Barry, Frank, 2023. *Industry & Policy in Independent Ireland, 1922–1972*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 256 pp.

As recently as a generation ago, Ireland was Europe's backwater. Today, despite its relative size, Ireland is the driver of European economic growth. Given this remarkable turnaround, the story of economic growth and industrial policy on the periphery of Europe is clearly of interest to a wide audience seeking to understand the nature of Ireland's success. Is it merely a case of having a low corporation tax environment, or is there more to the story? This is the question that Barry addresses by looking at the long history of Irish industrial policy in the 50 years prior to Ireland's accession to the European Economic Community.

Industry & Policy in Independent Ireland is foremost a macro business history of Ireland. By this, I mean that Barry surveys businesses and quantifies the size of companies at various points in time, creating a database painstakingly compiled from a wide array of source material. This business history focus is to be lauded because, as Barry notes, there has been a tendency in Irish economic history to focus primarily on the role of the state in economic development. However, this macro focus has come at the expense of any micro examination of firm level records. There has been an implicit trade-off between breadth and depth, but by highlighting the big players Barry has provided a road map for future scholars to do the digging.

The book is comprised of eight chapters and the structure is chronological rather than thematic. There is no conventional introduction and conclusion, rather a preface that outlines Barry's motivation for the research project: what was the level of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Ireland pre-EEC accession? In place of a conclusion there is an epilogue where Barry squares the circle and answers his motivating questions: there was a significant amount of FDI. Barry's monograph is the culmination of a research agenda, almost two decades in the making, to trace the roots of FDI in Ireland before Ireland joined the European Community. The answer to the question is that the level of employment in foreign owned firms was 15 percent in 1922, 20 percent by 1929, 33 percent by 1972, rising to 50 percent by the 2000s.

The main theme that emerges is that of brownfield FDI – foreign mergers and acquisitions of Irish firms – or Greenfield FDI – new sites and factories. Pre-1972, brownfield FDI was dominant, and many instances were British firms acquiring Irish businesses in order to avoid tariffs; so called "tariff jumping". By 1929, four of the five largest firms were foreign owned (p. 91). Some of Ireland's largest firms also tariff hopped; Guiness relocated production to London in the 1930s (p. 102). The issue of foreign ownership rose to the fore in the 1930s and restrictive legislation – Control of Manufactures Acts – was passed in 1932 and 1934 and remained on the statute books for decades to come.

The book is replete with many titbits and anecdotes relating to Irish businesses that Barry uncovered along the way. For example, Dundalk, a town north of Dublin, had a familial connection with the Scottish poet Robert Burns and the cigarette brand Silk Cut exploited this connection when exporting its Sweet Afton brand to Scotland (p. 52). Another example is the origin of the name of the soft drink brand MiWadi, which turns out to be an amalgam from the initials of the company Mineral Water Distributors (p. 52).

A significant theme that develops is the denominational split in the business community, and how its gradual erosion was central to the emergence of modern Ireland, but the most overarching theme is the shift in Ireland's trading regime from protectionism to free trade. Protectionism had been advocated for by a generation of nationalists pre-independence, but it was not until the 1930s when protectionism was fully embraced. Ireland adopted a form of import substitution industrialisation, and many of the manufacturing firms that Barry identifies were formed during this period. A key part of Ireland's later export driven success was the problems associated with import substitution. This had led to a series of balance of payment crises in the 1950s (p. 130). The response to these crises was either austerity budgets (increased import taxes) or efforts to stimulate exports (export profit tax relief), the latter introduced in 1956 was the foundation of Ireland's longstanding low corporation tax regime (p. 131). This policy had been advocated by different groups within the bureaucracy, the newly formed Industrial Development Authority and the Department of Industry and Commerce. The more conservative Department of Finance was opposed to the idea from the outset as it was "objectionable in principle" (p. 134).

A limitation of the book is the somewhat narrow comparative focus on Britain alone. While the motivation for comparison with the former master is obvious, arguably more scope could be gained from considering developments elsewhere in Europe, Asia, and Latin America as well. The little-known fact that Puerto Rico is the inspiration for Ireland's industrial strategy is something that can be explored in future, initiatives in Panama inspired the Shannon Free Trade zone, and also the approach taken by the Dominican Republic towards their taxation policy would be worth further comparative study. Perhaps more could be gleaned by studying small countries at the periphery of large markets (e.g., Ireland in relation to the US, Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic in relation to the US, etc.). Another area of interest could be the role of import substitution industrialisation. Independent Ireland had initially chosen an import substitution industrialisation strategy in the 1930s, which draws straightforward comparison with the experience of Latin American countries in the early 20th century. Perhaps there is a significant difference between Ireland and Latin

American countries in terms of when the decision to liberalise came and then how fast liberalisation came about; again, further comparative analysis could illuminate these issues.

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