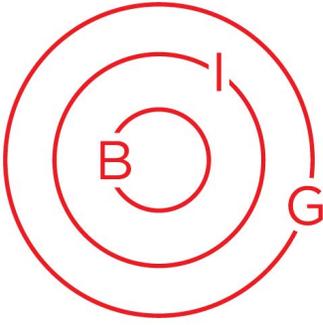




BORDERS IN GLOBALIZATION





Borders in Globalization Research Project 49

**Brexit and the Northern Irish Borderlands:
Fragile Progress Moving Towards
Disintegration**

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1. Introduction

Northern Ireland is perhaps the most unassuming borderland region one can imagine. No natural or man-made impediments physically separate the Republic of Ireland from Northern Ireland (UK), and the international border runs a meandering 450 km route that divides the historic province of Ulster, several parishes, and occasionally individual households between the two sovereign states. With only a switch from imperial to metric signage to denote one's position, the most significant division within the Northern Irish borderlands, instead, exists primarily within the minds of those who dwell there. Though the sectarian conflict between Catholic Nationalist and Protestant Unionist communities pre-dates the current border configuration – laid down only in 1921— by several centuries, the largely socio-economic impact of Northern Ireland's modern 'bordering' process pales in comparison to the human cost accumulated during the conflicts provoked by its ethno-political symbolism. The border, in this sense, is a tangible legacy of the region's recent post-colonial past, whose present post-Brexit management will define the shape of its post-conflict future.

Counteracting the momentum of recent (1970's) EU-prompted trends towards 'all-island' economic and policy integration, the weight of longstanding socio-political antagonism between the island's two largest communities has created a lop-sided process of borderlands integration. As a result, Ireland today presents with full market integration, limited policy integration & collaboration, and local

cross-border political clout and culture that tends heavily towards disintegration. In a sense, national (UK-NI), international (UK-IRL) and supranational (EU-UK, EU-IRL, EU-NI) cooperation has effectively implemented 'top-down' integration without equivalent bottom-up social integration within the borderlands, and across the island's mixed communities more generally. As a result, the Irish borderlands can be characterised partially integrated at best, with existing socio-political structures acting as a disincentive towards systematic bottom-up integration.

Importantly, the drawdown of EU PEACE funding for Irish post-conflict reconciliation programming (largely delivered by non-profit and public-sector agencies) will likely entail a drastic reduction in cross-border programs aimed at producing this 'bottom-up' integration. While not likely in and of itself to spark resumed sectarian violence on the island, these impacts will be felt disproportionately particularly by the high-vulnerability and high-risk population segments who reside there and who rely on these programs. Regrettably, with no UK strategy in place to replace this substantial funding source, and post-Brexit fallout all but assuring economic disintegration, it would appear the Irish borderlands will soon be entering a period of increased disintegration.

2. Defining and Profiling the Irish Borderlands

At this early juncture – before delving into matters of theory, historical development, and the public policy challenges of the near-future – it is first necessary to clarify a few basic definitions, and to provide unfamiliar readers with a brief profile of the Northern Irish borderlands as they exist at present. While much of the historical literature tends to present the whole of Northern Ireland as an Anglo-Celtic cultural borderland, for the purposes of this analysis the Irish borderlands will refer specifically to the local authority areas which straddle the meandering 450 km UK-Ireland land border (Ellis, 2007; Kennedy & Morris, 2005). Of the Island's 6.4 million inhabitants, roughly 15% live within this borderland region, comprised of five southern counties (Donegal, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan & Louth) and the eight

northern district council areas of Derry, Strabane, Omagh, Fermanagh, Dungannon, Armagh and Newry & Mourne (Harvey, 2005). The combined territories account for roughly 16,000 km², or 19% of the island's total area.

These thirteen districts, for historical reasons detailed momentarily, are distinct for their high rurality, peripheral geo-political positioning, and exaggerated socio-economic deficits. In terms of rurality, the Irish borderlands present exceptionally low rates of urbanization relative to the rest of the country, which not only limits the number of towns available to facilitate economic development, but also contributes to low levels of employment in technical and professional occupations (Roper, 2006). This extreme dispersion of the borderlands populace not only contributes to economic underdevelopment, also provide the demographic basis for their geopolitical peripherality. Here, geopolitical peripherality refers not only to the physical and cognitive distances between borderland communities and their metropolitan centres of governance and commerce, but also their historical inability to attract investment from the public and private sector away from the Dublin-Belfast, and to a lesser extent Derry-Letterkenny development corridors (Wilson, 2000).

The peripheral nature of the Irish borderlands in this sense is easily observable in the region's characteristically limited access to public transportation, tertiary education, and consistently retarded development of communications infrastructure. From a public administration perspective this can be easily understood in terms of the various public service providers' difficulties in achieving economies of scale in such small, and physically dispersed communities (Harvey, 2005). This reality and public policy challenge is openly recognized in the NI Department for Infrastructure *Regional Development Strategy – 2035* (2015, 75-78). Unfortunately, resultant lack of agglomerated economies in small border towns and villages further spurs the outmigration of skilled labour towards those more developed urban centres with concentrations of higher value-added industries – providing important social context underlying the region's three characteristic socio-economic deficits (Roper, 2001).

3. Three Crucial Deficits in the Irish Borderlands Today

Beyond rurality and geo-political peripherality, the Irish borderlands are further characterized by the presence of interrelated and exaggerated demographic, fiscal/economic and integrative deficits. Exaggerated, here, referring to the fact that they “appear as more extreme forms of the problems which practically affect all parts of Ireland” (KPMG, 1996). Firstly, a problem as old as the border itself, the borderland’s demographic deficit can be observed in both its critically-low levels of population density, and the relatively low levels of population growth. Given the aging population of the border counties, the demographic deficit represents a grave threat to the long-term sustainability of the region’s communities.

This material deprivation underscores a characteristic fiscal/economic deficit exhibited across the borderlands – seen in the region’s elevated levels of unemployment, overcrowding, financial dependency, and overrepresentation of declining and low-value added industries (Cook et al., 2000). The fiscal/economic deficit of the region can also be clearly observed in its ‘growth lag’ during the Celtic Tiger boom period of the 1990’s, suggesting that over time the borderlands are becoming increasingly economically peripheral to the Dublin-Belfast development corridor (Harvey, 2005, 26). Moreover, both detailed sociological analysis by Stutt (1999) and Price Waterhouse Cooper’s (2003) analysis show the concentration of extreme material deprivation in the District Electoral Divisions in closest proximity to the physical borderline – illuminating the heterogeneity of living conditions within the borderland region.

Perhaps connected to the relative lack of social capital generated and retained in the borderlands communities, or perhaps due to the fact that the Irish borderlands were not seen as a distinct region by either national governments until the 1980’s, is the integrative deficit characteristic of the Irish borderlands. Here, integrative deficit refers to differences in policy and administration across

the border that hinder local cross-border co-operation (versus local domestic cooperation) in both public and private sectors. In the public sector, local cross-border co-operation was not even considered until the mid 1970's, and though several local authority-led cross-border groups have formed in the interim, their policy jurisdiction remains limited to planning and implementing externally-financed tourism and economic development initiatives (Arthurs, 2015). While pilot programs in local cross-border healthcare provision have taken place within the last decade, most cross-border policy-making and execution takes place at the regional level.

In addition to their limited spectrum of operations, the sustainability of these integrative, local cross-border groups is threatened by a double-edged cultural and financial crisis. In terms of culture, the first and only generation of local councillors engaged in cross-border collaboration has largely retired in the last five years – leaving many cross-border groups without personnel committed and knowledgeable in cross-border co-operation (Arthurs, 2015). In terms of financing, not only are these cross-border groups entirely dependent on EU INTERREG funding for operations, but the constraints of the UK's post-2007/8 austerity program have also left northern local authorities with shrinking resources from which to commit to these collaborative forums. The post-Brexit reality only compounds this crisis of local cross-border co-operation, leaving these groups in a position of extreme financial vulnerability and existential crisis. In sum, the limited levels of local cross-border public sector co-operation achieved in the post-1970 period face extreme challenges if they are to avoid slipping back into a state of baseline disintegration.

It is perhaps surprising, given the central role Northern Irish businesses played in pushing for market integration – the area in which Ireland has most effectively integrated to date – that even within the private sector there still exists a significant integrative deficit within the borderlands region. Despite the removal of all border controls in the 1990's, levels of local inter-firm co-operation across the border remain much lower than levels of inter-firm co-operation on the same side of the border (Roper, 2006).

For reasons that are at once financial and psychological, the border continues to exercise a disintegrative influence over the local public and private sector actors within the Irish borderlands region. To begin to comprehend the more intractable socio-psychological dimensions of the Irish border, however, it is first necessary to delve into its historical development and impact on the communities in its proximity.

3. A Short History of Ireland's Borderlands

Though most of the historical analysis presented here will focus on the single configuration and historically variable enforcement policies of the modern Irish border, as per the 1921 Anglo-Irish peace treaty, one must peer further into the mists of Ireland's early medieval past to begin to understand – *and render transparent* – the sanguine sectarian narratives the border's integrity lends legitimacy to. As O'Dowd aptly points out in his historical analysis of the of the Irish border, “a product of the balance of coercion between Britain and nationalist Ireland in 1920 ... and the ensuing conflict made clear that longevity was not synonymous with legitimacy” (1995, 274). In this sense, by observing how ‘bordering processes’ change over time, we can see the common patterns of expectation and effect that emerge from the specific occasions of dividing the same territory in various ways.

The history of Ireland's internal borderlands pre-dates by several centuries the emergence of the United Kingdom, the Protestant Reformation, and even the Westphalian concept of state sovereignty. Indeed, Ireland's pre-modern history illuminates the centrality of ‘core’ territory security, and control over territorially-bound resource flows for bordering processes – belying Ireland's historical position as England's first, and last, colonial endeavour. The first recognisable Irish borderlands in recorded history emerges after the Norman invasions of Ireland in the late 12th century.

Pre-modern Irish Borderlands (1100-1600)

The common phrase 'beyond the pale' may well have its origins in the 'English pale' created by the first involvement of Cambro-Norman and later English military forces in Ireland. The Pale, here, referred specifically to the defensive fortifications delineating the edge of English jurisdiction and law – which at the climax of the Celtic Revival (prior to English re-invasion) corresponded to roughly the borders surrounding the historic province of Meath, centred on Dublin and its hinterlands). Centred on Dublin and its hinterlands, this province was the most economically developed and agriculturally productive on the island – providing a chief distinction between pastoral-Celtic and agrarian-English socio-economic systems (Ellis & Magin, 2007). A second distinction between the Celtic peoples, who might be considered the indigenous population of Ireland, and the Cambro-Normans were the legal systems which regulated land and title (resource control/taxation rights) inheritance (Lennon, 1995). The divergences between English feudal law and the indigenous Brehon code was a central political conflict, made manifest by the English Pale (i.e. a socio-legal border), and ineffectively resolved by English re-conquest during the Nine Years War of 1594-1603 (Ellis, 1998).

The creation of the English pale had a then-unique impact on the peripheral regions surrounding Meath. With fortifications calibrated to provide 'defense in depth' along a broad, depopulated area, the borderlands were governed by feudal 'marcher lords', initially selected for their martial ability, loyalty to the English crown (*i.e.* the promise not to raid, but to defend core English-held territories), and rewarded with the right to subdue the peripheral Celtic regions considered beyond the protection of the king's law (Ellis & Magin, 2007). What resulted, however, was the development of several ruling noble lineages distinct to the Irish borderlands who were generally regarded with suspicion by both sides for their mercurial loyalties and entrenched position of local security.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this was a common frontier defense strategy across the historic Anglo-Celtic borderlands to England's north and west. The development of specific lineages tied to a contested 'third culture' local to the borderlands exhibiting outward cultural characteristics of both sides, and

governed by local political elites responsible for that 'peripheral frontier' to a superior power residing in a removed 'core territory'. In this sense, Ireland's pre-modern border illustrates a distinct socio-political effect of historical 'bordering' processes: the creation of a distinct borderlands ruling class whose position of privilege is tied to both their professed loyalty to the crown, and its ability to martial peripheral 'frontier' populations in the defence of the crown's 'core' territories. Where the medieval Irish experience departed from the experiences of other Anglo-Celtic borderlands, and where Ireland's contemporary sectarian history finds its origins, was in the experience of direct colonisation – initially in the form of a crown policy now referred to as the Plantation of Ulster.

Ireland's Borderless Colonial Age (1600-1920)

The Nine Years war was a watershed moment in Irish history, which replaced the indigenous Celtic Irish nobility, brought the entire island under the control of a single jurisdiction for the first time in four centuries, and marked the beginning of a period of increased population flows. In order to ensure the continuing submission of the island's most Celtic area, the northern province of Ulster, King James I put into motion what he called 'a civilising enterprise' of settling Protestant communities from Scotland and England on lands seized during the war (Canny, 2001). Excepting where Presbyterian communities already existed (counties Antrim and Down), the crown seized all lands in the counties of Armagh, Cavan, Coleraine, Donegal, Fermanagh, and Tyrone, and gave title (taxation rights) to a largely Anglo-Scottish nobility with the express intent to repopulate and develop defensible clusters of British (Anglo-Scottish) settlements (Lenihan, 2008).

The legacy of this policy, however, has been subject to much romantic sectarian mythologizing – and has influenced the historical discourse surrounding the 'naturalness' of the 1921 partition of Ireland. Plantation emphatically did not result in the straightforward displacement the indigenous Gaelic-Irish population. Indeed, Celtic population flows between western Scotland and Ulster both pre-date and

outlasted the program of plantation (Perceval-Maxwell, 1973). Moreover, Irish landowners who hadn't taken up arms against the crown were often allotted the secondary parcels of their native communities, and Irish commoners were frequently required to make up the British labour shortfall on developing agricultural estates (Ellis & Magin, 2007). If anything, the program of plantation intensified human flows between Ulster, Western Scotland, and England, creating an unprecedented era of cultural and technological cross-pollination and co-existence.

What characterised this system of co-existence that emerged within this newly-united Ireland, however, was the socio-legal advantage given to the settler populations in terms of land ownership, legal rights, and access to government – one accentuated by initially stark cultural and linguistic divides. For centuries the Catholic Irish were regarded as a separate race of people, and were subject to some of London's most callous colonial policies – including the infamous Malthusian policy of denying Ireland foreign aid during the potato famine (Lengel, 2002). Historians generally refer to this period as the Protestant Ascendancy, and during this time the economic centre of the country moved north from Dublin to Belfast with the development of textiles and other early industries (Rafferty, 1994; Morris & Kennedy, 2005).

This system of 'civilising mission'-induced inequality provides an important backdrop to the later development of Irish Republican and Ulster Unionist sectarian narratives enshrined in the partition of Ireland. Irish Republicans, drawing upon a heavily romanticised nationalistic cannon of art and a litany of patriotic martyrs, view the Plantation as an illegitimate land-grab – often underpinning the common 'they stole our land' trope. The Ulster Unionists, eyeing the following centuries of sectarian violence, see themselves as victims of a siege scenario – highlighting the importance of demographic vulnerability to an ethnic minority community within an otherwise culturally homogenous, and hostile, island (Harris, 1986; Kennedy, 1988). Both of these popular narratives contain grains of historical truth and neither are

entirely true, though both have repeatedly served as fodder for the antagonism and divisiveness of 19th and 20th century Irish politics (Hennessy, 2005).

Ireland's Modern Borderlands (1920-present)

Despite this long history of internal borderlands, the idea of Ireland's partition and current border configuration dates to only 1912, and was not detailed in full until the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921. Article 12, which established a Boundary Commission, aimed to "determine, in accordance with the wishes of its inhabitants, as far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions, the boundaries between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland" (Anglo-Irish Treaty, 1921). Indeed, under pressure from panicked governments on all sides, the input from borderland communities and analysis contained in the Commission report was eventually suppressed, and the immediate ceasefire borders were preserved in exchange for the forgiveness of Ireland's share of the British war debt (Harvey, 2005).

As a result of this semi-unintentional border formation, several borderlands communities were separated from their historical economic hinterlands by a border that ran – and continues to run – in a largely arbitrary, meandering, and practically unenforceable 450 kilometer route. Thus, for several Protestant and Catholic borderlands communities alike, the wholesale adoption of this ill-planned border meant catastrophic separation from their natural economic hinterlands – with towns like Clones declining from relative affluence to official 'disadvantaged' status by the 1950's (Dooley, 1994). Moreover, from 1921-1998 border enforcement policies ran the gambit from 'hard' enforcement (using customs checkpoints and roving patrols) to 'extreme' – including the outright destruction of cross-border civil infrastructure by UK military forces during the 1970's border campaign (Harvey, 2005; Flynn, 2009). During the most violent of these years, substantial out-migrations from the borderlands region occurred, and between 28,000-60,000 southern Protestants and Northern Catholics relocated to the 'safer' side of the border (Tomlinson, 2004).

The movement of ethnic minorities towards the 'safe' side of the border again highlights the direct connection between the modern Irish border, historical nation-state antagonism, and the identities of both sectarian groups. Both Catholic Republican and Protestant Unionist communities subjected themselves to decades of active nation-building programs that portrayed the Irish conflict as one of external subordination or existential threat, respectively (Harris, 1986). The relevance of the 1921 border to this sectarian culture is in its embodiment of this historical contestation – its configuration today stands as the product of the modern politicisation of a centuries-old rivalry. In drawing a border between zones of national exclusion, politicians in 1921 accidentally transixed into permanence what was a temporary 'balance of power and coercion prevailing in Great Britain and Ireland' (1994, 5-6).

For the largely rural, impoverished, and overcrowded small-town world surrounding the border itself, the severing of 'ties of economic relationships and kinship [that] had run freely' across the county boundary prior to it being raised to the status of a state border, this would carry dire consequences (Harris, 1986, 19-20). During the following decades, antagonism between the two communities was mobilised through the machinery of modern, industrial media and state – including the ever-potent weapon of mass instruction (Hutchinson, 1987; O'Brien, 2010). The combination of systematic discrimination against Catholics in the north and the political embrace of violent, ultra-nationalism in the south ensured that both sides had ample ammunition of outrage and martyrs to fuel visceral responses from extremist parties that gained traction in both Dublin and Belfast (O'Hallaran, 1987; McAuley, 2015). In what should be a lesson to divisive, nationalistic politicians today – the success of this alienation would result in enormously costly, violent conflict.

3. Irish Borderlands: Local Socio-Political Disintegration

By 1969, the eruption of widespread violence between the two communities and the deployment of British troops to Northern Ireland stood in stark contrast to the beginning process of

relations normalization of between states. The 1970's began a new era of Irish macro-integration, with external actors like the EU playing an increasingly important role in resolving the zero-sum dynamic between the UK and Irish states (Bardon, 1995; Murphy, 2014). The accession of both Ireland and the UK to the then-EEC in the mid 1970's played a pivotal role in shifting the bilateral dynamics of UK-Ireland relations away from extremist antagonism by creating formal structures for compromise-based agreements to take place. Even with extremist politicians on both sides obstructing effective policy alignment effectively into the twenty-first century, the enabling role of European institutions can be clearly seen as early as the 1985 Hillsborough Agreement – which managed to coax out an unprecedented “determination of both governments to develop close cooperation as partners in the European Community”.

Despite the successes of top-down integration, however, sectarian violence continued in earnest until the signing of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement – a process which moved gradually from bolstering moderates towards including more extremist parties and their now-entrenched paramilitary groups (Cunningham, 2001). This lag between bringing moderate political elites and more radical sectarian political elements to the table mirrors the lop-sided integration now seen in the borderlands area; policies developing market and governance links were implemented long before social normalization between communities was even a realistic proposition. During this time, the Irish borderlands region remained peripheral to Belfast and Dublin, and further suffered direct infrastructure and human damage from military and paramilitary activity – particularly during the 1950's and 1970's (Flynn, 2009; Harvey, 2005).

Though financially the Troubles were disastrous, the conflict's heaviest cost must be calculated in terms of human lives lost and irrevocably damaged. In excess of 3600 people died during the Troubles, with ten to twenty times that number injured (Albert & Lang, 2009). Of the eight most heavily afflicted district councils in the north, five lay along the border. Though the direct costs of the conflict

remain staggeringly high (with some estimates placing it upward of 34 billion euros, 84% falling in Northern Ireland), the indirect costs of trauma and violence upon the population remains essentially uncalculated (Tomlinson, 2004).

A study by the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health placed the economic and mental health treatment costs resulting from the Troubles in Northern Ireland at 3 billion pounds in 2002/3 (2006). Regardless of the total cost, the increased securitization and militarization of the Irish border – which continued until 2002 – impacted disproportionately those who lived in proximity to it, severing communities and straining relations already besieged by a decades-long atmosphere of guerilla violence and political terrorism (Harvey, 2005). In this sense, during the half-century preceding the ceasefire, the Irish borderland experienced an consistent pattern of local social and political disintegration.

4. Post-Ceasefire Stasis: Ireland's Limited Governance Integration

With the local socio-political disintegration of the Irish borderlands explored, two areas of relatively effective integration can now be analysed – both of which have sprung from the EU-enabled successes of the Good Friday Agreement. The comparative success of Ireland's governance and market integration processes has both been a notable result of, and contributing factor to, the sustained peace in Ireland. In terms of governance, the politicisation and de-securitization of the Irish sectarian conflict in the 21st century has produced a consociational democratic arrangement in Northern Ireland defined by a systematic aversion to political change, partial devolution, and structural fiscal vulnerability. At the international level, 21st century governance trends point towards continuing patterns of limited, bi-lateral co-operation.

Negotiating and effectively implementing the Good Friday Agreement necessarily hinged upon bringing all belligerent parties engaged in violence to the negotiating table and creating a governance system to effectively keep the gun out of Irish politics. In essence, the framers of the Good Friday

Agreement, by 2008, had operationalised a 'three strand' governance approach, featuring a structured power-sharing Legislative Assembly and Executive as the first strand. This internal Northern Irish power-sharing agreement mirrored the intergovernmental agreements between London, Belfast, and Dublin that comprised the second and third strands. The gradual devolution of legislative powers to Stormont therefore accompanied a de facto veto system for both unionist and nationalist communities through the requirement for 'parallel consent' on pre-determined 'key measures' (O'Leary, 2001). The success of this system in including all relevant political parties into constitutional politics is manifest, and stable governance arrangements continue to function in Belfast without the resort to political violence.

The cost of this stability and all-party buy-in has been that, over the past decade, these arrangements have become broadly seen as ineffective at transitioning to a post-conflict paradigm; they have been criticised for entrenching sectarian divisions within the Northern Ireland Act (McGarry & O'Leary, 2006). While the current governance systems in place effectively avoid delays in government formation that might result from inter-party negotiations, it remains systematically averse to moving beyond the bifurcated nationalist-unionist paradigm – a paradigm that remains antagonistic and accusatory (Diez et al., 2003). Ongoing trends in Northern Ireland's socio-demographic composition, however, suggest a declining relevance of traditional unionist/nationalist identities – most notably in younger, better-educated cohorts (Garry & McNicholl, 2015). Therefore, the divergence of 'status-quo' governance mechanisms and the declining salience of the sectarian identities that underpin its operational paradigm seems likely to present an systematic adaptive challenge that Stormont will need to directly address if it is to successfully transition towards a post-conflict future. To fail to adapt, in this sense, is to provide a political disincentive to the socio-cultural integration of these two communities.

21st Century Devolution in Northern Ireland

The progressive devolution of power from London is a governance characteristic common to

varying extents across the entirety of the Celtic Fringe – with devolved assemblies operating in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales. Though all powers accorded to these parliaments remain subject to repeal by Westminster, the devolution of powers towards the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly has been critically important in terms of generating initial buy-in from Unionist parties, and in effecting limited alignment on either side of the Irish border (Longley, 1990). The 2015 devolution of corporate tax-setting powers to Belfast through the Corporation Tax (Northern Ireland) Act serves as a more recent example here, as it allowed Belfast to finally match Dublin’s corporate tax rate in order to attract external investment by multinational firms (Lepoev, 2016).

Despite some successes, the ability of the devolved Northern Irish government to affect cross-border policy integration has been hamstrung by partisan opposition – particularly between Sinn Fein and the DUP, whose stances on education, language, community relations and the Northern Irish Bill of Rights (proposed in 1998) have proven incapable of compromise (Murphy, 2014). Moreover, historically the approach taken by the UK government towards Northern Irish problems as limited and reactive (Birrell & Gormley-Heenan, 2015). Therefore, while devolution has contributed to North-South policy integration in Ireland, it remains limited as an integrative force upon the borderlands and the region as a whole. The divergence between British and Northern Irish Brexit votes further demonstrates the externally-imposed limits of devolution’s integrative potential in this sense.

Structural Fiscal Vulnerability in Northern Ireland

It is important to note, however, that the devolution of political powers towards Belfast from London has itself been shaped to a large extent by Northern Ireland’s structural fiscal vulnerability. Structural fiscal vulnerability, here, refers both to Northern Ireland’s elevated fiscal deficit, and its lack of control over revenue sources. Northern Ireland’s per capita deficit currently stands at more than twice that of the UK average, belying the region’s position as a net-recipient of UK funding (Department

of Finance, 2015). Furthermore, stemming from the partial nature of existing devolution arrangements, Northern Ireland is vulnerable to reductions in fiscal transfers from the British exchequer – reductions that are ultimately beyond their control.

Stormont's lack of control over revenue sources has been particularly important in the post-2007 period, as fiscal austerity has been a defining feature of Northern Ireland's budget and discretionary limits – as set by London. Though not unique to Northern Ireland, this structural fiscal vulnerability directly and negatively impacts the sustainability of its public services, and most severely in remote, expensive-to-administer regions like the Irish borderlands. Moreover, discretionary controls further limit the ability of Northern Ireland to reallocate resources in order to address regional idiosyncrasies (Murphy, 2014). In this way, the structural fiscal vulnerability of Northern Ireland presents an obstacle towards further policy integration of the Irish borderlands.

Intergovernmental Relations & Limited Bilateralism

Mirroring devolved governance arrangements within the UK, bilateral cooperation across the Irish border is defined by its limited scope, non-binding in nature, and the institutional arrangements put in place by the second and third 'strands' of the Good Friday Agreement. The second strand, the British-Irish Council, operates largely indirectly – as a policy-transfer facilitator acting “to reach [non-binding] agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of relevant administrations” (Clifford & Morphet, 2015). The North-South Ministerial Council, however, serves as the primary intergovernmental mechanism for cross-border policy alignment in Ireland today.

The North-South Ministerial council fulfills the functions of directly managing two agencies and appointing the boards of four others – directly impacting cross-border policy alignment in at least four distinct arenas. Aside from directly managing both Ireland's internal waterways and cross-border EU funding applications, the North-South Ministerial council also indirectly coordinates cross-border

cooperation on matters of trade/development, official languages, and food safety by means of appointing the boards of InterTrade Ireland, the North-South Language Body, and the Food Safety Promotion Board, respectively (Ireland, 1999). The sixth body, unimaginatively named the Foyle, Carlingford, and Irish Lights Commission, is responsible for promoting the commercial and recreational development of the cross-border waters of Loughs Foyle and Carlingford and the unification of lighthouse administration across the island.

These agencies and commissions are co-funded by the three governments, and staffed by public servants from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland – creating an unprecedented, if severely limited, cross-border organization with both consultative and executive functions (Bell, 2003; Birrell & Gormley-Heenan, 2015). Additionally, the council discusses common approaches to policy-making in related to agriculture/rural development, education, the natural environment, healthcare, tourism, and transportation (Coakley & Gallaghe, 2010). By these means, the North-South Ministerial Council has served to align cross-border policy activities both directly and indirectly – effectively enhancing ‘all-island’ cooperation and borderlands integration within a limited set of policy arenas. While this has created opportunities for increased integration in the past, the explicitly limited nature of these bilateral arrangements presents very little potential for increasing integration beyond the existing mandates (Birrell & Gormley-Heenan, 2015).

5. Ireland’s Market Integration

Of the four borderland dimensions analysed here, the success of Ireland’s market unification stands apart from the social, political, or policy dimensions for its comprehensive scope and relative completeness of integration. Though continual sectarian conflict had a depressing effect on economic development until the 1990’s, market integration was actively pursued by Irish and UK governments by the 1970’s – particularly during the pre-1973 EEC accession period (Bielenberg & Ryan, 2012).

Importantly, the removal of customs duties and protectionist policies finally eliminated the price distortions seen in many common consumer goods (tobacco, alcohol, etc.), reducing the profitability of smuggling operations that had continued across the physical border since its inception (Harvey, 2005) . In the early years of EEC membership, this reduction of tariffs and access to the Single European Market (SEM) led to a brief export boom as Northern Ireland's exports to both the south and to Europe expanded dramatically (Murphy, 2014).

During the 1970's and 1980's, the spark of global recession began a vicious feedback loop of high unemployment, sectarian violence, and decreasing inward investment in Northern Ireland and the borderlands region. The UK policy to prop up the collapsing Northern Irish economy with massive subsidies began the pattern of high unemployment and high public-sector subsidy (as a proportion of total economic activity) that continues to this day (Murphy, 2014). The resulting process of de-industrialization in Northern Ireland saw the loss of roughly 45,000 manufacturing jobs to the south as the republic continued to attract inward investment at three to four times the northern rate (Tomlinson, 2004).

The influx of external capital through inward investment after the 1990's ceasefire brought an impressive spurt of economic development to Ireland north and south of the border – though the lion's share of this 'peace dividend' was enjoyed largely within the Dublin-Belfast development corridor (Quigley, 2004; Poole, 2004). During the 1990's gains in employment were made in less-than-sustainable construction and real estate industries, with implications for the island's long-term economic development (Murphy, 2014; Bielenberg & Ryan, 2012). The result of this near fifty-year process of market integration, spurred on by common membership in the Single Economic Area (and pre-existing bilateral agreements substituting for the EU's Schengen policy), has been a remarkable, but still incomplete, integration of a single cross-border Irish market.

For the borderlands region, which claimed a much smaller portion of Ireland's peace dividend, market integration was not a reality until the de-securitization of the border in 2002, and even then the process of accession had done little to remedy the region's unique socio-economic challenges. To this day, the region's primarily agricultural economy remains heavily reliant on Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) subsidization (Allen, 2011). In addition to rural subsidization, the EU has been particularly active in dispersing structural funding for cross-border infrastructure projects and social programs – channelling billions of Euros into Northern Ireland alone since the mid-1970's (Elliot, 2015). The unalterable reality of the Irish borderland region's economic reliance on EU funding and SEM access for future economic growth presents an unavoidable challenge for policy makers in Belfast and London post-referendum.

6. BREXIT Implications: Trade Reductions, Price Distortions, and Black Market Development

The conundrum posed by the northern borderland region's heavy reliance on soon-to-be-absent EU CAP and structural funding illuminates a central dimension of Northern Ireland's post-Brexit reality; the most successful dimension of Irish cross-border integration over the past half-century is precisely the dimension most directly threatened by Northern Ireland's impending exit from the EU. When considered in the context of an already-austere fiscal environment, it is difficult to imagine a realistic scenario in which economic activity, employment levels, and the provision of public services would not be reduced in Northern Ireland – and most acutely in already-underdeveloped rural areas. Here, the vulnerability presented by Northern Ireland's devolution arrangement is made manifest; nothing the Northern Assembly and Legislature can do, short of calling a response referendum to unify with Ireland, will allow them to escape this painful reality. Northern Ireland's structural financial vulnerability and public-sector reliance on the British exchequer, however, makes that an unlikely (and costly) scenario.

Though the transformation from internal to external EU border is unlikely to result in the re-securitization of land-border crossings due to the existing Common Travel Area (CTA) agreement

between Ireland and the UK, the price distortions created by a northern exit of the SEM present both a financial and security challenge to policy-makers on both sides of the border. Financially, returning to a disintegrated market would entail negative financial consequences for both Irish jurisdictions as it would revive the same incentive for black market growth that fuelled smuggling operations across the border prior to EEC accession. The growth of price distortions and resulting black market growth would undermine both consumption tax and import revenues collected by both states. Moreover, in passing through an external EU border the approximately 35% of Northern Irish exports (55% of manufactured exports) currently destined for southern markets would be exposed to a significant competitive disadvantage relative to EU-produced goods (InterTradeIreland, 2016; KPMG, 2016). This is particularly true for the agricultural goods produced in the rural borderland areas, which have seen exports of animal products to the south drive recent economic growth (Agri-Food Strategy Board, 2016).

A Northern Irish exit from the SEM also has direct security implications for the borderlands region specifically, and for the Irish peace process more broadly. While the bulk of the paramilitary groups engaged in the atrocities of the Troubles have since been demobilized and reduced to sporadic, isolated outbursts of violence, the most extreme elements of both sides continue to rely on black-market and smuggling operations to finance their activities (House of Commons, 2009). An increase in demand and profitability of black market smuggling would provide ex-prisoners and at-risk youth on both sides with a powerful economic incentive to become increasingly engaged with the paramilitary groups already engaged in these types of operations (Secretary of State, 2015). In this sense, the economic disintegration of Ireland entailed in Belfast's exit from the SEM is likely to increase the profitability of the smuggling operations conducted by Ireland's remaining paramilitary organizations – increasing the likelihood of both black-market growth and related violence across the borderland region. The drawdown of PEACE IV funding, aimed at assisting and reconciling high-vulnerability demographics

like ex-prisoners and youth-at-risk, though not tied directly to the Brexit process, will likely compound this challenge as no replacement funding has emerged to fill this service gap.

It is important to remember that much of Ireland's post-conflict governance success was historically contingent upon strong UK-Irish bilateralism outside the control of Brussels, and that the result of the British referendum in no way diminishes the capacity for good, peaceful, and mutually beneficial relations to continue across the Irish border. With that said, in a time of increasingly nationalistic and isolationist fervour in Britain's English core, the threat posed to continued Irish integration should be noted by politicians of all stripes across the Emerald Isle. In essence, Brexit threatens market disintegration in Ireland and presents a severe barrier to further socio-economic integration across the border, but does not pose an existential threat to the region's post-conflict settlement. It does, however, threaten the economic sustainability of the borderland region and could have serious security consequences for the people who live there.

7. Concluding Remarks

The history of Ireland's internal borderlands points not to the intractability of the sectarian conflict embodied in the 1921 border, but towards a lesson on the severity of unintended consequences left unaddressed in peripheral spaces. The 1921 border configuration remains a relic of an early-modern treaty negotiation that was never intended to be permanent, but that nonetheless transfigured a temporary political compromise into a century of permanence. The inability or unwillingness of governments to address the unintended socioeconomic consequences of the 1921 bordering process only became more complex and intractable through decades of neglect, and were most keenly felt by those communities in proximity to the physical border.

Despite the severe social, political, and economic disintegration the island endured during the 20th century, not to mention the outright violence, 21st century developments point to the practical

viability and political desirability of increased Irish integration and cross-border cooperation at present. The fallout of the recent British 'leave' vote, however, presents significant challenges to further socio-political integration, while essentially assuring market disintegration to some extent. Still in a position of endemic economic underdevelopment and peripherality, and now exposed to the withdrawal of significant EU subsidization, the Northern Irish borderlands stand to lose a great deal from quitting the SEM and the EU. Short of England leaving the United Kingdom, a successful legal challenge to the Brexit vote, or the unlikely reunification of Ireland by referendum under the Republic, it seems nearly inevitable that Ireland stands on the brink of a new era of cross-border disintegration. It is the authors' hope that at least the few unintended consequences roughly outlined in this paper will not go unforeseen and unaddressed this time.

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