

THE PROSPECTS OF IRISH UNITY AFTER BREXIT:
A REVIEW OF HISTORICAL & CURRENT FACTORS PERTAINING TO THE
PROSPECTS OF IRISH UNITY AFTER BREXIT

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at Notre Dame University-Louaize

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in International Affairs and Diplomacy

by
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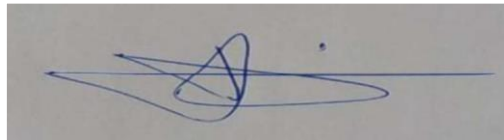
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ABSTRACT

The topic of Irish unity has recently resurfaced to the headlines, after Brexit began in 2016. The dissertation was motivated by the pursuit to analyze the prospects of Irish unity, its timeline, and the factors affecting unity. In order to achieve the goal of the dissertation, an analytical approach was used to study historical, economic, social, and political indicators in Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. These indicators form a cohesive picture regarding the possibility of Irish unity after Brexit. The dissertation finds that Irish unity was re-triggered with Brexit in 2016 and is evolving at a steady pace. However, the progression of indicators pinpoint that Irish unity will not be in the near future, but will happen within ten or twenty years.

I. Introduction

The former United Kingdom's Prime Minister Winston Churchill once said: "We have always found the Irish a bit odd. They refuse to be English" (Dowd, 2011). That statement is true because, in simple terms, the Irish are not British; they're Irish. This has led to many conflicts over the years between the British and Irish, and even between the Irish themselves, which resulted in the Irish border. The 500 km line separating Northern Ireland and Ireland has witnessed times of war and conflict, as well as times of peace and prosperity. Nowadays, the Irish border has become a source of dispute between those who see that the border is meant to disappear in the way of a united Ireland, on one hand, and those who do not believe that the border is justly meant to separate the North from the South, on another hand. In order to dive into this conundrum, this dissertation will look at many factors that influence Irish unity prospects after Brexit. Many developments in the region, like the Good Friday Agreement, Brexit, the European Union-United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and the Northern Ireland Protocol play a significant role in shaping the current Irish unity debate. The dissertation will also look into economic, social, and political indicators in the four major actors – Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union – to identify and develop the topic further. This dissertation will make use of the aforementioned developments and indicators to answer the following question: Will Irish unity become a reality and, if so, when?

The dissertation will focus on developments and indicators in four major actors. First, the four actors are Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. As for what the dissertation will tackle, the focus will be on major regional developments and economic, social, and political factors. The reasoning behind choosing these actors is

that these are the main actors that have been involved, in the past and present, in setting and defining Northern Ireland's border and have directly influenced the prospects of Irish unity. The rationale behind looking into regional developments like the Good Friday Agreement, Brexit, the European Union-United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and the Northern Ireland Protocol is that these events have formalized economic, social, and political changes related to Irish unity. Moreover, the economic, social, and political indicators delve into specifics that help paint the overall picture of Irish unity prospects. It is important to look at all three indicators to pick up patterns and changes in each actor and relate it to the other actors, in order to fully understand the causes and effects. Economic indicators include major trading partners for each actor, FDI inflows and sources, as well as details that directly link Irish unity prospects. Social indicators include polls, demographics, and general patterns that are significant in determining public opinion. Political indicators look into the results of elections – as the manifestation of the people's will – and the effect of the newly elected on Irish unity. The political indicators also include historical examples for reference, a comparison of ideologies, and regional developments that might have a spillover into Northern Ireland.

This dissertation holds much relevance and importance on local, regional, and international levels.¹ On a local level, the dissertation looks into the details under the headlines of the Irish border, Brexit, and Irish unity developments. The facts and figures are present in a multitude of sources and there are many that claim to predict Irish unity based on individual economic, social, or political factors. However, the dissertation

¹ The local level means Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. The regional level means Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. The international level means globally.

provides the opportunity to accumulate the data, analyze it while studying all indicators and developments, and tie any loose ends. In short, the dissertation can provide an accurate picture on the probability of Irish unity after Brexit. Moreover, the topic of Irish unity is not a recent one, as years of conflict between the Irish and British have proved that there have always been people that fight for a united Ireland, solely under the Irish flag, and others that fight for a Northern Ireland, under the British flag. Since 2016 and the beginning of Brexit, the issue of a united Ireland became a more common question, after it relatively died down after the Troubles. The value of this dissertation is to look into the factors that played into bringing Irish unity back to the forefront of headlines after Brexit. On a regional level, the dissertation analyzes the trends of regional changes. In this case, Northern Ireland and Scotland are the wild cards of the game. Will Scotland become independent? Will Northern Ireland unite with Ireland? The dissertation touches lightly on the topic of Scottish independence, but stresses on the spillover effect on Northern Ireland. Interestingly, Scotland and Northern Ireland are more favorable or aligned to the European Union. That is why the conclusions of this research are the first steps to predicting a new regional status, in terms of the creation of a new county like a united Ireland or Scotland, the reintegration of these regions into the European Union, and the probable breaking down of the United Kingdom. On an international level, the dissertation speaks to the nationalistic trend in cultures that are part of a bigger culture. This means that just like the Northern Irish or Scottish are part of a bigger British culture, other cultures like Catalonians are part of the bigger Spanish culture. In fact, in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Catalonia we notice a common trend of increased nationalism. Therefore, the value of the

dissertation, in that sense, is highlighting these trends and opening the doors for new possibilities.

The dissertation's objective is simple: determining if Irish unity will happen and, if so, then when? In order to answer that question, the research will focus on looking into predominant ideologies and changes in their adoption by the four actors. In addition to ideologies, the research's aim will be to look into the past, present, and future. First, the past includes the shared history between the four parties that spans from British colonialism in Ireland, to wars between them, then shared Union membership and cooperation, reaching the present that begins with Brexit. Second, the present will focus on the recent developments and deals, as well as the economy, social attitudes, and political changes and trends in the four actors. In that respect, the main goal is to analyze the numbers in economics, find a common denominator in social attitudes, and foresee the effects of the many surprising political changes. Then, it is important to connect the dots between all these indicators to arrive to a logical conclusion, based on facts. Third, the research looks into the future by pinpointing factors that might influence the prospects of Irish unity, such as Scottish independence or closer Northern Irish alignment to the Union. In brief, the research conducted will have as aim to answer the dissertation's main question by ticking checkmarks pertaining to analyzing past, present, and future economic, social, and political indicators.

The dissertation makes use of a mixed methodology to make the most out of the available data. First, the use of qualitative data is most prominent in the benchmark, theory, and political chapters. Whereas the benchmark and theory chapters relay basic information needed on fundamental agreements, developments, and international relations theory, the

political indicators chapter uses changes in the specific political arena of each player to infer analysis on the effect on Irish unity. As such, a deductive approach is used to analyze the data, based on a structure whose purpose is to answer the question regarding the possibility of Irish unity and its timing. Moreover, the process-tracing method is heavily used. The individual variables of historical context, economic, social, and political indicators are individual elements in an equation, whose sum is the final conclusion. On a more in-depth level, each indicator is composed of many elements, whose correlation leads to a final indicator-based conclusion. Second, quantitative data also plays an important role in the dissertation. Quantitative data is found in the economic and social chapters, through economic data on main trading partners and FDI inflows, as well as public opinion polls, respectively. Data in the economic chapter is analyzed based on a trend analysis, wherein the well-being of an economy and the interconnectedness of the actors is detected through observing consistent trends. As for polls in the social indicators chapter, individual questions in polls may not seem indicative of a specific conclusion, but cross-tabulation analysis allows the data to point in a general direction, be it for or against Irish unity. As for sources, the dissertation draws on plenty of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the texts of the Good Friday Agreement, the European Union-United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and the Northern Ireland Protocol. The social indicators chapter also makes reference to polls in Northern Ireland and Ireland, in addition to population censuses in Northern Ireland. Moreover, the economic chapter draws on economic data and numbers pertaining to all four actors. Secondary sources include academic journals, books, and publications that tackle the topic of Irish unity from various angles.

The dissertation has faced some limitations. First, the 140-page limit for the dissertation meant that some restrictions were required. For example, had there been more page number flexibility, the economic chapter could have delved into much deeper indicators, like FDI (% of GDP), GDP real growth rate, inflation, etc. This would have resulted in a much clearer insight into economic interdependency and health of the actors. Second, access to journals to further read about the topic became harder, as the major source for this – the NDU database – is making it harder to find a wide selection of journals, as cutbacks in subscriptions will affect student accessibility. Third, the limited time allocated to finishing this dissertation in one semester will limit the time span to a few months, affecting the overall time available. Fifth, given that the topic is extremely recent and is still ongoing, the dissertation might miss out on any new developments in the topic – not because of neglect or lack of research, but simply because new developments are still happening and probably will continue to happen for the next couple of years, like amendments to agreements and protocols, sudden changes in leadership, unexpected economic or social reactions, etc. For example, the European Union-United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement and the Northern Ireland Protocol are just coming into force at the beginning of 2021 and the effects of the new arrangements are still to unfold within the next few months.

Based on the above, the chapter structure of the dissertation will be divided in such a way to best highlight the progression of the data. First, there is a literature review covering necessary background data on Northern Ireland and the Irish border in light of British rule and the European Union orbit, Brexit, interdependency between the actors, and socio-cultural factors among the Irish. Second, this will be followed by a theory chapter, tackling

realism, liberalism, and intergovernmentalism. Third, a benchmark chapter will detail the necessary developments to understand the Irish unity and border conundrum better: the Irish border, the Good Friday Agreement on how to achieve unity, the European Union-United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the Northern Ireland Protocol, and the European Union. Then, an analytical chapter for each of the social, economic, and political indicators will follow. Each of the indicators will be sub-divided by actor – Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and European Union. Each sub-division will explain the relevance of the factor on the player, in light of the Irish border. At the end of each of the economic, social, and political chapters, an analysis section will consolidate all the data from the chapter and link to Irish unity. Finally, the conclusion will tie all the data from the previous chapters together and give a fact-based answer to the main question of the dissertation.

In conclusion, the dissertation looks into the probability of Irish unity and the possible timeline. The research will draw on data from all four major actors through a triangle of economic, social, and political indicators, centered on historical background. Moreover, the analysis provided will help clarify the assumptions on Irish unity and determine a general direction for the topic.

II. Literature Review

A. Introduction

The dissertation discusses the Irish border, within the Brexit framework and the border's historical overview. It is important to review academic sources to look into the individual factors that affect Irish unity. This section will look into books and publications used in this dissertation to highlight the past and present relationship and ties between Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union, given the Irish border, the role of the European Union, the Good Friday Agreement, Brexit, and the Northern Ireland Protocol. Ultimately, the dissertation will also highlight the Irish border and prospects of Irish unity, in particular, from a political, economic, and socio-cultural perspective to rationalize the analysis behind the conclusion on the possibility of Irish unity and its possible timeline.

The relevance of the literature review is to understand existing debates regarding the factors affecting Irish unity. For example, whereas some scholars may indicate that the history of strife between the British and the Irish does not play a role in Irish unity, other scholars point out that British intervention in Ireland has built on Irish nationalism that plays into Irish unity. Another debate ranges on about the effectiveness of the European Union programs' efficiency in bridging the economic and cultural gap between Northern Ireland and Ireland, after the Troubles. That is why this section will look into debates on several levels regarding factors that affect Irish unity.

B. The British Factor & Brexit in the Irish Border

The Irish border was triggered again – after years of historical developments - when Brexit started, as a major result of the European Union diluting the United Kingdom’s sovereignty and autonomy and the Irish border became “*an external symptom of an internal disease*”, be it the United Kingdom’s desire for independence or the Irish resentment against the British (DeMars, M. et al., 2018, p. 1 - 10). That is why British insistence on independence from the Union has affected Irish border solutions, as the reason behind the refusal of the backstop was to ensure the United Kingdom’s total divorce from the Union (Spence, 2012, p. 1237 - 1260). However, the fact that the United Kingdom was the most European Union country on the losing side of arguments between 2004 and 2015 – and even further back – explains a lot about Brexit tendencies (O’Brennan, 2019, p. 151 - 171). Combine this information with a dissatisfied United Kingdom paying fees, it deems too costly to a Union that does not give it its financial due, we get a messy case of EU-UK divorce. Then, the divorce gets messier when the Northern Irish are included and see that the United Kingdom treats the issue of the border with indifference. It took extensive lobbying from the Irish side (Connolly & Doyle, 2019) and a fortunate Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) leverage in Westminster to get the United Kingdom to give the Irish border the attention it deserves (Emerson, 2019).

In fact, a quick revision of Irish history shows three major trends: nationalistic, antinationalistic, and new trend (Perry, 2010, p. 330 - 333). The nationalistic trend highlights “a 700-year chronology of English ‘oppression’ and domination of Ireland, and ‘heroic resistance’ to that oppression and domination” (Ibid). The second trend is antinationalism and opposes the latter trend by stating that British rule and influence in

Irish affairs was never harmful and that Irish resistance was uncalled for (Ibid). The last trend rejects the aforementioned trends and seeks to explain Irish history from a clearer historical understanding (Ibid). Among all these three trends, the Irish nationalistic trend shows the most potential, as the wars and clashes across history among Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Great Britain, as well as current calls for Irish unity can best be explained not through the anti-nationalistic trend of agreement among the players and nor through the new trend of trying to re-evaluate British and Irish relations.

Evidently, it is quite clear that antagonism is the base sentiment throughout history and best explains the violent British-Irish history and even the repressed hostility and critical nature of this relationship that persisted after the Good Friday Agreement. Had there been no nationalistic basis, the question of Irish unity would not have survived all the years, only to peak when Brexit happened. To further clarify the fact that the Irish border was not meant to last and to build on the nationalistic trend mentioned above, Matthews (Matthews, 2000, p. 2-9) indicates that “despite its seeming permanence - despite the trenches, blockhouses, and customs huts - few on either side of this, the only international land border in the British Isles believed that a boundary so unnatural and ungeographical would long remain.” Indeed, the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland has been considered by many over the years – till today – as unnatural and has little chance of being maintained, in the event of a chance to eliminate it – exactly like the potential Irish unity vote.

C. The European Union Factor in the Irish Border

Another factor to escalate the Irish demand for unity is the massive amounts the European Union has invested in Northern Ireland (Hayward, K. et al., 2016), especially in funds to maintain peace (McCall, 2011, p. 201 - 221). The European Union's role was pivotal during that time, as when official, political relationships were at a stalemate, the Union reached out on a community level that is characterized by voluntary participation and beneficial programs (Ibid). In fact, a study by Todd, Muldoon, Trew, Cañas Bottos, Rougier and McLaughlin found that the most shared comment was "North and South – it's all the same, we're all the same" from respondents concerning the Union's cross-border initiatives (Ibid). This point is further clarified by (Diez & Hayward, 2008, p.4) the fact that the Union created an enabling and constructive pathway to maintain a positive relationship between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

The enabling pathway stressed on how border conflicts would only harm both sides, as good relations and common projects would bring positive economic and social change to all (Ibid). The constructive pathway was also laid out by the Union and the author uses the word "Europeanisation" to describe how creating a supranational identity to unify was an effective method to create more harmony (Diez & Hayward, 2008, p. 51). However, the author is misled in saying that these pathways may not necessarily lead to positive border relations. These steps help create a positive environment for change and if any such methods were used in other locations, without effect, one must look at other factors to explain the failure of positive border change. Moreover, the argument that Union aid has not had the desired effect in Northern Ireland does not stand when data shows that "supporters of all political parties believe that EU funded projects have been important to

their community's economic development" (Tonge, 2005, p. 17). In fact, around 75 percent of Sinn Fein and DUP members in Northern Ireland indicated that they hold European Union aid in high regard, regardless of political affiliations (Ibid).

In addition, the author criticizes Union efforts like PEACE II by stating that Union requirements that a third of the people participating be Protestants is counterproductive. The authors elaborate that not only can this create an artificial environment, but also reinforces the concept labelling groups – something the activities are trying to eliminate (Diez & Howard, 2008, p. 58). However, the authors are mistaken by seeing this as a major flaw in Union programs. First, it is a must to require certain categories of society to participate to guarantee that all parties in the conflict are represented. Second, this Union requirement is not labelling and certainly does not encourage that because it does not infer judgment. Had the Union requirement not been put in place, the programs would not have been as effective, as some major parties in the conflict may not have been represented. The authors also state that economic enhancement brought by integration has not benefited all parties and has served to further divide (Diez & Hayward, 2008, p. 60). This may be valid, but there is no denying – even from the authors themselves – that without Union integration programs and aid, even the slightest economic benefits would not have been possible.

The uneven economic gains, however, should be attributed not to the Union aid, but to the natural economic cycle. In fact, the European Union's INTERREG program was in large part set up in Northern Ireland to offset the negative effects of uneven economic gains from globalization. In retrospect, European Union aid to Irish PEACE programs between 1995 and 2004, alone, amounted to "nearly 950 million Euros from the Commission, about three quarters of the overall volume, with matched funding from the

UK and Irish governments.” (Diez et al., 2006, p.582). The authors move on to describe how that even though Union programs and funding have reshaped the border from a dividing line to an area of economic growth and cooperation, societal division moved from a large scale frame to small streets where the Union’s effect has not laid roots yet (Ibid).

By reuniting with Ireland, Northern Ireland automatically rejoins the European Union. In fact, the eradication of megaphone diplomacy and sensitivity interdependence between the Irish and British is in major part due to common European Union membership and interests (Tannam, 2011, p. 1191 - 1214) Furthermore, the Union’s effect over the years in Northern Ireland has spilled over into Northern Ireland’s major political parties. This can be clearly seen through the friendly approach of Sinn Fein, Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and of course the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP) to the European Union, a point in favor of unity with Ireland – who is part of the Union and has been on the beneficiary side of the Union scale for years (Tonge, 2005, p.16). If we were to look into the current Northern Irish political party status, we would notice a pro-European Union wave. In the latest elections in Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein took the lion’s share of votes and came out as the leading party (BBC, Irish general election: Sinn Féin celebrate historic result, 2020a). It is worth noting that Sinn Fein first changed its doctrine on the Union in 1998, when it let go of the idea of leaving the Union on the basis that it is no longer an option (Tonge, 2005, p. 18 - 19). Since then, Sinn Fein has called for the extension of the Euro to Northern Ireland and has sought refuge in the European Union as an alternative to the United Kingdom in the party’s quest for a united Ireland (Ibid).

D. The Economic Interdependency Factor in the Irish Border

The issue of the Irish border is further complicated by economic interdependency among the four actors. In light of the dissertation's question and the fact that the United Kingdom is no longer a member of the Union, will trade barriers with the United Kingdom affect the prospects of a united Ireland? Great Britain² has been among Ireland's top trading partners for many years (Irish Government News Service, 2017) (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Overview of Northern Ireland Trade, 2020). The new Irish Sea border arrangements will result in extra paperwork, bureaucracy, and delays (Government of the United Kingdom, 2019a). In effect, this may push traders to resort to increasing reliance on Northern Ireland, rather than the United Kingdom – since Northern Ireland is more closely aligned to the European Union. Moreover, since almost half of total United Kingdom's trade is with European Union countries (United Kingdom Department for International Trade, 2020, p. 4) and that the United Kingdom is third biggest trading partner with the Union (Eurostat, Intra-EU trade in goods - main features, 2019), the European Union – United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement and Northern Ireland Protocol resulted in a somewhat complicated trade relationship across the Irish Sea border. However comforted the United Kingdom was about the Agreement and Protocol, the fact is that they made Northern Ireland more aligned with the European Union's rules and regulations – thus Ireland, as well – and more in favor of unity (Government of the United Kingdom, New Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland and Political Declaration, 2019a) (European Commission, 2020a).

² In this case, Great Britain is mentioned and not the United Kingdom. As will be explained in detail in Chapter V, Ireland's trade dependence on Northern Ireland is much less significant than Ireland's trade dependence on Great Britain.

Hayward (2018, p. 244) argues that in order to guarantee a smooth post-Brexit Irish border transition, four major dispute points must be settled: the European Union Customs Union, the Common Travel Area (CTA), the European Union Single Market, and the Good Friday Agreement. These points of dispute may have been settled by the Agreement and Protocol, but that does mean that the current trade arrangements will not result in more controversy regarding Irish unity, especially when Northern Ireland is moving economically closer to the Union.

E. The Socio-cultural Factor in the Irish Border

The last dimension to the Irish border is a socio-cultural one. Although this dimension does not make headlines as much as political and economic news regarding the Irish border, it remains a very important aspect to consider. To begin with, it is pivotal to define a border, in order to understand its significance. There are many definitions for country borders, but for the sake of the Irish context, the following definition stands out. Hayward (2018, p. 240) defines borders as “lines of defence and distinction between what ‘belongs’ and what is ‘foreign’ – this can easily spread to encompass goods as well as people.” As such, we notice that the value of borders transgresses the meaning of a simple line to a divider of what belongs and what does not belong; the border is a dynamic geographical result of socio-spatial dynamics (Scott & Van Houtum, 2009, p. 271 - 273) (Vukov & Sheller, 2013, p. 225 - 241). That is why the Brexit Irish Sea border and the Northern Irish – Irish Republic border matters because the socio-cultural dynamics in Northern Ireland are changing.

The rise of Sinn Fein and the British dividing Northern Ireland from Great Britain by the Irish Sea border, coupled with historical Northern Irish resentment towards the British, are shifting Northern Irish sentiment to be pro-Irish unity – as they identify with ‘their own’ more than they do with British. To add context, Hayward & Diez (2008, p. 49) and McCall (2011, p. 202) define the border in terms of distinguishing between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, ‘us’ and ‘them’, and ‘here’ and ‘there’ mentality. This distinction is divided by McCall into several categories: religion, culture, sports, and language. First, the author points out the obvious Catholic, South and Protestant, North part of the island, which is indeed a major part of the original cause behind the setting of the border. Second, McCall

mentions culture. There is no one, clear definition for culture, for it can encompass many things at once and differ based on the perspective.

Bodley (Bodley, 2011, p. 17 - 23) agrees that there is not a single definition to pinpoint what culture is, but indicates that the most widely used definition of culture is taken from Edward B. Tylor: “Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” The author comes to a general conclusion that culture comes down to the small differences in daily life. However, the author falls short in this regard by not clarifying this from the Irish point of view, but highlights that culture has so many elements in it that it differs from one town to another in some cases, so let alone between two territories across a border. Third, McCall talks about sports and gives the example of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). Established in the 1880s, during a time of political upheaval, the Association saw past the boundary and considered the island not as the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, but as 32-county-island. This goes to show how sports can still be considered as a factor to unite, rather than divide the Irish. Fourth, the last factor is language. There have been many attempts over the years by the British government to encourage the Irish-medium education. In Ireland, the Irish language is mandatorily taught in schools and used as a requirement in civil service exams. However, the English language is widely used on both sides of the border.

Further examination into this point shows us that the tribal mentality is well and alive (Chua, 2018). As humans, we tend to look for an association with a ‘tribe’. In the case of the Irish border, the tribe starts from being Northern Irish or from the Republic of Ireland. However, when expanded, how do the Northern Irish feel? Do they associate their

bigger tribe with the East or the South? The answer to that lies in the increasing number of Northern Irish that would vote for a unity referendum to be held. In fact, polls held over the years indicated increasing numbers of Northern Irish that said they are becoming more encouraged to vote for unity (Connolly, E. & Doyle, J. 2019).

F. Conclusion

The literature review gives an overview of some of the most debatable points in Irish unity factors. The history of British involvement in Ireland and Northern Ireland, the role of the European Union programs', economic interdependency between the actors, and socio-cultural ties between Northern Ireland and Ireland are highly influential on the prospects of unity, but also up for interpretation in different manners.

In brief, the British historical role of oppression and wars is a basis for building the Irish nationalistic trend and is a major push for Irish unity. In fact, the dissertation will seek out to pinpoint, in upcoming chapters³, details and instances where this strained, cultural relationship has affected Irish unity in the present day. As for the European Union programs' roles in establishing peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland and Ireland, it is clear that the programs have benefited the region, despite claims that the effects were negligible or non-existent. Moreover, economic interdependency between the four actors links them to a large degree, highlighting the importance of economic developments. Interestingly, the recent economic trade agreements push Northern Ireland to become more closely aligned with Ireland and the European Union, subsequently making Irish unity more probable. The socio-cultural aspect further enhances the chances of unity, as Northern Ireland and Ireland share plenty of cultural elements. This will further play into increasing the probability of Irish unity.

³ The effect of Anglo-Irish history on the current Anglo-Irish resentment will be detailed in Chapter VI, section F, p. 107.

III. International Relations Theory in Irish Unity

A. Introduction

In order to look into the case of Irish unity from a theoretical perspective, it is important to study the case from an international theory relations lens. In this respect, the theories of realism, liberalism, and intergovernmentalism provide the best frameworks to compare and identify the most suitable theory for the case of Irish unity. Whereas realism and liberalism have clear differences, liberalism and intergovernmentalism share some common, general elements - albeit with some pronounced differences on a detailed level. This chapter will look into the main points of realism, liberalism, and intergovernmentalism and determine the most appropriate theory for Irish unity.

In order to analyze the theories, the section will start off by looking into the basic elements of realism and liberalism. Then, a descriptive section for intergovernmentalism will follow to explain its details and link to the Irish unity case. The section will conclude with a final overview of the three theories and their relevance to Irish unity.

B. Realism & Liberalism

Realism and liberalism constitute a very mainstream line of thinking in international relations theoretical analysis. In light of the dissertation's topic, this section will explore how realism clashes with the topic, whereas liberalism enhances it.

Realism is characterized by its focus on four main points: states are the principal actors, the state is an isolated, unitary unit, rationality (as opposed to morality) is the base for all decisions, and national security is the most integral of state priorities (Kauppi & Viotti, 2010, p. 37 - 38). In short, "pure realism can offer nothing but a naked struggle for power which makes any kind of international society impossible" (Miller, 2019). To begin with, the entire case of the European Union goes against realism, as states may be the base actor, but the European bloc is an amalgamation of interests and cooperation. As for the case of the Irish border, the lines become blurred. The state is no longer the main focus, as membership to the European Union as a bloc is a major plus for Northern Irish arguing for unity with Ireland for the purpose of becoming part of the European Union again. Moreover, the state is most certainly not isolated, not even in the case of the United Kingdom in Brexit. Brexit and the ironing out of details is still ongoing, chiefly because a smooth economic and political transition is a must for the survival of the United Kingdom. In economy, it appears as though the United Kingdom and European Union are aiming to preserve the links between them – as they are pillars for both parties – hence the realist approach calling for the state as a unitary actor falls. In fact, it seems as though the Northern Irish are clearly against this anti-realist perspective. The increasing calls for uniting with Ireland are, in a large part, calling to reintegrate Northern Ireland within the European Union. A major part of the rationale is cultural, in the sense that the Northern Irish have

never really felt British, but more like outsiders. The Irish cultural identity is still apparent in the polls calling for Irish unity, the rise of pro-unity political parties, discontent with British “mistreatment”, etc.⁴

On the other side of the spectrum, liberalism poses another side of the coin. In its purest form, liberalism is based on four major principles: state, non-state, and transnational actors are important, interdependence in many forms affect state behavior, the agenda of states is extensive, and liberalism stems from the individual-societal level (Kauppi & Viotti, 2010, p. 127-129). In addition, the general liberal umbrella of stoicism and the belief in the good nature of humans underlines the topic at hand. In fact, it is Emmanuel Kant who believed in “accepting the notion of an innate moral sense – sketched a progressive movement toward world peace that worked through the balance of private, selfish concerns, even between nations populated by ‘devils’.” (Moravcsik, 1992, p. 5). While the general principles of liberalism may loosely apply to the general topic – as it is intergovernmentalism and focus on intergovernmental cooperation that most suitably fits the scenario – liberal thought does not fully paint an accurate picture of the Irish border.

In conclusion, realism and liberalism do not match the case for the Irish border. First, the principal actors are individual governments within the larger entity of the European Union, and not standalone nation states or state, non-state, and transnational actors. Second, the principal actor – individual governments – are not solitary or simply interdependent, but are interdependent within the European Union framework, a case framed by intergovernmentalism for the European Union. Third, the base theory foundation

⁴ The elements of Irish cultural identity will be discussed in the Social Indicators of Irish Unity in Chapter VI, p 74.

is not simple rationality or morality, as envisioned by realism and liberalism respectively, but bargaining in order to ensure a non-zero sum game and smooth cooperation for the good functioning of the group. Fourth, as has become apparent with the Irish border negotiations over the past few years, the priority for the principal actors is not national security per se (realism) or a rather extensive, general agenda (liberalism), but a tug of war to reach consensus and a decision that is approved by all (intergovernmentalism).

C. Intergovernmentalism

The theory that most fits the case dealt with by this dissertation is liberal intergovernmentalism. This theory – conceptualized by Andrew Moravcsik – focuses on nation states being the primary actors, bargaining, and the important role of institutions (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, *Liberal Intergovernmentalism*, 2009, p. 67 - 87). The European Union is a perfect example for this theory, in the sense that it embodies a group of states that saw it was in their best interest to create this European bloc by forming supranational institutions to guarantee cooperation, while using bargaining as a way to safeguard each state's interests. In short, it is a bloc in which states are looking to find mutually advantageous bargains (Hooghe & Marks, 2019, p. 1119 - 1124). In fact, the idea of European Union integration was born as a response to the shift in the power balance during the U.S.-Soviet conflict (Ibid). While the latter were accumulating forces, European states were left in the background as mediocre nation states (Ibid). Consequently, European Union integration, from the lens of intergovernmentalism, was consolidated in three steps: domestic formation of national preferences, intergovernmental bargaining to agree on a common denominator, and the creation of EU institutions (Ibid).

Many scholars have spoken about the influence of intergovernmentalism on the European Union. An important aspect to highlight is that intergovernmentalism stands first and foremost on nation states. To illustrate, the Union draws its powers from member state size and resources – not veto rights - within the institutions it created like the European Parliament, Council, Central Bank, Commission, etc. What is most remarkable is that these institutions not only help guarantee a lowest common denominator in most cases, but also show how relatively small European Union countries can outvote bigger ones (Franchino,

2012, p. 326). This is where the power of bargaining comes in, as intergovernmentalism focuses on how much domestic politics affects government preferences. In fact, it is well argued that this theory not only guarantees a lowest common denominator, but also pushes past that by demanding cooperation for the well-functioning of the institutions and consequently the entire group (Franchino, 2012, p. 334).

A case in point of intergovernmentalism efficiency in action is clear in the Union's response to the Euro crisis and Brexit. First, when the Euro crisis hit, financial imbalances pushed many countries like Greece, Ireland, Spain, and Portugal to the brink of bankruptcy, in a time when the Union did not have a collective measure to deal with such a crisis. (Hooghe & Marks, 2019, p. 1118 - 1120) That is why it took years of bargaining between 2008 and 2012 for national governments to agree on a common denominator that would appease Union members and avoid the crisis (Ibid). Second, if intergovernmentalism were to be applied to Brexit, one would assume that Brexit will affect the United Kingdom's domestic politics and not the United Kingdom's association with the Union. In this sense, the present day scenario is accurate in the theory's assumption. Intergovernmental bargaining is the key point in Brexit negotiations to ensure cooperation and the bargaining depends on economic interests and power balance. (Hooghe & Marks, 2019, p. 1126 - 1128) In fact, the United Kingdom cannot disassociate itself from the Union this easily, as their economies are deeply well intertwined.⁵ That is why extensive bargaining and focus on state interests, as well as the role of European Union institutions, have been the highlight of Brexit negotiations and the Irish border.

⁵ This point will be explained in detail in Chapter V, section D, sub-section a, p. 57.

D. Conclusion

The following table summarizes the main points for each theory and links the above theories to Irish unity.

Theory Comparison Breakdown			
	Realism	Liberalism	Intergovernmentalism
Principal Actor	The nation state	The state, non-state, and transnational actors	Government
The State of the Principal Actor	Solitary unit	Interdependence	Interdependence within a larger unit
Base Theory Foundation	Rationality	Morality	Bargaining and cooperation
Priorities	National security	Extensive agenda	Finding a lowest common denominator
Relevance to the Irish Border	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Relevant
	<p>Realism and Liberalism: All four main points do not apply.</p> <p><i>Principal actor:</i> The Irish case at hand revolves around cooperation between the governments of the Republic of Ireland – Northern Ireland (Parliament) – United Kingdom- European Union.</p> <p><i>The state of the principal actor:</i> The Irish case at hand revolves around interdependence between governments, however in this case the governments are not standalone (as in liberalism or realism) but are members of a bigger entity – the European Union.</p> <p><i>Base Theory Foundation:</i> The Irish case at hand revolves around the intergovernmentalist foundation of bargaining and cooperation to reach a common denominator among all parties (the basis of European Union decision making – for example, Euro crisis and Brexit). It is not based on pure rationality (realism) or morality (liberalism), but negotiation and mutual benefit.</p> <p><i>Priorities:</i> The Irish case at hand revolves around finding a lowest common denominator (intergovernmentalism) among the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union to agree on a win-win situation for all on political, economic, and social topics. That is why realism and liberalism do not apply in this case.</p>		

Table 1. Differences between Realism, Liberalism, & Intergovernmentalism

Source: Kauppi, M. V., & Viotti, P. R. (2010). Intellectual Precursors and Influences in International Relations Theory (Fifth ed.). London, United Kingdom: Pearson.

IV. Benchmark Concepts & Agreements

A. Introduction

The case for Irish unity requires some historical perspective, as well as basic information on agreements and deals. Being the root cause of the Irish unity question, the Irish border separating Northern Ireland and Ireland has a rich history that is linked to the Good Friday Agreement. The Agreement was the main focus during Brexit negotiations on the Irish border and highlighted the necessity of maintaining an open border. That is why this chapter will provide a brief outlook on the Irish border's history, the Good Friday Agreement and its stipulations on Irish unity, Brexit and the European Union-United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the Northern Ireland Protocol, and the European Union.

The purpose of this section is to provide benchmark information to understand the basic concepts and knowledge required to form a well-rounded concept on Irish unity. Moreover, it is important to have these benchmark agreements and concepts in mind to gain a better perspective on economic, social, and political factors in the ensuing chapters.

B. The Irish Border

The Irish border has an interesting backstory that pans out over the years. The 500 km line dividing Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland has caused much controversy and political crises over the years. The border first saw light in the Government of Ireland Act that was passed in 1920 and consequently divided Northern Ireland from the Irish Free State (now known as the Republic of Ireland) and gave each its own government and parliament (Hayward, 2018, p. 242 - 243). The border line was drawn in such a way as to give unionists control over land with the highest Protestant-majority population (Ibid). In 1922, civil war lasted a year in the Irish Free State, and Northern Ireland officially used its prerogative in the Government of Ireland Act to announce it will not be part of the Irish Free State (Ibid). Years later, in 1949, the Irish Free State became the Republic of Ireland and left the British Commonwealth, and thus began years of megaphone diplomacy between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom (Ibid). As the years went by, the border transformed from soft, hard, and then to extreme (Ibid). As is explained in this part, the border started as soft – a simple line that had no complicated measures involved. It then became a hard border, as tensions increased and distinct differentiating began between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and turned into an extreme border when it became a war line during the Troubles.

An example of the two parties trying to keep the other on their toes is the suspension of the Common Travel Area (CTA) when WWII broke out in 1939 (Ibid). The CTA made it possible for citizens across the Irish border to travel freely across the border without passports. However, the status of Ireland during WWII as a neutral country pushed the United Kingdom to suspend the CTA for security and political reasons until 1952 (Ibid).

Then, the Troubles broke out in 1968 and the border reached its extreme phase by becoming a war front between Northern Ireland and Ireland (Ibid). Tensions between Northern Ireland and Ireland resulted in civil rights movements in the late 1960s that caused heavy fighting from the 1960s to the 1990s (Armstrong, Herbert, & Mustad, 2018, p. 16 - 22). The fighting pushed Great Britain to intervene and the conflict now involved all three parties (Ibid). The Irish border became a peaceful border again when the Belfast Agreement – also known as the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) - was signed on April 10, 1998.

As for the Irish border dilemma in Brexit, the Protocol will enforce a regulatory border between Northern Ireland and Great Britain in the Irish Sea. A customs border will be set between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, since Northern Ireland will stay in the United Kingdom's custom's territory, but also keep in place European Union customs, tariffs, quotas, and single market trade regulations for goods, excluding services (Invest Northern Ireland, EU Exit Northern Ireland and Customs Implications of the Northern Ireland Protocol, 2020). However, since the European Union – United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement removed tariffs and quotas between them, there is no more dispute on these two points (Ibid). Northern Ireland has the opportunity to vote on whether this arrangement should continue. Its first chance will be in four years after the finalization of the transition period (House of Commons Library, Brexit and the Northern Ireland Border, 2020a). This solved the issue of avoiding a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland because the idea of putting border controls between the two parts is a keen reminder of the Troubles. Moreover, there are many across Northern Ireland and Ireland who keep calling for unity. In fact, the discussion of putting a hard border instigated attacks and protests. It is worth noting that nowhere in the Agreement is there a mention of a no hard

border stipulation. However, no sooner that the notion of a hard border saw light, did the negotiators shut the door on it.

C. The Good Friday Agreement

The Good Friday Agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement, was signed on April 10, 1998 and was the solution for ending years of conflicts across the Irish border. (Armstrong, C. I., Herbert, D., & Mustad, J. E, 2018)

The division began when, as mentioned above, the Irish island was divided between: (1) unionists who want to be part of the United Kingdom and (2) nationalists who wanted to join Ireland (Ibid). Then, in the late 1960s, civil rights movements started and that introduced years of war and fighting from the 1960s to the 1990s between the two aforementioned groups (Ibid). The intensity and gravity of the fighting caused Great Britain to intervene, thus making the war a three-party conflict (Ibid). After years of fighting, talks began with all three parties in 1996 and this led to the Agreement, which basically had 3 major administrative branches: (1) the creation of the Northern Ireland Assembly, (2) institutional cooperation arrangements between Northern Ireland and Ireland (3) and between Britain, Northern Ireland, and Ireland (Biletz, 2013, p .12). After the Agreement was put to a vote, it passed with a 94 percent approval in Ireland and 71 percent approval in Northern Ireland and was officially signed on April 10, 1998 (Ibid). On December 02, 1999 Ireland changed its constitution, so as to no longer have any claim to the whole of the Irish island and the United Kingdom got direct rule over Northern Ireland (Ibid)

An important factor that helped improve Irish and British relations is the joint European Union membership, when both countries joined the European Economic Community in 1973 (European Commission, Representation in Ireland, n.d.). This allowed for open, easy trade of economic goods and services, shared regulations, and open passage for Irish and British across the border. However, Brexit shook the entire foundation of this

border state of peace with years of debate that resulted in the Irish Sea border – a solution that has proven to be controversial, to say the least.

a. The Good Friday Agreement on Unity

While the Good Friday Agreement is cited as the source to address the Irish border and unity scenario, there is no specific detailed process to go ahead with uniting Northern Ireland and Ireland, in the event that will happen. The Agreement most notably addresses the following (Government of the United Kingdom, The Belfast Agreement, 1998):

1. At the time the Agreement was signed, the three signatories agreed that even though there is a percentage of Northern Irish that want Irish unity, the majority opted for the United Kingdom.
2. The United Kingdom and Ireland endorse Northern Ireland's freedom to choose whomever they support, be it the United Kingdom or Ireland.
3. It is up to the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland alone, freely and without external coercion, to decide on a united Ireland. A border referendum must be held in Northern Ireland and Ireland, at the same time.
4. In case the future people of the island of Ireland decide on uniting the island, the British and Irish governments agreed to support in their legislations measures to achieve this unity.
5. If an official referendum proves that the majority in Northern Ireland voted for unity with Ireland, the Secretary of State of Northern Ireland must prepare proposals to present to Parliament. Then, the United Kingdom's government and the Irish government must agree on how to make unity happen.

6. The Secretary of State of Northern Ireland may order a referendum to be held regarding Northern Ireland's constitutional change on unity, if it appears that the majority in Northern Ireland wish for Irish unity. There is no specific method that is explicitly mentioned in the Agreement to determine if a majority has been met. Several indicators may be adopted like a Catholic majority census, a majority vote in the Northern Ireland Assembly, or even a nationalist majority in the Assembly (Sargeant & Paun, 2019).
7. A border referendum can be called upon only seven years after the latest poll was held.
8. The Agreement sets general details on the Northern Ireland Assembly, the British-Irish Council, and the North-South Ministerial Council, highlighting that they are all interdependent.

D. Brexit

Brexit is rooted in 2013 when then-Prime Minister David Cameron announced a referendum on the United Kingdom's membership in the European Union (House of Commons Library, *Brexit timeline: events leading to the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union*, 2017). The referendum was held on June 23, 2016 and the results tipped in favor of pro-Brexit by 51.9 percent (Ibid). It was not long before Cameron resigned, as this was not the vision he desired to lead his country through (Ibid). Then, Theresa May was appointed the United Kingdom's Prime Minister on July 13, 2016 (Ibid). Shortly thereafter the House of Commons approved the Brexit law in February 2017 and a month later, Parliament had passed the Brexit bill and Article 50 was triggered (Ibid). Triggering Article 50 meant officially launching the long, strenuous process of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union (Ibid). However, after several rounds of discussions and disputes between May and all concerned parties, Parliament still rejected May's Brexit deal three times before the March 2019 deadline (Castle & Mueller, 2019). The strife carried on for many more rounds, so the deadline was extended twice until October 31, 2019 (BBC, *Brexit: UK and EU agree delay to 31 October*, 2019a).

Due to the negotiation impasse, May announced that she was submitting her resignation on May 24, 2019. May was succeeded by Boris Johnson, who was elected the United Kingdom's Prime Minister on July 24, 2019 (BBC, 2019b). Once Johnson assumed this position, he started extensive negotiations with all parties. He was particularly fixed on making sure that postponing the deadline again was not an option – so much so, that he threatened a no-deal Brexit (Birnbaum, 2019). However, in September 2019, Members of Parliament passed a law that would prevent a no-deal Brexit and Johnson restarted

negotiations to ensure a deal (BBC, 2019c). As a result, the United Kingdom pushed the deadline once again and the new date of January 31, 2020 was set (Jamieson, 2020a). After, Johnson called for a general election and succeeded in guaranteeing an 80-seat majority in elections held on December 12, 2019, thus finally making sure Brexit would pass (The Guardian, 2019).

Brexit was signed as a done deal on January 31, 2020 and a transition period of one year until December 31, 2020 was given to reach a trade deal (BBC, 2019d). After almost a year of tough negotiations, the European Union – United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement was agreed upon on December 24, 2020 (European Commission, EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement: protecting European interests, ensuring fair competition, and continued cooperation in areas of mutual interest, 2020a). The agreement touches on economic and social cooperation, a framework for law enforcement and citizen security, and governance stipulations (Ibid). The main highlights are as follows (Ibid):

1. The trade deal:

- A. There will be no tariffs and quotas on goods between the United Kingdom and European Union.
- B. Both parties agreed on environmental protection measures, labor rights, tax transparency, fisheries, etc.
- C. Both parties agreed on a level playing field regarding air, road, and maritime transportation to protect passenger and workers' rights.
- D. The United Kingdom may participate in certain European Union programs for 2021-2027 (conditioned by the United Kingdom contributing to the European Union budget).

2. The agreement coordinates law enforcement and judicial cooperation between the United Kingdom and European Union.
3. A Joint Partnership Council will be established to oversee the application and interpretation of the Agreement.

Since the Agreement was signed at such a late stage, it will be provisionally applied until February 28, 2021. Until then, the European Parliament, Council, and British Parliament must sign off on the Agreement to bring it into effect (Ibid).

E. The Northern Ireland Protocol

The Northern Ireland Protocol was issued on January 31, 2020 (Government of the United Kingdom, 2019a). It is worth noting that the Protocol came in force on January 1, 2021, at the end of the transition period (Ibid). The Protocol guarantees that the European Union will avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, protect the island's economy, and adhere to the Good Friday Agreement (Ibid). The main elements of the Protocol are as follows (Stojanovic, 2020):

What does the Protocol Say?	What does it mean?
<p>Common Travel Area The UK, EU, and Ireland respect the regulations of the Common Travel Area</p>	British and Irish citizens enjoy free movement between UK, Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, but not to other EU countries.
<p>UK Customs Territory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Northern Ireland is part of the UK customs territory. - Northern Ireland is included in any UK agreements with third-party countries. 	If the UK signs a free trade agreement with another country, then Northern Ireland is included.
<p>Customs and goods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>For Northern Ireland-Ireland trade:</u> EU's customs rules apply and no tariffs or restrictions are enforced. - <u>For Great Britain-Northern Ireland trade:</u> no tariffs or quotas apply unless the good is 'at risk' of moving to the EU. - <u>For Northern Ireland-Great Britain trade:</u> no tariffs or quotas apply. - <u>For third party-Northern Ireland trade:</u> goods will be subject to UK tariff, unless the goods move to the EU. - <u>'At risk' goods:</u> EU tariff will apply. If the good is proven to stay in Northern Ireland, then the UK will reimburse traders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Even though Northern Ireland is part of the UK customs territory, customs checks will apply on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, to ensure no customs checks between Northern Ireland and Ireland. - The Joint Committee is yet to determine the criteria for 'at risk' goods.

Regulations

- Northern Ireland has to stick to EU single market rules in several areas, like technical regulation of goods, agricultural and environmental production and regulation, among others.
- Northern Ireland will have to stick to some EU single market rules for goods to avoid regulatory checks with Ireland.
- Goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland will be subject to checks.

VAT

- Northern Ireland will remain in the UK VAT area, but will adhere to EU VAT laws and will be part of the EU's IT system.
 - The UK will be responsible for applying EU laws in this regard and will keep revenue from VAT in Northern Ireland.
- Since importers have to pay VAT on any good from the UK that goes into the EU, keeping Northern Ireland in the EU's IT systems and subject to EU law on VAT prevents border checks between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Table 2. Northern Ireland Protocol - Main Points

Source: Brexit deal: the Northern Ireland protocol, by Alex Stojanovic, February 05 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/ryRW6

A consent mechanism was agreed on, in which the Northern Ireland Assembly may vote, four years after the ending of the transition period, by simple majority to continue following the European Union's law. If the Assembly votes not to continue, the Protocol will no longer be valid two years later (Ibid).

E. The European Union

The European Union is a bloc of 27 countries that was formed in 1993. The bloc is composed of many institutions that work in tandem to guarantee the good functioning of the institution. The main bodies of the European Union are the European Council, Council of the European Union, European Parliament, European Commission, Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), European Central Bank (ECB), among many others (European Court of Auditors (ECA), European External Action Service (EEAS), European Investment Bank (EIB), European Ombudsman, etc. (The European Union, n.d.(a)).

The European Union is one of the major, most powerful blocs around the world. The bloc constitutes only 6.9 percent of the world population, but has a pronounced place in world economics. It operates as a single market and had a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$ 19,454.00 billion in 2019 (The European Union, The Economy, n.d.(b)). This cements the European Union as one of the top three entities in international trade, along with the United States and China, in the world (Ibid). The European Union is also an influential player in the political arena. In fact, the bloc is responsible for a multitude of development programs around the world, as well as aid, relief, and peace projects, and most notably helping in solving many international relations disputes as a mediator for promulgating peace (The European Union, The EU in Brief, n.d.(c)).

That is why the United Kingdom's divorce from the European Union has faced much controversy within the United Kingdom regarding advantages and disadvantages. The European Union's massive influence has also contributed to the historical developments on the Irish border and unity. The European Union has played a role in the

Irish border by looking out for the interests of the Republic of Ireland, a Union member, and by being a driving force in Brexit and Irish border negotiations.

F. Conclusion

This chapter provides benchmark information on basic concepts like the history of the Irish border, the Good Friday Agreement, Brexit, the Northern Ireland Protocol, and the European Union. This information is important to understand the economic, social, and political factors and their implications on Irish unity prospects.

The brief historical overview of the Irish border serves to highlight the relevance of the border and the significance of the historical events that it witnessed. Indeed, the wars that took place over the years have cemented the idea that the Irish border can never become a hard border. In fact, that is the result of the Good Friday Agreement that put an end to the fighting among Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Great Britain. The Agreement's stipulations on how to achieve a united Ireland are very general. Even though the Agreement states that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland may call for a unity referendum if it seems as though a majority are in favor of it, the basis to determine if a public majority in favor of unity has been reached is not clear in the Agreement and up to debate. Moreover, Brexit has restarted the debate on Irish unity and brought it back to the spotlight. That is why the process of Brexit negotiations, as well as the resulting Northern Ireland Protocol and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement are important developments and agreements to inspect. In fact, they are the determinants of the new economic and political relationship among the main actors that will directly affect Irish unity. The European Union is also a major actor to highlight, as it is involved in Brexit and Irish border negotiations, and an invested actor in Irish unity – given that Ireland is a Union member.

V. Economic Indicators in Irish Unity

A. Introduction

Several factors come into play when considering the probability of Irish unity. One of the most important factors is the economic interrelation among the major actors, Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. The fact that these actors highly depend on each other for economic balance and success further complicates the Irish border, as the new arrangements incur further complications in trade specifics. This chapter will shed light on trade specifics in each of the actors, the degree of economic interdependency and relations among the major actors involved in the Irish border, and will draw relationships on how this will affect the conception, implementation, and ripple effect on the Irish border.

The relevance of the chapter is to study the main trading partners, FDI inflows and any other indicator in Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union to get a clear picture of the health of their economies. This economic overview will lead to establishing links among the four main actors to explain the prospects of Irish unity from an economic perspective, under the umbrella of the Northern Ireland Protocol and the European Union-United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

B. Northern Ireland

a. Northern Ireland's Major Trading Partners

The main focus is attributed to Northern Ireland, so where does Northern Ireland stand from an economic perspective? Northern Ireland's major economic partners are its direct neighbors, meaning Great Britain and Ireland. As per Figure 1, export trade numbers in 2019 with Great Britain totaled US\$ 13.7 billion, US\$ 4.14 billion with Ireland, US\$ 1.55 billion with the U.S.A., US\$ 773.85 million with Canada, followed by Germany, France, and the Netherlands (Statista, Main destinations of goods exports of Northern Ireland as of 2019, by trade value, 2020a) (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2020).



Figure 1. Main Goods Export Destinations, Northern Ireland, 2019, Million US\$

Source: Main destinations of goods exports of Northern Ireland as of 2019, by trade value, Statista, June 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/cfrF6

As for Northern Ireland's main import partners in 2019 in Figure 2, the list goes as follows: US\$ 18.3 billion with Great Britain, US\$ 3.02 billion with Ireland, US\$ 1.03 billion with the U.S.A., US\$ 906 million with China, US\$ 906 million with the

Netherlands, US\$ 6.47 million with Germany, and US\$ 434.8 million with the Netherlands (Statista, Main sources of goods imports of Northern Ireland as of 2019, by trade value, 2020b). The data shows that Northern Ireland's lists of main partners in terms of imports and exports are quite similar, meaning that the interdependency is further solidified between these trading partners.



Figure 2. Main Goods Import Sources, Northern Ireland, 2019, Million US\$

Source: Main sources of goods imports of Northern Ireland as of 2019, by trade value, Statista, June 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/IH046

This trend in trade has been consistent over the years. Between 2011 and 2019, the total value of Northern Irish goods imports and exports has been topped by Great Britain, followed by Ireland, the rest of the European Union, and the rest of the world (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Overview of NI Trade with GB, 2019) (Statista, Value of goods exports and imports to Northern Ireland (UK) in 2018, by source market*, 2020c).

b. European Union Funding and Investment in Northern Ireland

The European Union has invested millions of dollars over the years in Northern Ireland in the form of development aid, as well as INTERREG and PEACE programs. This

is a major incentive for Northern Ireland in looking to the European Union as a safety net and major contributor to its development. It is worth noting that the European Union has announced that it will still fund PEACE programs until 2027, even though Brexit means that Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom are no longer part of the European Union (Campbell, 2020a).

Aid from the European Union comes in the form of many programs. Between 2007 and 2013, Northern Ireland has received European Union aid through the Single Farm Program (US\$ 170.2 million), Northern Ireland Rural Development Fund (US\$ 435.4 million), European Fisheries Fund (US\$ 23.7 million), Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective (European Regional Development Fund) (US\$ 405 million), Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective (European Social Fund) (US\$ 217.7 million), among many others (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2015). However, the major European Union sources for aid and development for Northern Ireland are the PEACE and INTERREG programs.

i. The PEACE Programs

The European Union's PEACE programs total four, with plans for a fifth. The PEACE program's timeline is as follows (Special EU Programmes Body, Impact of EU Funding on the Region, 2020a, p. 2)):

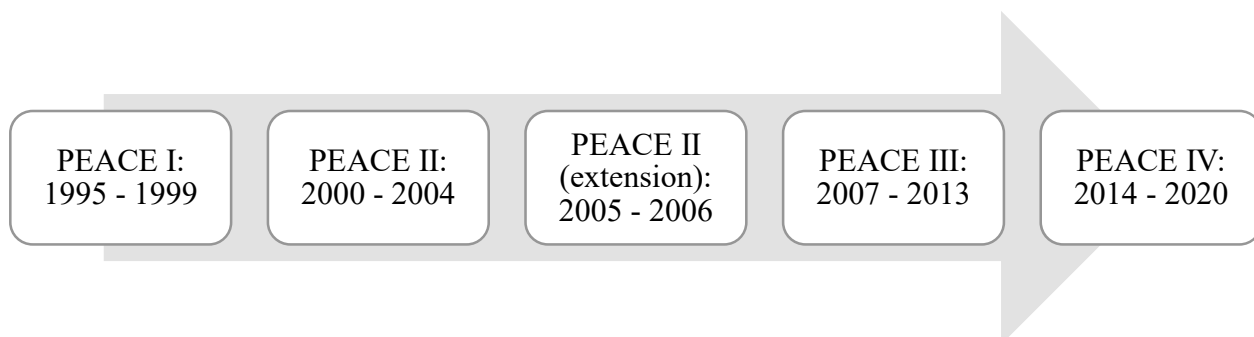


Figure 3. Northern Ireland's PEACE Program Timeline Breakdown

Source: The impact of EU Funding on the Region, by Special EU Programmes Body, 2020, retrieved from https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/styles/file_entity_browser_thumbnail/public/PEACE%20Content%20Type/The_Impact_of_EU_Funding_in_The_Region.sflb.pdf

As per Figure 3, funding for these PEACE programs has amounted to a sizeable sum over the years, as the program's outreach has expanded. Funding was provided by the European Union, on one hand, and by the British, Northern Irish, and Irish governments, on the other hand. Funding for the programs is divided as is summarized below (Ibid.):

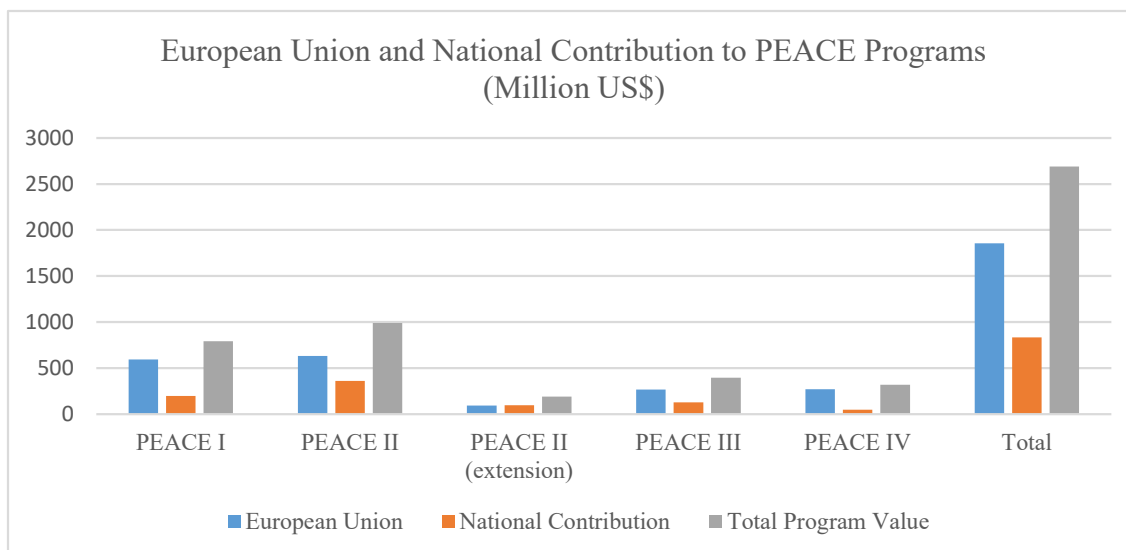


Figure 4. European Union & National Contributions to the PEACE program, Million US\$

Source: The impact of EU Funding on the Region, by Special EU Programmes Body, 2020, retrieved from https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/styles/file_entity_browser_thumbnail/public/PEACE%20Content%20Type/The_Impact_of_EU_Funding_in_The_Region.sflb.pdf

PEACE programs have had a major impact on development in many sectors. PEACE I came as a direct response to the cross-border conflict over the years and funded over 15,000 projects aiming at conflict resolution, development of cross-border businesses, promulgating values like tolerance and fighting sectarianism, etc. (Colgan, 2012) PEACE II's most notable achievements have been creating around 6,000 new jobs as a result of cross-border initiatives and developed businesses, assisting approximately 10,000 businesses in developing their businesses and growing them across the border and internationally, training around 100,000 individuals and helping them to acquire skills to help gain qualifications, reaching out to around 42,000 individuals in the form of Reconciliation programs to promote cross-border cooperation and peace, etc. (Special EU Programmes Body, 2020a, p. 3) PEACE III has built on the previous programs' achievements and reached out to slightly over 189,000 individuals in over 3,000 events to tackle sectarianism and racism, involved around 25,000 people in conflict resolution training sessions, launched seven, cross-border pilot programs between the public and private

sectors with the aim of merging societies, among many others (Ibid). The program continues with PEACE IV that has made a very significant impact in the program by – including, but not limited to – providing training for 2,000 teachers and involving 280 schools in development programs that gave 135,000 students the chance to participate in shared education classrooms, training around 5,000 young individuals in soft skill improvement programs, anti-racism and sectarianism trainings, as well as conflict and trauma resolution, etc. (Special EU Programmes Body, 2020b)

ii. The INTERREG Program

The European Union has invested much in cross-border development and peace, as seen above through the PEACE program. Another European Union program is the INTERREG program that was introduced in 1991. Strand A of this program is a direct result to the creation of the European single market and the latter's negative effects on cross-border regions across the European Union.

There have been five INTERREG programs between 1991 and 2020 (Special EU Programmes Body, 2020a, p. 5). The programs are divided over the years, as follows (Ibid):

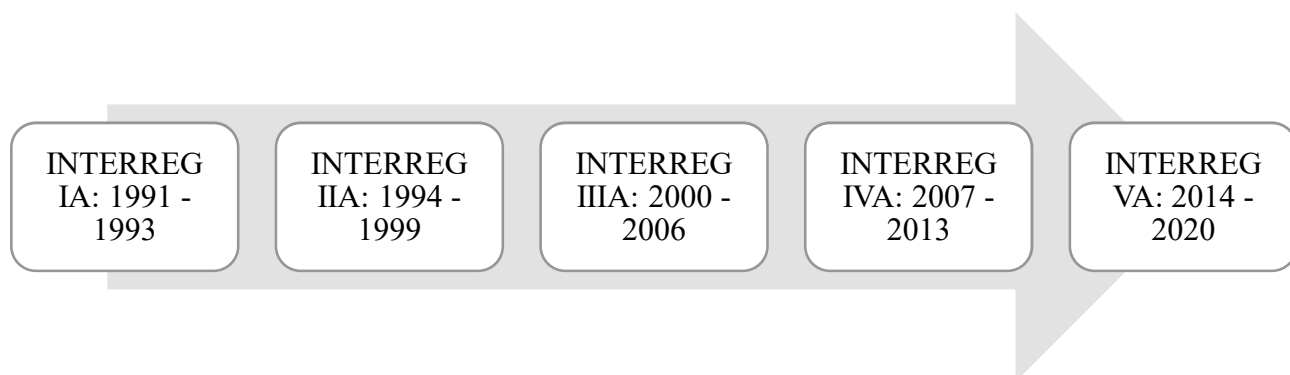


Figure 5. Northern Ireland's INTERREG Program Timeline Breakdown

Source: The impact of EU Funding on the Region, by Special EU Programmes Body, 2020, retrieved from https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/styles/file_entity_browser_thumbnail/public/PEACE%20Content%20Type/The_Impact_of_EU_Funding_in_The_Region.sflb.pdf

The program's funding for Northern Ireland, the border region of Ireland, and Western Scotland came from the European Union, as well as from contributors like the governments of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Great Britain (Ibid). The program's funding can be summarized as is shown in Figure 6 (Ibid):

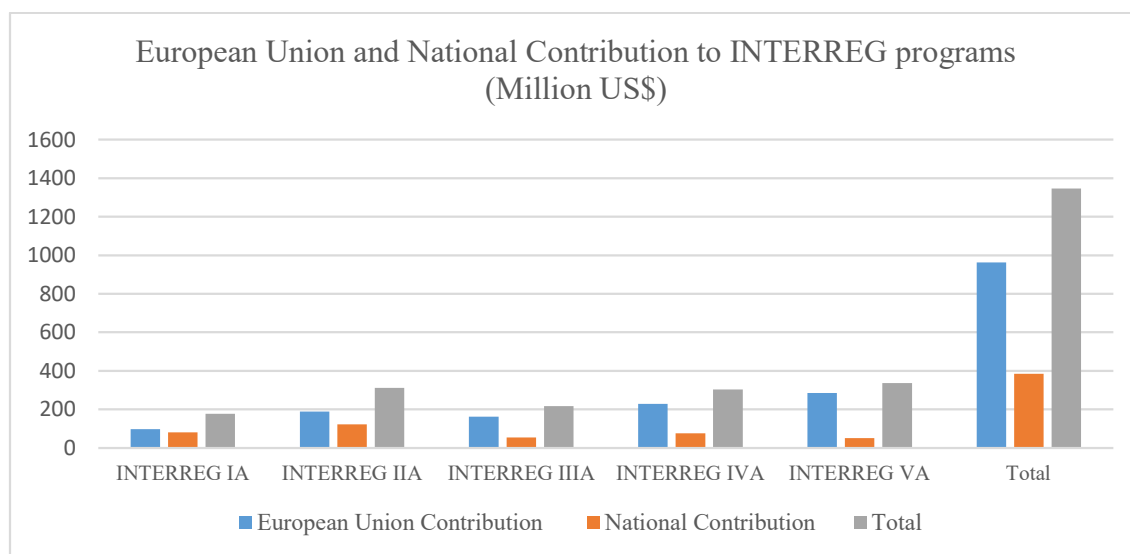


Figure 6. European Union & National Contribution to INTERREG, Million US\$

Source: The impact of EU Funding on the Region, by Special EU Programmes Body, 2020, retrieved from https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/styles/file_entity_browser_thumbnail/public/PEACE%20Content%20Type/The_Impact_of_EU_Funding_in_The_Region.sflb.pdf

INTERREG IIIA up to INTERREG VA has reaped many benefits for Northern Ireland, the Irish border, and Western Scotland. INTERREG IIIA created slightly over 2,600 new full-time jobs, helped approximately 3,600 small and medium enterprises (SMEs), created 102 rural businesses, etc. (Special EU Programmes Body, 2020a, p. 6) INTERREG IVA assisted more than 3,500 businesses in incorporating creativity and innovation in their work, created 954 new jobs resulting from the program's assistance to businesses, promoted cross-border cooperation by forging links between 1,318 cross-border businesses, etc. (Ibid) INTERREG VA has given the lion's share of funds to the

research and innovation sector, followed by major investment in climate change and environment preservation and technical assistance (European Commission, 2020b).

c. Foreign Direct Investment – Inflows in Northern Ireland

The implications of Brexit and the Irish border conflict for Northern Ireland spill over into the economic aspect of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Northern Ireland has much in terms of investment infrastructure and labor to offer as an incentive for FDI, for European and other countries as well. However, with the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, the investment incentives that shared European Union membership provides will be – in the least – altered. This part will highlight the effects of Brexit and the border conflict on European investment in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland has a lot to offer for investors who are looking for new markets. First, Northern Ireland has great transport and communication infrastructure, making use of its proximity to mainland Europe and Great Britain through frequent ferry and freight sailings, over four ports, and being the pioneer in Europe to achieve 100 percent broadband coverage. (Invest Northern Ireland, 2019) Second, labor salaries are much lower than many European countries – reaching up to 30 percent less, compared to some countries, office rents are also among the cheapest in Western Europe, and taxes are the lowest among all other European countries (Ibid). Third, over half of the Northern Irish population is under 40, the region is characterized by one of the youngest and most enthusiastic workforce in Europe, and the region’s education system is among the most qualified in Europe, with two major world-class universities like Ulster University and Queen’s University Belfast (Ibid). There are many other investment incentive indicators in Northern Ireland like low

operating costs, cheap cost of living, support packages, etc.(Ibid) That is why Northern Ireland is a major point of interest for European FDI.

Looking into FDI inflow numbers is important because it makes up an important part of a country's economy. Moreover, it is worth noting that even though an Agreement has been reached, numbers have already shown that Brexit's expected effect on the United Kingdom will cause a 3-4 percent decreased in the GDP and a four percent reduction in Northern Ireland's GDP (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2015, *op. cit.*)

In July 2020, the Department for International Trade released numbers indicating that the number of new FDI projects has increased in Northern Ireland for the third year in a row: 40 in 2019/2020, 35 in 2018/2019, and 28 in 2017/2018 (Sync NI, 2020). Interestingly, over a five year period between 2015-16 and 2019-20, 41 percent of the total new FDI projects came from the European Union (Ibid). Moreover, the 14 percent increase in FDI projects between 2018-19 and 2019-20 was much greater than the United Kingdom's increase of 4 percent, during the same period (Ibid).

Therefore, FDI inflows in Northern Ireland are witnessing rapid increases, with the European Union as a major investment source. Furthermore, the fact that Northern Ireland is closely aligned with the European Union, as a result of the Protocol, definitely played a major role in favoring Northern Ireland over the rest of the United Kingdom, given the facilitated factors and access to the Union's markets.

C. The Republic of Ireland

The Republic of Ireland is one of the most important actors in the Irish border dilemma. The border that the Republic shares with Northern Ireland, as well as the sensitivity of the border's history, make the relationship between Ireland – as a member of the European Union – and the United Kingdom quite complicated. However, the Irish Sea border provides facilitated means to trade with Northern Ireland. This part will look into Ireland's main trading partners, FDI inflow numbers, as well as trade with Northern Ireland in detail.

a. Main Trading Partners of Ireland

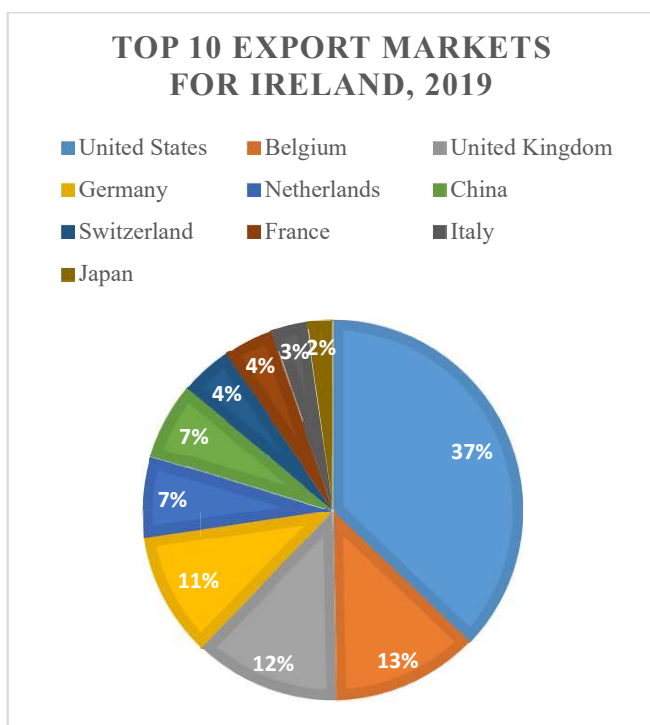


Figure 7. Top 10 Ireland Export Markets, 2019, Percent
Source: Ireland's Top Trading Partners, by Daniel Workman, 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/biBGZ

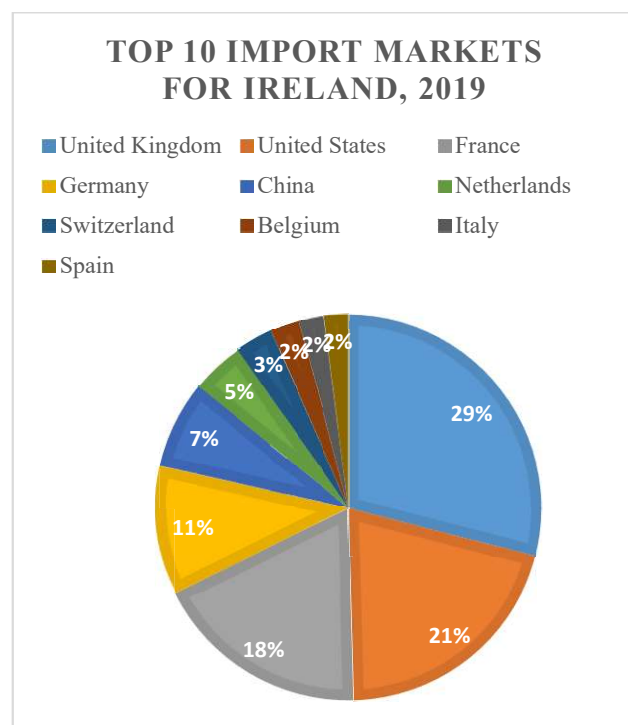


Figure 8. Top 10 Ireland Import Markets, 2019, Percent
Source: Ireland Imports By Country, by Trading Economics, 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/qDUW8

Figures 7 and 8 show Ireland's top trading partners for 2019 (Workman, Ireland's Top Trading Partners, 2020b) (Trading Economics, Ireland Imports By Country, 2020b).

Five out of ten countries and six out of ten countries for exports and imports, respectively, are European Union countries. The United Kingdom ranked third and first for exports and imports, respectively, showing the closeness of the economic relationship between the two neighbors.

b. Trade between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

This part of the dissertation tackles trade interconnectedness between Northern Ireland and Ireland.



Figure 9. Total Cross Border Trade between Ireland & Northern Ireland, 2018, Million US\$

Source: Value of total cross border trade of goods and services between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (UK) in 2018, by direction of trade flow, Statista, March 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/fgiBM

Figure 9 shows that Northern Ireland is more dependent on Ireland, as the North-South trade value (US\$ 5.7 billion) was almost double the South-North trade value (US\$ 3.2 billion) in 2018.

This appears to be a trend, as between 2012 and 2016, Northern Ireland's exports and imports to Ireland constituted around 27 percent of Northern Ireland's total exports and 23 percent of imports (Office for National Statistics, Patterns of Northern Ireland trade

by destination, product and business characteristics: 2012 to 2016, 2018). In fact, Figures 1 and 2 corroborate that Ireland is among the top 3 trading partners of Northern Ireland. In contrast, between 2012 and 2015, Ireland's exports to Northern Ireland constituted a mere 2.1 percent of total Irish exports and 2.3 percent of imports (Central Statistics Office, Brexit: Ireland and the UK in Numbers, 2016).

This data has major significance, as it sheds light that Northern Ireland is much more dependent on Ireland, rather than the other way round.

c. Foreign Direct Investment – Inflows in the Republic of Ireland

A major point to consider is the inflow of foreign direct investment. Ireland has proven that it is a formidable competitor, in terms of attracting foreign direct investment. This part will look into Ireland's FDI – inflows and link it to Irish border developments.

Ireland has taken giant steps in working on attracting foreign direct investment. The Policy Statement on Foreign Direct Investment has highlighted major points that Ireland has worked on between 2015 and 2019 to boost FDI (Department of Enterprise, n.d.). The government has worked on refreshing Ireland's vision to investors as a hub for talented labor and expertise, a place where cities of urban design meet lifestyle opportunities, a friendly environment that encourages both start-ups and heavyweight companies, as well as a location for thriving sectors like research and development, industry, and science (Ibid). In fact, research centers are replacing low-level activities, and sectors like engineering, medical technology, information and communication technology, etc. are being thoroughly invested in (Noredea Trade, n.d.).

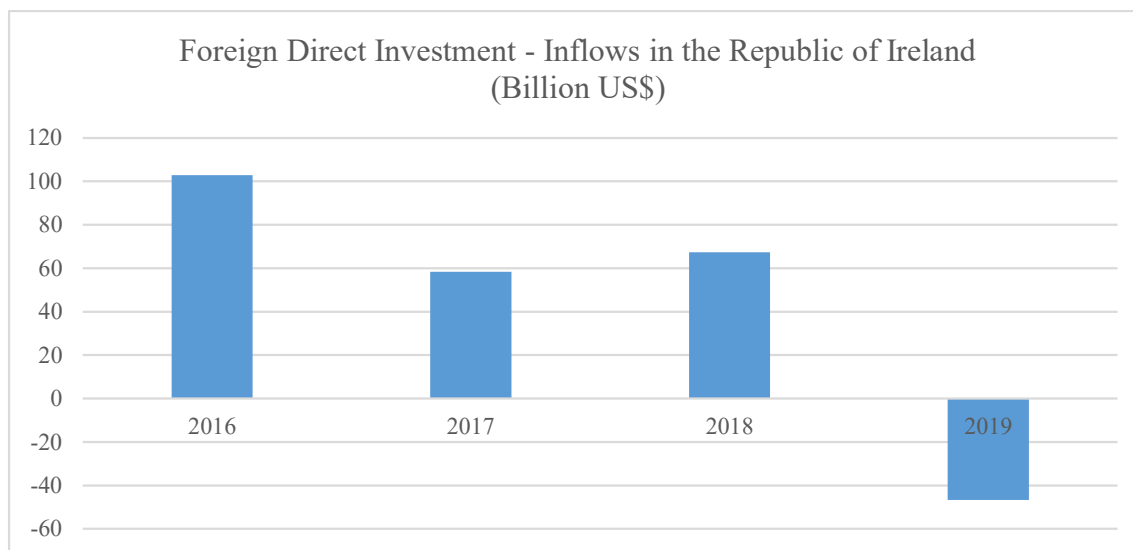


Figure 10. Ireland FDI-Inflows, 2016-2019, Billion US\$

Source: Foreign direct investment, net inflows (BoP, current US\$), by The World Bank, retrieved from shorturl.at/nryBH

Figure 10 shows that FDI in Ireland has been fluctuating, over the past few years, with US\$ 102.91 billion in 2016 and closing at US\$ -46.63 billion in 2019. However, Q1 and Q2 of 2020, showed positive FDI inflow signs (Maguire, 2020). According to the OECD, Ireland was the biggest recipient of FDI inflows in the first six months of 2020 with US\$ 75 billion, more than US\$ 62 billion in the United States and US\$ 68 billion in China (Ibid). Although Ireland's FDI inflows were 10.7 percent lower in the first half of 2020, it was still better than sharper decreases around the world, due to Covid-19 (Ibid). Many major economies were negatively affected in the first half of 2020, like European economies that took particularly sharp blows (Taylor, 2020). Even FDI inflows in North America fell by 56 percent, making Ireland's decrease a sign of a strong investment market (Taylor, 2020).

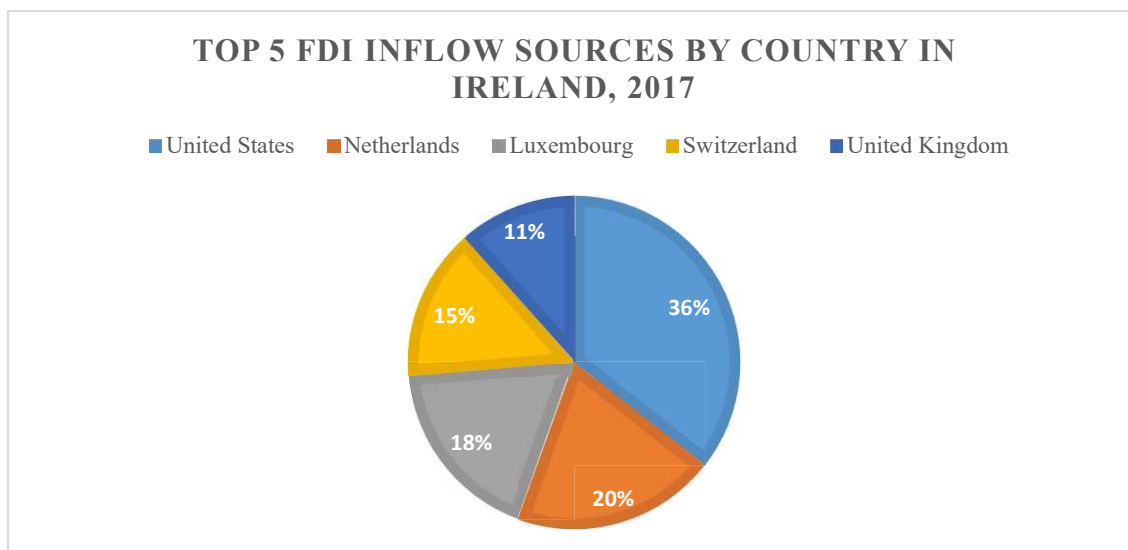


Figure 11. Top 5 FDI Inflow Source Countries in Ireland, 2017, Percent

Source: Ireland: Foreign Investment, by Santander Trade Markets, December 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/epBUY

As can be deduced from Figure 11, the lion's share of total FDI sources in 2017 are from the United States, followed by other European countries (Santander Trade Markets, 2020). The United Kingdom ranks fifth in terms of major FDI sources, still maintaining a strong position as economic partner.

D. The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has been the star of the entire Brexit show, so far. Brexit officially happened on January 31, 2020 and the trade Agreement is set, but the United Kingdom cannot leave the European Union unscathed. This section will cover the economic side of the effects of Brexit and the Irish border on the United Kingdom's economy and consequently Northern Ireland.

a. The United Kingdom's Major Trading Partners

An overview of the United Kingdom's major trading partners highlights the importance of trade with the European Union. To add context, trading partners and numbers with the United Kingdom help explain the situation more clearly.

It is true that the United Kingdom may have gained economic benefits as part of the European Union, but negotiating new trade deals with countries, based on its own preferences, instead of those of 27 other states is a major point. In 2018, the United Kingdom negotiated separate bilateral trade deals with Morocco, Georgia, Central America, South Korea, Switzerland, Chile, Caribbean countries, and several others that would kick in after the transition period (Government of the United Kingdom, UK Trade Agreements with Non-EU Countries in a No-Deal Brexit, 2019b). However, no matter how many bilateral trade deals the United Kingdom strikes, the European Union remains its main focus.

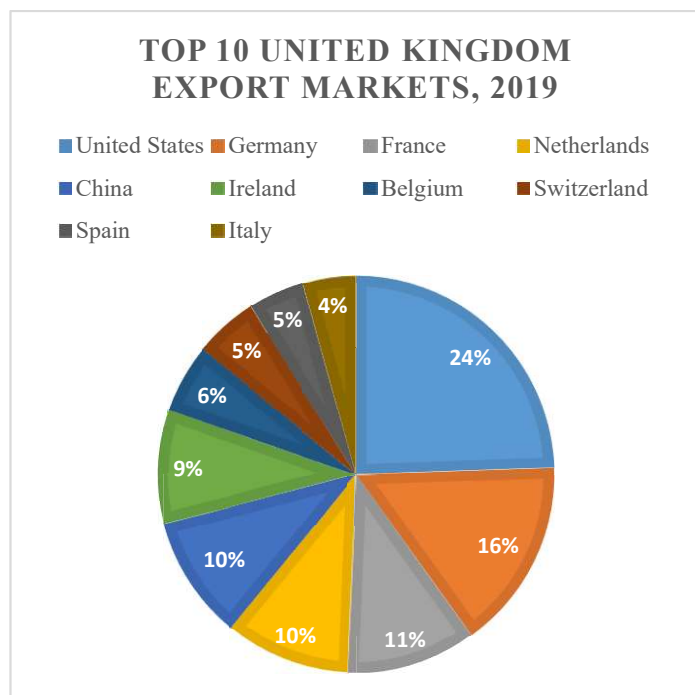


Figure 12. Top 10 UK Export Markets, 2019, Percent
Source: United Kingdom's Top Trading Partners, by Daniel Workman, 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/bhmq8

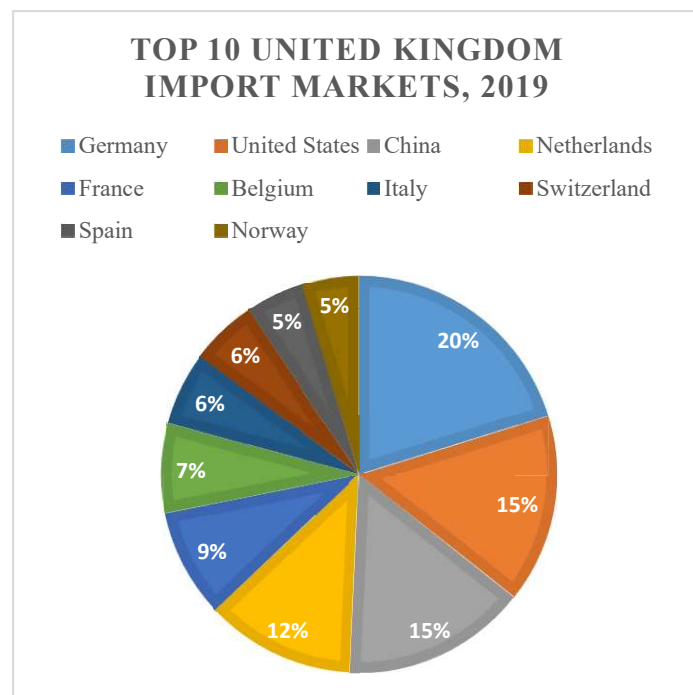


Figure 13. Top 10 UK Import Markets, 2019, Percent
Source: United Kingdom Imports By Country, by Trading Economics, 2019, retrieved from shorturl.at/qsyJW

Figures 12 and 13 detail the major partners of the United Kingdom in trade for 2019 (Trading Economics, 2020a) (Workman, 2020a). As we can deduce, European Union countries constitute a major part of the United Kingdom's trading partners. Seven out of ten export and import markets for the United Kingdom are members of the European Union, constituting 65 percent of total exports and 64 percent of total import destinations in 2019. However, to make more sense of this data, it is important to look at the big picture through the European Union.

In 2019, the United Kingdom's total exports to the European Union totaled US\$ 387.93 billion and total imports from the European Union totaled US\$ 493.49 billion (House of Commons Library, Statistics on UK-EU trade, 2020b). The interesting part is

that total exports and imports with the European Union account for 43 percent and 52 percent of all United Kingdom exports and imports, respectively (Ibid).

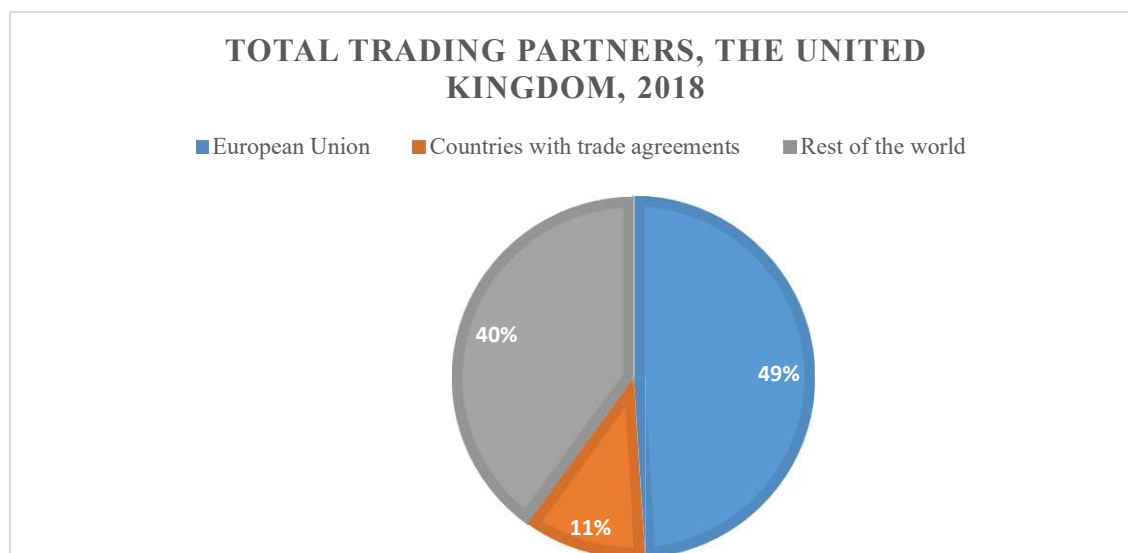


Figure 14. Total UK Trading Partners, 2018, Percent

Source: Statistics on UK-EU trade, by House of Commons Library, November 10 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/wC013

Figure 14 highlights that the European Union is the biggest trading partner for the United Kingdom and that is exactly why the trade deal with the European Union is very important. However, even though a trade deal has been struck, the United Kingdom's GDP is set to fall by 3-4 percent, as a result of Brexit (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2015, op. cit.).

To put all of this given together, how is this data interpreted in Irish border language? Former-Prime Minister Theresa May's backstop solution to the Irish border was refused many times in the House of Commons for many reasons, in most part to avoid still adhering to the European Union's regulations. This is important because since the European Union is such a significant trading partner, adhering to its regulations and economically depending on it makes Brexit useless. As such, the Irish Sea border was the alternative that would break ties between the United Kingdom and the European Union, in

the form of a common customs union with the European Union, and ensure a peaceful border solution with the Republic of Ireland.

b. Foreign Direct Investment – Inflows in the United Kingdom

Foreign direct investment – inflows in the United Kingdom is a major point to consider, given that it has a direct effect on all Northern Irish-related matters. Given the worldwide economic problems due to COVID-19 and economic slowdown, the United Kingdom has been fairly able to stand its ground.

In 2019, the United Kingdom ranked 8th (eighth) in the world as one of top 20 host economies for FDI inflows (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2020).

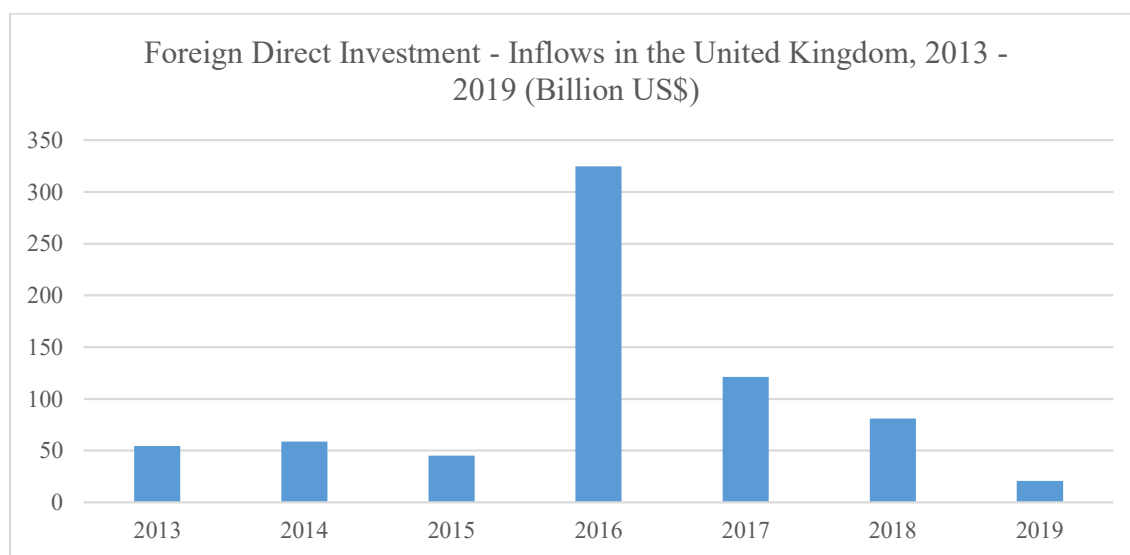


Figure 15. Total Annual FDI-Inflows in the UK, 2013-2019, Billion US\$

Source: Foreign direct investment, net inflows (BoP, current US\$) - United Kingdom, by The World Bank, retrieved from shorturl.at/iszNV

Figure 15 indicates that after Brexit negotiations started in 2016, FDI inflows dropped in the United Kingdom. However, this has not severely affected the United Kingdom's standing. As previously mentioned, in 2019, the United Kingdom ranked eighth worldwide in terms of FDI – inflows and second among European states in 2019 (Ernst &

Young, 2020). What is most impressive is the fact that the United Kingdom has always come in first place since 1997 (Ibid). This was the first year that the United Kingdom has ever come in second – with 1,109 projects - in Europe, behind France with 1,197 projects (Ibid). It is remarkable that despite the shadow set by the unsettling Brexit negotiations, global economic slowdown, and the breakout of Covid-19, the United Kingdom is still among the top 5 global host countries for FDI – inflows, along with the United States, Canada, Netherlands, and Ireland (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2020, *op. cit.*). However, an alarming trend of decreasing FDI-inflows is being set. If the United Kingdom does not manage to address this issue and make the most of the new trade deal with the European Union, the United Kingdom could witness major problems.

As for the United Kingdom’s partner countries that contributed to FDI – inflows, we notice a steady trend.

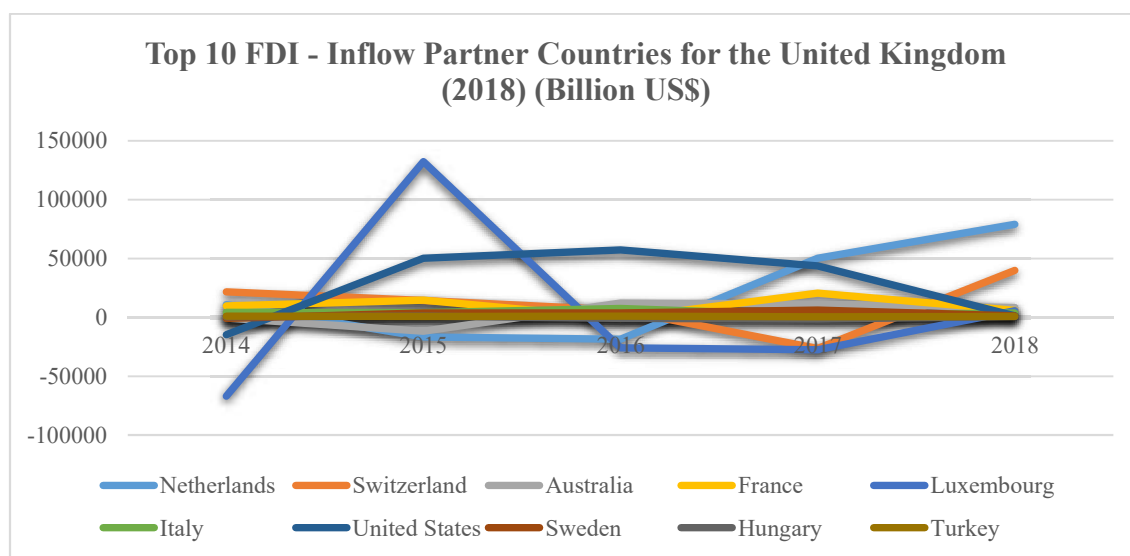


Figure 16. Top 10 FDI-Inflow UK Partner Countries, 2018, Billion US\$

Source: Inward FDI flows by partner country, by OECD, 2020, retrieved from doi: 10.1787/04f8069b-en

As can be deduced from Figure 16, half of the top ten biggest sources of FDI inflows in the United Kingdom are members of the European Union (Netherlands, Italy,

Sweden, France, Hungary, and Luxembourg) (OECD, 2020). This parallels Figures 7 and 8 that show that the European Union has the lion's share of United Kingdom export and import markets.

E. The European Union

a. The United Kingdom from the European Union's Perspective

The European Union is one of the most important partners in Brexit and the Irish border conundrum. The European Union is involved in Brexit, as it is the party that the United Kingdom has been negotiating since 2017 to make Brexit happen and reach a trade deal before the end of the transition period. Moreover, the European Union is directly involved in the Irish border solution. Ireland is one of the main, concerned parties in the management of the border with its neighbor, Northern Ireland. Since Ireland is a member of the European Union, the Union has proven to be a strong source of support for Ireland all throughout.

To start off, we look at the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Union. 2019 was the last year in which the United Kingdom had to contribute to the European Union's budget.

The United Kingdom's Financial Contribution to the European Union (2019) (US\$)

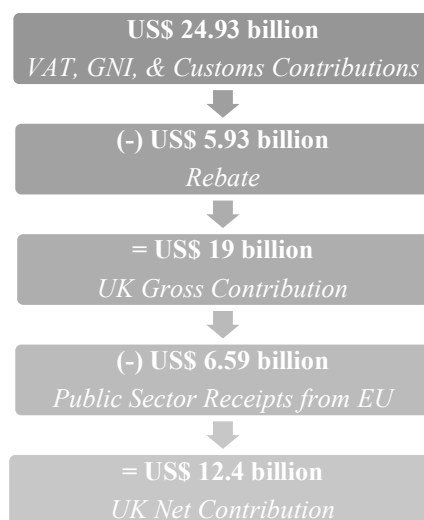


Figure 17. UK Total Financial Contribution to the EU, 2019, US\$

Source: The UK's contribution to the EU budget, by House of Commons Library, August 11 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/byEGZ

As shown in Figure 17, the United Kingdom paid the amount of US\$ 12.4 billion in 2019 as its yearly contribution to the European Union, after deducting the rebate amount and public sector receipts received from the European Union (House of Commons Library, The UK's contribution to the EU budget, 2020c). It is quite a sizeable amount and is one of the main reasons that pushed for Brexit. On an overall basis, the United Kingdom has received US\$ 1.32 for every US\$ 2.64 it has paid (AcKrill, 2016). Moreover, the United Kingdom is among the European Union's top contributors. Between 2014 and 2017 alone, the United Kingdom ranked third top financial contributor to the European Union with 13 percent of total contributions, only to follow Germany and France in first and second place, respectively (Full Fact, 2018).

From a trading perspective, the United Kingdom takes up a large part of the European Union's trade sheet, be it in imports or exports.

Trade numbers show a consistent trend, in which the United Kingdom has ranked among the European Union's top 3 trading partners between 2009 and 2019, along with two of the world's major economic power houses, the United States and China (Eurostat, 2020). The data drills down into showing that the United Kingdom ranks second among the European Union's top export markets, with a share of 15 percent of the European Union's total exports in 2019 (Ibid). Furthermore, the United Kingdom ranks third among the European Union's top import partners in 2019, with 10 percent of total import value (Ibid).

This data serves to show that the European Union and the United Kingdom are closely intertwined, in terms of economic interdependence. Not only was the United Kingdom one of the biggest financial contributors and trading partners to the European

Union, but the European Union takes up the lion's share of the United Kingdom's total trade balance (around 50 percent) (Figure 14).

b. The Republic of Ireland from the European Union's Perspective

The Republic of Ireland has been a member of the European Union since 1973 (The European Union, Ireland, n.d.(d)). As a member of the European Union, Ireland has benefited more from the European Union than the inverse. This part will discuss the European Union's unbalanced relationship with the Republic of Ireland and its effect on the Irish border resolution.

Ireland has only recently become a net contributor to the European Union in 2018 (Connelly, 2019). Between 1973 and 2013, the Republic of Ireland received US\$ 73.6 billion from the European Union and gave back US\$ 24.5 billion (Fin Facts, 2009). It began work in 2013 to become a net contributor and achieved that status by "contributing €315m more than it drew down in 2018 - an increase from €173m in 2017 and €181m in 2016". (Fin Facts, 2009, *op. cit.*) (O'Connell, 2020).

Therefore, we can deduce that Ireland is benefiting to a great extent from its European Union membership. It has spent most of its membership years taking more than it gives, as well as benefiting from the eased regulations offered by the Union's membership in all aspects, including but not limited to, politics, economy, tourism, etc. The European Union has also been a major support for Ireland in the Brexit and Irish border negotiations. The border between Ireland and Northern Ireland not only affects trade with the United Kingdom - one of Ireland's biggest trading partners - but also ensures peace across a border that has been characterized by strife, discord, and wars for years.

F. Implications of Irish Unity on Northern Ireland and Ireland

This part examines the general numbers if Irish unity were to happen in the next couple of years. It is of paramount importance to stress on the fact that this section looks into the implications of Irish unity in the very near future and not if unity were to happen in ten or twenty years, for example.

Irish unity in the very near future does not show favorable numbers for neither Ireland, nor Northern Ireland. The fact is that if Northern Ireland were to leave the United Kingdom and unite with Ireland, Northern Ireland would have to carry with it a part of the debt to the European Union with it and lay it on Ireland's shoulders (Fitzgerald, 2019). However, Northern Ireland could hope that – in a best case scenario - this debt could be scrapped, in return for relieving the United Kingdom of the subsidy it sends to Northern Ireland (which account for around 20 percent of Northern Ireland's GDP) (Ibid). That is a possibility because, in the event of Irish unity, the United Kingdom might consider gradually decreasing the annual subsidy, until unity negotiations are over. By totally stopping Northern Ireland's subsidies, it decreases the total debt the latter takes with it. However, the United Kingdom might not choose this option and keep the full amount of the debt. However, assuming the debt is decreased, it still doesn't bode well for Ireland.

Therefore, by 2019 numbers, that would leave Ireland to deal with US\$ 9.95 million, rather than US\$ 13.5 million (Ibid). That would not be the end of the Irish's new economic problems. For example, welfare payments in Northern Ireland would have to be adjusted to Ireland's level, increasing Ireland's financial support to Northern Ireland by around 50 percent (Ibid).

The numbers for Northern Ireland also look somewhat dismaying. The British market is one of Northern Ireland's biggest markets (Ibid). Therefore, even though Northern Ireland would regain an entire European Union market, it would have difficulty with one of its biggest markets – especially given that trade arrangements between the Union and the United Kingdom have changed and a united Ireland will be considered as a European Union country trading with the United Kingdom.

Given all this data and knowing that the British economy is currently stronger than the Irish economy, the idea of unity might not seem very alluring for the Irish and Northern Irish. However, this does bring back the shadow of the former United Kingdom Prime Minister Sir Harold Wilson's government, when the United Kingdom took a serious step towards disengaging with Northern Ireland (The Irish Times, 2005). In fact, Wilson said in his 1971 memoir that the United Kingdom enjoyed "responsibility without power" in Northern Ireland (Ibid). After the Ulster Workers' Council strike, Wilson was considering the idea of giving Northern Ireland a dominion status and gradually cutting off Northern Ireland over a period of five years (Ibid). Wilson persevered in making this idea into a reality and by June 1974 the Northern Ireland Office was drawing up precedents in international law, like the Dominion of New Zealand, the Irish Free State, or Newfoundland's decision to unite with Canada (Ibid). However, it was the U.S.A. that put an end to this. The fear of a possible war between Northern Ireland and Ireland was too big (Ibid). Moreover, in the event of a war, the United Kingdom will be forced to intervene again, thus going back to being involved in Northern Ireland's affairs, as well as be seen as the traitor for being the instigator for the dilemma.

Based on all of the above, we deduce that the question of Irish unity is not a new one. It has been tackled over the years by the British, Northern Irish, and Irish from many different angles. However, unity in the very near future seems quite far-fetched, but not a far-fetched idea.

G. Conclusion

The above data in this chapter looks into the economic reality of the four main actors of this dissertation. The purpose of gathering and analyzing this data was to have a look at the economic interdependence among these actors and forge a link to Irish unity prospects.

First, data from Northern Ireland consolidates general assumptions about the economy of the region. It is evident that Ireland and the United Kingdom are the top two trading partners for Northern Ireland. However, the fact that trade with other European Union countries ranks in third place is a definite advantage for Irish unity, as a united Ireland will automatically be a Union member. Another point of focus for Northern Ireland was European Union aid in the form of PEACE (1995 – present) and INTERREG (2000 – 2014) programs over the years, not to mention other smaller-scale investment and development programs. Indeed, the European Union has invested sizeable amounts in Northern Irish programs, especially in agriculture. It is worth noting that the European Union has indicated it will continue to fund the PEACE program in Northern Ireland after 2020, even though the United Kingdom is no longer part of the European Union. As for FDI inflows in Northern Ireland, numbers have been increasing over the past few years, with the European Union accounting for almost half of the projects. Moreover, FDI inflows in Northern Ireland greatly surpass the United Kingdom's, an advantage acquired, in most part, by Northern Ireland's close alignment to the European Union, as a result of the Protocol. Ultimately, how does this data reflect on unity prospects? A common denominator in Northern Ireland's analysis is the European Union. It accounts for two of the top three ranks in trading partners, provides extensive investment and aid programs,

and is a major source of FDI. Northern Ireland may benefit from being closely aligned to the European Union, as a result of the Protocol, but that only applies for goods, not services. The economically positive relationship between Northern Ireland and the Union is definitely a point in favor of Irish unity. This is further consolidated by the close trade and service dependence of Northern Ireland on Ireland, a point in favor of unity.

Second, Ireland further consolidates the economic interdependence among the main actors. The United Kingdom ranked third and first among Ireland's major exports and imports, respectively, in 2019. The United Kingdom also took up fifth place among Ireland's top FDI inflow source countries in 2017. Moreover, trade between Northern Ireland and Ireland is in favor of Ireland, as Northern Ireland's trade dependency on it far surpasses its dependency on Northern Ireland. In fact, good FDI potential, a growing economy, and closer alignment with Northern Ireland, seem to constitute firm steps towards unity.

Third, the United Kingdom provides a clear view of economic interdependence with the main actors. The United Kingdom's biggest trading partner is the European Union – with the lion's share of 49 percent of total trade with the United Kingdom in 2019. What makes this number even more important is the fact that the United Kingdom has struck trade deals with only 11 percent of countries with which it trades and has no trade deal with 40 percent of the rest of the world. As for Ireland, the relevance of trade with the latter is for two reasons: Ireland is one of Northern Ireland's top trading partners and it ranked sixth as one of the United Kingdom's top export markets in 2019. As for FDI inflows, six European Union countries rank among the United Kingdom's top FDI inflow sources. In parallel, the United Kingdom was not successful in optimizing many points in the trade

deal. It failed in convincing the European Union to decrease the number of checks on goods coming from the United Kingdom, failed to have its professional qualifications and licenses automatically recognized, and failed in allowing UK-based testing centers to continue certifying products for the Union's market (Lowe, 2020). Moreover, the new trade deal with the European Union does not cover services, so the services sector is bound to take a hit (Ibid). The aforementioned listing of negotiation failures will lead to more paperwork and delays. If this is added to the decreasing FDI inflow numbers since Brexit, a bleak picture will be the result. The United Kingdom already lost its first place standing in 2019 as the top FDI destination in the European Union since 1997, so the top 6 FDI sources for the United Kingdom might be re-thinking their investments there in the future. Given that the United Kingdom GDP is expected to drop by 3 – 4 percent in the next decade, as a result of Brexit, and that it will bring Northern Ireland's GDP by 3 percent down too, it is inevitable for Northern Ireland to find solutions. These solutions come in the form of Lynas Foodservice's, a major food supplier in Northern Ireland, decision to source more goods from Ireland, rather than get stuck in bureaucratic trade delays by sourcing from Great Britain (Halpin & Holton, 2020). Another example is seed potato sellers in Scotland. Northern Ireland will not be able to buy seed potatoes from Scotland, until third-party equivalence is granted (Ibid). Naturally, the closest and easiest place to look for a replacement is in border-free Ireland. The examples of Lynas Foodservice and seed potato sellers in Scotland is a micro sample of macro problems between Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom that will push Northern Ireland more towards Irish economic dependence, and ultimately Irish unity.

Fourth, the European Union serves as an economic link to all three actors. The European Union not only invested millions of dollars in development programs in Northern Ireland, but also provided Northern Ireland with an open market to 27 other countries. As for the United Kingdom, not only has it proven to be one of the top five biggest financial contributors to the European Union over the years, but also stands in third rank among the European Union's biggest trading partners in 2019, third only to the United States and China – the two biggest economic and political power houses in the world. That serves to cement the United Kingdom's standing among the top powers. In addition, the European Union is even more involved in the border crisis with Ireland being a European Union member, given that it shares a land border – characterized by a history of strife - with Northern Ireland. Therefore, the European Union has every benefit in maintaining an easy and peaceful trade relationship between the two and with the United Kingdom. Although not ideal for either party, the trade agreement preserves the good economic relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union. It is also worth noting that Ireland has also stepped up its role in the European Union in recent years and has become a net contributor since 2018, a point in advantage of Irish unity.

The overview of the financial troubles in a near-future unity scenario between Ireland and Northern Ireland has been discussed in detail in this chapter. It is not in their benefits to consider unity in the next couple of years, but this could all change in a couple of decades, or slightly less. Ireland has recently become a net contributor to the European Union and is building its economy at a fast pace, so these financial problems might not seem so relevant in the far future.

In conclusion, this chapter highlights the close economic interdependence among the European Union, the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland, and Ireland. The trade agreement seems to have given Northern Ireland an advantage over the United Kingdom and made it diverge from the United Kingdom and align with Ireland and the European Union. Northern Ireland has incentive to be a European Union member – a status gained by uniting with Ireland – in the form of economic aid and support, facilitated trade with Ireland, easy access to Europe's markets, membership in one of the world's biggest, most influential blocs, among many others. Moreover, Ireland's economy is booming, as it has recently become a net contributor to the European Union and is already among the world's top 10 countries for FDI inflows. However, unity in the near future is neither expected, nor advised. This is, nonetheless, a problem that can be remedied in ten or twenty years, opening the door for this prospect once again.

VI. Social Indicators in Irish Unity

A. Introduction

Looking into social indicators to further analyze the prospects and timeline of Irish unity is very important. Social indicators study the people's answers in polls, demographic shifts, as well as social attitudes and changes. In the case of Irish unity, social indicators are a very effective way to determine what the people are saying. This is of paramount importance since Irish unity depends on the people's answers in a referendum in Northern Ireland and Ireland. The social indicators chapter will look into polls and other social trends in Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union.

The relevance of the chapter is to add an integral social perspective to the conclusion on Irish unity. The chapter will start off by explaining the main underlying concept of tribal mentality, then move on to specific indicators like polls, demographics, as well as historical and current social trends, in each of the four main actors.

B. The Tribal Mentality

A notable trend among societies in general is the prevalence of tribal mentality. Although society has evolved in such a way to eliminate the tribe in the traditional sense of the word, the mentality still prevails. In the case of the Irish border, the tribe mentality refers to the Northern Irish' sense of belonging to a bigger group: the British or the Irish. This is where the question lies in determining the majority's tribe of choice in Northern Ireland.

It may be hard to think of the current Western society as tribal, in the standard definition of the word. However, research and experiments have shown that the sense of tribal belonging is innately found in humans. An experiment conducted by Northeastern University in Boston asked participants to answer a series of questions, based on which each was assigned as a habitual 'over estimator' or 'under estimator' (Yudkin, 2018). Then, the participants were asked to observe a person perform a task; but unbeknown to them, the person was cooperating with the researchers without the participants' knowledge and was asked to cheat on the task assigned to him. Half of the participants were told that this person was in the same category as them, while half was told the opposite. Interestingly, participants who were told that the person had the same estimation style as they did were much more likely to go easy on the person, compared to the second half of participants who rated the person much more harshly. Experiments of the like extend to younger ages, as well. Research published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA took a sample of children between the ages of six and eight and divided them into two teams of "blue" and "yellow" (Ibid). After a series of tests, the conclusion was clear that the children punished members of the other group more than those belonging to their

group (Ibid). This proves that our tendency to differentiate between us and others is an instinct that seems to come naturally to people. Although tribal mentality proved to be quite useful throughout history to ensure the survival of mankind, it may sometimes evolve into something more harmful.

Toxic tribalism is “A loyalty to one’s own tribe or social group to the point that dogma and dysfunction become the standard.” (Dahhaj, 2018). In everyday terms, toxic tribalism may sound like ‘tribes’ discussing each other, using the following terms (Ibid):

Us	Them
Our glorious leaders	Their wicked despot
Our great religion	Their primitive superstition
Our noble populace	Their backward savages
Our heroic adventures	Their brutish invaders

Table 3. The 'Us' vs. 'Them' Terminology Difference

Source: Why Toxic Tribalism Is Destroying Our Society & What To Do About It, by Zaid Dahhaj, February 18 2018, retrieved from shorturl.at/mrtJ0

The negative side effects of toxic tribalism are many. Violence and genocide are a direct effect of this mentality, being the product of toxic tribalism and misuse of power (Ibid). Another side effect is inaction from side fights, easily portrayed by any political impasse in a government when opposing political parties refuse to agree to the other’s plan, proposition, etc. simply because of the ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality (Ibid).

In Northern Ireland, tribal mentality may show in the small details. For long periods of time, religious segregation in Ireland determined where people lived (Barber, 2018). In its simplest form, Catholics and Protestants divided themselves by neighborhoods and geographical location and expanded this division into years of wars and mistreatment.

How does this fit into politics? Given man's natural tendency to look for a tribe to feel a sense of belonging, politicians have used this tactic along with fear to manipulate the masses (Javanbakht, 2019). Examples of such cases include the Ku Klux Klan, Nazism, the crusades, and even current left-wing and right-wing political parties. Tribalism, mixed with fear, has pushed people to commit acts that they would not have done under other circumstances. In Northern Ireland, the 'us' and 'them' fear-induced tribal mentality has led to wars, segregation, and conflict over the years. Whereas the Irish fought each other in the past, based on Catholic and Protestant belonging, the Northern Irish fight now to identify themselves with the British or Irish tribe. With Brexit came the Irish border debate and the alienation of Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom by a border in the Irish Sea. It was after years of peace that the affiliation of Northern Ireland is once again under question. The topic of Irish unity has been discussed frequently since Brexit began, given the tug-of-war in Northern Ireland between nationalists and unionists.

After having set the foundations for social Northern Irish tribal mentality, the following sections will look into the public's opinion on the Northern Irish identity, in an attempt to pinpoint the changes and direction to the tribe's alliance.

C. Northern Ireland

a. Polls in Northern Ireland

Organized and well-executed unity polls are among the best ways to have a look at public opinion regarding a certain topic. In the case of Irish unity, there are many polls that have shown the progression of public opinion over the years. The importance of these polls has increased with the many unprecedented instances and surprises in Northern Ireland. Since the 2016 referendum, 12 public opinion polls were held regarding the border poll (Tonge J. , 2020). Generally, the polls showed general disfavor for unity, but with wildly varying results (Ibid). The following section will look into the latest three polls in Northern Ireland and analyze the change of public opinion, the degree of change, and the effect it may have in the latest polls recorded, all of which tend to show similar trends being assimilated.

*i. **Liverpool University Poll***

A poll carried out by Liverpool University, Britain's Economic and Social Research Council, and Social Market Research was published in February 2020 and is among the most recent polls in Northern Ireland on the topic. The study involved 2,000 people and was done between December 28, 2019 and February 11, 2020 (Reuters, 2020a).

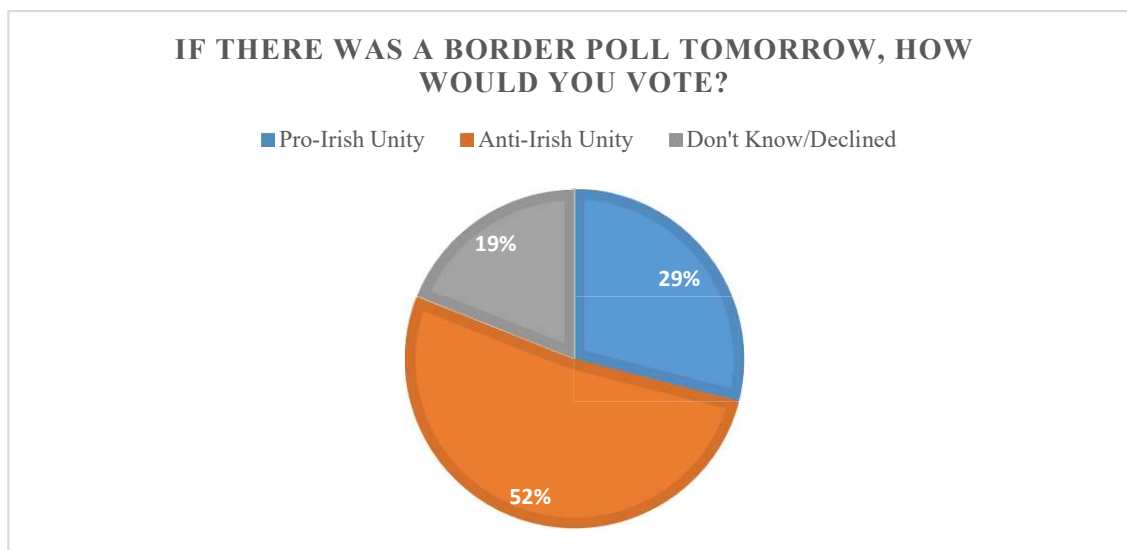


Figure 18. Border Poll Results in Northern Ireland, Liverpool University Poll, 2020, Percent
 Source: Just 29% in Northern Ireland would vote for unity, major study reveals, by Suzanne Breen, February 18 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/ptlY8

As per Figure 18, the result shows that if a vote were to be held the following day, 29 percent would vote for unity, 52 percent would vote against unity, and 19 percent did not know how they would vote (Ibid). However, the highlight of the study is that the number of participants voting for Irish unity increased by 2 percent, since the last poll in 2017 (Ibid). At this rate, enough people will vote pro-Irish unity in two decades (Ibid). If the category of people who did not know how to vote were not included, the results would tip in favor of voting against unity by 65 percent and voting for unity by 35 percent (Ibid).

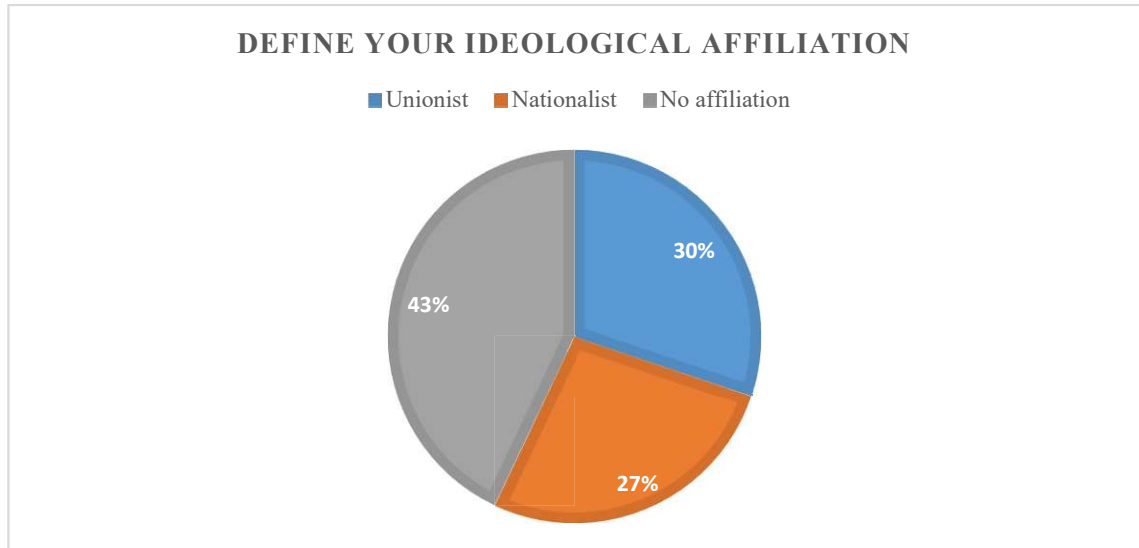
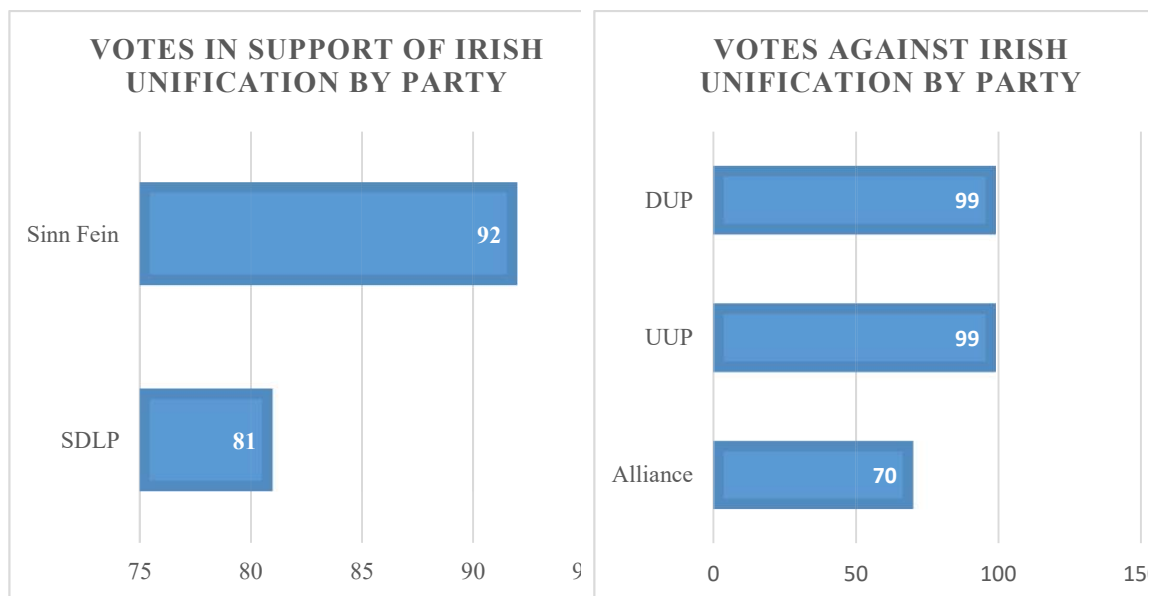


Figure 19. Choosing an Ideological Affiliation, Liverpool University Poll, 2020, Percent
Source: Just 29% in Northern Ireland would vote for unity, major study reveals, by Suzanne Breen, February 18 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/ptLY8

As per Figure 19, when the participants were asked to label themselves, 30 percent were unionist, 27 percent were nationalists, and 43 percent did not affiliate themselves with any category (Ibid). However, 73 percent of those who did not affiliate themselves with neither unionists, nor nationalists would choose anti-unity, while 27 percent would opt for Irish-unity the next day (Breen, 2020).



*Votes by party in this graph are categorized based on the party that voted by majority for/against Irish unity.

Figure 20. Sinn Fein & SDLP on Irish Unity, Liverpool University Poll, 2020, Percent

Source: Just 29% in Northern Ireland would vote for unity, major study reveals, by Suzanne Breen, February 18 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/ptIY8

Figure 21. DUP, UUP, & Alliance on Irish Unity, Liverpool University Poll, 2020, Percent

Source: Just 29% in Northern Ireland would vote for unity, major study reveals, by Suzanne Breen, February 18 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/ptIY8

As for the distribution of participants by political party in Figures 20 and 21, 99 percent of those affiliated with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and 70 percent of those with Alliance voted against Irish unity, whereas 92 percent of those with Sinn Fein and 81 percent of those with the Socialist and Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) voted for Irish unity, if the vote were the next day (Ibid).

Data was also gathered regarding participant opinions on the Irish Language Act. The Act is a proposed legislation that basically equates the Irish language with English in Northern Ireland (Burke, 2018). 36 percent of participants opted for the Act, while 32 percent opted against it (Ibid). The division in opinion generally parallels the political division above: 74 percent of DUP and UUP-affiliated participants voted against the Act,

whereas 82 percent of Sinn Fein, 77 percent of SDLP, and 32 percent of Alliance participants opted in favor of it.

The participants' answers were categorized by religious affiliation too. Catholic division was as follows: 51 percent Sinn Fein, 28 percent SDLP, and 13 percent Alliance (Ibid). No protestant voted Sinn Fein and only 1 percent voted SDLP (Ibid). As for those who voted no religion, "28% voted Alliance, 15% SDLP, 10% UUP, and 6% Sinn Fein and 6% DUP" (Ibid).

ii. Analysis – Liverpool University Poll

This poll is quite interesting, given its trusted sources and conduct. The biggest conclusions from the study are as follows:

1. If a unity poll were to be held the following day from the poll date (December 28, 2019 and February 11, 2020), the result would be against unity by 52 percent.
2. The same poll was conducted in 2017, when Brexit negotiations were beginning. The poll was conducted again end 2019 and early 2020, when Brexit was being signed and concluded. Compared to 2017, the percentage of people voting for unity increased by 2 percent in 2020.

The data shows that, at this rate, Irish unity will pass in a poll after a decade from 2020.

3. Nationalists, Sinn Fein and SDLP, are the two major parties that voted for Irish unification with 92 percent and 81 percent of pro-unification votes, respectively.
4. Only 1 percent of Protestants voted for a nationalist party, SDLP.
5. Participants who were not attributed to any religious category voted 68 percent unionist and 32 percent nationalist.

iii. *The Northern Ireland LIFE & TIMES Survey*

Another survey that is worth looking into is the Northern Ireland LIFE & TIMES (NILT) survey. The survey is run from Queens University and supported by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (Gudgin, 2020). Random participants, selected by Research Evaluation Services, are interviewed based on questions organized by NILT (Ibid).

The questions regarding Irish unity were asked over the years, with an average of three to four years between running the same question over to the public again. The following summarizes the questions and answers that best capture public opinion regarding Irish unity.

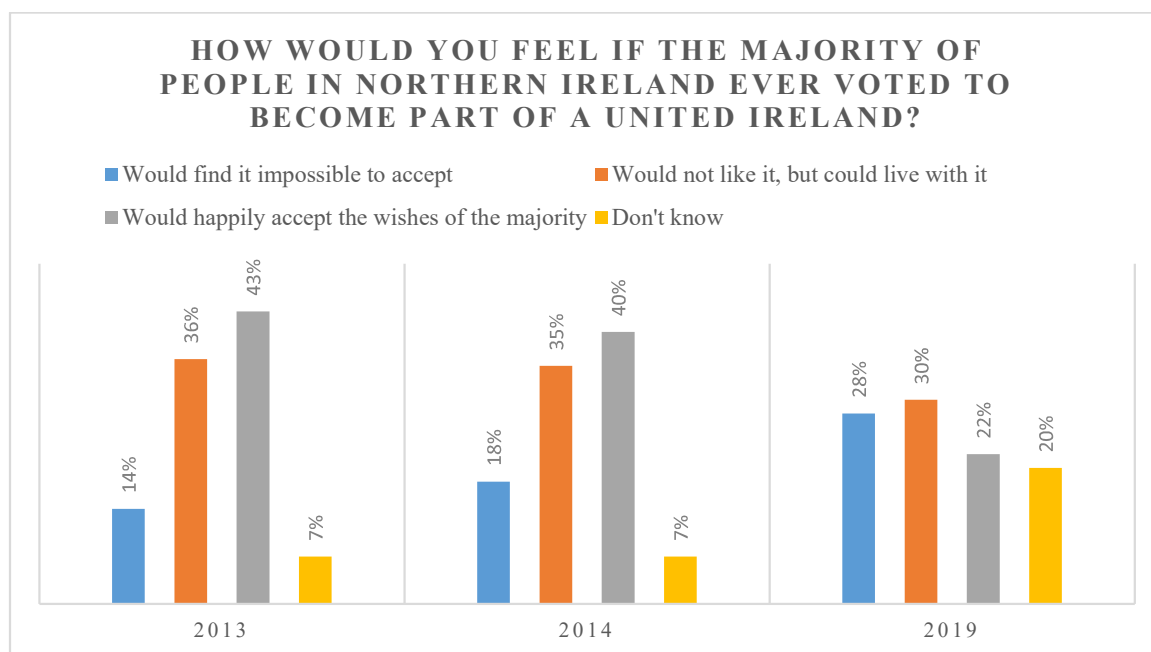


Figure 22. Northern Ireland's Sentiment on a Pro-Unity Vote, NI LIFE & TIMES, Percent

Source: Module: Political Attitudes, Northern Ireland LIFE & TIMES, retrieved from shorturl.at/lpCMY

Figure 22 shows the poll audience's general feeling about unity two years before Brexit (2013 and 2014) and one year nearing the conclusion of Brexit (2019) (Northern Ireland LIFE & TIMES, 2020):

1. The percentage of people not accepting unity doubled from 14 percent to 28 percent between 2013 and 2019.
2. The other increase in data was in the percentage of people who did not know how they would feel: the number more than doubled from 7 percent in 2013 to 20 percent in 2019.
3. In contrast, the percentage of people who would accept the outcome, albeit not like it, decreased from 43 percent in 2013 to 22 percent in 2019.
4. The other decrease was in the number of people who would happily accept unification, as the number dropped from 43 percent in 2013 to 22 percent in 2019.

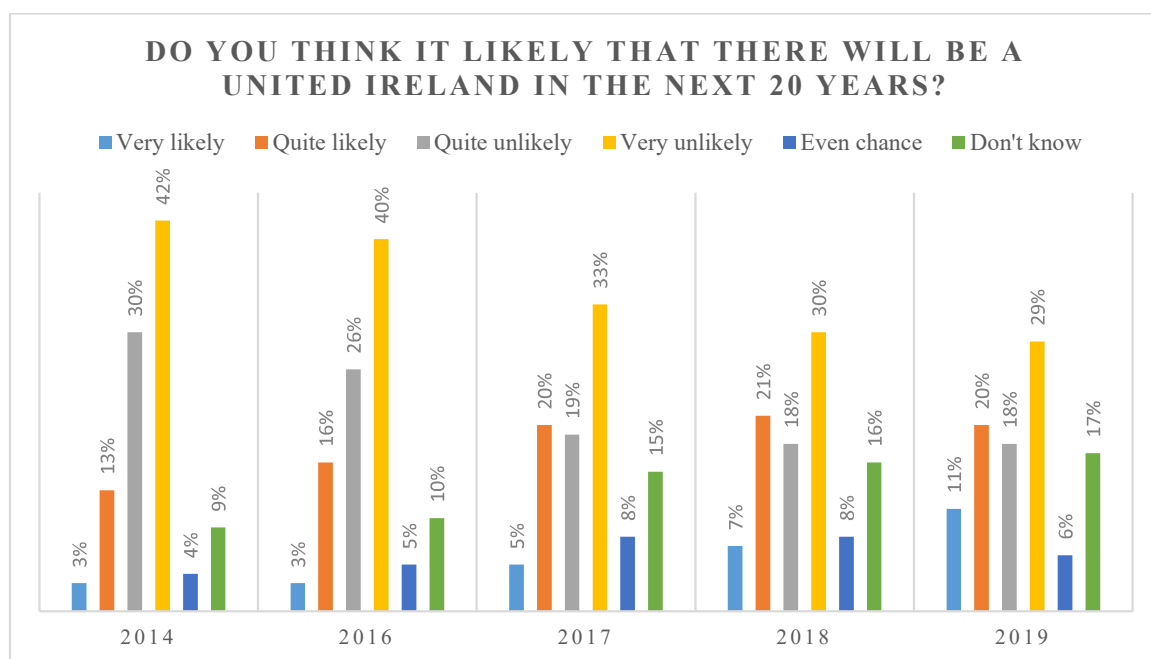


Figure 23. Northern Ireland on Unity in Two Decades, NI LIFE & TIMES poll, Percent

Source: Module: Political Attitudes, Northern Ireland LIFE & TIMES, retrieved from shorturl.at/lpCMY

Figure 23 provides insights from before Brexit began, during the negotiations, and at the conclusion of Brexit:

1. The overall increase is in the percentage of people who believe unity is ‘Very Likely’, ‘Quite Likely’, and has an ‘Even Chance’. Numbers also increased in the percentage of people who ‘Don’t know’.
2. The overall decrease is in the percentage of people who thought unity is ‘Quite Unlikely’ or ‘Very Unlikely’.
3. The percentage of people who said unity is ‘Very Likely’ and ‘Quite Linkely’ doubled between 2014 and 2019 from 16 percent to 31 percent.
4. The percentage of people who said unity is ‘Quite Unlikely’ or ‘Very Unlikely’ decreased by 42 percent between 2014 and 2019 from 72 percent to 47 percent.

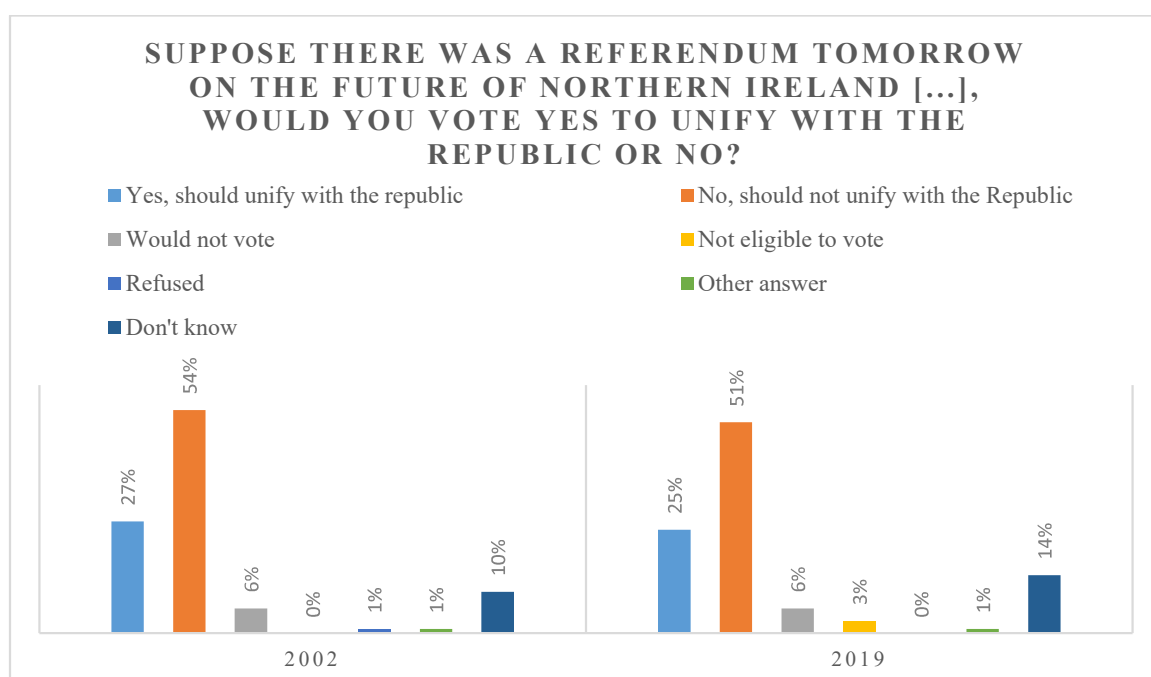


Figure 24. Northern Ireland's Votes for Unity the Next Day, NI LIFE & TIMES Poll, Percent

Source: Module: Political Attitudes, Northern Ireland LIFE & TIMES, retrieved from shorturl.at/lpCMY

Figure 24 shows results for public opinion on how they would vote in a unity referendum, in case the referendum was held the following day. The poll gathered data from 2002, over 10 years before Brexit, and 2019:

1. The noticeable point is the fact that the percentage of people who said they would vote yes or no for unity 17 years apart (2002 and 2019) only differed slightly. The yes vote decreased by 2 percent and the no vote decreased by 3 percent.
2. The percentage of people who did not know how they would vote increased by 4 percent from 10 to 14 percent between 2002 and 2019.

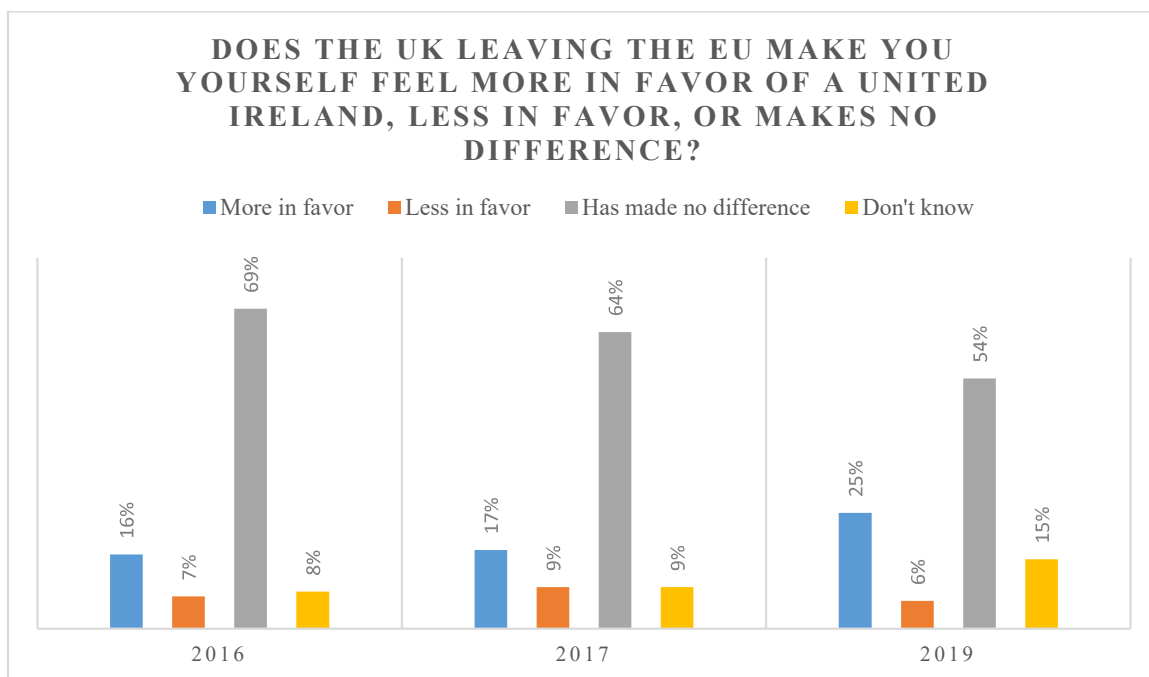


Figure 25. Northern Ireland on Brexit's Effect on Unity, NI LIFE & TIMES Poll, Percent

Source: Module: Political Attitudes, Northern Ireland LIFE & TIMES, retrieved from shorturl.at/lpCMY

Figure 25 directly ties Brexit to Irish unity and studies the progression of the participants' answers from the beginning of Brexit negotiations till its signing:

1. The percentage of people in favor of unity increased by 9 percent from 16 percent in 2016 to 25 percent in 2019.
2. The percentage of people who are less in favor of unity because of Brexit decreased 1 percent over three years.

3. The percentage of people who said Brexit did not affect their decision on unity decreased by 15 percent from 69 percent to 54 percent over 3 years.
4. The percentage of people who did not know if Brexit affected their views on unity increased by 7 percent from 8 to 15 percent over 3 years.

iv. Analysis – Northern Ireland LIFE & TIMES Survey

The Northern Ireland LIFE & TIMES survey's data can be summarized as follows:

1. The answer that consistently increased across all questions (Figures 22 through 25) was the percentage of people who answered 'Don't Know', indicating increased uncertainty among Northern Irish regarding unity, given the unfolding of Brexit, Irish border, and the ensuing deals.
2. The percentage of people who would be happy (Figure 24) or vote yes for unity right then at the time of the poll (November 2019 to February 2020) was less than the percentage of people who would vote the opposite way. However, the percentage who would thought unity is more likely in 20 years steadily increased over 5 years (2014 – 2019) (Figure 23), compared to a decrease over 5 years (2014 – 2019) to those voting no in 20 years.
3. Figure 25 highlights the interesting factor that Brexit increased the percentage of people who said Brexit pushed them more in favor of Irish unity and less against it. In fact, the percentage of people who said Brexit made no difference on their opinion on unity also decreased over 3 years (2016 – 2019).

v. Lucid Talk Poll

The following Lucid Talk poll was held over 4 days between January 31 till February 03, 2020 (Ingoldsby, 2020). 1,896 people participated in the poll in Northern

Ireland and 1,171 people participated in the Republic of Ireland (Ibid). It is worth noting that the poll followed British Poll Council standards (Ibid). The poll looked into participant answers regarding public opinion on Irish unity, in light of Brexit and the ensuing effects.

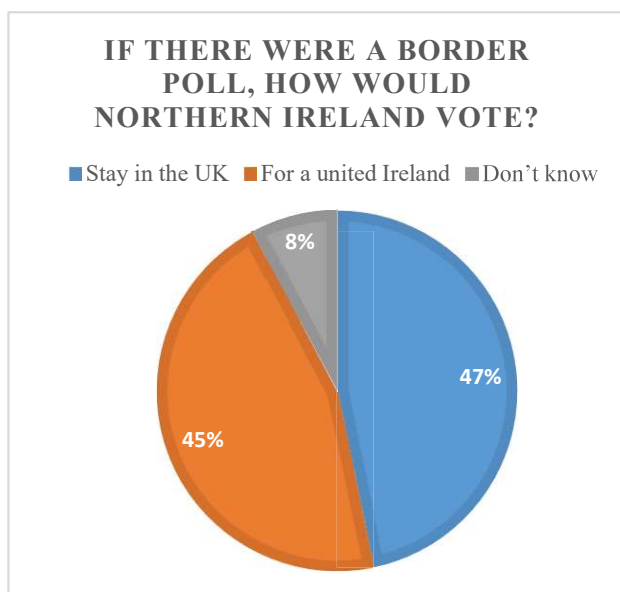


Figure 26. Northern Ireland on Voting for Irish Unity, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent

Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Ingoldsby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

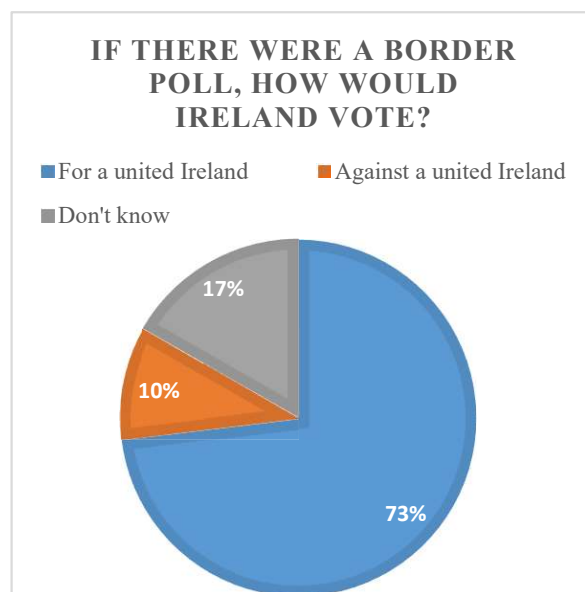


Figure 27. Ireland on Voting for Irish Unity, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent

Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Ingoldsby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

Figures 26 and 27 show the results of public opinion in Northern Ireland and Ireland regarding how they would vote in a border poll:

1. Northern Ireland's results are close: 47 percent voted against unity, 45 percent voted for unity, and 8 percent did not know how they would vote.
2. Ireland's results are more decisive: 73 percent voted for unity, 10 percent voted against unity, and 17 percent did not know how they would vote.

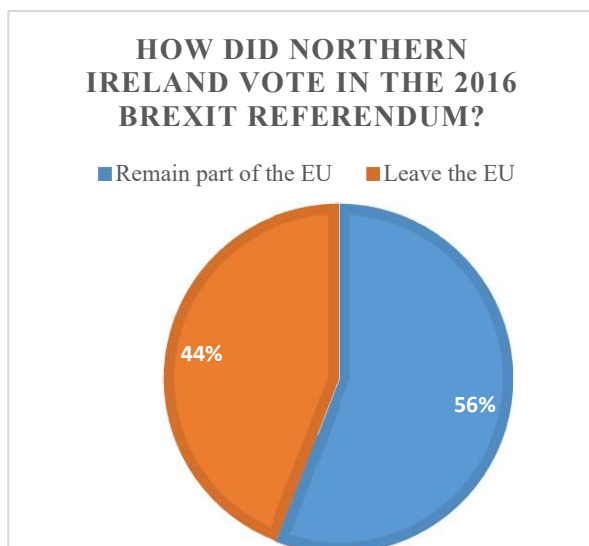


Figure 28. Northern Ireland's Vote in the 2016 Brexit Referendum, Percent

Source: EU referendum: Northern Ireland votes to Remain, BBC, June 24 2016, retrieved from shorturl.at/gtwIU

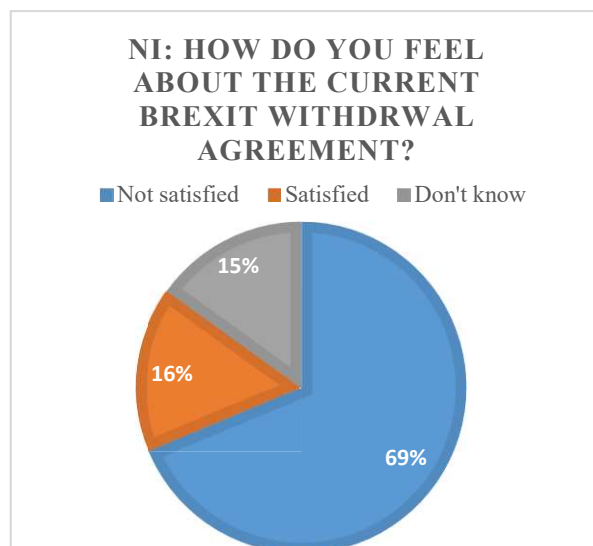


Figure 29. Northern Ireland's Assent on Withdrawal Agreement, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent

Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Inglodby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

Figure 28 shows Northern Ireland's initial response to the 2016 Brexit referendum. The majority voted pro-EU by 56 percent. When the Northern Irish participants were asked in 2020 about the Brexit withdrawal agreement, the majority (69 percent) said they were not satisfied, compared to a much smaller percentage (16 percent) that said they were satisfied, while 15 percent said they did not know how they would vote.

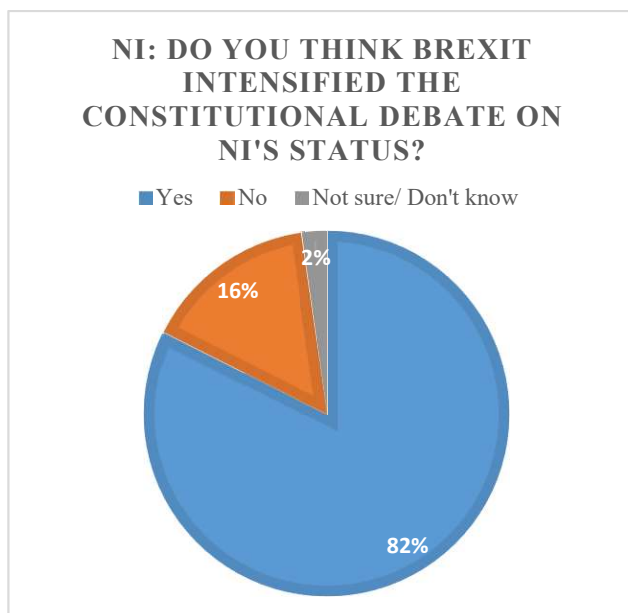


Figure 30. Northern Ireland on Brexit & Unity Debate, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent
 Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Ingoldsby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

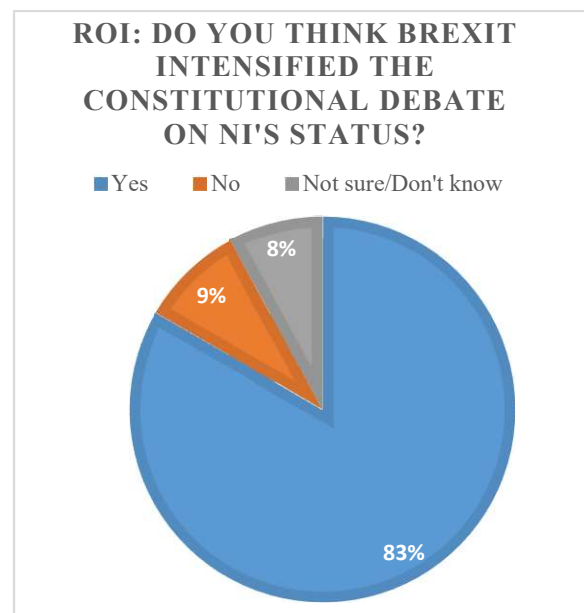


Figure 31. Ireland on Brexit & Unity Debate, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent
 Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Ingoldsby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

Figures 30 and 31 show the participants' views on whether Brexit intensified the debate on Irish unity. The results are 'Yes' by a landslide (82 percent and 83 percent) in Northern Ireland and Ireland, reflecting the unsure result and future that Brexit has caused.

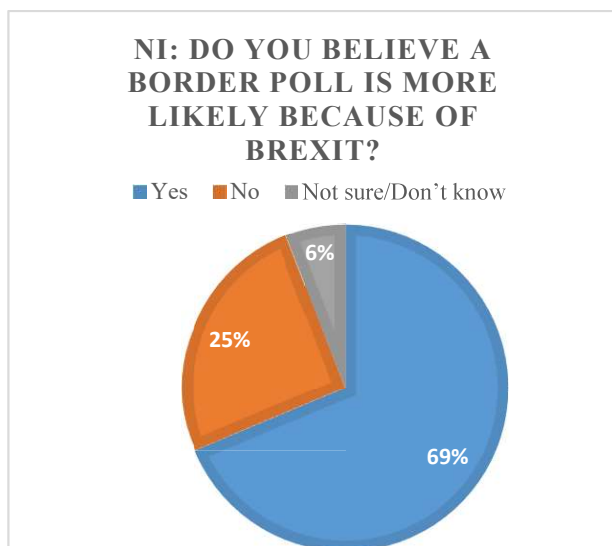


Figure 32. Northern Ireland on Brexit & Unity Likelihood, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent

Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Inglodby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

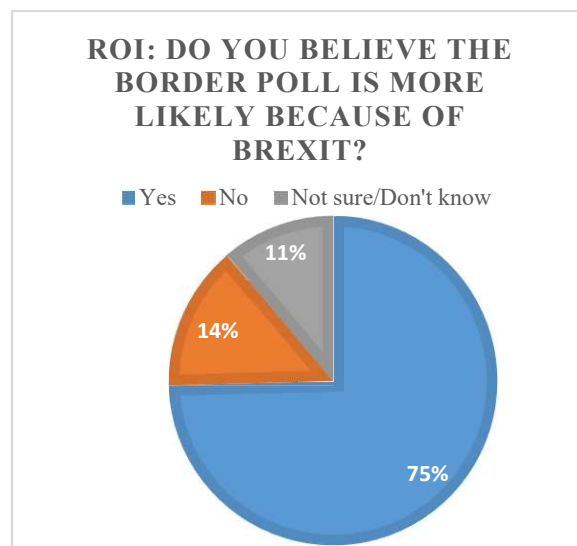


Figure 33. Ireland on Brexit & Unity Likelihood, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent

Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Inglodby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

Figures 32 and 33 look into audience opinion on whether Brexit made a border poll more likely. The answer reflects opinions in above questions and shows that participants from Northern Ireland and Ireland voted 'Yes' by a large majority, 69 percent and 75 percent respectively.

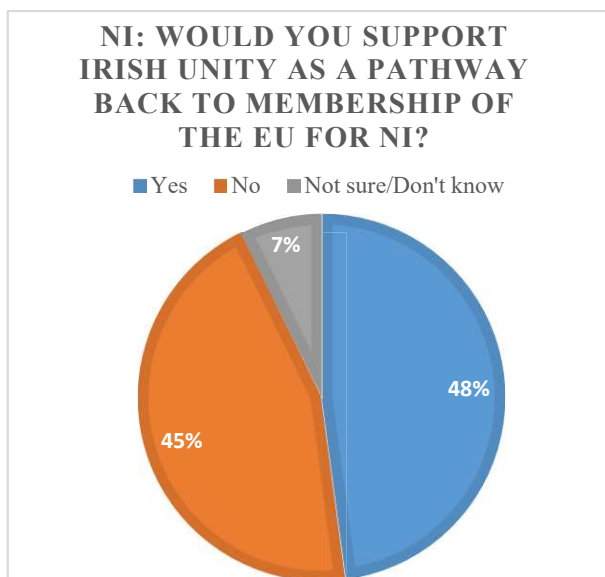


Figure 34. Northern Ireland on Using Unity to Join the EU, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent
Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Inglodsby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

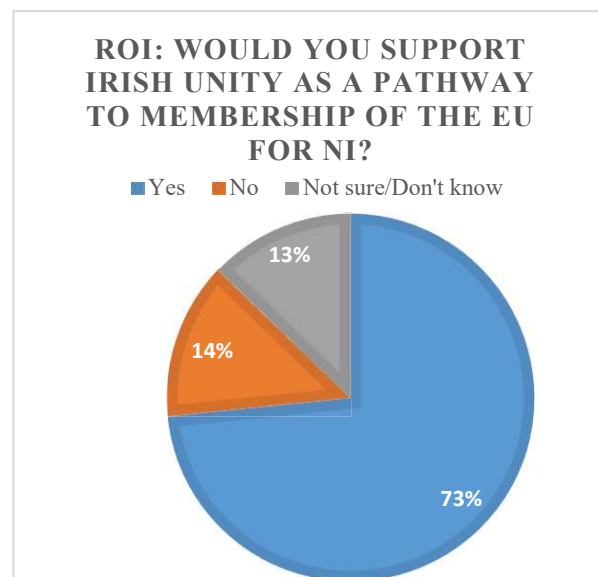


Figure 35. Ireland on Using Unity for NI to Join the EU, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent
Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Inglodsby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

Figures 34 and 35 probe into a united Ireland being Northern Ireland's access back to the European Union. The 2016 referendum showed that 56 percent in Northern Ireland voted pro-European Union, a fact that explains why 48 percent still voted for Irish unity on the to rejoin the European Union. The percentage is even bigger in Ireland, where almost a quarter of participants (73 percent) replied with a "Yes" for rejoining the European Union through Ireland.

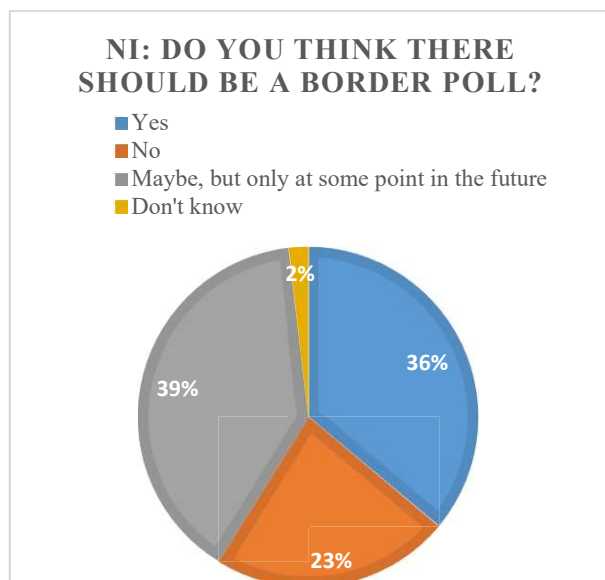


Figure 36. Northern Ireland on Holding a Border Poll, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent

Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Ingoldsby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

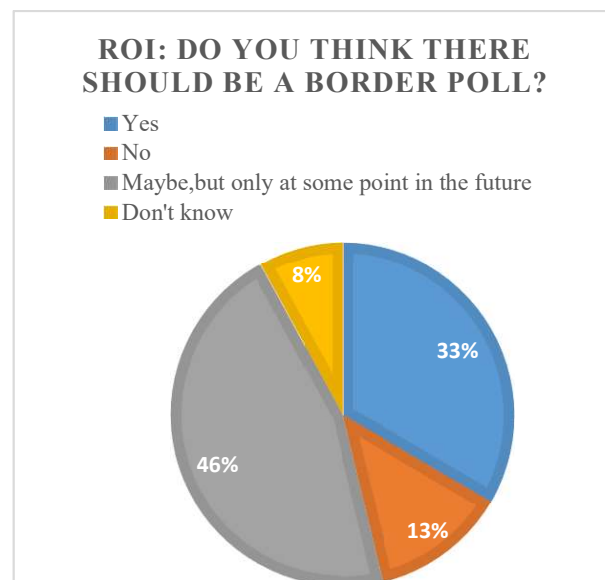


Figure 37. Ireland on Holding a Border Poll, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent

Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Ingoldsby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

Figures 36 and 37 ask participants if they think there should be a border poll. The majority in Northern Ireland (39 percent) and Ireland (46 percent) voted that it was a possibility, albeit in an undetermined time in the future. The percentage of people who voted 'No' for a border poll ranked third, after those who voted maybe and yes.

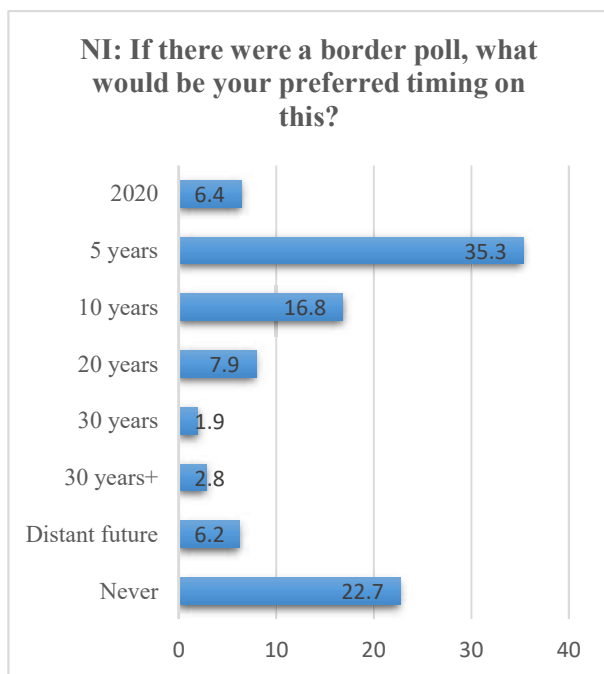


Figure 38. Northern Ireland on Timing for a Border Poll, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent

Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Ingoldsby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

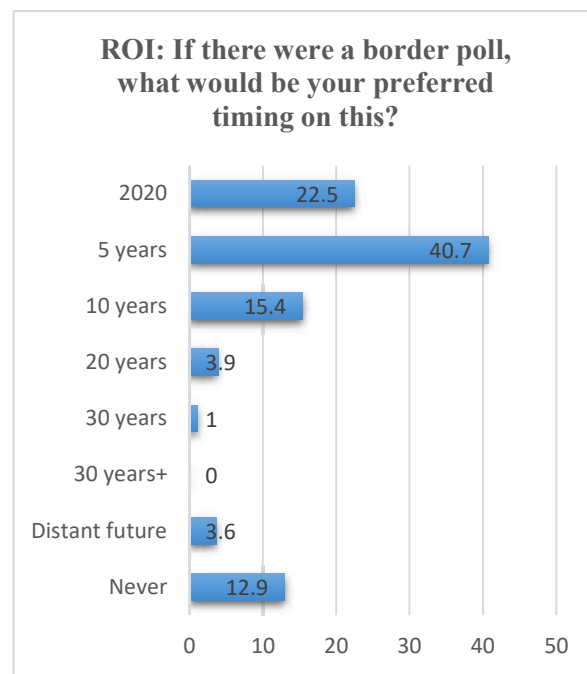


Figure 39. Ireland on Timing for a Border Poll, 2020, Lucid Talk Poll, Percent

Source: Results of a future border poll on a knife edge, Sinead Ingoldsby, February 24 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/uS349

Figures 38 and 39 look into participant preference for their desired timing for a border poll. The majority in Northern Ireland and Ireland voted for a poll in 5 years, with 35 percent and 40 percent respectively. Participants from Northern Ireland voted for ‘Never’, ‘10 years’ and ‘20 years’ as their second, third, and fourth most preferred timing, respectively, but in much smaller percentages than the top answer. As for participants from Ireland, they voted for ‘2020’, ‘10 years’, and ‘Never’ as their second, third, and fourth most preferred timing, respectively, with also much lower percentages than the top answer.

vi. *Analysis – Lucid Talk Poll*

The poll gave insight on participant opinions in January/February 2020 in Northern Ireland and Ireland on Irish unity. The following are some of the major highlights:

1. Figures 26 and 27 show that Northern Ireland's votes on Irish unity are very close, with 47 percent with staying in the United Kingdom and 45 percent uniting with Ireland. The close difference is explained by the high percentage (69 percent) of participants from Northern Ireland not being satisfied with the current Withdrawal Agreement (Figure 29).
2. Figures 30 and 31 add Brexit to the Irish unity questions. When asked if participants thought Brexit intensified the unity debate, 82 and 83 percent in Northern Ireland and Ireland, respectively, voted 'Yes'. That would also explain the high percentage of people in Northern Ireland and Ireland that said that Brexit made a border poll more likely (69 and 75 percent, respectively).
3. As for the European Union and Irish unity, Figures 34 and 35 asked participants on whether they encourage Northern Ireland to take advantage of unity to rejoin the European Union. Almost half (48 percent) said 'Yes' in Northern Ireland (reflective of Northern Ireland's 2016 referendum) and almost three quarters (73 percent) in Ireland voted 'Yes', as it is no secret that Ireland has economically benefited a lot over the years from European Union membership and considers the amount it gives in, compared what it receives, a "steal" (O'Connell, H. *op. cit.*).
4. Figures 36 and 37 ask if there should be a poll and the majority voted for a general yes. If the percentages of those who said 'Maybe, but only at some point in the future' and 'Yes', we would get a total of 75 percent in Northern Ireland and 79 percent in Ireland. Figures 38 and 39 further elaborates on that by showing that the majority is in favor of a poll in five years, with options like 2020, in 10 years, in 20 years, and Never as follow-ups.

vii. Analysis – All Polls

All 3 polls give a distinct direction on public opinion regarding constitutional change in Northern Ireland. In general, we see common trends among the polls:

1. General conclusion

- Liverpool University poll indicated that, at this rate, Irish unity will pass in a referendum in 20 years. Interestingly, LIFE & TIMES Survey detects this change towards supporting unity in its polls over four to five years, on average. Lucid Talk’s survey matches the general direction of opinions in both other surveys.
- Each of the polls brought an additional piece of insight into the results. The Liverpool University poll highlighted the results divided by religious and political party affiliation, the LIFE & TIMES survey provided data over the years for the same question, and the Lucid Talk poll provides data from both Northern Ireland and Ireland to compare.

2. Replies on voting for Irish Unity

All three polls ask their participants how they would vote if a referendum were held (The polls were all held around the same time – end 2019 to beginning 2020). The numbers are quite close:

	Liverpool Poll	University Poll	LIFE & TIMES Poll	Lucid Talk Poll
Yes, for unity	29%		25%	45%
No, against unity		52%	51%	47%

Table 4. Northern Ireland's Votes on Irish Unity – All Polls

Table 4 shows that the majority in Northern Ireland would vote against unity, at the time the poll was held. However, the gradual change detected over the years in favor of unity will shift the scale to a pro-unity majority. Moreover, the LIFE & TIMES survey asked its respondents if Brexit affected their opinion on Irish constitutional change and numbers show that percentages of people saying they are ‘More in favor’ regularly increased over 3 years (2016 – 2019) and regularly decreased for those voting ‘Less in favor’ of unity.

3. Timeline for unity

Two of the polls look into participant perception or preference for a border poll:

- Lucid Talk asks participants for their preferred time for a unity poll. The majority voted for a poll in 5 years’ time, followed by Never, 10 years, and 20 years.
- LIFE & TIMES survey asked the participants if they thought a border poll is likely in 20 years: a total of 31 percent voted ‘Very likely’ and ‘Quite likely’, compared to 47 percent who voted ‘Very unlikely’ and ‘Quite unlikely’ in 2019. The interesting part is that the numbers for these answers have changed in the same orientation between 2014 and 2019: the percentage of people that think unity is likely in 20 years is increasing and the percentage of people against it is decreasing.

4. Northern Irish dissatisfaction with Brexit

The 2016 Brexit referendum showed that Northern Ireland voted to stay in the European Union by a 56 percent majority. Lucid Talk probes further into this point:

- Lucid Talk asked in 2019 if its Northern Irish participants were satisfied with the current Withdrawal Agreement. 69 percent of respondents replied that they were not satisfied.
- When Lucid Talk asked if Northern Irish would support Irish unity to rejoin the European Union, 48 percent of respondents said ‘Yes’ and 45 percent said ‘No’.

vi. Northern Ireland Demographics

Additional information on Northern Ireland’s demographics provide a wider perspective regarding the change in Northern Irish society. Sinn Fein’s rise to the top in the latest Northern Irish elections, along with the realization that most of Sinn Fein’s public is Catholic (supported by the aforementioned University of Liverpool poll), shows a marked shift in Northern Ireland’s society. This part will dive into the changes in Northern Ireland’s demographics and its effects on Irish unity.

The latest census in Northern Ireland was held in 2011 and the upcoming census will be held in 2021. According to the 2011 census, 48 percent of the population was Protestant and 45 percent was Catholic (Gareth, 2018). If we fast forward a few years, when subcategorized, the estimated percentage of working age population (16 – 64 years old) in 2016 was 44 percent Catholic and 40 percent Protestant (Ibid). In fact, the difference is even more pronounced in school-age children, where 51 percent are Catholic, 37 percent are Protestant, and 12 – 13 percent are ‘Other’ (Ibid). This indicates that the youngest segment of the population has a Catholic majority, which goes in tandem with the below Ulster University study.

These numbers are significant because, not only do they break the historical understanding of a Protestant Northern Ireland, but also show the general trend when compared with the 2001 census.

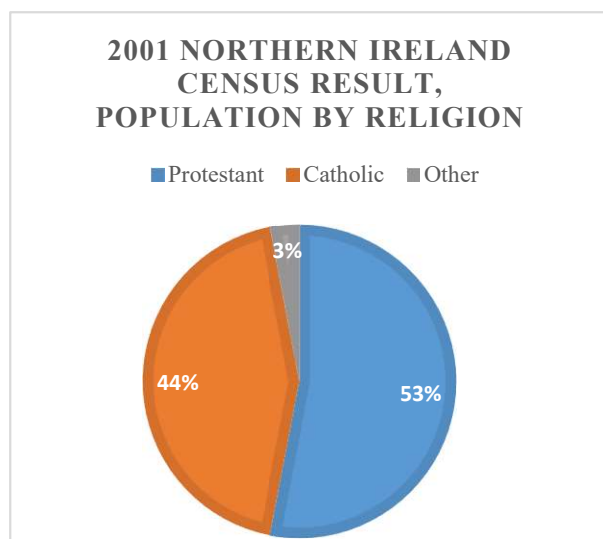


Figure 40. Population by Religion, 2001, Northern Ireland Census
Source: 2019 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland – Summary, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2019, retrieved from shorturl.at/nvPZ4

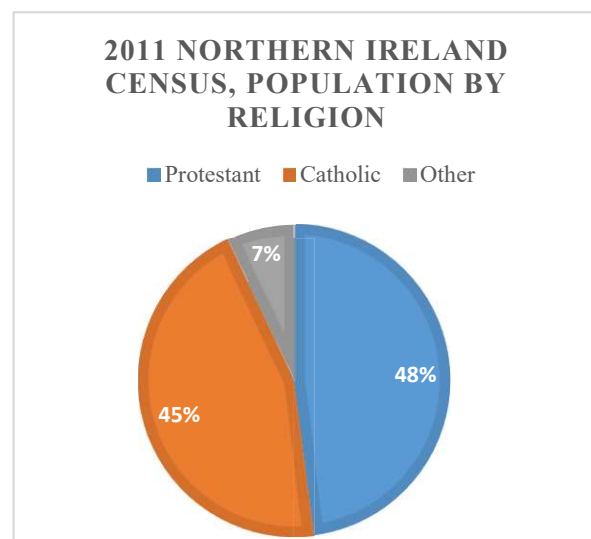


Figure 41. Population by Religion, 2011, Northern Ireland Census
Source: 2019 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland – Summary, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2019, retrieved from shorturl.at/nvPZ4

As can be deduced from Figures 40 and 41, when the 2011 census is compared with the 2001 census, it is quite noticeable that the percentage of Protestants has decreased and Catholics has increased (BBC, 2012).

A report published by Ulster University (The Irish Times, 2019a) in 2019 further adds to this data by indicating that, at this rate, Belfast will have a Catholic majority within a decade. This is of absolute importance, given that “concept by majority underpins the legitimacy of the state” (Ibid). After studying data over the years, the study indicates that “very few Protestants consider themselves to have an Irish national identity and that the vast majority of those who call themselves Irish also identify as Catholic” (Ibid).

vii. *Carriers of Irish Passports in Northern Ireland*

The number of Northern Irish that have Irish passports and the evolution of the demand on Irish passports in Northern Ireland is definitely worth looking into. It is quite interesting to look into the surge in demand for Irish passports in Northern Ireland before and after Brexit.

The increased demand for Irish passports in Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom started in 2016. Around 200,000 people in Northern Ireland applied for an Irish passport for the first time after the Brexit referendum in 2016 (BBC, 2020c). Demand on Irish passports in Northern Ireland kept increasing to reach the record breaking number of nearly 1 million passports issued in 2019 (BBC, 2019e). This marks a 7 percent increase in the number of issued passports, compared to the number of passports that were issued in Northern Ireland in 2018 (Ibid). The highlight of this data is that out of the 1 million Irish passports issued in 2019, 94,000 of them were first time applications (Fact Check NI, 2020).

The increase in demand for Irish passports after Brexit is an indicator of fear of Northern Irish losing advantages from European Union membership, like the European Health Insurance Card, travel facilities like open queues at airports, etc. (Ibid). Brexit has pushed many in Northern Ireland to prefer Irish passports, especially that Northern Ireland voted against leaving the European Union in the 2016 referendum. Consequently, it can be deduced that Northern Ireland values the Union membership that unity could bring.

D. The Republic of Ireland

In order to discern the public's opinion in Ireland on Irish unity, an analysis based on polls will be taken into consideration. Interestingly, the results of the polls parallel the trend of increasing support for unity that is growing in Northern Ireland.

a. The 2019 RTÉ and TG4 Poll

A poll conducted in 2019 by RTÉ and TG4 looked into answers of 3,000 people in Ireland. Regarding unity, the poll asked participants on how they would vote if a unity poll were held the following day.

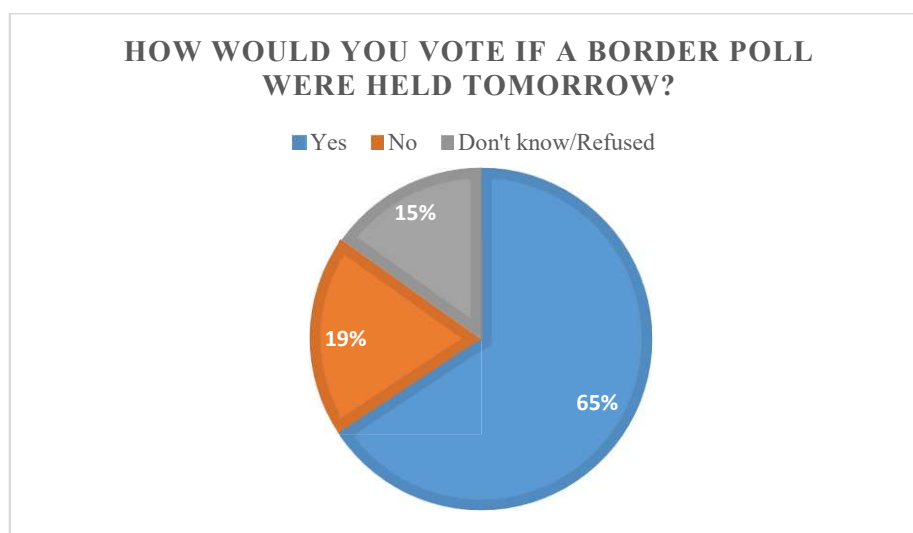


Figure 42. Ireland's Vote in a Border Poll the Next Day, 2019, RTE & TG4 Poll, Percent
 Source: Two-thirds of Irish would vote for united Ireland, poll says, Naomi O'Leary, May 26 2019, retrieved from shorturl.at/bjAQT

Figure 42 shows that the majority of respondents to the poll voted in favor of Irish unity, by a wide margin of 65 percent (O'Leary, 2019a). The poll also asked participants on their views on other Irish-related matters. Of the questions that reflect public opinion on Irish identity, there was a question on the importance of the Irish language. 60 percent of participants chose a score of 7 or higher (out of ten) when asked about the importance of the Irish language, indicating a strong sense of Irish identity (Ibid).

b. The 2020 RTÉ, the Irish Times, TG4 and UCD Poll

In 2020, RTÉ, UCD, TG4, and the Irish Times commissioned a poll that was conducted by Ipsos MRBI. 1,000 people from across Ireland were asked if they thought a unity referendum in the North and South should happen in the next 5 years (Barry, 2020).

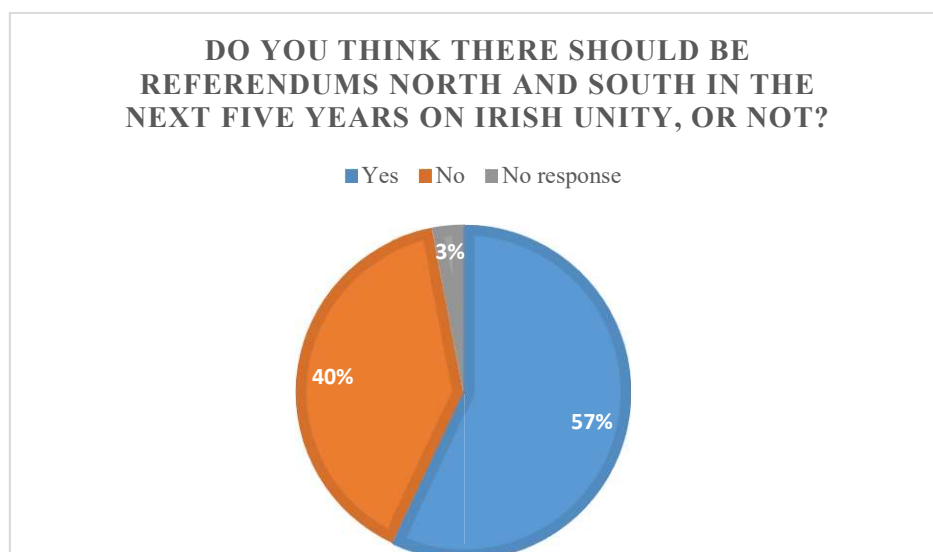


Figure 43. Ireland on a Unity Referendum in 5 Years, 2020, RTE-UCD-TF4 Poll, Percent

Source: Exit poll shows support for Irish unity referendum, especially among 18-24 age group, Aoife Barry, February 09 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/gFLS5

Figure 43 shows the answers to the poll's question on whether participants would vote in agreement or objection to there being a referendum on Irish unity in five years. 57 percent of respondents said they thought there should be a referendum on Irish unity in the next five years, compared to 40 percent who answered 'No'.

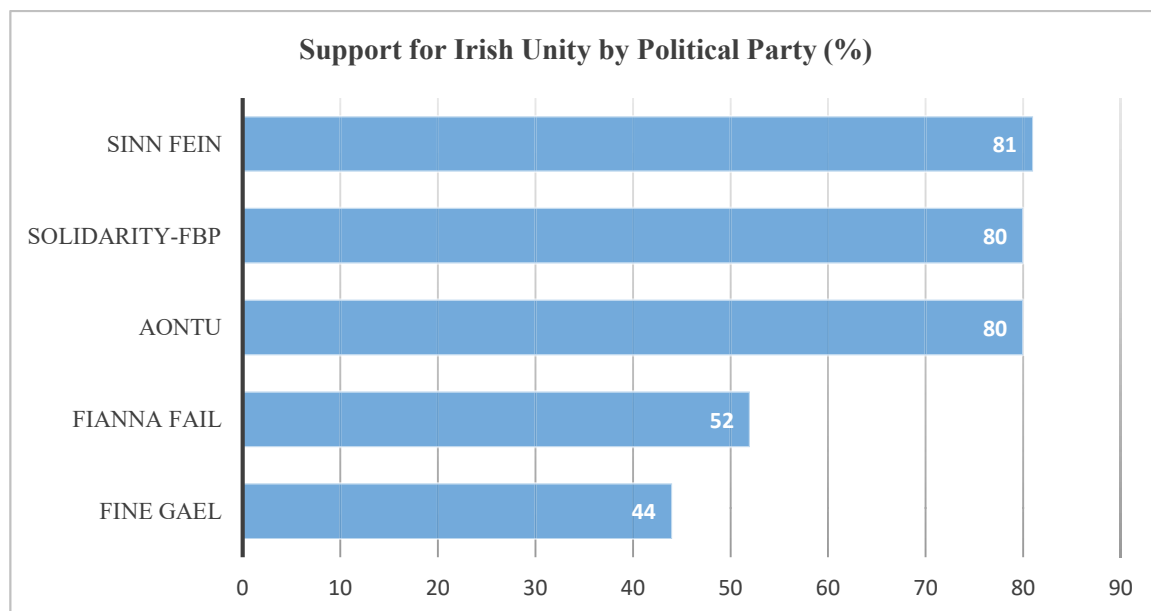


Figure 44. Support for Irish Unity by Political Party in Ireland, 2020, RTE-UCD-TF4 Poll

Source: Exit poll shows support for Irish unity referendum, especially among 18-24 age group, Aoife Barry, February 09 2020, retrieved from shorturl.at/gFLS5

The poll also divides those who voted ‘Yes’ for a unity referendum by political party. Results show that Sinn Fein is in the lead by 81 percent, closely followed by Solidarity-PBF and Aontu with 80 percent. Fianna Fail registered 52 percent, while Fine Gael was the only party to have less than half of its participants’ consent to a referendum in 5 years with only 44 percent voting ‘Yes’ (Ibid).

c. The 2020 Lucid Talk Poll

The 2020 Lucid Talk mentioned in Chapter VI⁶ details participant response on many points on Irish unity in Northern Ireland and Ireland (Ingoldsby, 2020). The main points from respondents in Ireland are as follows:

⁶ The Lucid Talk poll is detailed in Chapter VI, section C, sub-section v, p. 87.

1. When participants were asked how they would vote on a poll, 73 percent in Ireland voted 'Yes' for unity, 10 percent voted for Northern Ireland to stay in the United Kingdom, and 17 percent said they did not know.
2. When participants were asked how they felt about Brexit, 69 percent said they were not satisfied with it, 16 percent said they were satisfied, and 15 percent said they did not know.
3. When participants were asked if they thought Brexit made a border poll more likely, 75 percent said 'Yes', 9 percent said 'No', and 8 percent said they did not know.
4. When participants were asked if they think there should be a border poll, 46 percent said 'Maybe', 33 percent said 'Yes', and 13 percent said 'No'.
5. When participants were asked about their preferred timing for a border poll, the answers were as follows, by decreasing order: in 5 years, in 2020, and in 10 years.

E. Analysis – All Polls

The three polls that were used to look into the responses of participants from Ireland had generally close answers. The common theme among all three was the public's favorable orientation towards Irish unity. The result breakdown is as follows:

1. Both the 2019 RTE, TG4 poll and the 2020 Lucid Talk poll ask participants on how they would vote if a border poll were held⁷. Poll results were close: 65 percent and 73 percent voted yes, while 19 percent and 10 percent voted no, for RTE/TG4 and Lucid Talk polls respectively.
2. Both 2020 RTE/Irish Times/TG4/UCD and 2020 Lucid Talk polls ask participants if they think there should be a border poll. However, there is a slight change in the question between the two. Whereas 2020 RTE/Irish Times/TG4/UCD poll specifies if the participants think there should be a referendum in 5 years, the Lucid Talk poll simply asks participants if there should be a border poll. We see a common trend between the two, tending towards encouraging a border poll, both having pro-poll majority answers: 57 percent in the RTE/Irish Times/TG4/UCD poll said 'Yes', while 46 percent and 33 percent in the Lucid Talk poll said 'Maybe' and 'Yes', respectively.
3. We see a common trend in political party vote division, as well. The Liverpool University poll⁸ showed that those who answered 'Yes' for pro-Irish unity were 92 percent Sinn Fein and 81 percent SDLP in Northern Ireland, both nationalists. In

⁷ The RTE and TG4 2019 poll specifies the date in its question and asks how they would vote if a border poll were held tomorrow. The 2020 Lucid Talk poll does not specify a date for its respondents, but it can be assumed that they are asking participants on how they would vote at the time they are answering the question.

⁸ The Liverpool University poll is detailed in Chapter VI, section C, sub-section i, p. 78.

Ireland, the RTE/Irish Times/TG4/UCD poll shows that participants from all but one party had a pro-poll majority.

4. The Lucid Talk poll⁹ also sheds light on public opinion in Ireland on Brexit and preferred timing to hold a border poll.

Dissatisfaction rates with Brexit in Ireland were quite high with 69 percent saying they were not satisfied by it, compared to a mere 16 percent that stated they were satisfied by it. As for timing, we notice that participants from Ireland chose relatively close dates: a border poll ‘In 5 years’ as their most preferred option, followed by ‘2020’ and ‘In 10 years’ in second and third place, respectively.

⁹ The Lucid Talk poll is detailed in Chapter VI, section C, sub-section v, p. 87.

F. The United Kingdom

In order to understand the impact of social factors on the Irish border from a British perspective, it is important to look into the topic from several angles. This section will look into the background to Irish and British history, as well as current snapshots of the British attitude towards the Irish border in Brexit negotiations.

a. The Roots behind Irish Resentment

When looking at the relationship between Great Britain, on one hand, and Northern Ireland and Ireland, on the other hand, we sense a general history of Irish resentment towards the British.

History is strife with examples that explain why the Anglo-Irish relationship is characterized by strain. It can go back to Great Britain's failure to hold up its end of the bargain in the Act of Union in 1801, when Great Britain merged the entirety of Ireland into it, but failed to protect the Irish economy - which led to the deterioration of the Irish economy – and reneged on its promise to Catholics to let them hold public office positions (O'Leary, 2019b). It also includes the partition spark that the British started, when they sold the idea of partition to nationalists as a temporary solution and to unionists as the best way to keep Ireland in the United Kingdom and giving Dublin Home Rule – in the worst of cases (Ibid). According to Tim McMahon, associate professor of history at Marquette University in Milwaukee, the purpose behind this move was to give the Irish a solution that was so horrible they would not even dare to take it, as the British' purpose was to put out the demand of the Irish for self-rule (Ibid). Among the many historical incidents in which British negligence towards the Irish shows, it is a must to mention the Irish famine that lasted from 1845 till 1849 (Sheridan, 2019). The British attitude towards the famine was

characterized by lack of interest, shift of blame to the Irish themselves for being the cause of the famine, and refusal to help. The British attitude can be summarized by the words of the Assistant Secretary to Her Majesty's Treasury Sir Charles Trevelyan at the time, who wrote that the famine was an "effective mechanism for reducing surplus population [...] Judgment of God, sent the calamity to teach the Irish a lesson, that calamity must not be too much mitigated... The real evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of the Famine, but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the [Irish] people." (Ibid). The topic of the Irish famine is still a sensitive topic and considered by the Irish as the result of the colonial policies the British put in place in Ireland (Ibid). In fact, even after 150 years, Ireland still has not reached the population level it had before the famine hit (The Guardian, 2020). In short, the British seem to forget their unjust colonial history in Ireland, spanning way back to the mid-1500s conquest of Ireland by King Henry VIII, the 1606 plantation of Ulster by King James VI, the Irish famine, and the Irish border in current times.

The memory of British cruelty towards the Irish during the famine lingers to this day, even in small details. Irish rugby fans will definitely know the "The Fields of Athenry". When they sing it, the first verse says "For you stole Trevelyan's corn... So the young might see the morn... Now a prison ship lies waiting in the bay", in reference to the British imprisoning any Irish citizen who tried to steal food during the famine (Sheridan, 2019).

b. The Irish Border and Anglo-Irish Resentment

Given all the history and the normalization of the Anglo-Irish relations after the Good Friday Agreement, Brexit has shed an unsettling shadow over this relationship by means of the Irish border debate and Irish unity possibilities.

A prime example of the British' lack of connection to reality when it comes to understanding the Irish is the proposition of a House of Commons committee to former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern if Ireland would consider leaving the European Union and joining the United Kingdom, as a solution to the then-backstop problem (Flanagan, 2019). As expected, this did not go well in Ireland (Logue, 2019). The then-Taoiseach replied: "Well I'll just be kind and say not very well. Unfortunately we have an 800-year past of difficulties and that's just a reality of our history." (Ibid).

The United Kingdom's Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been quoted on several occasions dismissing the Irish border in Brexit negotiations, as though it were a mere inconvenience. When the European Union said that a solution for the border – the backstop – at the time was a requirement, Boris Johnson – foreign secretary at the time – said that it was ludicrous that the "tail was now wagging the dog" (Hickman & Ryan, 2020). PM Johnson has also called the Irish border problem a "gnat" and even misled the Northern Irish on needing to fill out forms to trade with Great Britain across the Irish Sea border by saying they would not have to fill out any paperwork, when the agreement at the time was that businesses were required to fill out lengthy forms (O'Halloran, 2018) (Stewart, Rankin, & O'Carroll, 2018).

It is also well noted that the British did not prioritize the Irish border in Brexit negotiations, nor in the debate leading up to the 2016 referendum. Even though the former

United Kingdom's PM-Theresa May indicated that Brexit will undoubtedly cause change in the Irish border in 2016 and debate about border changes were ripe in the Northern Ireland Assembly and Northern Irish businesses, the topic of the border took a back seat in the Brexit debate and negotiations (McCormack, 2019). It was evident that the Irish border was not considered a priority by British voters and that it was overshadowed by issues like economy and immigration (Ibid). The matter was aggravated when Ireland lobbied – noticing the disinterest of the United Kingdom in the topic - before the European Council to make the Irish border one of the major agenda points (Connolly, E., & Doyle, J., 2019, *op. cit*).

As for the Irish Sea border, the United Kingdom has guaranteed that no hard border will be placed. However, the United Kingdom has, in effect, separated Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom with a border, effectively moving the border from the island to the Irish Sea. The fact that a country is now divided by a border that complicates economic trade within the same country only intensifies the Northern Irish feeling of resentment and alienation from the United Kingdom.

G. The European Union

The European Union's stance on the Irish border was clear during the negotiations. Despite the arduous process that lasted for four years to reach the signing of the Withdrawal agreement, the European Union was always adamant that there would not be a hard border separating Northern Ireland and Ireland.

The European Union's focus on ensuring a soft border across the Irish Sea is to ensure the best benefit of one of its members, Ireland. Consequently, the Good Friday Agreement, that ensured an end to the Troubles between Northern Ireland and Ireland, was mentioned on many occasions as an important peace agreement to uphold. Even though the Agreement does not state – per se – that there can be no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, the concept of adopting a hard border caused major uproar and protests in Northern Ireland and Ireland (Department of Foreign Affairs - Ireland) (O'Connor, 2019). That is why the European Union's focus on ensuring an open border is its way to protect Ireland from slipping into further chaos.

The European Union has stressed, on several occasions, that the Irish border is an important pillar in the success of Brexit. The European Union's Chief Brexit Negotiator Michel Barnier has expressly stated that ensuring an open border between Northern Ireland and Ireland is “top of the list” priority (Express & Star, 2017). Indeed, the European Union kept its word by making Brexit contingent on securing an open Irish border. A clear example of this is former PM-Theresa May's backstop being refused by the United Kingdom's Parliament three times. Other solutions could have been found, but they would not have guaranteed an open border. That reason, among others, is why the European Union was in favor of the backstop, even though it was not accepted by the British.

In brief, the European Union did a stellar job of maintaining peace and security across the Irish border. It has upheld the border issue as a priority all throughout negotiations and succeeded at coming to an agreement with the United Kingdom, in the form of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

H. Conclusion

This chapter looks into social factors that affect Irish unity prospects. Given that in order to hold a referendum, a public drive towards it is necessary, an overlook on the public's stance on the subject is quite helpful.

Northern Ireland is the focus of the trend. As discussed in this chapter, tribal mentality is well and alive in our society. The question is whether the Northern Irish view their bigger tribe to be the English or the Irish. First, data from polls shows that the majority of Northern Irish are leaning towards Irish unity and have given it a general timeline of five to 20 years. Second, demographics show a change in Northern Ireland's society. Within a few years, Belfast will have a Catholic majority, in parallel to the general increase in Catholic population and decrease in Protestant population between the latest two censuses in 2001 and 2011. Third, the number of Northern Irish citizens that have taken up an Irish passport hit record numbers in 2019, marking an absolute increase trend in favor of the Union that began in 2016 with Brexit, showing alarm and fear amongst the Irish who voted against Brexit in the 2016 referendum.

As for Ireland, we notice a similar trend to that in Northern Ireland. The polls that were held there showed a high percentage of sympathy towards Irish unity, with the majority agreeing with poll participants in Northern Ireland that Brexit intensified the debate and that Brexit made a poll more likely.

The United Kingdom's history with the Irish is a complicated one. Years of wars and oppression built up a sense of resentment in the Irish against the British. Shared European Union membership eased the tensions between the two, but Brexit put that ease

into question. Splitting one country by a border in the sea only fueled Northern Ireland's sense of detachment from the United Kingdom.

The European Union has tried to guarantee an open border between Northern Ireland and Ireland since the beginning of the negotiations. For the sake of preserving the peace and best interest of Ireland – a European Union member – the European Union put the border issue as a top priority during Brexit negotiations.

In conclusion, the general social trend is pro-Irish unity in the next 10 or 20 years. It is clear that the factors align to support that view. The shift in Northern Ireland in the gradual increase of the number of Catholics and the rise of Sinn Fein to the top in the latest elections (especially when it clearly had Irish unity on its agenda and that Catholics are the major supporters of it), as well as the pro-unity attitude among the Irish, show that unity is not far. The European Union's guarantee that Northern Ireland may rejoin the European Union, the fact that Northern Ireland voted against Brexit in the 2016 referendum, and given the dissatisfaction of over half of Northern Ireland poll participants with Brexit so far, the European Union membership seems to constitute a push for Irish unity (Strupczewski, 2017). The Irish' history with the United Kingdom does not help and the current division of Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom is not reassuring to Northern Ireland. Moreover, the United Kingdom's dismissal of the Irish border as a non-priority when Brexit began – be it through lack of media attention to the border issue or favoring immigration and the economy as matters of bigger importance to the British – shows a lack of understanding from the British regarding the significance of the border to the Irish. In short, the social indicators at hand point towards a favorable public opinion

towards Irish unity, with prospects of unity becoming a reality in the next ten or twenty years.

VII. Political Indicators in Irish Unity

A. Introduction

Fully understanding the probability of Irish unity would not be complete without looking into political indicators. Political indicators help in understanding the translation of economic and social factors into changes in political power and direction. That is why this chapter will link changes in positions of power and political shifts, as well as the rise of certain ideologies and their effect in Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union to Irish unity.

The chapter will look into details of election results and patterns in each of the actors. This will help to discern how election result changes are changing with respect to public preference and perception in regards to unity, as well as how the changes in sources of power will translate into action pertaining to Irish unity. The chapter will also draw on current regional developments like Scottish calls for independence and historical examples like the Irish Free State and Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada to infer links to Irish unity. Furthermore, the trends of nationalism, populism, and intergovernmentalism are highlighted in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom to discern the changes in public orientation between the two.

B. Northern Ireland

Over the last few years since Brexit began, the political landscape in Northern Ireland has significantly changed, marking a lot of first times and surprising results. The elements that most reflect these changes are the Council elections (2019), European Parliament elections (2019), the United Kingdom general elections (2019), and Scottish claims for independence that will definitely have a spillover effect on Northern Ireland.

The most prominent political parties in Northern Ireland can be grouped into two main categories: nationalists and unionists. Nationalist parties include Sinn Fein and the Social Democratic Labor Party (SDLP) and unionist parties include the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland does not associate itself with neither unionist, nor nationalist. As it pertains to the Irish border, nationalists are pro-Irish unity, unionists are against Irish unity, and Alliance is currently against Irish unity.

a. The Northern Irish Council Elections

The Northern Irish council elections were the first elections to take place in 2019 and were held on May 2, 2019 (NI Direct Government Services, n.d.). The results were as follows (BBC, 2019f):

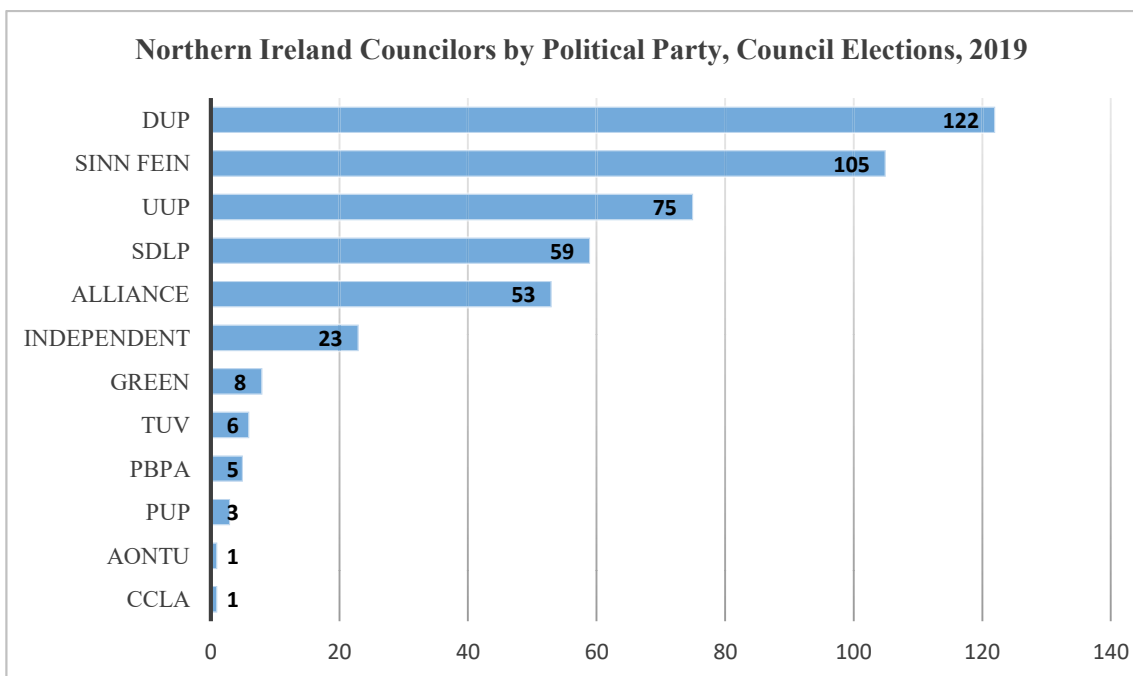


Figure 45. Northern Ireland Councilors by Political Party, Council Elections, 2019, Number
 Source: NI council elections: Alliance hails 'breakthrough' NI vote, BBC, May 04 2019, retrieved from shorturl.at/aetzI

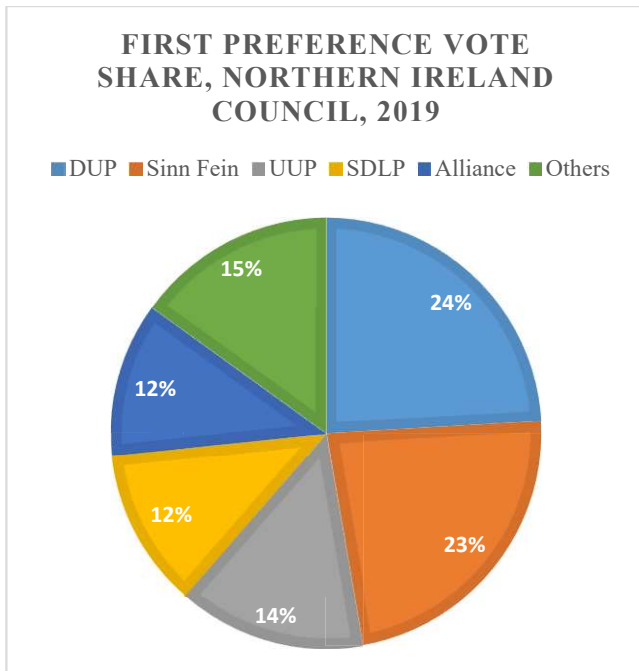


Figure 46. First Preference Vote Share, Northern Ireland Council, 2019, Percent
 Source: NI council elections: Alliance hails 'breakthrough' NI vote, BBC, May 04 2019, retrieved from shorturl.at/aetzI

POLITICAL PARTY	PERCENT DIFFERENCE (FIRST PREFERENCE VOTE)
DUP	+1.0%
SINN FEIN	-0.8%
UUP	-2.1%
SDLP	-1.6%
ALLIANCE	+4.8%
OTHERS	-1.3%

Table 5. First Preference Vote Change, 2019 & 2014 Council Elections, Percent
 Source: NI council elections: Alliance hails 'breakthrough' NI vote, BBC, May 04 2019, retrieved from shorturl.at/aetzI

Figure 46 and Table 5 summarize the results of the Northern Ireland Council elections. As per Figure 46, the DUP took the lion's share of votes, followed by Sinn Fein by a 1 percent difference. Table 5 reflects the top first preference of voters by party. DUP and Sinn Fein topped the chart, once again, followed by the UUP and SDLP. Table 5 shows that Sinn Fein had the smallest decrease in first preference votes, compared to the previous elections, and Alliance had the biggest increase in first preference votes.

Whereas both Sinn Fein and the DUP ranked top in the charts, DUP lost eight seats, whereas Sinn Fein preserved its number of seats, but slightly fell in first preference votes (Ibid). One of the parties that lost a big number of seats was the UUP that lost 13 seats (Ibid). The increase in seats also went to smaller parties like the Green party, People before Profit, independents, etc. (Ibid).

What is most interesting is that Alliance got 53 councilors, increasing its percentage of votes from 6.7 percent to 12 percent (Ibid). That is an interesting fact because Alliance recorded the biggest increase, as per Table 5, compared to the previous election with a 4.8% increase in first preference votes. This was a very surprising turn of events, given that it reflects an increase of people in Northern Ireland that do not associate themselves with neither unionists, nor nationalist (Alliance is not associated with either and is a centrist party that aims at attracting both Protestant and Catholics).

b. The 2019 European Election

On May 23, 2019 Northern Ireland was set to vote to elect 3 members to represent it in the European Parliament. The results are as follows (BBC, 2019g):

Elected members and their Associated Parties	First Vote Preference
Martina Anderson – Sinn Fein	Sinn Fein: 22.2% (-3.3%)
Diane Dodds – DUP	DUP: 21.8% (+0.9%)
Naomi Long – Alliance	Alliance: 18.5% (+11.4%)

Table 6. First Preference Votes for Elected Northern Irish Representatives and Parties to the EU Parliament, 2019, Percentage

Source: European elections: Dodds, Anderson and Long elected, BBC, May 27 2019, retrieved from shorturl.at/ktyD5

The main parties that were elected are Sinn Fein, the DUP, and Alliance. The election of Sinn Fein and the DUP was highlighted, but not so much as the boost Alliance got in the elections. As in the Council elections, the people who did not associate themselves with neither nationalists, nor unionists showed that their numbers are increasing at a fast pace, as they aligned behind Alliance.

The European Parliament elections are held every five years. As per Table 6, it is quite noticeable that Alliance had the biggest boost among the top three elected members with an 11.4 percent increase from the previous elections. Sinn Fein's first preference vote percentage dropped by 3.3 percent from the previous elections, while the DUP's increased by 0.9 percent. However, Sinn Fein still ranked first as voter first preference, followed by the DUP and Alliance in second and third places, respectively.

c. The United Kingdom General Elections

The 2019 United Kingdom general elections were held on December 12, 2019. Northern Ireland participates in this election to elect 18 MPs to represent it in Westminster. The following is a summary of the Northern Irish elected MPs over the years (Russell, 2017) (BBC, 2019h):

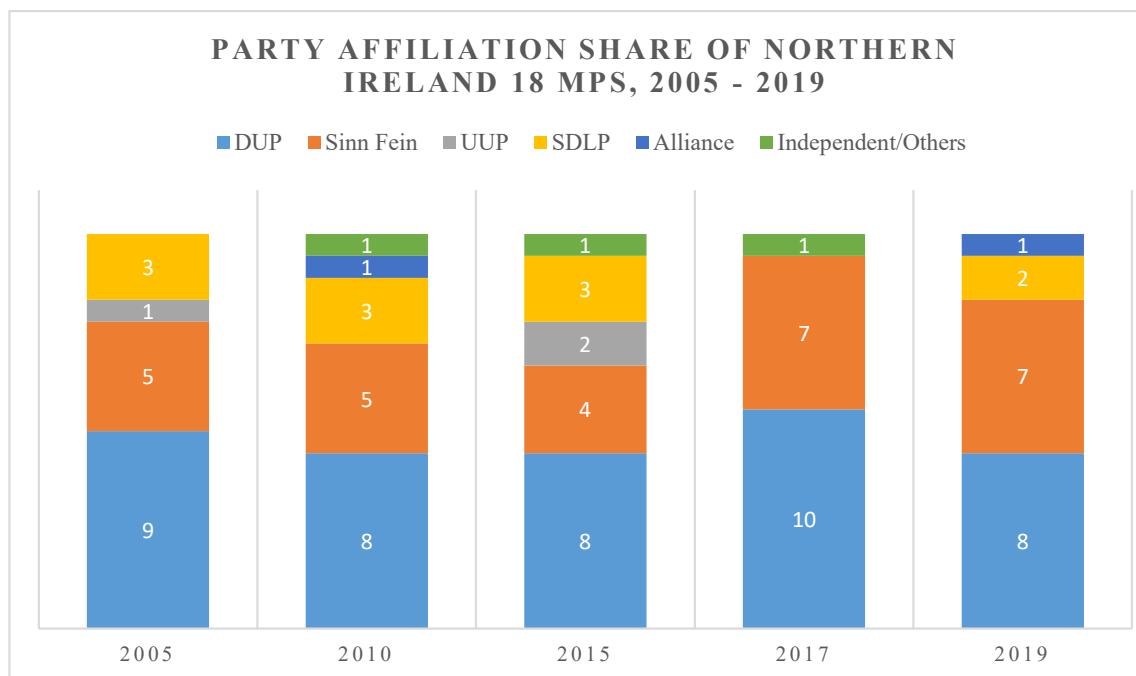


Figure 47. Northern Irish MPs in Westminster by Political Party, 2005 – 2019, Number

Source: General election 2017: A detailed look at the result in Northern Ireland, Ray Russell, June 20 2017, retrieved from shorturl.at/epzDN

Figure 47 summarizes the political affiliations of the 18 elected Northern Ireland MPs in Westminster over the years. The most noticeable elements of the chart are the major, sudden jumps from one election to the next. That applies to Sinn Fein that grew its representation from five to seven MPs and maintained that increase, as well as Alliance that makes a surprising addition in 2019 – especially given its lack of general representation in previous years.

Another important point to look into is the change between 2017 and 2019, given that Brexit began in 2016 and was reaching its end by 2019. The DUP fell by 2 seats, while Sinn Fein maintained its 7 seats. It's interesting to note that the DUP lost one of its seats to the SDLP (nationalist) and Alliance (centrist), further marking the trend of increased popularity for nationalists and centrists. In fact, the interesting twist is that Northern Ireland

returned more nationalists than unionists to Westminster for the first time ever, highlighting the marked shift in public opinion after Brexit (McClements, 2019).

d. Northern Ireland's Political Tug of War

Northern Ireland has had a rather tough time since Brexit began in 2016. Internal turmoil, as well as the uncertainty and fears that Brexit might bring, led to clashes and a lot of changes in the Northern Irish political landscape, as has been shown above.

During Brexit negotiations, the Irish border definitely constituted a major point of dispute. Theresa May's controversial backstop is a prime example. Initially, the backstop was designed solely for Northern Ireland and aimed to keep Northern Ireland aligned to European Union customs law, in order to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland (Meredith, 2019). However, at the insistence of the DUP, the backstop evolved to encompass the entire United Kingdom (Ibid). The reasoning behind the insistence of the DUP, Northern Ireland's biggest party representative in Westminster at the time, is that it refused to alienate Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom.

The progression of Northern Irish representation in Westminster also reflects the fluctuations. As Brexit negotiations went on, as of 2016, it is quite noticeable that DUP representation decreased, compared to an unexpected boost in Sinn Fein and Alliance popularity. Tumultuous solutions for the Irish border caused a significant shift towards nationalists that began to associate more with Ireland, rather than the United Kingdom, or towards Alliance (centrist) that associates with neither nationalist, nor unionist.

Northern Ireland's position in negotiations was strengthened by the leverage the DUP had in 2017. After the 2017 snap elections resulted in a hung Parliament, the

Conservative party – led by Theresa May - lacked the majority it needed to govern. The deal with the DUP – that counted 10 MPs at the time – gave the Conservatives the support they needed and guaranteed that the DUP had its voice heard, especially regarding any matter related to the Irish border (The Economist, 2019).

The current status of Northern Irish MP representation is characterized by Sinn Fein's policy of abstentionism and general feeling of abandonment by the United Kingdom. Sinn Fein's representatives at Westminster have a policy of no attendance, as they support neither Westminster's jurisdiction in Northern Ireland, nor taking an oath to the Monarch (New Statesman, 2017). As for the general feeling of abandonment, it spans to most Northern Irish that have come to face the reality of the Irish Sea border, but the disappointment hit harder for the DUP. In November 2019, PM Johnson attended the DUP annual conference in Northern Ireland and said: "We would be damaging the fabric of the Union with regulatory checks and even customs controls between Great Britain and Northern Ireland [...] I have to tell you that no British Conservative government could or should sign up to any such arrangement." (Quinn, 2019) However, as is evident, Northern Ireland was offered the short end of the stick, basically dividing it from the rest of the country by the Irish Sea border. This overall disappointment has contributed to the loss of the DUP of two seats in the United Kingdom's general elections, as after years of trust and support for the Conservatives, Northern Ireland was left out in cold.

All the events unfolding for Northern Ireland after Brexit have changed the political arena. The DUP has lost some ground, Sinn Fein is maintaining its status or making small progress, and Alliance is gaining track as a centrist party, representing the increasing percentage of people who no longer identify as clearly nationalist or unionist. After three

years of the government breaking down, Northern Ireland formed its government on January 13, 2020 (McLoughlin, 2020). Given the general election's startling results for the DUP and Sinn Fein, as well as the threat of fresh Assembly elections in Northern Ireland, both parties may have been propelled to agree to power sharing, for fear of further changes in elections (Ibid). Signs of compromise are already apparent between the aforementioned two parties, like in the Irish Language Act. Ireland and the United Kingdom definitely had a role to play in making this government a reality by conditioning funding for healthcare and infrastructure to resolving the government formation impasse (Ibid).

How does this translate in Irish unity terms? If there is anything to note, it is that the past 4 years have demonstrated sudden and unexpected changes in politics in Northern Ireland. The rise of Sinn Fein indicates a boost in Irish nationalism, the decrease in DUP popularity is a shot at the party envisioned as the United Kingdom Conservative's ally in Northern Ireland, and the boost to Alliance's popularity signifies a new trend away from the classical, traditional nationalist and unionist division. Alliance's stance on Irish unity is currently against unity, but are in total support of European Union membership and believe in its paramount importance (Moriarty, 2020). The party also stresses that it does not have a fixed stance on unity and is open to a "fact-based debate" (Ibid). The party admits that its members have mixed opinions, ranging from pro-Irish unity, anti-Irish unity, to some who admit that the situation is extremely fluid and prone to quick change (Ibid). Interestingly, a factor that might push Alliance more in favor of Irish unity is their advocacy for European Union membership, a possibility that could become reality by uniting with Ireland. In effect, this fact was cemented in 2017 when the European Union announced a united Ireland would automatically be a member of the Union (Reuters, 2017). The current

situation, along with Northern Ireland's alienation, will probably play in favor of Sinn Fein and Alliance. Sinn Fein is clearly advocating for Irish unity and Alliance admits its stance is fluid. In short, the sudden political changes that were seen in the last four years can develop into even more changes. However, the 2016 remain vote in Northern Ireland and favorable European Union sentiment, the alienation of Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom, and the economic complications brought about by the border need to kick in after the transition period to get a clear picture of the Northern Irish reaction. It is most likely that the shift will be gradual and develop at a steady pace in a pro-Irish unity direction, especially that Ireland is strengthening its economy and offers European Union benefits.

e. Scottish Independence & Northern Ireland

Scotland is part of the United Kingdom, same as Northern Ireland. It seems that in the past few years, both have been struggling with their sense of belonging to the United Kingdom and claiming their independence, in the case of Scotland, or aligning with another country, in the case of Northern Ireland.

Scotland's latest independence referendum was held in 2014 and the result was 55.3 percent voting to stay in the United Kingdom and 44.7 percent voting to become an independent country (BBC, 2014). As for the 2016 referendum in the United Kingdom regarding leaving the European Union, Scotland voted to stay in the European Union by a 62 percent vs. 38 percent vote (Paun & Sargeant, 2020). After Brexit negotiations began in 2016, Scotland found itself with more reasons to justify an independence referendum, given its desire for European Union membership, the mismanagement of the government of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the general feeling of abandonment amid increasing

Scottish nationalism (Walsh, 2020). However, Scotland's request to hold another referendum in March 2017, exactly a day before Article 50 was triggered, was refused by then-Prime Minister Theresa May because it simply "wasn't the time" (BBC, 2017). The topic of Scottish independence was raised again and a referendum was requested to be set on December 19, 2019, but PM Boris Johnson refused saying the 2014 referendum was a "once in generation opportunity" (Gehrke, 2020). In January 03, 2021, PM Johnson reiterated his refusal to hold another referendum, explaining that a timespan of decades must separate one referendum from another (Percival, 2021). It is worth noting that Scotland needs Westminster's approval to hold an independence referendum, as the Scotland Act 1998 says that the Scottish Parliament does not have the right to pass legislation regarding matters that are "'reserved' to Westminster, including 'the Union of the Kingdoms of Scotland and England'." (Paun and Sargeant, 2020).

Scotland is still on the preparatory path for a referendum, as it passed the Referendums (Scotland) Bill in January 2020, detailing rules for a poll (Ibid). Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon also announced in November 2020 that if her party, the Scottish National Party (SNP), wins the elections in May 2021, she will consider resorting to legal action in the event Westminster refuses another Scottish independence referendum (France 24, 2020). Courts have not handled this topic before and the increased push for a Scottish referendum and threat of taking the matter to courts will definitely be an interesting twist to democracy and free choice.

Although the Scottish referendum is far from concrete - and even if it takes place and the vote is to leave the United Kingdom - the actual separation of Scotland will require years of negotiation with the United Kingdom. However, when it comes to the effect of the

Scottish referendum on Northern Ireland, the effects are many. There are many common trends between Scotland and Northern Ireland. Both voted against Brexit in the 2016 referendum and both are suffering from a sense of alienation from the British, be it by cause of the Irish Sea border or increased Scottish and Northern Irish nationalism. Moreover, it seems that Scotland is closer to independence than Northern Ireland, in terms of chronological timeline. Scotland has already had a referendum in 2014, passed appropriate legislation, shows increased political support for independence (popularity of SNP), and is actively seeking a way to make another referendum happen. Consequently, it is quite certain that Scotland is moving faster than Northern Ireland in that direction.

If Scotland were to achieve a referendum and vote for leaving the United Kingdom, a ripple effect will reach Northern Ireland. There are three main categories that will be affected. First, the Northern Irish already supporting Irish unity will call for more action and feel that it is their prerogative too to call for what the people want. Second, the newly increasing percentage of those who are uncertain of Irish unity will be propelled to look into the subject further. The Northern Irish who are uncertain admit that their reasoning goes back to the fluidity of the situation, amid constantly changing variables. The state of an independent Scotland will either convince them more of the benefits of separation from the United Kingdom or push them more towards the United Kingdom, depending on how the negotiations go and Scotland does after independence. Third, those who do not support Irish unity will see that the wave of nationalism has hit home and will have to look harder for reasons to remain in the United Kingdom.

Results show that 44.7 percent voted for an independent Scotland in the 2014 referendum. Given the rough divorce from the European Union, displeasure with the

Conservative government, and mishandling of the Covid-19 crisis, the small percentage needed to push the leave vote over the threshold could have been achieved. Polls in Northern Ireland show a steady increase of Irish unity support, albeit a slow progress. In fact, polls in Northern Ireland have shown that Irish unity might become a reality in the next couple of decades. This is where Scotland's independence plays a role. Scotland's independence will most certainly shake things up in Northern Ireland, especially given the common points they share in their arguments for separating from the United Kingdom. However, Northern Ireland has a stronger case than Scotland, in the sense that it will be uniting with an already established Ireland that has grown its economy and shows further signs of growth, in addition to the already existing cultural ties.

In short, a prospective Scottish independence might push Irish unity closer from possibly being achieved in two decades to a decade. This will not make Irish unity happen tomorrow, as the elements to support such a thing have not matured yet. However, the increased and persistent push of Scotland for a referendum and independence will affect Northern Ireland, most probably towards Irish unity.

C. The Republic of Ireland

Ireland's political indicators and status is an important indicator to the readiness of the region for a united Ireland, given that both Northern Ireland and Ireland must approve unity in a referendum to achieve unity. This part will look into the results of the 2019 Irish elections, the 2019 European Union Parliament elections, the 2020 general elections, the general atmosphere in the region, as well as a general historical outlook that plays into current Irish unity.

a. Elections & Political Developments in Ireland

When it comes to the Irish parties' position on Irish unity, all parties advocate for a united Ireland (Duffy, 2020). When asked for their opinion on the matter in 2020, all parties indicated their approval for a united Ireland. Fine Gael's official title is 'Fine Gael – The United Ireland Party', Fianna Fail, Sinn Fein, Labour, People Before Profit, Green Party, Social Democrats, Aontu, Irish Freedom Party, and the National Party all said that they "aspire to democratic unity of Ireland" (Ibid). As for the timing for a unity poll, the majority of parties said they prefer that a poll happen after making sure all factors that will make unity beneficial to all parties are present, mainly advising to wait after Brexit is fully finalized and generally giving after five years from 2020 as an approximate date for the poll (Ibid). Only Sinn Fein, People Before Profit, and Aontu, said that they preferred a poll happen during the lifetime of the 2020 government (Ibid).

The 2019 local Irish elections and European Parliament elections were held on May 24, 2019 to elect local authorities in Ireland and Irish representatives in the European Parliament (RTE, 2019) (The Irish Times, 2019b). First, the 2019 local Irish election results were not no shocking, in terms of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael ranking top two, as historically

these two parties have shared power in Ireland more than most (The Irish Times, 2019c) (Ibid). Interestingly, Sinn Fein's number of seats fell by 4.4 percent since the latest elections in 2016, but still ranked third. Second, European Parliament elections saw Fine Gael win 6 out of 14 total seats, followed by independents, Fianna Fail, the Green Party, and Sinn Fein, in decreasing order. Third, the general Irish elections were held on February 8, 2020 and the results were quite shocking (The Irish Times, 2020). Sinn Fein rose to the top with the second highest number of seats and the highest percentage of first preference votes, 24.53 percent, outranked only by Fianna Fail by one seat (Carroll, 2020). The sudden change comes after the failure of Fine Gael to ride the wave of Brexit negotiations (through former Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar). Sinn Fein's win is mostly attributed to the public's perception of it as the main driver of change for the decreasing quality of public services, hospital crises, and increasing rent and homelessness (Ibid). However, no party was able to secure a majority, but the dominant parties - Fine Gael and Fianna Fail – were able to take over the reins through alliances. As a result, Fianna Fáil's Micheal Martin will serve as Prime Minister until December 2022 (BBC, 2020d).

The changes and jumps in the political scene in Ireland reflect the volatility of public opinion in general. However, the latest elections in 2020 have resulted in the new government's Prime Minister Micheal Martin declaring that even though the government is not planning for an Irish unity referendum in the next five years because of Brexit and focusing on “landing Brexit safely”, the new government is working on strengthening ties with Northern Ireland by investing €500 million in cross-border infrastructure throughout the coming five years, marking a significant boost in Irish investments in Northern Ireland (Pogatchinik, 2020). In order to elaborate further, the new government has issued a

document that details 10 missions that focus on the “shared island” (Reuters, 2020b). The document specifically stated: “We will establish a unit within the Department of An Taoiseach (prime minister) to work towards a consensus on a united island ... examining the political, social, economic and cultural considerations underpinning a future in which all traditions are mutually respected.” (Ibid). In fact, both ruling parties have indicated that they would like to see a united Ireland and as such, Fianna Fail’s manifesto during the 2020 elections indicated their wish to set up a unit to conduct formal studies on how Ireland should set up for uniting the island. How much support is needed to make such changes a reality? The two dominant parties, Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, need one smaller party or eight independent MPs in Parliament to guarantee a majority (Ibid). However, with initiatives like the aforementioned infrastructure investment, it is clear to see that Ireland is making small steps towards testing the waters of Irish unity prospects. Most recently, Ireland has also announced that it will fund the Erasmus+ program in Northern Ireland, so that students there may benefit from it even after the United Kingdom’s withdrawal (Cerulus, 2020), paving the way for closer North-South cooperation and alignment.

In fact, Irish vision for unity has had signs from years before. In 2017, Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny requested from the European Union that the bloc declare that a united Ireland will automatically be included in the Union, a request to which the bloc agreed (Macdonald, 2017). Northern Ireland voted to remain in the bloc in the 2016 referendum, has soaring demand on Irish passports – to benefit from the Union’s advantages, and has clear shifts in public view towards unity. Therefore, the automatic involvement of a united Ireland in the European Union may very well be a swaying factor.

In brief, Ireland's involvement and investment in Northern Ireland is quite clear. It is taking significant strides in showing preparedness for unity. This fact is made more poignant, given the divergence of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom, as Ireland steps in as a closer economic, social, and political ally.

b. Irish Unity Paralleled in History

While looking at the case for Irish unity, one must consider that such cases must have happened throughout history. Indeed, one need not look far for an example, as the Irish Free State was born by disassociating itself from the United Kingdom. Another case that might shed light on Irish unity is the joining of Newfoundland and Labrador to Canada, as a case of a region uniting with an already existing country and disassociating itself from the United Kingdom.

Recent history has known a lot of dispute over regions. Some regions like Catalonia in Spain desire independence and never seem to let the idea wither by bringing their demands to light every few years (BBC, 2019i). Other regions, like Crimea, remain a source of dispute between countries (The European Council, 2020). Russia and Ukraine both have strategic reasons for claiming Crimea, so much so that Russia risked international sanctions and alienation for Crimea's annexation (Ibid). There is also another form of 'independent' regions, such as Hong Kong and Macau, China (Hayes, 2020). They were turned over to China in 1997 and 1999, respectively, and enjoy a great degree of administrative, legal, and judicial autonomy (Ibid). Therefore, it is safe to say that there is no single, adopted method to deal with cases of region affiliation crises.

Northern Ireland is not similar to Catalonia in its disruptive relationship with the bigger entity it belongs to, since it ended the bloody history of annexation with the United

Kingdom that Crimea is currently suffering from, and does not have the wide-range autonomy Hong Kong and Macau have (BBC (o), *op. cit.*) (Blackwill & Sestanovich, 2020). That is why looking into the case of the Irish Free State and Newfoundland and Labrador is closer to the Northern Irish case. The Irish Free State is a vital historical chapter to look into because of its independence from the United Kingdom and direct relationship with Northern Ireland. Moreover, Newfoundland and Labrador is an example of a region joining an already existing country and provides historical insight.

The Irish Free State was born after years of struggle and war. Since the twelfth century, the English have ruled in one way or another in Ireland (History.com editors, 2020). After years of struggle with many problems, including the oppression of Catholics and the potato famine of the 1840s, a wave of Irish nationalism gained ground that led to the Easter rising against the British in 1916 (Ibid). After the rebellion was suppressed, it was followed by a guerilla war between the Irish and the British and a failed peace treaty with the British in 1922 that would have given Ireland its independence and annexed Northern Ireland to the United Kingdom (Ibid). However, before the Irish Free State was announced, civil war broke out and it ended with the Irish Free State defeating the Irish Republican forces (IRA) in 1923 (Ibid). However, it was not until 1949 that Ireland broke all links with the Commonwealth (Ibid). The status of Northern Ireland, however, remained a sore point. The tension boiled over when conflict was reignited in the 1970s in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants and the Troubles began (Ibid). The fighting was solved by the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (Encyclopaedia Britannica Editors, n.d.).

The history of Newfoundland and Labrador also provides useful historical context. In the 1930s, the Great Depression hit Newfoundland so hard that they went to Britain for economic assistance (Hillmer, 2013). Britain agreed and in exchange, Newfoundland gave up its independence to the British Commission of Government (Ibid). By the end of World War II, Newfoundland and Labrador was thriving economically and the state of British rule was no longer tolerable (Ibid). Consequently, the debate between 1946 and 1948 revolved around the source of their best interest: Britain, the Confederation of Canada, or self-governance (Ibid). At the time, the major two trends were in favor of the Canadian Confederation and self-governance. In June 1948, a referendum was held and the votes for the three options were as follows: 44.6 percent for self-governance, 41.1 percent for the Confederation, and 14.3 percent for the British Commission of Government (Ibid). Since no option received the majority required, another referendum was held in July 1948 and the results for the two available options were: 52.34 percent for the Confederation and 47.66 percent for self-governance (Ibid). Given that a majority was obtained, Newfoundland and Labrador became a part of the Confederation of Canada in April 1949 (Ibid).

The case of Newfoundland and Labrador provides a historical case of a nation giving up its nationhood, in a completely voluntary and democratic manner. In this respect, it is quite similar to the case of Northern Ireland, where the people will have the right to hold a referendum to democratically and voluntarily choose the United Kingdom or Ireland. Another similarity pertains to the British lack of desire to remain involved in Newfoundland after World War II, due to its desire to cut back on expenditures (Ibid). The

British government has had historical instances of seeing Northern Ireland as a burden¹⁰ and even extends to the current day, with the literal Irish Sea border separating them. A third similarity is Newfoundland and Labrador's choice to join the geographically closer Confederation and people, with whom they had more in common (Ibid). In this sense, Northern Ireland is closer to Ireland with its open border – compared to the dividing Irish Sea border with the rest of the United Kingdom and rise of British nationalism – and shared history and culture with the Irish people. Consequently, this train of thought leads to a pro-Irish unity opinion, based on the Newfoundland history.

The history of the Irish Free State is also highly relatable to Northern Ireland. The fact that people of Northern Ireland and Ireland shared a major part of their history and crises over the years further consolidates the link between them. The general drive for the Irish Free State, back then, was in major part religiously triggered, along with displeasure with the English. The fact is that current day comparisons for Northern Ireland's Irish unity drive are more based on increased displeasure with the English and European Union membership favoritism. Brexit and the Irish Sea border that sacrificed Northern Ireland for the sake of smoothing out the United Kingdom's deal with the European Union constitute a point of resentment for Northern Ireland. It is worth noting that Sinn Fein is associated with the IRA of the past and Sinn Fein has been gaining ground in Ireland and Northern Ireland over the past few years. In Ireland, it is clear that all the parties agree to Irish unity, albeit with different timelines for achieving it. That is why the link between Ireland's independence and Northern Ireland leaving the United Kingdom has a strong basis.

¹⁰ Examples are mentioned in Chapter V, section F, p. 66 and Chapter VI, section F, sub-section b, p. 109.

D. The United Kingdom

Although the United Kingdom is not the core problem in the Irish border dilemma and not the main actor in Irish unity, it was the trigger that resuscitated the debate for Irish unity that was buried after the Troubles. Through Brexit, the United Kingdom started a chain of unexpected and radical waves, ranging from calls for Scottish independence to Irish unity. This section will look into the 2019 general elections in the United Kingdom and its effects on Irish unity prospects, as well as the rise of populism and nationalism in the United Kingdom and the role of globalization and intergovernmentalism, in this context.

a. The 2019 General Elections

The 2019 general elections in the United Kingdom were held on December 12, 2019, as a strategic move by PM Boris Johnson to get Brexit through (Perrigo, 2019). In the general elections in 2017, Conservatives failed to secure a majority and were constricted to a minority government, propped up by DUP MPs. This situation caused a stagnant state of Brexit impasse that led to the refusal of former-PM May's proposals and her resignation (Ibid). Current PM Johnson had faced the same deadlock fate as May, until he called for the 2019 snap elections and won with a majority in the House of Commons. In fact, the Conservatives won 365 seats, an addition of 47 seats from the 2017 elections, bypassing Labor by a wide margin, as the latter only secured 203 seats – a decrease of 59 seats since 2017 (BBC, Results, 2019j). As such, PM Johnson was able to smoothen the way to achieve Brexit that official happened on January 31, 2020 (Jamieson , 2020b).

In terms of Irish unity translation, a Conservative majority government does not go along the lines of encouraging Irish unity. The recent demands for a new Scottish

referendum have been refused by PM Johnson, after a 2014 referendum in Scotland showed that the majority favored remaining in the United Kingdom (Brooks, 2020). As discussed in Chapter VII¹¹, the Scottish independence calls directly affect Irish unity prospects and will fast-track the path towards it. Given the general political atmosphere in the United Kingdom, it does not seem likely that Westminster is in an Irish-unity conducive mood. Furthermore, the United Kingdom's official exit from the European Union may have been achieved and the Agreement reached, but the effects of this new era for the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland are still to be seen. In respect to that, the Irish PM Micheal Martin also indicated that there will be no referendum for the next five years, until Brexit details have been ironed out, for fears of needlessly aggravating matters for all concerned parties (Pogatchnik, 2020).

In brief, the current political arrangements and formations do not indicate that an Irish unity referendum may happen in the next five years. The United Kingdom and Ireland seem to express that a referendum is not viable in the short-term, at least until the United Kingdom has finished with Brexit, subsequent negotiations, and dealt with the effects.

b. Populism & Nationalism in the United Kingdom

When Brexit began in 2016, the already pre-existing English sense of populism and nationalism became the star of the theoretical scene. However prevalent populism and nationalism are among the English, we find an opposing wave of Northern Irish and Scottish favoritism for their own nationalism and intergovernmentalism. The two opposing trends paint a very conflicting picture, especially regarding Irish unity. This section will

¹¹ Details on Scottish calls for independence and their effect on Northern Ireland are detailed in Chapter VII, section B, sub-section e, p. 125.

look into British populism and nationalism, on one hand, and Northern Irish and Scottish intergovernmentalism and nationalism, on another hand, and the effects of both on prospects of Irish unity.

First, populism played an important role in Brexit for the British. The general definition is that populism “considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.” (Bonikowsky & Gidron, 2013). In the United Kingdom, numbers show that the poor were more likely to vote for Brexit, compared to the middle- and upper-classes (Younge, 2019). That is why the pro-Brexit camp argued that it was time to take back the reins in their own country and decide for themselves, a cry that appealed to many that oppose globalization and its effects (Ringeisen-Biardeaud, 2017). The fears from immigration and losing control over major decisions in the economy led many to vote for Brexit (Kaldor, 2019). Although the United Kingdom has not been hit with immigrant crises like the rest of Europe, it is interesting to note that it had one of the most extreme reactions it. The United Kingdom is not in the Schengen area, is an island that is mostly unbound by close neighbors, and is not connected to mainland Europe, thus was spared the influx of immigrants from the Syrian crisis or North Africa in the last few years, unlike the rest of Europe (Council on Foreign Relations, 2016). Although Brexit was centered to a great extent around the immigration debate, only a third of leave voters chose border problems as their main concern (Williams, 2016). In fact, pro-Brexit voters voiced that their predominant concerns were “that no one in authority, whether in Westminster or Brussels, cared or took notice” (Kalder, 2019). This represents the group that saw the threat

that the European Union's intergovernmentalism was posing to their interests. The funds that could have been allocated to remedy their needs, improve their schools, build their infrastructure, etc. were being sent to Brussels, and Westminster did not even have a say in any of that (Ibid).

Then, how can Northern Ireland and Scotland's voting to stay in the European Union be explained, from this perspective? From a theoretical perspective, intergovernmentalism is a theory of integration that does not oppose populism, per se. However, in the case of Northern Ireland and Scotland, the favoritism for intergovernmentalism in the European Union clashed with British populism. Scotland held an independence referendum in 2014 and has increased its demands for another to be held since then. In fact, a major reason behind referendum demands is that it voted against Brexit and wishes to remain in the European Union. Similarly, Northern Ireland voted to remain in the European Union because the economic, social, and political arrangements suited it. A recent case in point is Invest NI, Northern Ireland's economic development agency. The agency announced in December 2020 that it is facing severe lack of funding, after the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) cut back its funding because of Brexit (Campbell, 2020b). Consequently, the Agency's activities will be negatively affected and projects will be hit hard (Ibid). Historically, the European Union has provided a lot of financial support for Northern Ireland over the years, beginning from the PEACE and INTERREG programs and extending to many other development and aid programs¹². The European Union's intergovernmentalism has also provided open borders with Ireland – an

¹² Details on major European Union-funded programs in Northern Ireland are in Chapter V, section B, subsection b, p. 44.

important peace-keeping move, an open market of 27 economies, and a safety net of social and political support for a region like Northern Ireland. That is why from a Northern Irish and Scottish perspective, European Union intergovernmentalism – inherently correlated with globalization - comes face to face with British populism, hence creating a wedge between them. When translated to Irish unity terms, this trend shows that the increase in Irish unity calls have a strong base and that this base will only get stronger if the United Kingdom does not take back the reins and secure the same European Union benefits for Northern Ireland.

Second, there is no doubt about the rise of nationalism all across the United Kingdom. Nationalism is an “ideology based on the premise that the individual’s loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests.” (Kohn, 2019). Although nationalism is widespread across the United Kingdom, it is represented differently.

Nationalism is not a new concept for the British, for sure. One of the main points in Brexit was that money paid to the European Union did not amount to how much the European Union invested back in the United Kingdom. However, this train of thought actually goes back to years before. When the United Kingdom became a member of the European Economic Community in 1957, many in the United Kingdom questioned if the European Community could balance out the industrialized British economy at the time. We see this pattern re-emerge when Margaret Thatcher fought for the Fontainebleau abatement – more commonly known as the British rebate - in the 1980s. Since then, the United Kingdom has voiced its criticism over the European Union’s poorly-managed finances, the European Union’s projects, the allocation of resources for ‘poor’ European Union countries

– mainly new Eastern European members – when the latter do not give back as much as they receive, as well as the United Kingdom contributing too much to the European Union, irrespective of whether the United Kingdom falls within the ‘rich’ or ‘poor’ country category. Ultimately, that pattern was revived during Brexit, when pro-Brexit supporters argued that £350 million (US\$ 461.8 million) – almost half of the United Kingdom’s school budget – sent weekly to Brussels would better be spent at home. (Spence, 2012, *op. cit.*) In fact, the United Kingdom was the most outvoted European Union country between 2004 and 2015 and was on the losing side of the argument in the Union more than any other country (O’Brennan, 2019). Most recently, Brexit embodies this nationalistic trend by the British looking out for their own nation state and people, in the face of the conflicting interests of the Union in matters like immigration and border control, public spending, resource allocation, etc. In effect, the United Kingdom’s nationalism eruption in Brexit was simply an overdue result of years of resentment, highlighted in a world of liberalism.

Nationalism is also strongly present among the Scottish and Northern Irish. In the case of Scotland, Scottish nationalism is clear through the increased calls for a Scottish independence referendum and even in the small margin still required to obtain independence, as per the 2014 referendum¹³. It is quite evident that even though Scotland is part of the United Kingdom, Scottish nationalism is a fierce adversary to British nationalism in Scotland. Northern Irish nationalism is similar to Scotland. The pro-Irish unity Northern Irish embrace the Irish nationalistic wave and consider the Irish as the group they belong to. However, a lot of Northern Irish also consider themselves as British, hence the clash between Irish and English nationalism. Social factors, discussed in Chapter VI,

¹³ This is explained in detail in Chapter VII, section B, sub-section e, p. 125.

show that Northern Ireland's sense of nationalism may be divided into Catholic and Protestant and their respective nationalistic affiliations, Ireland and the United Kingdom, respectively.

In short, the United Kingdom is a mosaic of different trends. In terms of Irish unity prospects, the British populist trend and globalization/intergovernmental trend in Northern Ireland clash together. They both also clash on a nationalism level, where the British and a large faction of Northern Irish are pulling in opposite directions. Economic analysis and developments have shown that Northern Ireland will drift from the United Kingdom, as a result of Brexit, probably enhancing the Northern Irish globalized, nationalistic wave. On a political level, Ireland has not ruled out unity and has sought confirmation from the European Union that a united Ireland will be in the Union (MacDonald, 2017). That is why it is exercising caution and taking small steps¹⁴ on a path that could be described as preparatory. This economic and political input feeds into the social character of the Irish unity debate, making for an interesting push-and-pull between Irish and British nationalism in Northern Ireland. Moreover, a soft landing for Brexit is not guaranteed and will suffer from casualties in Northern Ireland, even in its best case scenario. If that is combined with the aforementioned drift between Northern Irish and British, then the scale is likely to tip in favor of Irish unity, on the long run.

¹⁴ Further details on Ireland's investment plans in Northern Ireland and unity preparations are available in Chapter VII, section C, sub-section a, p. 129.

E. The European Union

a. The European Union in Irish Border Negotiations

The European Union has advocated for making the Irish border a priority, all throughout Brexit negotiations. Although former-PM May's backstop proposal did not pass in Parliament, the European Union accepted it as a means to address the Irish border question (Baczynska, 2018). The need to keep an open border between Northern Ireland and Ireland to maintain peace was of paramount importance and was crucially valuable for the Union, given that Ireland is a member of the European Union. Consequently, any negative spill-over effect on Ireland means that the European Union will have to be directly involved in the cleanup. That provided incentive for the European Union to stress on a peaceful Irish border transition.

Michel Barnier, the European Commission's Head of Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom, has expressed the Union's focus on cooperation among all parties pertaining to the Irish border to maintain peace for Northern Ireland and Ireland and stressed on the extensive efforts pursued by all parties to reach the agreed upon solution, the Irish Sea border (European Commission, Keynote Address by Michel Barnier at the Institute of International and European Affairs, 2020c).

b. Democracy in Northern Ireland & the European Union

The European Union has long been an advocate of many liberal concepts, most importantly democracy. Indeed, the European Union prides itself on its system that provides an easy path for maintaining equality, human rights, secularism, etc. In respect to Irish unity, the concept of democracy is highlighted. Since Northern Ireland's vote in the 2016 referendum was to remain in the European Union, where does democracy stand?

To begin with, there are two types of democracy to distinguish: procedural democracy and substantive democracy (Kaldor, 2019). Procedural democracy is the procedures that are present and are necessary to guarantee the participation of citizens in public life. This entails “rights-based rule of law, full adult suffrage, elected power holders, a plurality of political parties, civilian control over the security services, and freedom of speech and association” (Ibid). Substantive democracy means political equality and the ability of citizens to have a real impact on the decisions and laws that govern their lives. It also includes the culture of democracy, through which the societal understanding of true democracy can guarantee the transparent application of the concept (Ibid). Both types of democracy are necessary in a nation state to guarantee an effective, democratic society.

Democracy in Northern Ireland, with respect to the European Union, has a very particular angle. Northern Ireland voted to remain in the European Union in the 2016 referendum, whereas the final result in the United Kingdom was to leave the bloc. Generally, referendums hold great power in a democratic society to put the public’s will into action. However, referendums are a two-edged sword. Whereas some may say that the public is adequately equipped to take major life-changing decisions regarding the fate of their countries, other might disagree based on the media’s ability to alter realities and perceptions, as well as general public preconceived ideas or misconceptions in some cases. For example, Colombians in 2016 voted ‘no’ by a 50.2 percent majority in a referendum on agreeing to a peace deal with Farc rebels, after four years of negotiation between the government and rebels to reach the agreement (BBC, 2016). The ‘no’ camp argued that the peace deal – encouraged by then-UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and many other countries – would have let the rebels get away with too much, given the crimes they have

perpetrated (Ibid). Another example is the 2016 Thailand referendum on a junta-supported constitution (France 24, 2016). Although media outlets worldwide condemned the new constitution for guaranteeing a half democracy and tightening military rule over the country, the new constitution was accepted by the public with a 61 percent majority (Ibid). The new constitution would weaken political parties and empower the military in controlling the country's economic and social development (Ibid). In fact, when asked about the next steps in the event of a 'no' vote for the new constitution, the military-installed prime minister Prayuth – who led the military coup in 2014 – said that he would write another constitution himself (Ramsey, 2016). In both cases, it can be argued that the opinion of the public complicated matters. In Colombia's case, years of negotiations were wasted and a solution that could appease the country's stability was turned down. In Thailand's case, the people's vote strengthened military rule and censorship that aims at eliminating the role of plurality of political parties that safeguard many democratic rights. Even when the logic behind the public's choice in a referendum is questionable, a referendum is considered the public's will and a democratic way to directly influence the decisions that shape their lives.

Therefore, the question arises: Regarding Northern Ireland and Scotland, where is the line that separates substantive and procedural democracy? Scotland is already demanding an independence referendum, so soon after the 2014 referendum, in most part because they are arguing that they did not wish to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum and that constitutes enough cause, among others, to call for another independence referendum. Then, does it not go without saying that Westminster's current

refusal to hold a Scottish referendum goes against Scotland's democratic right? Consequently, that would entail Northern Ireland's democratic rights, as well.

When analyzing the data for Brexit, the 2016 referendum voting patterns show that it was the working class in the United Kingdom that pushed Brexit through (Kaldor, 2019). It was that class that responded to the 'Take back control' calls of the pro-Brexit camp, demanding more focus on local matters like improving infrastructure, procuring investment, providing skills training, and putting an end to neglect and indifference in authorities in some regions (Ibid). In that respect, British people who were demanding their government to take back the reigns felt that substantive democracy was missing. The pro-Brexit camp did not feel that it is fair for a decision made in Brussels to directly impact their lives (Ibid). The main theoretical argument in this case lies in the fact that globalization and intergovernmentalism took away the people's direct power, hereby diluting their substantive democratic power.

In a parallel context, people in Northern Ireland voted against Brexit and may not consider that the current arrangements that were imposed on them reflect the changes that they wish to have. The current Irish Sea border that will complicate trade arrangements in Northern Ireland with the rest of the United Kingdom does not match what the Northern Irish foresaw in the 2016 referendum. Although former-PM Theresa May's attempts at delivering Brexit failed, her solution of the backstop protected Northern Ireland from being divided from the rest of the country and safeguarded the Good Friday Agreement.

In short, democracy is accepting the vote of the public and the English have voted for leaving the European Union. Generally, every referendum is likely to have voters oppose it and in this case, Northern Ireland opposed Brexit. To answer the aforementioned

question, where is the line that separates substantive and procedural democracy in Northern Ireland? Northern Ireland, like Scotland, voted and was overruled. Democracy is accepting that the people of the United Kingdom wanted to leave the European Union. However, the democratic right of Scotland to be independent and rejoin the European Union will be jeopardized when Scotland's calls for an independence referendum, driven by the desire to rejoin the European Union, are dismissed by the United Kingdom – as is being done now. As for Northern Ireland, the line in question is a dotted line. The fact that Northern Ireland may call on the Good Friday Agreement to hold a unity referendum is a salute to democracy.

In conclusion, democracy is much coveted, but not perfectly applied in many regions of the world. Democracy may also not always bring the best results: it may be because it was distorted, repressed, or even achieve the will of the public that could turn out harmful to the public and nation state, rather than beneficial. However, in the case of Northern Ireland, its democratic right to call for an Irish unity referendum and rejoin the European Union is the manifestation of democracy in its best forms. In fact, the fact that Northern is able to democratically and peacefully take charge of its fate by rejoining the European Union through a united Ireland and achieving the will of the public is a magnificent feat for democracy.

F. Conclusion

In four years of unexpected political surprises and first times, one thing is to be expected: nothing is certain. Brexit has triggered a myriad of economic, social, and political developments that have shifted public opinions from one end to another and pushed nation states, regions, and people into taking shockingly decisive, life-altering decisions. The four major actors – Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union – are playing a four-way tug of war, in which each is pulling at a different angle but is directly affected by any push or pull from another actor. This section will analyze the political landscape in all four actors and its link to the prospects of Irish unity.

First, being the star of the show, Northern Ireland has had many changes in its political landscape and surrounding environment. The 2019 Council elections, 2019 European Parliament elections, and 2020 United Kingdom general elections have shown a consistent trend: the rise of nationalists and centrists. In all three elections, unionists were hit - more than nationalists - and centrists - in the form of Alliance - have found major support among the public. In fact, Northern Ireland returned more nationalists than unionists to Westminster, for the first time. This highlights two major conclusions, in terms of Irish unity: parties supporting Irish unity are gaining public support, albeit gradually, and the party that is centrist and has voiced its non-fixed stance on Irish unity is increasing in popularity, at a fast pace. In fact, Alliance has said its opinion is based on facts and admits to the fluidity of the situation. Therefore, based on election results, Northern Ireland's current political stance is: the general trend shows a positive shift to the pro-unity camp, but the repercussions of Brexit on Northern Ireland hold the key in shifting public opinion on Irish unity.

A part of the volatility of the political situation is also affected by Scotland. The increasing demands for Scottish independence will definitely impact Northern Ireland. In the event Scotland holds a referendum and votes for independence, there can be no doubt that the pro-Irish unity camp will use it as ammunition. Furthermore, if Scotland succeeds in holding a referendum in the next few years, it will coincide with the fresh wave of Brexit repercussions, expertly expected to be economically mixed, on Northern Ireland. Consequently, a pro-Irish unity and pro-European Union wave is bound to hit in Northern Ireland. This wave will be intensified if the United Kingdom badly handles the post-Brexit period in Northern Ireland. Numbers show that it will take time for the United Kingdom to recover from Brexit, even with the trade Agreement in place. The problem lies in the fact that the issue of Irish unity is quite volatile and the four or five years needed to recover from Brexit might gather enough momentum and support in Northern Ireland for Irish unity. In contrast, if Scotland holds a referendum and votes against independence, the result will be the same as the reactions to the 2014 referendum result: status-quo maintenance in Northern Ireland, to a limited extent. However, the difference in the general political environment between 2014 and nowadays cannot be ignored. In 2014, the question of Irish unity was not as common, as it is today, and Brexit and its effects had not even been present. That is why even a 'no' vote for Scottish independence would mean a revitalized push for both pro and anti-Irish unity camps, where the pro-camp sees the paralleled Scottish nationalism that led to simply holding the referendum and the anti-Irish camp sees a 'no' vote that reinforces United Kingdom support sentiment. However, one of the camps will have an advantage, contingent on the well-being of Northern Ireland after Brexit. Northern Ireland is bound to suffer, in some aspects more than others, after the trade deal

kicks in, but will also benefit by being closely aligned to the European Union. That is why a ‘no’ vote will serve to intensify the argument points for both camps, rather than only one camp.

Second, as the co-star in the show, Ireland has a relatively clear trajectory regarding Irish unity, from a political perspective. In the 2019 local elections, the 2019 European Parliament elections, and the 2020 General elections, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael have continued their prolonged history of power sharing in Ireland. Although Sinn Fein got a surprise boost in the 2020 elections, it was Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, and the Greens that formed the new 2020 government. However, in terms of Irish unity translation, all parties in Ireland have voiced their support for Irish unity, albeit with a difference in preferred timing. Only a select few – Sinn Fein, Aontu, and People Before Profit – advocate unity in the current government’s lifetime. That is why the current Irish government is taking small steps to consolidate North-South cooperation. In fact, Fianna Fail is proposing a unit to conduct official studies pertaining to Irish unity prospects. Moreover, Ireland began in 2017 by guaranteeing European Union membership for a united Ireland, is funding the Erasmus+ program for Northern Ireland, and set up a five-year plan in 2020 with 10 missions for investment in Northern Ireland, marking a significant increase in North-South cooperation. This is a clear message from the Irish government that although it is not looking for unity in the next five years – as it is waiting for Brexit and the effects to settle – it is making small steps on the way to achieve that goal. The Irish government has started taking these steps as of late, since the topic of Irish unity has made many headlines since 2016, and is making its position on the matter quite clear.

A throwback into similar historical instances can provide useful insight, like the case of the Irish Free State and Newfoundland and Labrador. The Irish Free State had similar reasons for disassociating itself from the United Kingdom to the reasons supported by the pro-Irish unity camp and is an example of Irish taking control of their fate into their hands, rather than keep it in the hands of the English. Similarly, Newfoundland and Labrador represents a nation state giving up its nationhood to be aligned with another nation state that is culturally similar to it. These examples serve to show that such changes can be done democratically (referendums like Newfoundland and Labrador) and that democracy, when available and respected, can translate the changes in the people's desire into realities.

Third, the United Kingdom is the scene on which all the developments were happening, including trends of populism, nationalism, and intergovernmentalism. The 2019 general elections in the United Kingdom show a sweeping win for the Conservatives, which led to easing the process of passing Brexit in Parliament. Therefore, the recipe of a Conservative-majority government that is looking to distance itself from the European Union and an Irish government that is starting on the path to Irish unity are a good start for unity prospects, especially that Northern Ireland voted to stay in the European Union and is very sensitive to tipping the scale in either direction.

This is expressed in terms of British and Northern Irish nationalism, as well as British populism and Northern Irish intergovernmentalism. British populism has been very clear over the years regarding the European Union and the culmination of that populism in Brexit. In contrast, Northern Ireland preferred the intergovernmental nature of the European Union and voted to remain in 2016. As for nationalism, it is present in both, but

has different faces. British nationalism comes in contrast with Northern Irish nationalism that identifies with the Irish, rather than the British. The past four years have shown that Northern Irish nationalism is a growing force to contend with, as it is a major drive behind Irish unity.

Fourth, the European Union plays a leading role in Irish unity, in terms of discerning the borders of democracy. Democracy can be loosely expressed as translating the people's will into actions and results, in both of its forms, procedurally and substantively. The results of Brexit on Northern Ireland – the Irish Sea border and its subsequent effects and complications – is not what the Northern Irish voted for in the 2016 referendum. However, these results on Northern Ireland are the result of the will of the people of the United Kingdom. In the case of Scotland, Westminster's refusal to hold an independence referendum in 2021 may be interpreted as a breach of democracy, particularly with increasing Scottish demand for independence. As for Northern Ireland, holding a unity referendum lies in the hands of the Northern Irish Secretary of State. In the event a referendum is held in Northern Ireland, with the 2016 Northern Irish vote to stay in the European Union as the flagship, then this will be the enactment of democracy at its finest. Ultimately, democracy is prevailing in Northern Ireland when it can hold a referendum to contrast the vote of the majority in 2016.

In conclusion, the political combination of all four actors is a preparatory mix for Irish unity. Northern Ireland has probably reached its closest point, so far, towards unity since the Good Friday Agreement and Ireland is clearly dealing with Irish unity as major headline. The European Union is an allure for Northern Ireland that is democratically accessible through unity and the United Kingdom is on the opposing end of theoretical

stances with Northern Ireland. Brexit's implications on Northern Ireland are to unfold soon, as the Agreement negotiation between the European Union and the United Kingdom has been concluded. It is the slight tip of the scale in Northern Ireland that will guarantee Irish unity, a move that will be determined with time. Although the political landscape seems as an introduction to Irish unity, it only remains an introduction, for the time being. Neither Ireland, nor Northern Ireland is ready to achieve unity – at least on a purely political level – in the next few years, but more likely in the timespan of 10 to 20 years.

VIII. Conclusion

The dissertation looks into the Irish border and prospects of Irish unity in light of major developments like Brexit, the European Union-United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the Northern Ireland Protocol, and the history that unites the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Northern Ireland. Moreover, the mixture of economic, social, and political factors of all four actors – Northern Ireland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union – reflects changes that play into determining the prospects of Irish unity. Ultimately, the question driving this dissertation is: Will Irish unity become a reality and, if so, when?

The major developments that happened in the region that have a direct consequence on the Irish border and unity are Brexit, the European Union-United Kingdom Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the Northern Ireland Protocol, and the shared history among the actors. Brexit was the trigger that started the five-year's worth of negotiations. In fact, it was the spark behind the recent debate on the Irish border and, consequently, Irish unity. The above Agreement and the Northern Ireland Protocol outline the general guidelines, on which the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Northern Ireland will cooperate with each other. In effect, trade of goods has changed among all three actors, translating into closer Northern Irish alignment to the European Union and Ireland. Therefore, although the trade deal gave the United Kingdom control over its economy, it diverged Northern Ireland from it. As for the shared history, the Irish have a complicated sequence of wars and strife with the English and even with each other, through years of control, famine, Troubles... Nonetheless, their history also includes years of peace and cooperation, much encouraged by shared European Union membership. However, this shared membership

ended and was the result of the aforementioned developments that have started a drift among these actors.

The economic chapter looks into economic indicators and interconnectedness among the actors to discern the links that affect Irish unity. Whereas Northern Ireland's biggest trading partners are Great Britain and Ireland, the scale tips in favor of Ireland and the European Union since Union countries rank as its third biggest trading partner. This is further facilitated by the Protocol that opens up Northern Ireland's markets to the Union and pushes it further away from Great Britain, as the increased bureaucratic paperwork and delays will take their toll on trade. The European Union is also a source of major development and aid programs to Northern Ireland, as well as a significant driving source for its FDI inflows. In fact, the European Union has indicated that it will continue funding the PEACE program in Northern Ireland until 2027, even though the United Kingdom is no longer part of the Union. The United Kingdom's economic numbers show a great reliance on the European Union as trading partner and that Brexit has not been kind in terms of FDI inflows and complicated trade relationships. In fact, a look into the United Kingdom's FDI inflows shows that Northern Ireland has stolen the allure from Great Britain, in that respect, indicating that Northern Ireland's closer alignment to the Union is reaping benefits for Northern Ireland. Ireland's trade numbers indicate that the United Kingdom is a major partner. However, the increased trade barriers between Ireland and the United Kingdom might result in increased Irish reliance on Northern Ireland, given the open border and facilitated trade, thus increasing North-South dependence. Interestingly, Northern Ireland trade in goods and services with Ireland takes up almost a third of its total trade balance, in contrast with minimal Irish reliance (around 2 percent) on Northern

Ireland trade. This further highlights Northern Ireland's reliance on Ireland, which has started to increase, as traders are looking for the fastest and most convenient way to access markets and goods. Although, Ireland cannot economically afford unity in the next 2-5 years, it has become a net contributor to the Union and is a strong, growing economy. Therefore, from an economic perspective, Northern Ireland has every incentive to unite with Ireland.

The social chapter looks into social indicators to get an overview of public opinion and its changes on Irish unity. Although getting a clear idea of public opinion on matters is usually hard, the dissertation looks into polls, demographics, and other indicators to pinpoint the general direction of public perception on Irish unity. Three polls in Northern Ireland provide valuable insight, as they offer data before, during, and after Brexit to compare, data divided by religion and political party, as well as data to compare between Northern Irish and Irish respondents. In general, answers show that Ireland is more ready than Northern Ireland for unity with high pro-unity numbers. Northern Ireland's views show that anti-unity is a majority, but the underlying trend is that of increasing pro-unity supporters and the undecided faction, as the percentage of people that indicated they do not know where they stand on the issue has increased. The progression of post-Brexit effects on Northern Ireland are bound to tip the scales, depending on how well Northern Ireland fares. However, data has shown that the gradual shift will result in a pro-unity majority in two decades. As for religious and party affiliation in Northern Ireland, nationalists - Sinn Fein and the SDLP - are pro-unity, whereas the unionists - SDLP and DUP - are against it. Data has shown that the majority of nationalist followers are Catholic and unionist followers are Protestant, validating the long-standing perception about the two.

Interestingly, demographic censuses show that the percentage of Protestants has decreased, compared to an increase in the number of Catholics, predicting a major shift in Northern Ireland demographics that parallels the rise of nationalists. The boost in demand for Irish passports in Northern Ireland is also a major flag for the sought out European Union membership, an option that is available for Northern Ireland, when a united Ireland develops. As for Ireland, its poll results show a clear majority in favor of unity, adding to the already-existing allure of shared culture and heritage with Northern Ireland. The European Union has been an advocate of an open border since the beginning of negotiations and has succeeded in preserving, and actually building on, the good relationship between North and South. The United Kingdom has a complicated history with the Irish and the sense of divergence from it has increased in Northern Ireland with the Irish Sea border. All in all, social indicators parallel economic indicators in the close alignment with the European Union and Ireland, in specific, tipping the scale in favor of unity.

The dissertation also looks at political changes and indicators related to Irish unity in the four actors. In Northern Ireland, the elections show a decline of unionist popularity and the rise of Sinn Fein and Alliance (centrist), clearly marking a pro-unity trend and a step away from the United Kingdom. Neighboring Scotland's quest for independence is also a factor that could push Irish unity even more into the spotlight and push it closer across the timeline. As for Ireland, there are no parties opposing Irish unity, but some are more prone to building slowly towards unity, rather than rush into it. Indeed, the steps that Ireland is taking clearly show this startup plan: increasing cross-border investment, putting in place a 'shared island' - 10-mission program, seeking to conduct studies for a united

Ireland, funding Erasmus+ for Northern Ireland, etc. Furthermore, the historical references of the Irish Free State and Newfoundland and Labrador provide useful insight into events that share many similarities with the Northern Irish case, a point in favor of unity. The European Union played an important role in safeguarding the interests of Ireland during the negotiations, by pushing for an open border and aiming to maintain peace and security on the island. As for the United Kingdom, it stands on opposite ideological preferences to Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom's populism against the European Union clashes with Northern Ireland's appreciation of the intergovernmentalism of the European Union and globalization. Moreover, British and Irish nationalistic trends are on opposite ends, pushing Northern Ireland more towards Ireland. In short, the political indicators are aligned with economic and social indicators in the advancement of the pro-unity trend in Northern Ireland.

In brief, the dissertation's conclusions on Irish unity prospects are as follows:

1. From an economic perspective:

- A. Northern Ireland is more closely aligned to the European Union and Ireland, as a result of the Protocol and EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. Northern Ireland is also highly dependent on trade with Ireland, a relationship that is witnessing more growth.
- B. Northern Ireland is more aligned with the European Union, in terms of FDI dependence, trading partners, and investment programs.
- C. The European Union and the United Kingdom are major trading partners for each other. The spillover effect of this relationship into Northern Ireland is the 3-4 percent GDP decrease that will negatively affect Northern Ireland.

2. From a social perspective:

- A. Poll results, demographic changes, and the rush for Irish passports in Northern Ireland show increasing prospects for Irish unity.
- B. Irish polls show wide acceptance for Irish unity. In addition, the cultural ties between Northern Ireland and Ireland are a push towards unity.
- C. The European Union has been a conducive partner for adhering to the Good Friday Agreement and prioritizing the Irish border in negotiations.
- D. The United Kingdom has a mixed history of peace and war with the Irish. The latest developments have caused a drift between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

3. From a political perspective:

- A. Northern Ireland nationalist and centrist parties have gained ground on unionists, corroborating shifts in social and political attitudes towards Irish unity.
- B. Ireland's government is taking serious steps (investment plans, studies, and funding programs) that are conducive for unity.
- C. The United Kingdom is on opposite ends of ideological stances with Northern Ireland: English nationalism vs. Northern Irish nationalism and English populism vs. Northern Irish intergovernmentalism.
- D. The European Union has guaranteed a united Ireland European Union membership, a definite unity plus, and has the preference of the Northern Irish (as per the 2016 referendum results).

In conclusion, the takeaway from the regional developments, as well as economic, social, and political indicators is that Irish unity is a definite possibility. As for the timeline, unity is most probably not going to be in next five years, as Ireland has already declared that is not option, especially before Brexit's implications have fully manifested. Political signs from Northern Ireland show more support for nationalists and centrists. The centrist position, taken by Alliance, is prone to tip in either direction, but economic indicators all push towards closer alignment with Ireland and the European Union. In fact, Northern Ireland is still part of the PEACE program until 2027 – after the Union decided to keep it in place – and in the Erasmus+ program – after Ireland announced it will fund the program in Northern Ireland. It is quite clear: whereas the United Kingdom is looking to distance itself from the European Union, Northern Ireland is looking for a way to stay closely aligned to it. As for social indicators, a pro-unity majority in Northern Ireland is yet to be achieved. However, social indicators are developing in a pattern that majority will most likely be attained in two decades, at the latest. Many events may unfold, like Scottish independence, and fasten Irish unity and make it happen in ten years instead. As for the timeline of Irish unity, it generally seems to span between ten and twenty years. Therefore, after years of a dotted border separating North and South, it seems as though that soon enough there may be no border at all.

Since the topic is current and ongoing, it is worth mentioning the following recommendations for future reports:

1. Multi-disciplinary approach: In order to get a clear conclusion on the prospects of Irish unity, studying the historical, economic, social, and political factors is a must. Excluding one discipline from the analysis will result in a skewed conclusion.

Moreover, in-depth research into the factors is a definite plus, when there are no page number restrictions. For example, economic indicators can include annual GDP growth rate, inflation rate, etc. to get a clearer picture.

2. Historical relevance: Given that the topic of Irish unity is not a recent one, a historical overview is necessary to provide a basis for ensuing analysis. Looking into historical trends in economic, social, and political factors is also recommended. To illustrate, the radical changes in political representation in Northern Ireland deviates from the norm, a sign of changing social attitudes and preference.

IX. Bibliography

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