and Jerusalem as well as Belfast. Its further development will require focusing on the concerns of other Modules including those dealing with conflict management/resolution – see [www.conflictincities.org/research.html](http://www.conflictincities.org/research.html)

**Biographical note**

James Anderson is one of the project investigators and Emeritus Professor of Political Geography at Queen’s University Belfast. His research interests have centred on state borders and territoriality, nationalism, transnational developments and geopolitics. As well as attempting to develop a geopolitical framework for studying ethno-nationally divided cities, his particular project interests include the political demography of ethno-national conflict and alternative approaches to conflict management or resolution. [j.anderson@gub.ac.uk](mailto:j.anderson@gub.ac.uk)

# From Empires to Ethno-National Conflicts:

## A framework for studying 'divided cities' in 'contested states' - Part I

James Anderson

### Abstract

This paper begins to establish the category of 'ethno-nationally divided cities' by differentiating it from other similar categories with which it is sometimes confused. To create a coherent basis for comparing these cities it looks for common origins and common causal processes in the geographical-historical circumstances and conditions of their development. It looks at their locations relative to major ethnic cleavages of religion and language, but argues that much more important has been their common origins in the peripheries of empires, and particularly during the endgames of empire, and the specifically *nationalist* nature of their conflicts. It suggests that the empire focus could be sharpened by situating these cities in the space and time of state-building and nation-building because ethno-national conflicts have arisen with the *failures* or partial failures of these processes.

**Keywords:** imperialism, nationalism, ethno-national division, state- and nation-building

### 1. Introduction

*'Conflict in cities and the contested state: ... Belfast, Jerusalem and other Divided Cities'* – what are these 'other cities', and what do we mean by 'divided' and 'contested'? Are not all cities in some sense 'divided', whether by class, race, gender, generation or other divisions? And if we limit them to 'contested states', what does that mean? All states too are 'contested' and in a diversity of ways. The concepts could be chaotic. We need coherent categories, a sound basis for comparisons, and clear criteria for including or excluding 'other cities' in any comparison with Belfast and Jerusalem.

This working paper begins to develop a general, geopolitical framework for defining 'divided cities' and 'contested states' and studying their interconnections. We start by distinguishing ethno-nationally divided cities from some other types of 'divided city', and by noting the gap or mutual lack of connection between the literatures of ethno-national conflict on the one hand and of cities on the other (section 2). However, to get beyond definitions and comparative descriptions to the causal processes underlying 'divided cities', we need an historically-informed framework which focuses on how the ethno-national divisions have arisen and persisted. Where, when and why did they originate; what were the key geographical-historical circumstances and conditions of the birth and development of ethno-nationally divided cities?

To begin to answer these questions, we look firstly at city location relative to pre-existing ethnic divides of language and religion (section 3). But while this is of some use in explaining where 'divided cities' have *not* arisen, it is of limited use in explaining where they have actually developed, for there are many more ethnic divides than there are cities which are ethno-*nationally* divided. Secondly, and much more importantly, we need to look at city location relative to 'contested states', and location in time as well as in space, or location in space-time (section 4). Drawing on the recent conceptual 'rediscovery of empire', it was found that all our ethno-nationally divided cities had their formative origins within territorial empires and, more specifically, at the edges and towards the end of empires. Thirdly, and more speculatively, it is suggested that this empire focus might be sharpened by exploring how these cities were situated and the roles they played in the space-time of modern state-building processes, for it was the uneven development and the *failures* or partial failures of these processes which generated ethno-national conflict (section 5).

To further develop the framework, we can see urban spatiality in relation to imperial and national territorialities as *ideal types*, and look more concretely both at the role of cities in nationalist conflicts over territory, and at the continuing role of empires in modern guise - whether these 'great(er) powers' are facilitators or preventers of conflict transformation. But that is left for Part II (1).

## **2. Defining 'divided cities' – from chaotic to coherent concepts**

'Divided cities' and 'contested states' could be very chaotic concepts, especially in the absence of a ready-made unifying literature. We could be comparing 'apples and oranges', or charged with 'not comparing like with like'. While it may be agreed that Belfast and Jerusalem are 'divided cities' in 'contested states', what are the bases for including/excluding other cities? Among the candidates for inclusion are Danzig/Gdansk (pre-WWII), Trieste/Trst (at least up to the 1950s), West/East Berlin (at least pre-1989), and today's Brussels, Montreal, Mostar, Mitrovica, Nicosia, Beirut and Kirkuk. But which of these is the 'odd one out' – all are or have been in seriously contested states – if we take Belfast and Jerusalem as our benchmarks? To give a clue, we could add the divided cities on the present German-Polish border, such as Guben/Gubin or Frankfurt Oder/Slobice, to the original list. Or, to further confuse matters, we could add a different mix of candidates including Bradford, Istanbul, Los Angeles, London and New York. The latter three have appeared (along with Beirut and Belfast) in a book on *Managing Divided Cities* (Dunn ed., 1994), while the latter two had a book called *Divided Cities* (Fainstein *et al*, 1992) all to themselves. Chaotic? (2)

The 'odd one out' in the original list is Berlin, divided by inter-state conflict and the Cold War between the empires of the USSR and the USA, not by an ethno-national conflict over rival claims to 'national' territory, nor did it involve rival ethno-national communities within the same (albeit state border- and Wall-divided) city. Its ethnic divisions – involving for instance a sizeable Turkish minority – do not directly relate to any conflict over German statehood. But this is emphatically *not* to say that Berlin should therefore be excluded from the project. Unlike Humpty-Dumpty, it is now being put back together again and it may well hold important lessons for how ethno-nationally divided cities might be reunified. Rather, the important point is the proviso that Berlin's re-unification does not have to confront the *added* problems of *ethno-national* division, as distinct from state division, in contrast to wall-divided Jerusalem or Nicosia which have to confront both. Likewise, the separated German-Polish border cities were 'state-divided', rather than 'ethno-nationally-divided', after WWII. But in contrast to Berlin, they now comprise two separate national and ethnic groups, German and Polish, and their lessons might be about how cities unified for centuries (secure within German territory) can be divided relatively quickly into two quite separate urban entities (as in very different ethno-national circumstances has happened recently to Mostar and Mitrovica), though with former East Germany and Poland now both in the European Union, here too there could be useful lessons about re-unification or its limitations. But while their political dichotomizations have parallels in ethno-nationally divided cities (3), Berlin and the German-Polish border cities are different in being 'state-divided' by greater powers, and the distinction is important if we are to assume that ethno-national conflict over statehood has *causal* significance.

Conversely, Bradford, Istanbul, Los Angeles, New York and London are different in being ethnically- but *not* ethno-nationally divided. Along with a host of other cities - from medieval Venice with the first *ghetto* where Jews were locked up at night, to apartheid Johannesburg or Montgomery, Alabama – they are cases of more purely 'ethnic' division without any national contestation over state borders and the state belonging of immediate territorial hinterlands (although ethnic difference in, say, Bradford, New York or L.A. has an important 'national' dimension in the shape of immigrants – see Sassen 1994). Most of these cities are in 'contested states' only in the sense that all states are 'contested' (e.g., by political parties and civil rights campaigners). Even in the divided cities in fundamentally contested apartheid South Africa, the state was not *territorially* contested - the existing national, territorial borders of the state were accepted by both or all sides, emphatically not the case with 'ethno-nationally' divided cities like Jerusalem and Belfast and the others already mentioned. But again, although we are concentrating on such cities divided by specifically *nationalist* conflicts over statehood, the 'ethnically divided' cities may hold important conceptual and

policy lessons, about, for example, social and spatial segregation and mixing (4). But this time the important distinction and proviso is that they do not have to confront the *added* problems and causations of ethno-*national* division over state territoriality.

Thus we clearly have a continuum, with 'state-divided' cities at one end and 'ethnically-divided' ones at the other end, and in the middle the even more problematic (but less numerous) 'ethno-nationally divided cities' which combine the problems of both ends. While interested in the whole continuum, this is our central category, our main sphere for direct comparisons with Belfast and Jerusalem, distinguished from the two 'end' categories by its added problems and different mix of causal processes.

It is a category well described by Tony Hepburn (2004) whose short but rich *Contested Cities in the Modern West* very usefully discusses a range of cities in the ethno-nationally divided category, with more detailed histories of Danzig/Gdansk, Trieste, Montreal and Brussels, as well as Belfast and Jerusalem.

### ***A missing literature***

However, this is not a ready-made category with an established general literature - more a matter of particular studies, and a category which is often mixed up or confused with related but different categories, as we have seen. Each of our 'divided cities' is unique, each ethno-national conflict has its own particularities, but treating them on a case by case basis is hardly adequate to the challenge of establishing the empirical and theoretical basis for drawing legitimate lessons and comparisons between different cities and different conflicts across different states. With some exceptions (e.g., Scott Bollens' 1999 and 2000 comparisons of urban policy in Belfast, Jerusalem and Johannesburg ) most 'divided city' studies are of single cities. Hepburn's book is thus very exceptional in treating multiple cases, and in bringing together expertise both on cities and on ethno-national conflicts. Despite all the particular studies in 'ethno-nationally divided cities' (and perhaps especially in Belfast and Jerusalem), the category lacks a research literature on general causal processes and in that sense has still to be established.

There is indeed a large gap - or rather two 'mirror-image' gaps - where such a general literature should be found. On the one side, the urban literature generally ignores nationalism and national conflict. Mainstream urban studies in English-speaking academia have generally concentrated on 'normal', 'undivided' and more or less peaceful cities (as in North America, Britain, Australia, and other countries dominating urban research agendas). Where these cities are considered 'divided', we have seen it is usually not by nationalism but by other divisions, such as ethnicity *per se* or social class (divisions which are of course also

experienced in our category of 'divided cities'). Political violence as a factor shaping cities has been widely neglected in a mainstream dominated by the 'peace of metropolitan countries' (5). Recently this neglect has begun to be rectified – most substantially by Stephen Graham's (2004) edited collection *Cities, War and Terrorism* - largely in response to '9/11' and the 'terrorist threat'.

But here cities are mainly seen (sometimes one-sidedly) simply as the victims of outside forces or 'external' terrorism and warfare (as epitomized in the title *Wounded Cities*, Schneider and Susser 2003). In contrast, our 'divided cities' are embroiled as both victims *and* protagonists, or part and parcel of longstanding and pervasive conflicts, and more specifically national territorial ones. In Fred Boal's (1994) term, the cities 'encapsulate' the conflicts, which is quite different from being 'steamrolled' by external conflicts not of their own making, though obviously there are intermediate situations (6). So 'cities experiencing political violence' is yet another related but significantly different category, another instance where there is the danger of 'oranges' simply being thrown in with our ethno-national 'apples', rather than explicitly using the different categories to explore what might be distinctive about our central category. This distinction is also important to fully appreciate the conflict transforming possibilities of everyday urban life: here the city's potential rests not only on being a 'victim' where suffering is sometimes most concentrated, but also being a 'protagonist' where conflict is often most intense.

On the other side of the gap, the mainstream literature on nationalism and national conflict displays the converse case of generally ignoring the urban. Likewise the literature on state formation and 'contested' states. Both have generally concentrated on the 'national level', including at most sub-state regions but neglecting the 'urban level' and the sometimes pivotal, symbolic and strategic role of cities in ethno-national struggles. (And the over-concentration on the 'national level' has also meant neglecting the 'level' of empire and the imperialism of 'great(er) powers – all part of a wider problem of treating different 'levels' or scales as if they were separate and self-sufficient).

We want to draw on both the urban and the national state literatures and help strengthen the links - or fill the gap - between them, in order to develop the project's general framework and establish our central category more substantially. To have coherent meaning in terms of the historical development and contemporary reproduction of 'divided cities', we have to find some commonalities of causation. And we start by looking for common origins in ethnic divisions, at the edges and ends of empires, and in the uneven development of state- and nation-building failures (sections 3, 4 and 5).

### 3. Locations in space and divisions of religion and language

It is easier to say where our category of city is *not* found – in most of Africa, Australasia and the Americas, and to a lesser extent in much of Asia and Europe. Ethnically, as distinct from ethno-nationally, divided cities are of course numerous in all the continents, but by and large it seems that state-building successes have far out-weighed the failures, over-riding or circumnavigating pre-existing ethnic divides. Territorially ‘contested’ states are in a distinct minority. The good news is we are dealing with a finite, relatively limited and hence manageable category of city.

Partly this is because across much of the world European imperialisms – the main carriers of nationalism and of nation-building impulses, albeit mostly in opposition to imperialism – succeeded in imposed a large degree of cultural homogeneity over large areas as far as dominant elites were concerned (whether Francophone, Spanish-, Portuguese-, Dutch- or English-speaking). Put another way, mainly because of large differentials in material development, the huge diversity of indigenous cultures, languages and religions in most cases did not seriously obstruct state- or nation-building processes, particularly with respect to territorial delimitation and state borders (though some did belatedly and more might yet do so).

Thus in Africa ethnic conflict is rife but, with some exceptions (e.g., secessionism in ‘Spanish Morocco’, Ethiopia, and ‘tribal areas’ of southern Nigeria), it has not taken the form of rival ethno-nationalisms: ethnic conflict is *within* rather than *about* given state borders - given largely by imperialisms but now taken for granted in most cases. In Australasia and the Americas, settler empires were both culturally homogeneous over wide areas, and politically dominant over even the strongest indigenous ethnicities, so the latter rarely aspired to or effectively challenged for separate territorial statehood. Indeed here the comparatively few cases of ethno-nationally divided cities are mainly a product of rival European and settler empires. Montreal, perhaps *the* prime example in the Americas, is still living the legacy of the conflict between the French and British empires in the struggle over the possible secession of mainly Francophone Quebec (while cities along the US-Mexican border, itself a product of inter-imperialist Spanish-US rivalry, have elements of national as well as ethnic conflict but state territory *per se* is no longer contested)

Asia is a different matter for here European imperialisms met societies which were culturally and materially as or more advanced than themselves, with their own sophisticated states, empires and major transnational religions. It has some clear ‘indigenous’ examples of ethno-nationally divided cities, such as Amritsar and Lahore in the Punjab, but they entered

our category of 'divided city' largely as a result of British imperialism and its partition of mainly Muslim Pakistan and from mainly Hindu India; and other Asian examples in Sri Lanka are also a product of European empire. Perhaps the main location for ethno-nationally divided cities is indeed our Middle East-Western Europe axis running north and west from Jerusalem and Kirkuk to Brussels and Belfast.

### ***Ethnic divides***

One possible explanation might be that this part of the world has a number of major religion and/or language divides, and while even here our category is very much in the minority, perhaps that is because of the limited spatial extent or generally linear nature of the ethnic interface areas? Thus Belfast is on a Protestant-Catholic divide, Jerusalem is split three ways between Judaism, Islam and Christianity, Balkan cities like Mostar and Mitrovica are on interfaces between Catholicism, the Orthodox Church and Islam, Nicosia is split between Orthodoxy and Islam, Beirut between Islam and Christianity, and Kirkuk between Shia and Sunni Islam. In some of these cases the religion cleavages coincide with significant linguistic (and wider cultural) fault lines – in, for instance, Kirkuk between Kurds, Arabs and others, in Jerusalem (Hebrew/Arabic) and Nicosia (Greek/Turkish), while in Mostar where everyone spoke a version of Serbo-Croat, Croat nationalists have recently worked hard politically to create two separate 'languages', their own and that of the Islamic Bosniaks, a 'narcissism of small differences' *ad absurdum*. Prussian Danzig was on a Protestant/Catholic fault line which coincided with the linguistic Germanic/Slavic one of German/Polish; and sometimes language rather than religion is the main ethnic 'marker', as for example in Brussels and Trieste on Romance/Germanic and Romance/Slavic fault lines. In recently-independent Estonia ethno-nationally divided cities with Russian-speaking minorities are on a Slavic/Finno-Ugrian fault line.

Thus starting from language and religion in our 'divided cities' it could look as if we already have the 'explanation' of our category: pre-existing ethnic cleavages, perhaps supplemented with recently created ethnic 'difference'. Not so, however, and 'recent creation' is a give-away.

If we look at the major ethnic interfaces themselves, rather than the divided cities, it is quickly apparent that most cities in ethnic interface areas are not *nationally* divided, just as their surrounding states and state borders are not territorially 'contested'. There are for instance fault lines between mainly Protestant northern Germany and mainly Catholic southern Germany, but not an ethno-nationally divided city in sight. Brussels is the only ethno-nationally divided city of importance on the linguistic Romance-Germanic fault line, most of the other places being only linguistically-divided and largely conflict free - as

Hepburn (2004, 26-28) explains for Strasbourg; and we see further evidence in Bilbao (7). So the relative scarcity of our category is hardly explained by the ethnic divides being linear and hence limited in area, and we have seen that purely 'ethnically divided' cities are much more numerous.

While absolute and relative ethnic numbers (and changes in the numbers) can be important factors in fuelling ethno-national division, much more important are the underlying causal interactions between imperialism and nationalism and the failures of state- and nation-building in the peripheries of empire.

#### **4. At the edges and towards the end of territorial empires**

Perhaps most important in explaining ethno-nationally divided cities are the ways in which empires created *political* entities out of pre-existing *ethnic* difference, and how the politicized ethnicities tended to later become the basis for competing nationalisms, as the empires themselves grafted elements of nationalism to their own imperialisms prior to decline, retreat or collapse. Before and during the main era of nation formation - from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century - empires were largely responsible for politicising what had simply been language, religion or other cultural differences which in and of themselves often had little or no political significance with respect to statehood or nationality. That is, they only became politically significant because of the policies of states in general and of empires in particular. Thus it was found that empires typically provided the common historical point of origin for our ethno-nationally divided cities.

All, in one way or another, had their formative origins within territorial empires (8), and, more specifically, they all emerged in the relatively insecure or contested peripheries of empire, their development heavily conditioned by their space-time locations at the empire's edges in periods of decline, retreat or endgame. Imperial control was more stretched or indirect towards the edges than in the empire's core areas. It often involved the typically empire mechanism of 'divide and rule', politically using, and in the process strengthening, even creating, ethnic divisions, and constructing hierarchies and animosities between more and less favoured ethnic communities, or, more benignly, allowed them an element of self-administration. Either way, such ethnic communities politicized in a pre-nationalism era often lent themselves fairly readily to becoming the basis for separate 'ethnic nations' and oppositional nationalisms after the French Revolution had first popularised nationalist doctrine (9). Ironically, in many cases it was spread through the empire by the example of the imperial power itself, developing its own imperial nationalism (e.g., British, French,

Prussian, Russian), becoming more nationalistic or in fact behaving more like a *national* state, sometimes intervening more directly because under pressure from increased opposition in the peripheries. But that could prove counter-productive as ethnic divisions in the periphery became ethno-national divisions with different 'nations' seeking their own states.

This understanding of 'divided cities' was reached from two directions - and given substance by - studying the Irish conflict which shaped Belfast, and looking at 'other divided cities' in the light of it.

### ***Belfast and Irish nationalism in Britain's empire***

The initial starting point - stimulated by the recent revival of interest in empire and imperialism (see, e.g., Colas 2007) - was the conviction that national conflicts which are often simplistically blamed on nationalists or 'explained' by the 'excesses' of nationalist doctrine, can only be properly understood in terms of nationalism *and* imperialism. These are often simply juxtaposed as embodying antithetical or opposing principles of statehood and territoriality and seen as historically sequential (as will be discussed in Part II), but in fact they have been interacting and constituting one another since at least the period of the French Revolution. The Irish conflict (and arguably by extension similar ethno-national conflicts) could not be understood without tracing the historical intersections of imperialism and nationalism and Ireland's ambiguous position within the British empire - sometimes and in some respects part of the core, but more often in the periphery - an ambiguity which arguably extends to the present-day position of Northern Ireland within the UK (Anderson and O'Dowd 2007). For most of modern history, the Irish conflict has indeed typified the uncertain, contested and sometimes 'over-stretched' peripheries of empire.

The conflict had its origins in the imperialism of the English state and its expansion into Ireland (and Wales and Scotland), 'The British Empire' up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century being synonymous with 'the British Isles' (elsewhere it was 'the empire in India', '...in North America', etc.). In typically empire fashion, Ireland was divided and ruled through a three-fold hierarchical division of its population into 'Protestant, Dissenter, and Catholic'. The British state (still residually sectarian today) had thoroughly politicized religion, legally defining Protestant Anglicans as 'first class' subjects, Presbyterian 'Dissenters' as 'second class', and the majority Catholics as 'third class'. In Britain itself imperialism had increasingly been bolstered by a state-sponsored nationalism heavily imbued with Protestantism (in opposition to its main rivals, Catholic Spain and France). But (partly for this reason) it made little headway in predominantly Catholic Ireland, nor among the 'second class' Dissenters, and, given Ireland's 'colony of empire' character, not even among Irish Protestants (Colley 1992).

From the 1790s, under the influence of the American and French Revolutions, Belfast Presbyterians initiated Ireland's first republican, nationalist movement which explicitly sought to unite 'Catholic, Dissenter and Protestant' and achieve independence from British rule. When reform was refused it organised a separatist armed uprising which was militarily defeated in 1798, but this was to lead to Ireland's political Union with Britain in 1801 and also to a series of subsequent bids for Irish independence.

From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards the conflict in Ireland was shaped by a combination of British imperialism and nationalisms British and Irish (Anderson and O'Dowd 2007). Prior to the 1801 Union we can hardly speak of British *nation-* (as distinct from state-) building in Ireland. But after 1801 it would prove inconsistent and ultimately a failure, and this was bound up with Ireland continuing to have an ambiguous position in the empire despite now being in formal terms an integral part of the empire's central, core state. With 'The British Empire' label no longer referring to the British Isles but to the core state's world-wide possessions by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Ireland's integration into the core reached its high point (with Queen Victoria's 1849 royal visit, the dis-establishment of the minority Anglican Church of Ireland, finalised in 1869, and before the Irish Home Rule movement gained momentum from the 1870s).

However, it remained ambiguously 'between core and colony', its integration into the core state always incomplete. Important pre-Union and still essentially colonial institutions remained in place; many things (e.g., policing, land reform, poor relief) were 'done differently' in Ireland or remained unique to it (e.g., Protestant churches were not dis-established in England, Wales or Scotland); and Ireland continued to be a testing ground for various strategies of colonial rule across the Empire. Its nationalism and aspirations for quite limited Home Rule were feared as a very 'bad example' to other colonies, most notably to India and its National Congress; and this fear became self-fulfilling as Ireland did indeed exit the core in 1920 after armed insurrection. Going to this extreme was substantially because a Tory faction of imperialists, inflexibly fearful of the Home Rule Bill passed by the imperial Parliament in 1912, had been treasonous to the extent of openly advocating and supporting armed rebellion by Ulster unionists. This and a proposed mutiny by a section of the British Army in Ireland, precipitated a major crisis of the British state which was only 'solved' by the advent of the First World War. And after it the solution included Ireland's effective removal from the core state; the insulation of Britain from the disruptions of Irish politics by the creation of Home Rule parliaments in Dublin and Belfast; and the unilateral and quintessentially imperial imposition of partition by coercion and the threat of 'terrible force'.

Partition is typically a signal of state- and nation-building failures, and of 'divided cities' from Belfast and Jerusalem to Amritsar and Lahore, and more recently Nicosia and Mostar.

To deny the causal significance of Britain's empire and Ireland's peculiarly ambivalent position within it, would be to miss the key to understanding many aspects of the Irish conflict as they impinge on Belfast. Similar arguments can be made for our other ethno-nationally divided cities.

### ***Other peripheries, other divided cities***

Looking at other cities in the light of the Irish case quickly confirmed the formative significance of location in empires: while their cores did not produce ethno-nationally divided cities, all our other examples were unambiguously creatures of empire peripheries. It was true of Jerusalem, for centuries in a succession of empires, including Roman, Mamluk, Ayyubid, Ottoman, and British (and now, arguably and more controversially, American). But only the Ottoman and British were of direct relevance in creating ethno-*nationally* divided Jerusalem, despite the importance of its pre-national history: indeed the city's longevity but relatively brief period of specifically *national* history contrasts with Belfast's youth but a specifically national history about twice as long. Ottoman Jerusalem had long-established forms of politicized ethnicity and elements of autonomous self-rule for ethnic groups (in a city divided into four quarters – Arab, Armenian, Christian and Jewish). But Jerusalem becomes ethno-nationally divided only with the invention of Zionism by Jews in Europe in the 1890s (a hundred years after the invention of Irish nationalism in Belfast), and the subsequent influx of European Jews into Palestine, the British promise of a Jewish homeland in Palestine as part of its war effort against Ottoman Turkey (the 1917 Balfour Declaration), the 1948 creation of the Jewish settler state of Israel, and the consequent rise of Palestinian nationalism. The settler influx, the 'ethnic cleansing' of Palestinians from their lands, and the creation and maintenance of the 'ethnocracy' that is Israel (not a 'democracy', as the Israeli geographer Oren Yiftachel (2006) has courageously demonstrated (10)), were all dependent on the assistance of empires (British and then American, and now American with the EU). Israel now depends on American support, or, as the Palestinians see it, the American empire is preventing a solution to the problems of their homeland. Indeed, Israel is as much if not more an imperial as a national project - the 'client state' standard-bearer of US imperialism in the Middle East, and also imperial in its own right in its aggressive settlement policy and the way it deals with Arab Israelis ('second class citizens') and with Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Origins in empire peripheries also apply to the other cities divided by ethno-national conflict, including Trieste (Hapsburg/Austro-Hungarian empire), Danzig (Prussian), Montreal

(French and British), Brussels (Hapsburg), Mostar (Ottoman), Nicosia (Ottoman and British), Beirut (French), and Kirkuk (British), and perhaps some cities in the Baltic states (Russian) or further afield in India, Ceylon, Indonesia, the Philippines or Indo-China (British, Dutch, Spanish/American and French).

The overall picture is that in the peripheries imperial control was often insecure and could lurch between the tenuous and the brutal. Because of greater distance (in physical and/or cultural terms) from the centre or core state of the empire, its 'civilising mission' was often less successful, its acculturation processes weaker, the locals less persuaded. If near the edge and annexed comparatively late, popular memories of invasion and take-over from the centre could be stronger, more bitter or (perhaps with exaggeration and some invention) more useful for nationalist mobilization. At the same time, resentments about subordinate status in the ethnic hierarchy of empire, and the economic and other material disadvantages often associated with subordinate status, could be called into service. Furthermore, territories and cities towards the edge of empire were (and are) generally more likely to be caught up in, or divided by, conflict between rival empires. In contrast, places unambiguously at the core of empires (e.g., in their core kingdoms which became nations - Britain, France, Spain, Portugal or Sweden), and especially in the original 'core regions' of the core states (11), were secure within directly-ruled empire and would become more fully imbued with the national consciousness sponsored by the imperial state. But moving outwards from the empire's core this association generally declined, as the empire's ideological control weakened. It never quite completed the journey from England to Ireland for instance, or from Castille to Catalonia or the Basque Country. And in these peripheries (partly for material reasons of 'uneven development' as we shall see), rival nationalisms developed around the ethnicities of language or religion which the empire itself had politicized.

In virtually all cases, as with Belfast and Jerusalem, politicised ethnic divisions were pre-national in origin (e.g., Brussels was for long the headquarters of a Francophone Hapsburg administration dominating a population which mainly spoke subordinated Flemish; in Mostar and Nicosia the Ottoman's had always treated the Muslim inhabitants better than the Catholics or members of the Orthodox Church); but again it was mainly towards the end of territorial empires that ethnic divisions were transformed into ethno-national ones.

### ***Endgames of empire***

Once politicized, ethnic or cultural differences could easily become markers for national identification, and this was especially important for the 'stateless nations' in the outlying parts of empires. Already they were often differentiated politically from the ethnicity or 'nation' of the imperial core, and often from other subjugated adjacent ethnicities as well. In order to

delimit or carve out their would-be 'national' territory they generally had to depend on ethnic criteria - where they did not already have their own distinct or bounded space they could not fall back on a purely territorial definition of themselves. This is typically the problem for nations in search of a state, in contrast to 'state nationalisms' where the state preceded the nation (Anderson 1986) – here the existing borders of, say, Britain, France, Spain, Portugal or Sweden provided the ready-made territorial basis for defining their respective nations as far as the states were concerned (all as it happens nations at the centre of imperialisms). There are of course exceptions where the empires carved out distinct territories as 'colonies' and these later provided a ready-made territorial basis for 'anti-colonial' nationalisms, for example Gambian, Senegalese, Ghanaian, Kenyan, Algerian. Indeed, while not pre-determined (as separatisms in Nigeria attest), this as we saw begins to explain the scarcity of our category in most of Africa. More generally, however, 'stateless nations' have had to depend heavily on an ethnic self-definition (if necessary inventing one), even where a ready-made territory has already been delimited; and for 'state nationalisms' too ethnicity has been very important as the existing states created their more culturally homogeneous 'nations'. But ethno-nationalisms are especially important and problematic in territorially 'contested states' where, by definition, there is no generally accepted territorial basis for either states or nations – *the* problem of 'divided cities'.

These problems generally worsened as imperial control weakened towards the end of empire. The crucial formative period for ethno-nationally divided cities was often characterized by imperial weakness rather than strength, paradoxically a recipe for increased brutality and violence. Comparative weakness, combined with imperialisms themselves becoming more nationalistic, could make for an unstable or explosive mixture when faced with oppositional national movements. We have seen, for example, that it was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century - several centuries after the English began state-building in Ireland - that British imperialism began seriously to build its nation in Ireland (e.g., via a new education system, and reducing its anti-Catholicism), though even then its efforts were partial and inconsistent (e.g., it retained its decidedly imperialistic and militarized system of social control), and they were cut short by the rise of Irish nationalism.

Elsewhere a similar pattern emerged later. For example, Danzig, predominantly German-speaking, enjoyed considerable autonomy within the Prussian empire until fully incorporated into centralised control in 1793, but ethnic tolerance and Polish-German mixing survived. However in the 1870s Prussia stopped the teaching of Polish in primary and secondary schools; language, increasingly a *national* marker, became a matter of great contention; and ethnic consciousness intensified between 1870 and 1914 (Hepburn 2004, 41-43). Prussia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century started running its empire more like a national state, pursuing objectives

(e.g., linguistic homogenization) that would have been of little concern to more old-fashioned and in some respects more permissive pre-national empires, such as the Ottoman empire in the Balkans or Prussia itself in an earlier period. Similarly, it was only from 1899 that Russification by Finland's imperial masters became an important feature of Helsinki (Hepburn 2004, 17).

But whether driven by nationalistic impulses, or simply no longer able to cope, the final period of empire was often disastrous. Indeed in some respects, nothing disgraced the empires so much as their leaving, with particularly nasty wars in Algeria and Indo-China, Britain's period of 'divide and run' from India, including its massacre at Amritsar, the terror tactics of its 'Black and Tans' in Ireland, the brutal anti-Mau Mau campaign before leaving Kenya, and its brief but disastrous interlude in Palestine, promising away land that did not belong to it. Unfortunately it tends to be such particularly bad examples of empire which have left the greatest mark on subsequent developments.

In sum, territorial empires often created and hierarchized politicised ethnicities which then became hard for them to manage as their grip weakened with the spread of competing nationalisms. Their endgames which have shaped the 'divided cities' were characterised by several developments in various combinations. Because of increased opposition they were often pressured into intervening more directly, sometimes ruling more progressively (as when the Ottoman empire introduced centralising administrative reforms in response to the threat of nationalist opposition symbolised by Greek independence – Mazower 2004, 138-9 (12)), but sometimes ruling more harshly as less able to rely on more benign forms of indirect rule. As they developed their own nationalisms they were also more inclined towards state intervention, to behaving more like an homogenizing *national* state - in effect generalising more widely the practices of the now (proto-)national state at their own core. And quite apart from any nationalistic motivations, there was generally a big increase in the capacity of empires for state intervention, as states in general were 'modernised' into much more complex and efficient institutions with the advent of industrialisation, mass democracy and mass education. But interventions against peripheral nationalist oppositions could be counterproductive, a prelude to exit and leaving behind a legacy of ethno-national conflicts in 'contested states'.

## **5. Uneven development, cities and state-building failures?**

More speculatively, the empire focus could perhaps be sharpened by looking at modern state-building processes and their failures, exploring how ethno-nationally divided cities have

arisen and the roles they have played in the 'uneven development' of states and nations. And here it seems promising to draw on or adapt more general political sociology accounts with a spatio-temporal bent, such as Charles Tilly's approach to European state formation which highlights the role of cities and political economy (Tilly (1992; also 1975), and perhaps similar 'uneven development' approaches to nation-building (13).

'Uneven development', already involved in the relations of empire cores and peripheries and incorporating political economy as well as politics, suits our general purposes (e.g., economic disparities were often a feature of ethnic differentiation and politicisation, and still dramatically are in Palestine/Israel). In an over-simplified nutshell, the concept refers to the uneven development of social processes in space *and* time or space-time. Much more than a description of the *lack* of evenness across space (which in itself would be entirely unexceptional), it is a theory about places (and their economies, cultures, polities) growing and declining at the relative expense of, or alternatively to the relative benefit of, other places. Most convincingly elaborated for modern capitalism by Neil Smith (1990), such dynamic patterns of spatial-temporal unevenness are seen as inherent or integral to capitalism, producing a continuous making and unmaking of places and their societies (however delimited). Not only is unevenness produced, but capitalists and others may (try to) take advantage of it (e.g., relocating production to places with relatively cheaper labour; or oneself to places offering more 'opportunities' – as happens for instance to 'post-conflict' places). So unevenness is not just a 'product of society' but is also a factor or causal element in how society subsequently develops. It is thus highly relevant to studying 'divided cities' as 'causes' as well as 'effects'; and although partly pre-capitalist in origin they all now operate in a modern capitalist context.

### ***Cities in state formation***

Tilly's (1992) *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1992*, is a sweeping analysis of the roles of violence and of capital in creating different pathways to state formation, their different combinations or relative weights helping to explain Europe's great variety of states across the three main types - empires, city-states and national states. While much of his earlier history is of marginal relevance, later sections and especially his conceptual framework (Tilly 1992, 16-28) could be very useful because cities are at the centre of his analysis of the role of capital – and it is a comparatively rare example of bridging the usual gap between urban studies and studies of states or nations.

His causal trajectories of state formation are derived from the relationships and balance between capital, exploitation and cities on the one hand, and coercion, domination and states on the other. Capital accumulation and its (spatial) concentration leads to urban growth, while the accumulation and concentration of coercive means (in war and social control) lead to the growth of states. In both cases, according to Tilly, the various possible combinations of low or high accumulation with low or high spatial concentrations produce, respectively, different configurations of urban growth (e.g., primate cities or scattered centres), and alternative conditions of state growth (e.g., in empires, national states or city states). War, which Tilly sees as the main historical driver of state formation ('the state makes war and war makes the state'), depends however on material resources or the accumulation and concentration of capital, while the latter depends on military protection (if not more predatory plunder). And so he brings together his model of coercion/state growth with his model of capital/urban growth to construct a conceptual framework for explaining the variety of state forms which has arisen across Europe. He produces in effect a geography of coercion and capital and different pathways to state formation. For instance, he identifies three broad alternatives in the balance of coercion and capital: *coercion-intensive* (strong historically in eastern Europe); *capital-intensive* (e.g., in city states such as Genoa or Florence, city empires – Venice, and urban federations – the Dutch Republic); and *capitalized coercion* (e.g., in ultimately more successful states like England and France) (Tilly 1992, 28-30).

Although he does not deal specifically with national state failures, ethno-national conflict or divided cities, Tilly's causal trajectories of state formation might be adapted to help plot the pathway(s) leading to their emergence and their development in the carving out (or attempted carving) of new national states from declining empires. We can speculate, for instance, whether in the historical background of cities divided by ethno-national conflict there is any general preponderance of 'coercion over capital'? Unified 'proto-national' kingdoms of *capitalized coercion* such as England or France seem not to have spawned divided cities, perhaps because they were precluded by the combination of large concentrations both of capital and coercive means (unlike the situation in their own far flung empires where both were often low and spatially dispersed)? Capital-intensive/city-intensive zones such the northern Italy with its city states, and the Low Countries including the Dutch Republic, also seem not to have spawned divided cities, except for two significant exceptions, Trieste and Brussels. But Trieste's complex history was shaped by the Habsburgs from the 1700s, their major port quintessentially on the edge of the largely landlocked Austro-Hungarian empire up to 1918, as well as being contested by Italian and Slovenian nationalists up to the 1950s (see Minca 2008). Similarly, although in the Low

Countries which historically were dominated by federations of autonomous cities, Brussels was in the southern part of the Low Countries where through coercion in its wars with Dutch Republic, the Hapsburg empire managed to retain control over Flemish *and* French-speaking populations, with Brussels on the fault line between them.

Jerusalem too has a history of coercion – perhaps indeed a predominance given its relative lack of capital in a limited economy heavily dependent on forms of tourism and cash transfers. Belfast on the other hand, and especially with its industrialization in its formative 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, is comparatively capital intensive; but counter-balancing that is the fact that coercion was very prominent in Ireland and indeed towns and cities were directly associated with it, as settler nodes in plantations, as 'garrison towns' for British military forces, and later as centres for a semi-militarised police force. Belfast prior to industrialization fitted this general pattern, and with industrialization the need for coercion in fact increased, as the accumulation and concentration of capital depended on and attracted a huge influx of labour from the countryside, and rural sectarian competition transmuted into a fight (often literally) for urban jobs. Here, if anything, more capital required even more means of coercion; and while Tilly's model links the urban with capital, in Ireland where towns and cities were instruments of imperial control, urban places were often as much or more about coercion (and they generally lacked the relative or semi- autonomy of many cities in other empires, including Jerusalem). So as suggested by these various examples it might be useful to think in terms of how a Tilly-adapted perspective might intersect with ethnic cleavages and space-time locations in empire.

Because they deal more directly with what are in effect failures of state formation and nation-building, specific accounts such as Brendan O'Leary's (2007) comparative analysis of territorial partitions, and Michael Mann's (2005) more Tillyesque panorama of 'ethnic cleansing', might be used to augment the empire perspective more immediately without adaptation. O'Leary sees partition as the imposition of a new state border ripping through at least one national homeland and his account is based on just six cases - Ireland (1920), Hungary (1920), Kurdistan (1920-23), India (1947), Palestine (1937 and 1948), and Cyprus (1974). But all involved empires and have been associated with divided cities (14). As defined by O'Leary, partition is actually a relatively rare occurrence, rarer indeed than 'ethno-nationally divided cities', for while partitions tend to produce or perpetuate such cities and sometimes several of them, the category also exists independently of partitions (e.g., in Beirut, Montreal, Kirkuk, Brussels – though for some in, say, Brussels partition may exist as a political aspiration). Some cities (e.g., Nicosia, Jerusalem) are literally divided by a partition border, whereas in other cities (e.g., Belfast and Mostar) local borders defining the territories

of rival ethno-national communities act as proxies in the political fight over disputed state borders which are some distance from the city (and may or may not result from partition).

Michael Mann's (2005) explanation of 'ethnic cleansing' as the distinctly modern 'dark side of democracy' may similarly be of immediate use when approaching 'divided cities' (and is a useful antidote to the non-explanation of 'ancient hatreds'). Taking some of the worst cases (e.g., Armenia, Rwanda, ex-Yugoslavia - especially relevant to the project) and some counterfactual ones, he sees the *demos* of democracy being confused with *ethnos*, the ethnic group; and his analysis of where and why 'ethnic cleansing' occurs includes its links with territory, statehood and different types of regime, for example authoritarian and settler in the Israel/Palestine case (15). He sees class trumping ethnicity, partly by channeling classlike sentiments towards ethno-nationalism, and here Belfast's common dichotomization of *the* working class into two separate entities with the adjectives 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' is a case in point (representatives of each entity frequently posing as 'socialist' but behind the jargon perhaps 'sectarian socialists', a contradiction in terms).

Even if most 'divided cities' do not experience the more extreme forms of 'ethnic cleansing', Mann's 'dark side of democracy' perspective is of particular relevance to the problem of ethnic, territorial conflicts in general, and to their management/resolution: issues of democracy are central both to the problem and to its solution (see Anderson 2008).

### **To be continued...**

It is premature to draw (m)any conclusions, at least until the role of cities in the space-time of modern state-building is explored further in Part II, as well as looking at urban spatiality in relation to imperial and national territorial ideals, and at the continuing role of empire in conflicts over national state territory. The transformative possibilities of cities depend in substantial degree on their relationships with 'great(er) powers' and their priorities, but clearly our 'divided cities' can have pivotal, strategic and symbolic roles in these conflicts, both for the worse and for the better.

We have seen that ethno-nationally divided cities may straddle a major ethnic fault line (of religion and/or language), but it is equally noteworthy that many other cities on these fault lines are *not* ethno-nationally divided. For that to happen much more was required. In particular, it involved the politicization of ethnicities in the peripheries of empires, and the role of empires, nations and states in contriving to create failures of state- and nation-building. 'Divided cities' can be formulated as a coherent category, and so too can

'contested states'. But that only begins to open up the possibilities for studying their interactions.

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## Notes

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1. Nor does Part II exhaust the processes which need to be considered. It is hoped to also consider Bilbao/Bilbo as 'an exception which proves the rule' about 'divided city' origins (see note 7, below). And - relating to our focus on *everyday life and the possibilities for transforming conflict* - the framework will need extending to cover conflict management/resolution.

2. Other cities which feature individually or collectively in books entitled 'Divided City/Cities' include Amritsar, ancient Athens, medieval Coventry, Detroit, Dublin, Fortaleza, Glasgow, Hull, Johannesburg, Kansas City, Lahore, Paris and Philadelphia. Dublin was Dublin 1913, class-divided by an employers' lock-out; Hull's division is between the supporters of two football teams; and the other cases were variously more long-lasting and/or serious.

3. Mostar, divided in two, developed 'two of everything' (e.g., separate Bosniak and Croatian universities), but there were still shared facilities (e.g., still only one airport) and to run these, and symbolically keep open the possibility of re-unification, the city retained a small area of shared administrative space, and on the model of wall-divided Berlin (information from a visit in 2005).

4. Including Islamic Córdoba (Menocal 2002) and Ottoman Salonica (Mazower 2004), related models of how creative co-existence was sometimes possible between Muslims, Jews, Christians and others, though significantly in imperial rather than national contexts.

5. In addition to Hepburn, Ashworth (1991) is a notable exception. Allen *et al* (1999) is more representative of contemporary urban studies – a wealth of views on cities as fluidity and fixity, mixing and 'difference', but little on their state contexts or national conflicts; while on the nationalism side Anderson (1986) has to plead guilty of forgetting cities.

6. Baghdad can be considered 'ethno-nationally divided' in so far as the Shia/Sunni split has state territorial implications, but it is not considered here because of the over-whelming importance of the US invasion/occupation (though arguably the ethno-national divide contributes substantially to the USA's political quagmire).

7. Germanic (Alsatian-speaking) Strasbourg has generally been pro-France, and part of Germany only when conquered, not by choice. 'Exceptional' Bilbao, although embroiled in the territorial conflict of Basque ethno-nationalism and on the Spanish/Basque fault line, is not divided by language, nor segregated ethno-nationally in the sense our 'divided cities' usually are.
8. There may be exceptions (?) but I have not found any.
9. But while historical antecedents are important, their present causal significance can be greatly exaggerated: we must beware of essentialist 'ancient hatreds' as a non-explanation of what are modern conflicts, which have continually to be reproduced in the present, and stem from democracy as we shall see.
10. See note 15, below.
11. 'Core' regions of origin, as mapped by Pounds and Ball (1964), include the South-East of England, the Ile-de-France region, Spain's Castille, the Oporto region of Portugal, and Sweden's Stockholm-Gothenburg. Bearing in mind historical changes in scale, it was imperialisms based in these 'core regions' which created states such as Britain or France in the first place.
12. By the 1870s, in 'an astonishing departure from tradition', the Ottomans granted formal equality to all their subjects regardless of religion (Mazower 2004, 142).
13. Political economy is an important but often neglected dimension of ethno-national conflict, and there may also be possibilities in drawing on accounts of nationalism which have an explicit spatio-temporal or uneven development focus, such as those of Miroslav Hroch (1985) and Tom Nairn (1977).
14. Cyprus, invaded by the national state of Turkey in 1974, is a partial exception, but its modern history was shaped by the Ottoman and British empires. All the partitions except Hungary's were associated with leading cities being ethno-nationally divided.
15. Mann sees Israel as the main contemporary example of a settler state and typical in having "democracy for the settlers, lesser rights for the natives – what Yiftachel...accurately terms an '*ethnocracy*, a *demos* only for the *ethnos*'" (Mann 2005, 519); and in our terms, perhaps more akin to 'hierarchical empire' than 'homogenous national state'.

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