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INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT ANALYSIS

BLOODY IRELAND: THE UNFINISHED WORK OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE SETTLEMENT

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Oliver Corney

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Dedicated to Titus

Acknowledgements

Although this thesis carries my name as its sole author, there are a number of people who deserve prominent thanks for their assistance, contributions and support.

To Mark and Janine (*Mum and Dad*).

Thank you for your unwavering support, belief in me, and for putting me back together every time I fell down. I love you both very much.

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Abstract

Northern Ireland: The Unfinished Work of a Peace Settlement

This thesis demonstrates the cumulative shocks facing the relatively successful peace of 25 years, in Northern Ireland, probing the region's vulnerability in the context of the politics of deeply divided societies. Cumulative shocks, whether internal or exogenous, matter across peace agreements and a shifting context could pose new, often unprecedented challenges for peace. Time in Northern Ireland has neither erased the scars of the past, nor the names of the victims, nor the evolving ideology that drove its devastating hostility. The Northern Ireland problem and its challenges arguably remain as relevant today as it was 25 years ago. To demonstrate these challenges, the thesis engaged with discourse analysis of academic, political and civil society viewpoints since 2016, supplemented with earlier pre-2014 academic research, media articles, public lectures, surveys, and commentaries. Using this approach, the study concluded that the Northern Ireland peace process is unfinished in its work, vulnerable to external real-world shocks and requires reforming interventions to mitigate these vulnerabilities. Thus, such a conclusion implicates actors and stakeholders to publicly reengage with the problem of Northern Ireland as a matter of political and social responsibility. Stakeholders should address current vulnerabilities and assist in steering the region towards peace, stability and prosperity as an anchored partner on the island of Ireland, and an important member of the United Kingdom.

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Introduction

This thesis, "Bloody Ireland: The Unfinished Work of The Northern Ireland Peace Settlement", is an inductive study of the present-day reality of the peace in Northern Ireland by aiming to understand the resilience of Northern Ireland's peace in the face of external shocks. This culminates with an innovative analytical framework applicable to future shocks and recommendations that work towards fostering peace, stability, and prosperity on the island of Ireland.

RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION AND THESIS OBJECTIVE

This thesis posits that the job of the Northern Ireland peace process is neither complete nor protected. Therefore, this problem is crucial to the political actors in the region, who serve as guarantors of peace, drawing great encouragement from historical successes and future reforms rather than present-day regional challenges, and who have considerable influence over the region's future. Consequently, probing the resilience of a peace process (that was initially and subsequently negotiated and agreed, with the past in mind for the immediate (now historical) present, with little consideration to future problems) by framing the political vaeribiles of that influence acotor acotions in order to ensure its survival and success seems not only wise but vital.[1]

[1] Neophytos Loizides, *The Politics of Majority Nationalism: Framing Peace, Stalemates, and Crises* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015). P.35.

Furthermore, whilst there is a body of data on individual tests of the Northern Ireland peace, bringing that data together in one analysis is sparser, and is thus something that this thesis can, in a new form, distinctly contribute.[2]

Moreover, the use of discourse analysis in this study enables the derivation of inductive findings following observations from subjective actor understandings in the complex debate over Northern Ireland's peace vulnerability, which is the primary objective of this thesis.[3]

This thesis has identified the problem that, despite over 25 years of relative peace in Northern Ireland, the overall maintenance of peace in the region is vulnerable to external shocks. For this thesis, external shocks are defined as unexpected impactful events that occur outside the parameters of the peace text. Therefore, to explore this problem through this thesis, it is essential to establish credibility through knowledge as an author to engage with the complex subject. This is why this thesis includes a contextual literature review that explores the over 120-year history of the island of Ireland, from bloody conflict to historic peace. Once this credibility is established, the specific external shocks are tested in two evidence chapters against theory-backed questions to existing relevant actor discourse in a novel approach, which provides greater understanding of the relevant actors' discussion on the vulnerability of peace. Furthermore, these chapters aim to comprehensively examine the applicability of discourse pertinent to the problem that the Northern

[2] This thesis preliminary assessment of the literature is that the Northern Ireland peace process holds over 25 years later. This is what makes the selection of Northern Ireland a good case study for this research; as the most successful post-conflict peace to be negotiated, Northern Ireland serves as an exemplary case study. However, Northern Ireland has yet to move towards complete reconciliation and remains vulnerable.

[3] Brett K Hayes, Evan Heit, and Haruka Swendsen, 'Inductive Reasoning', *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science* 1, no. 2 (2010): 278–92.

Ireland peace process is vulnerable in these areas (represented as real-world events). Along with inductively deriving the specific variables contributing to an unstable present-day peace.

These variables form a novel framework developed at the end of Chapter 3, which identifies implicit and measurable explicit variables that specifically expose where the Northern Ireland peace is vulnerable. This allows for the framework to be applied to any future real-world shock to the peace, and informs actors, where specifically in the (tested) peace, targeted engagement and support are needed to reinforce stability in the region, thus making a distinctive contribution to this research. Once these specific vulnerabilities have been identified, this thesis offers targeted recommendations to address them, laying the groundwork for future practical action and research. In summary, this thesis identifies a problem (vulnerability within the Northern Ireland peace), establishes research credibility (through a comprehensive contextual literature review), robustly analyses the real-world shocks to the peace, and creates a framework of the specific vulnerabilities to the peace. Furthermore, this novel framework can be applied to future shocks and contributes specific recommendations addressing these established vulnerabilities.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The critical questions for peace in Northern Ireland, addressed in this thesis, stem from the notion that securing peace from a conflict is an event; maintaining peace, however, is an ongoing undertaking that transcends political, societal, and religious divides. This is evident from the universal reference to the peace process (post-agreement) in the discourse of international political figures, journalists, and the people of Ireland, both north and south.

It is, therefore, prudent to test the resilience of this peace and, where weaknesses are found, propose potential solutions to address them. Throughout the over 25 years following the Good Friday Agreement, which marked the beginning of the region's measurable successes in peace, the peace has been challenged by social issues, political ambitions, cultural clashes, and external real-world events that test the historically precarious region. These shocks can be explored through a detailed assessment of the measurable, explicit, and implicit factors that fuel these shocks and produce vulnerabilities to peace in Northern Ireland.

In the case of Northern Ireland, such enduring vulnerabilities would likely come as a public surprise to the wider political actors outside of the island of Ireland, as the Good Friday Agreement is revered as the binding event that has maintained peace for over 25 years. This becomes apparent through analysing shocks to the region's peace explored in this thesis, such as the consequences of Brexit. Therefore, given this attitude, the central question of this thesis is whether the Northern Ireland peace process is still unshakably secure, considering the external shocks it faces.

It is imperative first to state that by the conventional metric corroborated through preliminary fieldwork, the Northern Ireland peace process holds over 25 years later. This is evident in that Northern Ireland has, for the most part, shifted away from violence, and a new generation has grown without the threat of the bomb or the bullet. This is what makes the selection of Northern Ireland a good case study for this area of investigation; as one of the most successful post-conflict peace to be negotiated, by observable metrics, Northern Ireland serves as an exemplary case study. However, while this achievement is evident, Northern Ireland has yet to move towards complete reconciliation and remains vulnerable. When people refer to the ongoing work of the peace process, this is one example of what is meant. In 2024, it would be fair to argue that Northern Ireland exists between the two extremes of violence and reconciliation, in a state of relative peace,

security, and a subjective peace dividend. However, under the correct stress, Northern Ireland could deviate from this state and into a more violent, unstable context, thereby revealing a vulnerability in the peace process, which is one of the main questions this thesis will address.

The stresses that could test the peace process are real-world events that will be explored further and form the context for the data used in this question. It is essential to note that the real-world events used are not exhaustive, and no study can predict all relevant events; this limitation is acknowledged by the theoretical approach employed in this research. Still, those selected represent direct challenges to the peace process in different ways and thus test its resilience. The results of this analysis identify risk factors that can be applied using a specific framework to address future unspecified stresses, yielding new data and advancing the research.

Firstly, the instability of power sharing is explored, covering the rationale for the absence of an executive, its impact on the region, and the lasting effects, such as disengagement with the political class, which is reflected in low voter turnout. Secondly, the relative deprivation in the region is linked to the lack of progress on the aims of peace and the legacy of the troubles in the post-conflict society. Thirdly, the impact of Brexit, which reignited divisions in a recovering society, and the resurgence of sovereignty and identity politics are considered concerning for the resilience of the peace. Finally, the consequences of a future border poll on the island of Ireland and the specific implications of the lack of planning, the unexpected rise of the radical parties on either side of the proposed argument, and how the Good Friday Agreement relates to this specific event from the perspective of stability.

This, therefore, represents a comprehensive selection of real-world stresses (supported by a comprehensive contextual review of the historical, political and societal chronicle of the island of Ireland in Chapter One) and tests for the Northern Ireland peace that need to be considered in the evaluation of the vulnerability of the peace within the region.

CENTRAL ARGUMENTS

This thesis argues that the realities of the Northern Ireland peace process suggest that it is vulnerable to external shocks and that the historical passage of time is insufficient to resist the stresses of legitimate events and their variables in this still divided society. Whilst time heals the wounds of history, it doesn't cleanse the disorder that fuelled such conflict. Therefore, a breakdown of political engagement, redrawing of the social dynamics of the region, the relative deprivation of its citizens, and the constitutional restructuring highlight example variables that could contribute to an impactful shock, a divisive border poll on the Island of Ireland. That is not to say that a return to violence is likely or imminent; this thesis does not argue that. Still, it suggests that a shift towards a more unstable, divisive, and confrontational Northern Ireland is possible under the right strain.

However, given that, by the conventional metric of reducing sectarian-related violence, the Northern Ireland peace remains in place despite some of the stresses explored in this thesis, it is understandable that a counterargument would argue that the peace is strong because it is succeeding. However, this perspective overlooks the context in which this research is situated, where the success of reducing violence and maintaining peace is not absolute.

This links to this thesis central argument concept, that if securing peace from a conflict is a tentative event such as The Good Friday Agreement or a paramilitary ceasefire, where opposing political, violent and cultural actors, ideological motivations and partial diminished capability endures, then maintaining peace is a movement that crosses political, societal and religious divides. Ultimately, this means that success is not absolute, and time is not the final answer.

Consequently, this means that it is vital for a public process of re-engagement by all stakeholders to reaffirm the priority of Northern Ireland's success, absent any constitutional shifts, alongside a careful exploration of reform to address the vulnerable elements within the peace process. By undertaking this task, politicians, media, and the people can play a vital role in strengthening the peace within Northern Ireland, now and for future generations across all political, class and religious divides, and work towards a future of peace, stability, and prosperity on the Island of Ireland.

From the data collected and analysed in this thesis, it is evident that there is a broad range of evidence from academic sources, political discourse, media reports and citizen views on individual tests and problems facing the Northern Ireland peace process. For example, an argument advocated by Professor Katy Hayward of Northern Ireland's unfinished and uncertain peace. This helps us discern isolated elements contributing to peace process vulnerabilities. However, on their own, they do not address the overall threat to the stability of the peace in Northern Ireland. Nor are the measurable elements that signify instability for the region or the relationship between these elements, which must be understood to recognise the nuanced fragility in post-conflict Northern Ireland properly. This is the space that this thesis attempts to fill. Moreover, this thesis extends beyond raising awareness of the vulnerabilities to the Northern Ireland peace process and advocates for a future-focused assessment based on proposals that aim to reorient stakeholders towards an equal and consensus-based agenda of peace, stability, and prosperity.

Therefore, the idea that binds this thesis together is that the passage of time is not enough to overcome the problems and vulnerabilities currently existing in the Northern Ireland peace. Coupled with a credible argument, which says that such problems and vulnerabilities should be addressed before they contribute to a period of greater instability for the region.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH APPROACH

STUDY DESIGN

The research protocol for this methodological framework starts with the method of critical discourse analysis.[4] Critical discourse analysis is a method that encompasses many interdisciplinary approaches to analyse discourse within a set context critically.[5] This methodology is particularly advantageous for examining the resilience of the Northern Ireland peace. This is because the language used by actors plays a crucial role in shaping the attitudes, ideologies, and actions of individuals involved in the future of Northern Ireland, which directly contributes to the emergence of shocks that test the resilience of the peace process.

For this research study, a traditional coding approach was used to systematically categorise segments of text by their themes, ideological perspectives and underlying meaning.

Furthermore, two related and interlinked critical approaches are utilised. Firstly, political discourse analysis, an approach advocated by Van Dijk for analysing political discourse, is employed to answer genuine and relevant political questions, which are composed of issues considered within

[4] The use of discourse analysis enables inductive findings derived from observations of subjective actor understandings in this complex debate of the Northern Ireland peace vulnerability which is the primary objective of this thesis. Therefore, a judgement on the effectiveness of discourse analysis as a research methodological approach in political science, (beyond the advantages and disadvantages for this specific study) falls beyond the scope of this research.

[5] Marianne W Jorgensen, *Discourse Analysis: As Theory and Method* (SAGE PUBLICATIONS, 2002). P.01.
Rosalind Gill, 'Discourse Analysis' 1 (1 January 2000). P.173

the realm of political science.[6] These issues that Van Dijk alludes to involve the discourse on political factors such as political systems, ideology, institutions, the political process (often referred to as the political solution in Northern Ireland), political actors or engaged citizens and political events, and allow for a comprehensive thematic research sampling of the data to take place.[7] This is fundamental to successfully answering the research question by providing a theoretical foundation for selecting and engaging with the breadth of discourse material that spans the various external shocks in the empirical evidence chapters.

The second approach is the discourse historical approach, which has a precedent in being used in ethnopolitical and identity politics research.[8] According to Wodak, the discourse-historical approach is a problem-oriented approach that considers historical context when interpreting texts and discourses.[9] This presence of context is vital when analysing discourse as the theoretical grounding for this approach (Yule and Brown) mandates that discourse analysis is not just about studying language structures in isolation (in traditional linguistic analysis) but rather about examining how language is used in real-life historical, social, cultural, and political contexts.

[6] Teun A. Van Dijk, 'What Is Political Discourse Analysis?', *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 11 (31 December 1997): 11–52, https://doi.org/10.1075/bjl.11.03dij. P.12.

[7] Ibid. P.25

[8] Ruth Wodak, 'Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach', in *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, ed. Karen Tracy, Todd Sandel, and Cornelia Ilie, 1st ed. (Wiley, 2015), 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi116. P.04.

[9] Ibid. P.02

Therefore, this theory suggests that language should always be analysed in relation to its purpose and function in human interactions, rather than simply describing its formal properties, such as grammatical or syntactical features.[10] To achieve this, the Discourse Historical Approach presents the discourse in contextual categories, case studies (expressed as figures in this thesis), allowing for a critique and testing of the data within the predetermined categories.

According to Wodak, this research approach offers flexibility when approaching a new research project, as elements can be adapted to fit the project's specific constraints.[11]

The research strategy is the final component of the methodological framework for this research protocol. This research employs two strategies: one constant and one variable as necessary. The continuous research strategy is argumentation for statements presented within the discourse. This research strategy assesses the validity of the logic employed in the claims made within the discourse and identifies any fallacies that may be present.[12] The second research strategy is utilised appropriately when the discourse is based on opinion rather than factual statements. Wodak describes this strategy in the Discourse Historical Approach as perspectivisation, which aims to analyse the writer's perspective, underpinning their opinionated and ideological discourse.

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[10] George Yule and Gillian Brown, eds., 'Introduction: Linguistic Forms and Functions', in *Discourse Analysis*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–26, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511805226.003. P.01.

"*The analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use" and that "it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions for which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs"*

[11] Ruth Wodak, 'Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach', in *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, ed. Karen Tracy, Todd Sandel, and Cornelia Ilie, 1st ed. (Wiley, 2015), 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi116. P.13

[12] Ibid. P.08

This is particularly relevant to the case study of Northern Ireland, where multiple competing historical, cultural and political perspectives exist throughout the actor discourse, which contribute to the representation of their ideologically based power, which impacts the stability of the peace. Ultimately, this analysis is achieved by examining the direct or indirect speech in the data, which can be identified by direct quotations or conversing in a first-person point of view.[13]

According to Wodak, this analysis can test the discourse against specific questions that challenge the argument, considering both the perspective and the context, as the discourse must be context-dependent.[14]

Furthermore, this analysis is particularly advantageous for this area of investigation, as the language used by key figures plays a crucial role in shaping the attitudes, ideologies, and actions of individuals involved in the future of Northern Ireland. By employing this approach, this thesis gains access to the uncensored, focused narratives provided by relevant actors in various settings and means. This is an advantage over stricter methodologies, such as interviews, which can pose problems, including ethical concerns (in such a sensitive subject), the strength of recollection, and bias.

Moreover, by selecting discourse analysis, the scope of investigation broadened to encompass the ultimately six elements that would form the created analytical framework, in Chapter 3 (allowing for a detailed yet comprehensive study) as opposed to the considered approach of institutional analysis which would only apply to one of the factors of the framework.

[13] Ibid. P.08

[14] Ibid P.12

By employing this mixed critical approach, this research can also analyse the breadth of the implications of the relevant discourse on the specific consequences in present-day Northern Ireland. This is especially true when comparing the present-day discourse (such as political speeches) on pertinent issues of Northern Ireland to the historical peace agreement texts, such as 1997 and 2006, which will reveal the strength of the connection between these critical moments and their relevant impact in present-day Northern Ireland, which is vital when assessing the stability of the peace agreement as it exists in 2024/25.

Furthermore, the breadth of data and a multidimensional context address a common concern of discourse analysis: that the method is inherently subjective. This is due to its endeavour to work based on a variety of different data that is made up from various types, including political, citizen and academic discourse, as well as other methods (Political discourse approach and discourse historical approach), theories by Fairclough, Jorgensen, Wodak and Van Dijk as well as varied background information which forms the supplementary data for this research.

Therefore, the synthesis of approaches to critical discourse analysis, supported by the application of critical discourse theory as developed by Fairclough, Jorgensen, Wodak, and Van Dijk, was chosen for this thesis due to the advantages of combining two related and interlinking critical approaches: political discourse analysis and the discourse-historical approach.

Furthermore, given the breadth of evidence, the shifting context and subjective nature of the relevant actor described evidence this approach allows for a clear analytical strategy of presenting the discourse and analysing the direct or indirect speech included within the data, against specific questions that test the argument, considering the perspective and considering the context.[15]

MATERIALS

The materials used for this thesis comprise discourse from various actors, stakeholders, scholars, and media, which take different forms, including reports, national and international agreements, media articles, academic articles, studies, focus groups, transcribed lectures, interviews, and committee sessions.

[15] Using Discourse Analysis as a research approach has certain limitations, which are apparent in the wider literature for discourse analysis. However, whilst valid, the presented advantages (study design) outweigh these limitations for this specific research, and for disclosure of this calculation these limitations are included here.

Subjectivity: Discourse analysis can be subjective, as the interpretation of a text or conversation depends on the perspective of the analyst. This can lead to differing interpretations of the same text, and it is important to be aware of one's own biases and assumptions when conducting discourse analysis.
Limited generalizability: The findings of discourse analysis are often specific to the particular context in which the language use being studied occurs. This can limit the generalizability of the findings, and it can be difficult to apply insights from one context to another.
Time-consuming: Conducting a thorough discourse analysis can be time-consuming, as it requires a close examination of language use in context and often involves the analysis of large amounts of data.

DATA PRESENTATION

The data in both evidence chapters are presented in their textual, linguistic form, using direct quotations and presented in this form as figures, each within a specific area of examination (which are real-world factors) throughout the chapter, according to their relevance to the topic being analysed.[16] This format follows the composition of earlier established academic research using discourse analysis, which isolates relevant excerpts of discourse prior to in-depth analysis.[17]

The figures in the evidence chapter are the most pertinent examples of political and historical discourse from the broader individual sample. This forms the primary data, which is the data that has been directly analysed in this thesis using the chosen methodology framework, either through further direct quotation for longer discourse or through specific italicised words directly within the analysis in a style that has precedent in earlier discourse research[18].

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[16] Ruth Wodak, 'Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach', in *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, ed. Karen Tracy, Todd Sandel, and Cornelia Ilie, 1st ed. (Wiley, 2015), 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi116. P.12.

[17] Sally Lynn Smith and H Srn, 'Religion in the United Nations (UN) Political Declarations on HIV & AIDS: An Interdisciplinary, Critical Discourse Analysis', n.d. P.154.

Daniel PJ Soule, 'The Construction and Negotiation of Meaning in Scottish Political Discourse: A Case Study of the 2003 Scottish Parliament Elections', 2006. P. 160.

Camilla Zimmermann, 'Acceptance of Dying: A Discourse Analysis of Palliative Care Literature', *Social Science & Medicine* 75, no. 1 (1 July 2012): 217–24, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2012.02.047. P.217

Lāsma Kokina, 'New Cold War? A Comparison of Russian and US Foreign Policy Discourses in the Time of Deteriorating Relations', n.d. P.166 – P.195.

[18]Michael Farrelly, 'Critical Discourse Analysis in Political Studies: An Illustrative Analysis of the "Empowerment" Agenda', *Politics* 30, no. 2 (June 2010): 98–104, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9256.2010.01372.x.

Lise Dalen Mcmahon, 'Your Peace Might Not Be Our Peace. Perceptions of Peace in Northern Irish Politics', 2024.

Ciara Spencer, 'A Complex History Turned into a Tale of Reconciliation: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Irish Newspaper Coverage of the Queen's Visit to the Republic of Ireland', n.d.

For concise purposes, these are sometimes grouped (although each figure clearly states the author) by author, time period or topic. Additionally, the raw data is contained in separate appendices, included at the end of this thesis, whereby any mention of further primary data that falls beyond the scope of the included sample is referenced with the appropriate appendix.

RESEARCH SAMPLE AND PARTICIPANTS

The participants for this research include political figures contributing direct or third-party discourse for example, on behalf of a greater entity than the individual, such as a government, party or campaign. Additionally, media commentators who contribute direct supplementary journalistic discourse as well as direct quotes from relevant stakeholders, leading academic contributors that provide the breadth of discourse needed to comprehensively yet concisely cover the relevant elements of this issue. This includes the political, *(such as the House of Commons and Lords select committee, intergovernmental political agreements, and contemporary British and Irish political figures*) academic, *(Hayward, O'Leary and McEvoy*) social (*primary accounts from regional residents*) and historical (*Seamus Mallon, Jonathan Powell, Mo Mowlam and John Bruton*) ,citizens, (*Undeclared, Unionist and Nationalis*t) NGO's (*who specifically provide data that comes from the forefront of this issue*,) contextual discourse. This research sampling is grounded in the political discourse approach, according to Van Dijk's interpretation of the approach.

Jessica Cullen, 'A Discursive Analysis of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders', n.d.

Lāsma Kokina, 'New Cold War? A Comparison of Russian and US Foreign Policy Discourses in the Time of Deteriorating Relations', n.d.

This approach uses a sampling of political discourse, which is used in this thesis to form part of the overall methodological framework, based on the theory " *that political discourse is attached to political actors who are relevant individuals, political institutions and organisations, who are engaged in political processes and events, that form the political context*." Therefore, this approach enables a large sample of comprehensive, relevant actor-derived data and establishes a formal boundary that maintains strict relevance criteria, thereby benefiting the quality of research on such a complex and multi-perspective issue.[19]

DATA COLLECTION

The primary data collection for this research is theoretically grounded in the Wodak critical discourse approach for data collection.[20]

Firstly, this required a contextual literature review (Chapter 1) to uncover the main themes for this research area, and credibility introduces these events as areas for enquiry by this research. Following this, a data criterion was created, which stipulated that data needed to be relevant to the specific analysis, timely (within the last 8-10 years with the exception of government agreements and practical strategies) as well as striking a balance between, academic expertise, relevant political discourse, historical accounts, and broad public engagement on specific issues.[21]

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[19] Norman Fairclough, Isabela Fairclough, and ProQuest (Firm), *Political Discourse Analysis a Method for Advanced Students*, 2012. P.17.

[20] Ruth Wodak, 'Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach', in *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, ed. Karen Tracy, Todd Sandel, and Cornelia Ilie, 1st ed. (Wiley, 2015), 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi116. P.12.

[21] Throughout this thesis, there has been an awareness of sensitive feelings over bias and undue weight being given to specific groups of the constitutional debate in Northern Ireland. Given that the future determination of northern

When considering the completion criteria for the primary data collection for a particular section of this research, this research methodology acknowledges that no collection can be exhaustive and that the submitted evidence may be cross-sectional, relevant to multiple sections, and may or may not be selected for inclusion. Therefore, to ensure the advancement of discourse through specific topics, this research criterion stipulates that each piece of data (including repeated data) must introduce a new perspective, which can take the form of a distinctive argument, new facts, data, or differences of opinion and viewpoint. Furthermore, an expanded criterion has been used for supplementary data, which includes older pre-2014 academic research, journalist articles, public lectures, public surveys, and public commentary. This evidence is also relevant to the real-world stresses being explored, timely, and connected to the arguments that the primary data have explored. This evidence is included in the Preliminary Findings section to provide greater context, support arguments, and demonstrate a broader consensus of the perspectives being investigated. Due to some limitations in this set of evidence, it does not introduce new perspectives or arguments.

Irelands constitutional settlement is beyond the scope of this thesis, all possible measures have been taken to avoid bias or favouritism to any particular opinion on this matter, which the data collection process reflects.

DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGY

As previously stated, the research strategy for this research is argumentation and perspectivization. The argumentation strategy is the primary approach for analysing the primary data, which means that the perspectivization element will be incorporated into select pieces of data where appropriate. Therefore, to analyse the data in the two evidence chapters using this research strategy, three questions will be posed for each data set (Figures).

Vodak argues that by asking separate questions, the multi-dimensional coverage of the problem is achieved as different avenues of enquiry are considered for each piece of discourse. In accordance with Vodak's historical approach research strategy, the questions of the evidence chapters will cover context, logical arguments, and links between discourse and actual events.[22] The first question is the Logical Reasoning Question, which asks, *How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?* The second question is the Contextual Topical Question, which asks, *what does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?* Finally, the third question is the Event event-specific question, which asks *How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?* Therefore, this analysis will be critiqued (using these questions) as the penultimate stage of the research strategy within the evidence chapter. For this thesis, the critical analysis will occur after each Figure, which contains a set of clearly defined discourses.

[22] Ibid. P12.

Finally, at the end of each topic, a Preliminary Findings section will be included, which is designed to prepare the groundwork for Chapter 4.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given the independence of this research method from in-person discourse, the thesis supervisory team advised that seeking ethical approval for this research was unnecessary. This advice was followed when conducting the research for this thesis.

RESEARCH STUDY LIMITATIONS

Due to the parameters of this master's by research thesis, the principal limiting factor of this study is the prescribed length of this research thesis. This prescribed length limits a more in-depth literature review that could produce more specific data for targeted analysis. However, to partially mitigate this limitation, a stricter data criterion was employed early in the study, which, although useful, was not optimal compared to a longer targeted literature review.

Furthermore, the limits of length prevent the use of a more accessible format, such as long-form text discourse, which would allow for substantial analysis. Again, to mitigate this limitation, this thesis extensively utilises figures and an extensive appendix, which ensures the availability of the raw data; however, it does not address the limitations of ease of accessibility.

Finally, a practical limitation of research resources and time prevented the addition of primary discourse through interviews that would have supported the evidence included in this study.

It would have opened interesting areas of discussion around discourse through an evolving context in Northern Ireland, as well as comparisons and debates between primary and secondary sources of discourse on the vulnerability of the region's peace.

THESIS STRUCTURE

The structure of this thesis aims to address the critical research questions introduced in this introduction logically and concisely. The rationale for this structure is to comprehensively explore the political problems of this subject whilst ensuring a logical structure and conciseness of the work.

This work begins with an introduction that presents the research context within this thesis. Furthermore, it introduces the central arguments of this thesis and explains how they relate to the current explored context. Finally, it describes the methodology of this thesis, including the theoretical biases underlying this analysis, the research strategy, and how the findings will be presented within the two evidence chapters.

Chapter One examines the over 120-year history, as presented in a contextual literature review, from the Act of Union in 1801 to the island's partition in 1921, and the significant foundations that key events laid for the people of Ireland, North and South. Additionally, it aims to explore the opposing ideological positions, including the historical events that have cemented these positions and contributed to violence, as well as the shift from violence to a substantive peace process.

Whilst this chapter is comprehensive, it is not exhaustive, as an exhaustive examination of the literature would fall beyond the reasonable scope of this research and its research questions.

Chapter Two is the first evidence chapter, which enacts the research strategy by investigating the first two political topics of the thesis, referred to as stress factors, which consider the past and present context of power-sharing institutions and relative (social, political, and economic) deprivation within the region. This deprivation is linked to the lack of progress on the ongoing aims of peace and the enduring legacy of the troubles in a post-conflict society.

Chapter Three is the second evidence chapter, which continues the research strategy to investigate the impact of the final two present and future stress factors. Firstly, the impact of Brexit on the resilience of the Northern Ireland Peace, and secondly, the impact of a future border poll on the island of Ireland and how the existing political, social and historical context that such a poll must operate in could impact the peace when considered with this event.

Chapter Four presents the practical application of the research findings. This chapter examines how the research findings of this thesis, in conjunction with its overall research question and central argument, relate to their practical application. It also explores how such findings could be proposed from a solution-focused perspective, thereby positively contributing to addressing the problems associated with this issue in a logical and evidence-based manner. This is achieved by utilising the applied results framework data and generating specific proposals applied to a future scenario of a border poll. Ultimately, by doing so, this chapter reorients the debate toward a consensus-based agenda of peace, stability, and prosperity, enabling the conclusion of this thesis to focus on the future potential of Northern Ireland.

CHAPTER 1 ABSTRACT

Chapter 1 of this thesis, "Bloody Ireland: The Unfinished Work of the Northern Ireland Peace Settlement," is a contextual literature review. In order to proceed to the specific vulnerabilities of the negotiated peace, a contextual literature review is necessary to set up the evidence chapters, by providing the context behind the Northern Ireland peace as it has and currently stands. Therefore, this chapter begins with an exploration of the over 120-year history between Ireland and Great Britain, before examining the specific events, motivations and ambitions that contributed to violence prior to the transition to a substantive peace. In doing so, this chapter establishes the credibility for the central argument of this thesis, which posits that the current context for the Northern Ireland peace process renders it vulnerable to external shocks.

Chapter 1 Contextual Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

This chapter establishes credibility for this study of the resilience of Northern Ireland's peace in the face of external shocks by exploring the historical, societal and political context behind the divisions that encapsulated the sectarian violence on the island of Ireland during the latter parts of the 20th century.

This chapter will also investigate the history of over 120 years, from the Act of Union in 1801 to the island's partition in 1921, and the significant foundations that key events laid for the people of Ireland, North and South. Additionally, it intends to explore the opposing ideological positions, including the historical events that cemented these positions and contributed to violence, the shift from violence to a substantive peace process that reveals the extent of the political/moral challenge facing the British government over the years and the respective aims, motivations and intentions for this from both sides. Furthermore, following observations of the source material, this chapter derives specific historically fraught political, social and cultural issues in the region which endure post-conflict and catalyse this research study. As Tony Blair said, "It is a responsibility that weighs not only on the mind but upon the soul".[23] That quote embodies the idea that a conflict has a greater force than statistics or theory.

[23] 'CAIN: Address by Prime Minister Tony Blair 16 May 1997 - at Royal Agricultural Society Belfast', accessed 6 January 2023, https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/tb16597.htm.

In the case of any dispute, but perhaps more so in one where neighbouring communities conflict, the state and citizens are in dispute, or where a fragmented division between those who's motivation and aims align occurs, then it is the beliefs, relationships and faiths of the people involved that are the most vital thing to understand and address, factors that are undoubtedly applicable to the case in Northern Ireland. While statistics prove that over 3,500 people lost their lives in this conflict, their names, such as Michael and Patrick, Marie and Johnny, highlight the personal implication that this division continues to have, where the future of people's lives and their communities depend on the negotiated peace enduring.[24]

[24] Victor Mesev, Peter Shirlow, and Joni Downs, 'The Geography of Conflict and Death in Belfast, Northern Ireland', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99, no. 5 (30 October 2009): 893–903, https://doi.org/10.1080/00045600903260556. P.894.

'The Troubles: Deaths by Year 1969-2001', accessed 2 April 2025, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1401907/ni-troubles-deaths-annual/.

'The Troubles: Annual Deaths by Affiliation 1969-2015', accessed 2 April 2025, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1402168/ni-troubles-annual-deaths-affiliation/.

'The Troubles: Killings by Year and Organization 1969-2001', accessed 2 April 2025, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1401859/ni-troubles-killings-year-organization/.

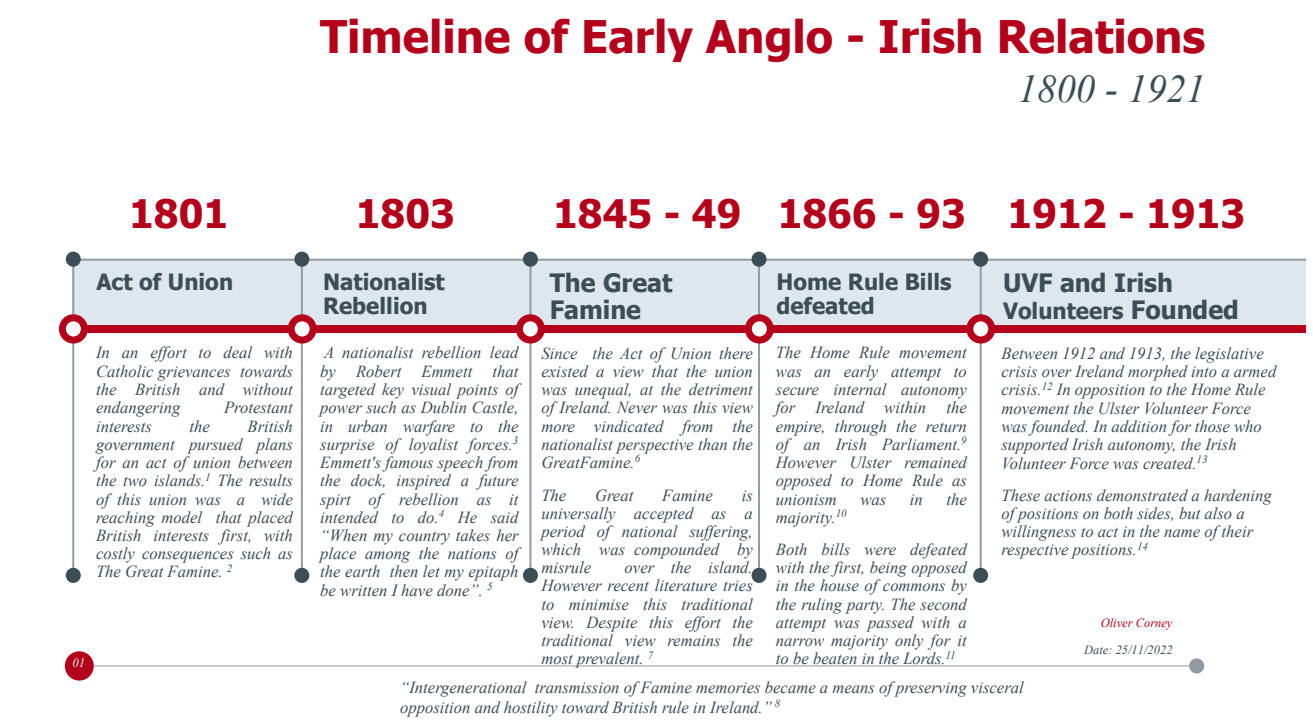
HISTORICAL CONTEXT PRE–PARTITION (*1800 -1921)*

Since 1801, the British have struggled to determine Ireland's and Northern Ireland's place within their constitution, resulting in significant economic, political, and ultimately, human costs.[25] Figure 1 illustrates that, over 121 years, a tension has existed between the island of Ireland and mainland Britain. This tension is generated more nuancedly through the nationalist and unionist sectarian struggle over an opposing and incompatible territorial settlement for the country, which has become increasingly prominent in British politics. By examining the critical period, it becomes clear how the views of the different sides became established and how this contributed to the actions of other actors. This is crucial to establish, as it removes any doubt about the legitimate convictions of the respective sides, which ultimately fuel their actions from 1800 to the present day.

[25] Richard Dorsett, 'The Effect of the Troubles on GDP in Northern Ireland', *European Journal of Political Economy* 29 (1 March 2013): 119–33, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2012.10.003. *Abstract.*

Figure 1.

Figure 1: Timeline of Early Anlgo Irish Relations



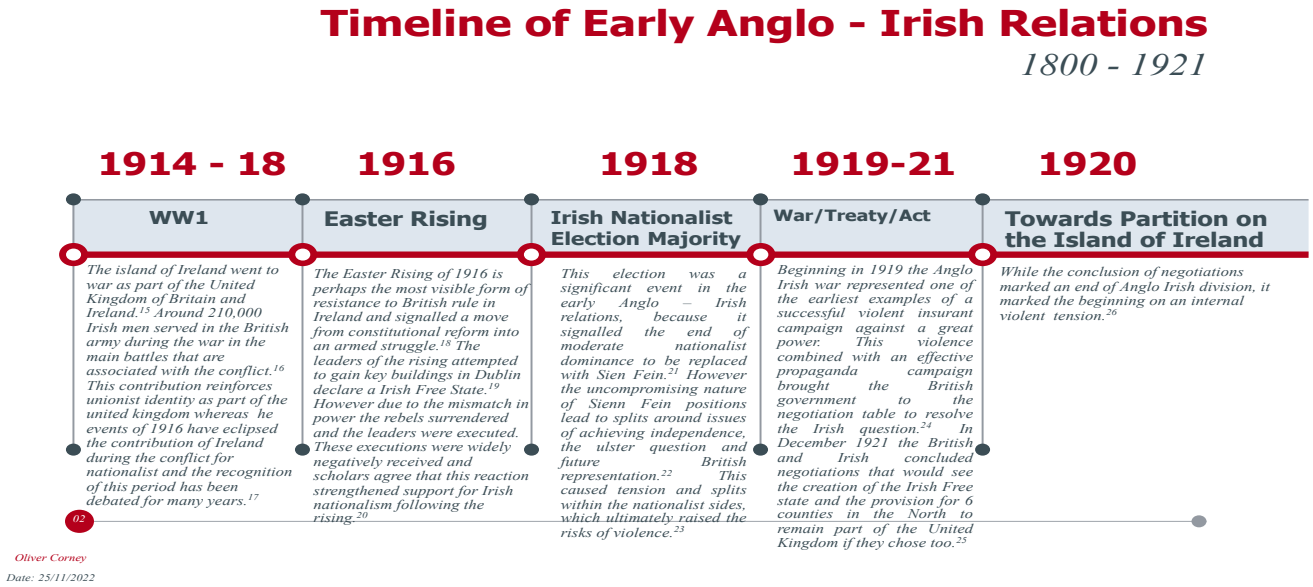
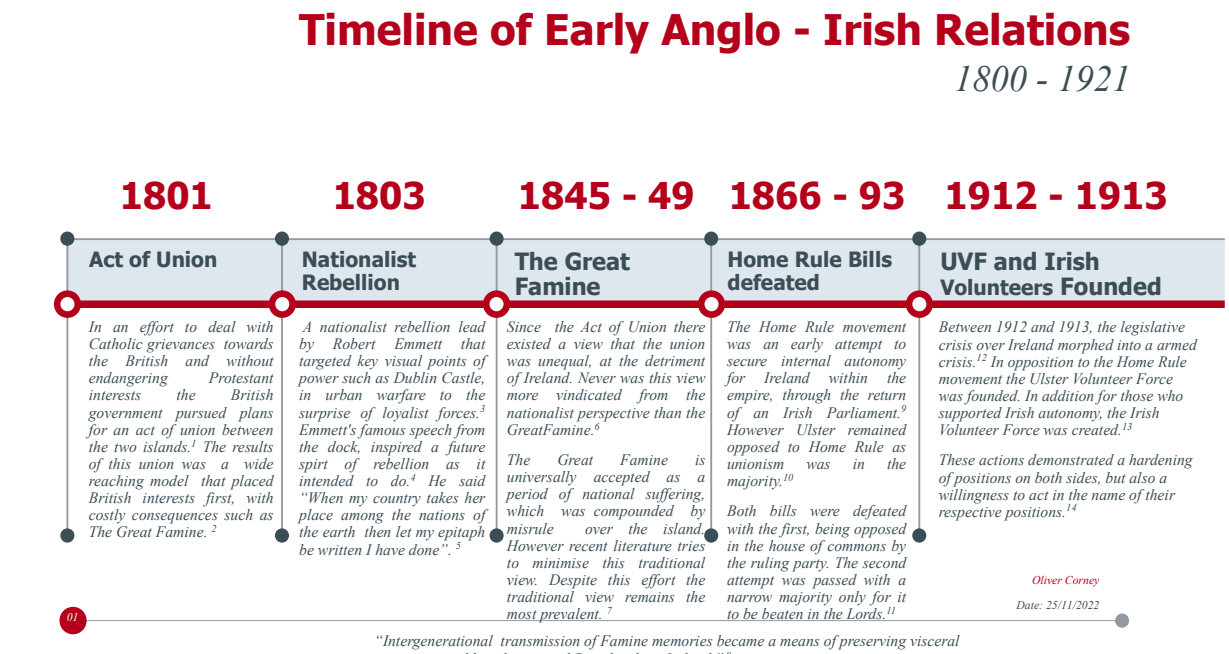
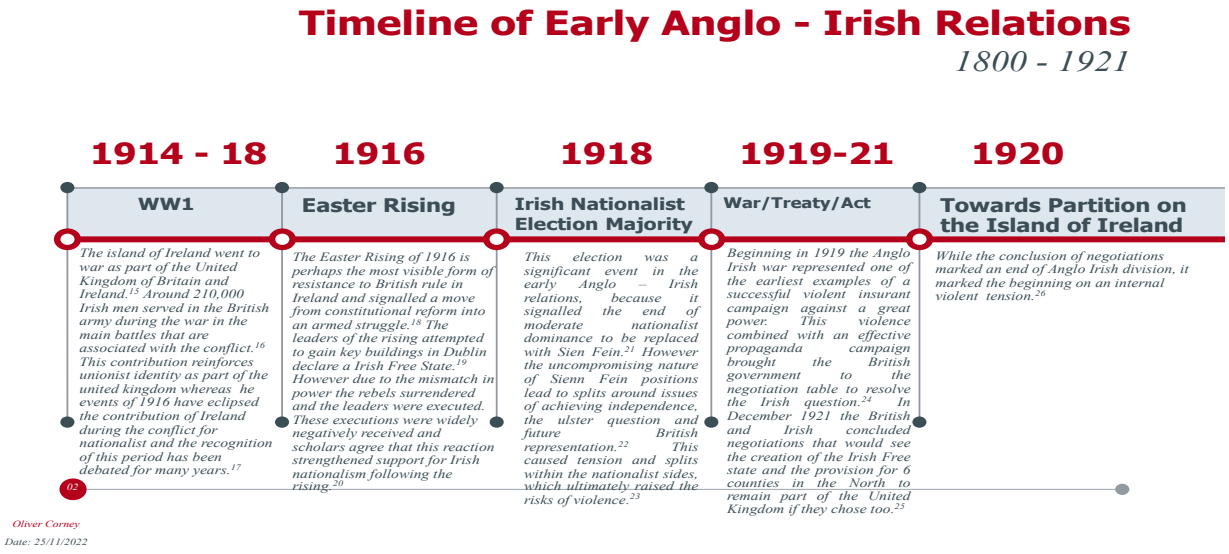


Figure 1 Continued.[26]

25. Figure 1 Continued
1. S. J. Connolly, 'RECONSIDERING THE IRISH ACT OF UNION', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 10 (December 2000): P.404
2. Christine Kinealy, 'At Home with the Empire: The Example of Ireland', in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), P.78.
3. Ruán O'Donnell, 'The Rising of 1803 in Dublin', *History Ireland* 11, no. 3 (2003): P.9
4. Tomás Ó Séaghdha, 'Robert Emmet and the Insurrection of 1803', *The Past: The Organ of the Uí Cinsealaigh Historical Society*, no. 22 (2000): P.62
5. Emmet Robert, *Memoir of Robert Emmet: Including His Speech from the Dock ,* (Dublin, 1898). P.44
6. Mark G. McGowan, 'The Famine Plot</Em> Revisited: A Reassessment of the Great Irish Famine as Genocide', *Genocide Studies International* 11, no. 1 (2017): P.90.
7. Christime Kinealy, *This Great Calamity: The Great Irish Famine: The Irish Famine 1845-52* (Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 2006).P.317
8. Gaia Narciso and Battista Severgnini, 'The Deep Roots of Rebellion: Evidence from the Irish Revolution', n.d. P.5
9. 'Two Home Rule Bills', accessed 13 January 2023, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/legislativescrutiny/parliamentandireland/overview/two-home-rule-bills/.
10. *Ibid*
11. 'Gladstone: Irish Home Rule', accessed 13 January 2023, https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item107704.html.
12. Hilary Larkin, 'A History of Ireland, 1800–1922', P.204
13. Timothy Bowman, '"The North Began" ... but When? The Formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force', *History Ireland* 21, no. 2 (2013): P.29.
14. Hilary Larkin, 'A History of Ireland, 1800–1922', P.205
15. Catriona Pennell, '"Choreographed by the Angels"? Ireland and the Centenary of the First World War', *War & Society* 36, no. 4 (2017): P256
16. *Ibid P.257*
17. *Ibid P.261*
18. Maureen Buckley, 'Irish Easter Rising of 1916', *Social Science* 31, no. 1 (1956): P.49.
19. Charles Townshend, 'Making Sense of Easter 1916', *History Ireland* 14, no. 2 (2006): P.41
20. Maureen Buckley, 'Irish Easter Rising of 1916', *Social Science* 31, no. 1 (1956): P.55.
21. Nick Maxwell, '100 YEARS AGO: The 1918 General Election', *History Ireland* (blog), 30 October 2018, https://www.historyireland.com/100-years-ago-the-1918-general-election/.
22. John Bruton, 'The 1918 Election and Its Relevance to Modern Irish Politics' 108, no. 429 (1918). P.99.
23. *Ibid P.100.*
24. Maura R. Cremin, 'Fighting on Their Own Terms: The Tactics of the Irish Republican Army 1919-1921', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 26, no. 6 (2 November 2015): 912–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2015.1095836. *P.913*
25. Colum Kenny, 'A Fateful Weekend in 1921: At the Crux of Negotiations for an Anglo-Irish Treaty and an Independent Irish Parliament', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 39, no. 1 (2 January 2019): 32–46, https://doi.org/10.1080/02606755.2018.1517919. P.33. David Torrance, 'The Anglo-Irish Treaty, 1921', 25 March 2023, https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9260/. P.21
26. *Ibid P.45*

Timeline of Early Anglo-Irish Relations 1800 - 1921[27]





[27] Figure 1's discussion walks through the detail of each event throughout the period and highlights the influence these events had on the troubled state of affairs for the region. A full transcript of this discussion is included in Supplementary material 1 of the Appendix.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT 'THE TROUBLES'

Following an analysis of the creation of partition, the evidence clearly shows that two opposing views, supported by religious contradictions, existed surrounding the management and constitutional settlement of Northern Ireland. The Protestant majority believes in acknowledging Northern Ireland's equal place within the United Kingdom, and the Nationalist community, comprising the catholic minority, believes in a united Ireland. It is important to note that neither side could claim a consensus about their respective aims. This resulted in the formation of different groups and factions, including peaceful ones (Unionists and Nationalists) and violent ones (Loyalists and Republicans), on both sides. Indeed, primary evidence suggests that individual motivations and journeys contributed to the explored historical, political, and societal themes.[28] Furthermore, these labels are not static, and there exists a degree of flexibility in their use. Still, for clarity, the above uses of the groupings have been identified as the most common and are used as such. The struggle between these two communities resulted in a violent conflict, representing the troubles from 1968 to 1998.

[28] Lorenzo Bosi, 'Explaining Pathways to Armed Activism in the Provisional Irish Republican Army, 1969—1972', *Social Science History* 36, no. 3 (2012): 347–90. P.349.

NATIONALIST/REPUBLICAN CASE ANALYSIS

The origins of the nationalist movement's ideology and aims during the late 1960s were not explicitly political or violent, as regarding the constitutional terms that followed. Instead, there was a desire to improve the livelihood of the Catholic community against a perceived inequality (later legitimised in the Cameron commission) towards the Catholic community. This inequality resulted from a voting advantage to protestants through the disenfranchisement of catholic voters, including a requirement of home ownership to cast a ballot (Catholics were proportionately more likely to rent) and boundary changes that prevented a Catholic majority. Additionally, the lack of available housing allocation for Catholics and high unemployment within catholic communities were also inequities that activists wished to address.[29] Furthermore, the literature clarifies that this civil rights movement enabled republican and nationalist groups to unite under the banner of the civil rights movement.[30]

[29] Lorenzo Bosi, 'Explaining Pathways to Armed Activism in the Provisional Irish Republican Army, 1969—1972', *Social Science History* 36, no. 3 (2012): P.37

[30] Edward M. Neafsey, 'A Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland and the Unresolved Legacy Issue', *Rutgers Journal of Law and Public Policy* 17, no. 1 (2020 2019):P.13.

Christopher Hewitt, 'Catholic Grievances, Catholic Nationalism and Violence in Northern Ireland during the Civil Rights Period: A Reconsideration', *The British Journal of Sociology* 32, no. 3 (1981): 362–80, https://doi.org/10.2307/589283. P.363

A debate exists within the literature regarding the extent of inequality between Catholic and Protestant communities. Hewitt suggests that the disparities between the two communities have been overstated, mainly concerning economic factors such as housing.[31] Conversely, Power argues that the feelings of perceived deprivation were strongest when a side-by-side comparison between the two communities took place, especially over political rights, a view with which the Cameron Commission agreed.[32] This comparison strengthened the belief in relative deprivation that ignited such passionate feelings among the Catholic communities, which manifested as an unwavering desire for reform, coupled with political and societal movements to express these feelings.[33] Therefore, the historical evidence shows that the reaction to the feelings of relative deprivation (expressed through steadfast commitment to demonstration) was the driving force that advanced events towards a more violent nature. This is evidenced by the creation of the Cameron Commission, which was set up in the wake of the demonstrations/disturbances beginning October 5, 1968, which were overshadowed by the eyewitness accounts of the RUC's strong reaction towards the marches. Thus, the Commission's remit was to investigate the motivations of the civil rights movement and learn lessons to prevent further disturbances.[34]

[31] Christopher Hewitt, 'Catholic Grievances, Catholic Nationalism and Violence in Northern Ireland during the Civil Rights Period: A Reconsideration', *The British Journal of Sociology* 32, no. 3 (1981): 362–80, https://doi.org/10.2307/589283. P.364.

[32] Derek Birrell, 'Relative Deprivation as a Factor in Conflict in Northern Ireland', *The Sociological Review* 20, no. 3 (1 August 1972): 317–43, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1972.tb00213.x. P.323.
[33] Ibid P.330.

[34] 'CAIN: HMSO: Cameron Report - Disturbances in Northern Ireland (1969), Chapters 1-9', accessed 12 September 2023, https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/hmso/cameron.htm. Chapter 1; Edward M. Neafsey, 'A Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland and the Unresolved Legacy Issue', *Rutgers Journal of Law and Public Policy* 17, no. 1 (2020 2019): 1–81. P.17.

Therefore, it is clear from the earliest stages of the troubles that the 'nationalist' movement perceived justifiable anger about the mismanagement of life in Northern Ireland and anger towards the British administration responsible for this mismanagement and the institutions that supported it.[35]

The Battle of the Bogside was a pivotal event that marked the first disturbance of the Troubles to spread from a localised impact to widespread violence across the counties of Ulster, in the form of the Northern Ireland Riots of 1969, which began the shift from protest to conflict within Northern Ireland. The Battle of the Bogside was a three-day (12th – 16th August 1969) violent struggle by the Catholic community in Derry/Londonderry against police (RUC) who were responding to the violent clashes between catholic and protestant communities in the wake of the loyalist apprentice boy march, which was seen as highly provocative by Catholics.[36]

These clashes and the actions of the police reinforced the perceived deprivation and inequality theory that existed within the nationalist community. An analysis of the RUC strategy of focusing much of its violent response, with support from loyalists (which is subject to debate), towards Catholics is a conclusion that is supported by White's 1989 analysis.[37]

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[35] Niall Ó Dochartaigh, 'What Did the Civil Rights Movement Want?: Changing Goals and Underlying Continuities in the Transition from Protest to Violence', in *The Troubles in Northern Ireland and Theories of Social Movements*, ed. Lorenzo Bosi and Gianluca De Fazio (Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 33–52, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv56fgn2.5. P.34.

[36] Lorenzo Bosi, 'Explaining Pathways to Armed Activism in the Provisional Irish Republican Army, 1969—1972', *Social Science History* 36, no. 3 (2012): 347–90. P.356

Douglas Woodwell, 'The "Troubles" of Northern Ireland', *Understanding Civil War*, 2005, 161. P.167

[37] Robert W. White, 'From Peaceful Protest to Guerrilla War: Micromobilization of the Provisional Irish Republican Army', *American Journal of Sociology* 94, no. 6 (1989): 1277–1302. P.1282

In addition, the initial use of Cs gas by the RUC during this period of violence, which for some led to severe medical consequences, is evidence of causality for a hardening of the raw feelings of the nationalist community as a result of this escalation.[38] Furthermore, from a nationalist perspective, the events over these three days make clear that a breakdown of support and confidence and a belief in competence between the nationalist community and the police exists, increasing tensions between the two.[39] These tensions were stretched to include a shifted consolidated attitude towards British administration over Northern Ireland affairs and the creation of no-go self-autonomous areas after this affair, such as Free Derry.[40]

As such, it can be argued that this consolidation view was an invitation to challenge, in some cases violently, the British administration over the affairs of Northern Ireland. Therefore, the Battle of the Bogside strengthened the motivation for reform with wide-reaching implications. This is demonstrated through eyewitness testimony, as one Derry/Londonderry resident was *quoted as saying, "We will fight for justice. We will try to achieve it by peaceful means. But, if necessary, we will make it impossible for an unjust government to govern us."*.[41]

From a Catholic nationalist perspective, the Battle of the Bogside and the riots in 1969 served as an initial point that consolidated the beliefs that had existed since partition.

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[38] Norman Macdonald, 'Cs Gas in Northern Ireland', *Proceedings of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War* 2, no. 1 (1970): 10–12. P.11.

[39] Lorenzo Bosi, 'Explaining Pathways to Armed Activism in the Provisional Irish Republican Army, 1969—1972', *Social Science History* 36, no. 3 (2012): 347–90. P.365.

[40] Gordon Gillespie, '1969: How the Crisis Unfolded', *History Ireland* 17, no. 4 (2009): 16–19. P.18

[41] Edward M. Neafsey, 'A Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland and the Unresolved Legacy Issue', *Rutgers Journal of Law and Public Policy* 17, no. 1 (2020 2019): 1–81. P.32

Furthermore, it marked a period during which violent elements increased in critical political events within Northern Ireland. From the nationalist/catholic perspective, the violent episode that accompanied their civil rights marches by protestant groups drove the animosity between the two to greater levels, with the actions of the community now under the threat of violence during this period, owing to an increased arming and a process of organising violent structures from respective groups. Thus, contributing to increased tensions in Northern Ireland.[42]

Following 1969, a series of events that stirred nationalists occurred until January 1972. These events included British troops on the streets of Ulster under Operation Banner. Although initially welcomed by nationalists as a mitigating force against loyalist attacks, it was seen as a logical next step following the breakdown of support, confidence, and perceived competence in the existing police force's order structure. However, it became an antagonistic presence, especially when action was taken against the IRA, viewed as a protection outfit for the catholic community against loyalist paramilitaries.[43] In addition, the Battle of the Falls, following a search for weapons in nationalist territory in Belfast, the use of CS gas again, and its perceived antagonistic nature contributed to nationalist anger towards Britain and loyalist factions.

[42] Rod Thornton, 'Getting It Wrong: The Crucial Mistakes Made in the Early Stages of the British Army's Deployment to Northern Ireland (August 1969 to March 1972)', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 1 (February 2007): 73–107, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390701210848. P.75

Douglas Woodwell, 'The "Troubles" of Northern Ireland', *Understanding Civil War*, 2005, 161. P.167.

[43] David R. Lowry, 'Internment: Dentention Without Trial in Northern Ireland', *Human Rights* 5, no. 3 (1976): 261–331. P.267

This is supported by the following quote from a British soldier on the effects of this escalation, *"The place was saturated with tear gas, children were coughing… I think the major effect of the Falls curfew was that it gave the community… the opportunity to see the IRA as their saviours and the British army as the enemy."*[44]

Finally, Internment without trial, under Operation Demetrius, which was introduced in Northern Ireland by the Stormont unionist government on August 9th, 1971, resulted in widespread British army arrests of more than 340 people from Catholic and nationalist backgrounds. This was a considerable exercise in suspension of civil liberties for a section of British society, to capture IRA members.

Furthermore, this event has stark parallels to the fates of Ireland's 'founding fathers' in the wake of the Easter Rising, which profoundly impacted the psyche of nationalist citizens and thus reinforced their anger.[45] Furthermore, deficient intelligence resulted in the release of more than 100 within 24 hours, resulting in a collective feeling of persecution by nationalists and Catholics at the hands of the Unionist administration supported by British troops.[46]

The events of Bloody Sunday are well documented as the actions of that day form an important place in British, Irish and Ulster history, with the deaths of the 14 people still raw over 50 years later. It is important to note that any judgment about people's actions on that day falls beyond the scope of this case analysis.

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[44] 'Quotations: British Intervention', *Northern Ireland* (blog), 19 April 2016, https://alphahistory.com/northernireland/quotations-british-intervention/. *A British private on the Falls Road curfew, 1970*

[45] David R. Lowry, 'Internment: Dentention Without Trial in Northern Ireland', *Human Rights* 5, no. 3 (1976): 261–331. P.268

[46] Ibid P.274

Therefore, the conclusions of the official inquiry serve as a reference to assist this analysis, while recognising that other opinions, separate from the official inquiry, exist, as widely reported in the media.[47]

From the nationalist perspective, this event is pivotal in cementing the anger within the nationalist community. This view is confirmed by the Savile enquiry on the events of that day: "What happened on Bloody Sunday strengthened the Provisional IRA and increased nationalist resentment and hostility towards the army."[48] It is also clear that the raw emotions built within the nationalist community for many years were received as they believed their justification for those feelings in the tragedies of Bloody Sunday. This is because the British army embodied the establishment during its operations in Northern Ireland and the absence of a functioning Stormont parliament during periods of direct rule. The military's actions (acting as state agents) towards the people can be categorised as state repression, which severely exacerbated the delicate situation in Northern Ireland at the time.[49]

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[47] 'Bloody Sunday Inquiry: A Soldier's View - "I Was in Derry That Day. I Just Wish the Army Hadn't Been"', *BelfastTelegraph.Co.Uk*, 15 June 2010, sec. Opinion, https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/bloody-sunday-inquiry-a-soldiers-view-i-was-in-derry-that-day-i-just-wish-the-army-hadnt-been/28541696.html.
'Henry Patterson: For Many, the Bloody Sunday Saville Report Has Fallen Short', *BelfastTelegraph.Co.Uk*, 16 June 2010, sec. Opinion, https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/henry-patterson-for-many-the-bloody-sunday-saville-report-has-fallen-short/28541900.html.

[48] Robin Moffat, 'Principal Conclusions and Overall Assessment of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry', *Medico-Legal Journal* 78, no. 3 (September 2010): 111–111, https://doi.org/10.1258/mlj.2010.010018. 5.5 P.58.

[49] Robert W. White and Terry Falkenberg White, 'Repression and the Liberal State: The Case of Northern Ireland, 1969-1972', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39, no. 2 (1 June 1995): 330–52, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002795039002006. P.331

Paul F. Power, 'Civil Protest in Northern Ireland', *Journal of Peace Research* 9, no. 3 (1972): 223–36. P.228.

This means when the establishment sets itself upon a largely unarmed peaceful community who were protesting their anger against injustice, such as internment without trial, an episode that had already brought great anger to the nationalist community. This was coupled with a demand for change (which supersedes potential mitigating factors such as an IRA presence, as determined by the British government enquiry). Ultimately, it is akin to a failing of the establishment (Britain) as happened on that day. This judgment is the conclusion of the enquiry, and that failing provides an invitation to more extreme methods of attempted reform. *"The civil rights movement is dead and all over this city tonight, young men, boys, will be joining the IRA, and you will reap a whirlwind."*[50] This provides a rationale for why the events of that day served as an enduring, powerful symbol for the advocacy of the cause within the now-growing Republican movement, which would endure and contribute to future violence.[51]

In addition to events leading to 1971, the treatment of prisoners during the troubles was a source of great contention for the nationalist/republican community, driving animosity towards the British government, supported by Unionists. Despite numerous examples of this issue during the Troubles, the most notable were those who engaged in hunger strikes in 1981.

The initial effect of this time was the revealing of different positions of Republicans and the British government, which manifested itself over the categorisation of imprisoned IRA members.

[50] 'Ivan Cooper Obituary', 20 September 2023, sec. register, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ivan-cooper-obituary-pp3bt2hq2.

[51] Robin Moffat, 'Principal Conclusions and Overall Assessment of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry', *Medico-Legal Journal* 78, no. 3 (September 2010): 111–111, https://doi.org/10.1258/mlj.2010.010018. 5.5 P.58.

The imprisoned advocated for the return of special category status (as prisoners of war instead of criminals) and the demands that accompanied that status, which the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher resoundingly refused, as she could not reconcile the difference between political and criminal killing.[52] From a republican perspective, this once again represented a mistreatment (and even a hypocritical position by some) of its people by the British government, which built upon many years of frustration.[53] Furthermore, the British government's overt resistance (despite covert flexibility) to negotiate on this matter meant that the hunger strike reached its fatal conclusion for ten people.[54] Therefore, republican opinion places responsibility on the British government for this tragedy. Although from those that survived, there is evidence of accepting personal responsibility for their fate (but this confirmation is not established with those who died, and thus the potential for a contradicting view exists) as this quote from Gerard Hodgins highlights, *"We all made up our minds that we were going to die,".*[55]

Regardless of motivation and responsibility, there is unquestionable evidence that those men who died on hunger strike became martyrs for the republican cause, which had great significance for the nationalist cause. The effect of this fuelled further anti-British sentiment but also reinforced the validity of the actions of the republican and nationalist movement among its supporters.

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[52] Aogán Mulcahy, 'Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy: Press Coverage of the 1981 Northern Irish Hunger Strike', *Social Problems* 42, no. 4 (1995): 449–67, https://doi.org/10.2307/3097041. P.449

[53] 'Quotes by Bobby Sands', accessed 4 October 2023, https://republican-news.org/current/news/2011/05/quotes_by_bobby_sands.html.

[54] Hopkins, Stephen. 'Hunger Strike: Margaret Thatcher's Battle with the IRA, 1980–1981'. *Irish Political Studies* 30, no. 2 (3 April 2015): 318–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2014.952103. P.319.

[55] Paul Howard, 'The Long Kesh Hunger Strikers: 25 Years Later', n.d. P.71.

The deaths of the hunger strikers had an incalculable effect on supporters of the cause that they died for, in a way unlike any other event during the troubles, that even briefly united certain unionists in remembrance for the men.[56] Thus, the 100,000 supporters who attended Bobby Sands' funeral are evidence of this fact.[57]

One of the reasons why the deaths of the hunger strikes struck so profoundly with the nationalist community was because the manner of the deaths struck a biblical chord with supporters in such a religious community. The parallels between the hunger strikers and biblical teachings of religious sacrifice against political persecution are evident and perhaps suggest why the catholic church refused to refer to the strikers' actions as suicide. To that end, it is clear why each of the ten men's deaths resonated powerfully with their community, with their deaths achieving greater prominence than almost all others during the troubles and providing an additional rallying/recruiting point for the cause.[58]

In addition to the internal consequences of the fatalities for the republican/nationalist community, an additional external consequence also emerged. This manifested itself in the attitude towards the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The Prime Ministers refused to acknowledge the demands of the strikers before, during or immediately after their deaths.[59]

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[56] Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh, Patsy O'Hara, Joe McDonnell, Kieran Doherty, Martin Hurson, Kevin Lynch, Thomas McElwee, and Michael Devine.

[57] Chris Yuill, 'The Body as Weapon: Bobby Sands and the Republican Hunger Strikes', *Sociological Research Online* 12, no. 2 (1 March 2007): 111–21, https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.1348. P.113

[58] Ibid P.113.

[59] *"Faced with the failure of their discredited cause, the men of violence have chosen in recent months to play what may well be their last card," "They have turned their violence against themselves through the hunger strike to death." MRS. THATCHER PAYS 9-HOUR ULSTER VISIT', The New York Times, 29 May 1981*

This led to another episode of heightened animosity towards the British establishment, which would be addressed in a new complex strategy for democratic reform. This occurred through political outfits such as Sinn Féin and violent pressure, supported by an increase in violence, including in mainland Britain, and an increase in IRA membership known as the Armalite and ballot box strategy.[60]

Overall, the evidence makes clear that republican prisoners detained in Britain provoked a strong belief of contention from the Republican/nationalist cause. This contention mainly stems from the belief that those imprisoned were combatants in a legitimate war against an occupying force and, as such, were not criminals, as stated in republican literature.[61] Therefore, the stark opposition to this nationalist/republican position by the British government contributed (in the minds of the catholic community) to the mistreatment and deaths of republican prisoners. This demonstrates why this period once again reinforced anti-British sentiment and contributed to heightened motivation for violent retaliation.[62]

It is clear from the nationalist/republican community that historical events in Northern Ireland brought about a deep-rooted anger against unionist-managed inequality, the historical actions of the British on the island of Ireland and British management of the region, stretching from everyday life to monumental events.

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[60] William Borders and Special To the New York Times, 'MRS. THATCHER PAYS 9-HOUR ULSTER VISIT', *The New York Times*, 29 May 1981, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/29/world/mrs-thatcher-pays-9-hour-ulster-visit.html. Paul Howard, 'The Long Kesh Hunger Strikers: 25 Years Later', n.d. P.91;
John A. Hannigan, 'The Armalite and the Ballot Box: Dilemmas of Strategy and Ideology in the Provisional IRA', *Social Problems* 33, no. 1 (1985): 31–40, https://doi.org/10.2307/800629. P.38.

[61] 'CAIN: Events: Text of Irish Republican Army (IRA) "Green Book" (Book I and II)', accessed 8 September 2023, https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/othelem/organ/ira/ira_green_book.htm.

[62] Adrian Guelke and Jim Smyth, 'The Ballot Bomb: Terrorism and the Electoral Process in Northern Ireland', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 4, no. 2 (June 1992): 103–24, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559208427151. P.122.

These feelings of anger have been reinforced over the years with events such as Internment, Bloody Sunday, and the treatment of prisoners, amongst others. Furthermore, the actions of leading figures in the community who have ascended to the honour of martyrs for the cause, such as Bobby Sands and his fellow hunger strikers, arouse these feelings. In addition, the unionist community's resistance to their aims further fuels that anger, resulting in a complex, multi-directional anger in Northern Ireland, contributing to the prolonged conflict. The evidence makes it clear that these feelings are authentic, deep, and a prelude to actions inspired by the emotions experienced by this community during that period. As a result of this situation, and with enough 'justified' anger for enough people willing to act upon it, the violence during this time on behalf of this community was determined as not only justified but also inevitable.

UNIONIST/LOYALIST CASE ANALYSIS

Instead of anger, fear could be argued as the primary emotive factor on the unionist/loyalist side. The fear that the status quo was about to be disrupted, the fear that a community's identity would change. Coupled with the fear that the campaign of the nationalist/republican community would succeed and the fear that the British government, hailed as the greater guarantor of the union and Northern Ireland's place within that union, would compromise with nationalists and Dublin.[63] Once again, it is the historical events during the troubles that cement this emotion, and just as angry people are drawn to angry action, scared people are drawn to scary things, which is evident in Northern Ireland during this period.

As with any community identity, the make-up of unionism in Northern Ireland is a complex, layered entity with different motivations and methods to achieve its ideological objective.[64] However, as with the nationalist analysis, there is a common threat that unifies various factions and helps reveal the overall aims and feelings of the community.[65]

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[63] Jennifer Todd, 'History and Structure in Loyalist Ideology: The Possibilities of Ideological Change', *Irish Journal of Sociology* 4, no. 1 (1 May 1994): 67–79, https://doi.org/10.1177/079160359400400104. P.73.
Ander Boserup, 'Contradictions and Struggles in Northern Ireland', *Socialist Register* 9 (17 March 1972), https://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5310. P.178.
[64] Ibid P.49.

[65] B. Graham and P. Shirlow, 'The Battle of the Somme in Ulster Memory and Identity', *Political Geography* 21, no. 7 (September 2002): 881–904, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(02)00034-3. P.885

The literature makes clear that through a natural and widespread communal interpretation of the past, a community could contribute to a collective and reinforced sense of identity, which the evidence suggests exists in unionism in Northern Ireland.[66]

This suggests that certain historical events can reinforce this collective identity (see Figure 1 discussion).[67] This, coupled with a deep-rooted belief in Protestantism, fuels the unionist community's campaign during the period.[68] Furthermore, these events can endure through generations through a community's remembrance efforts, reinforcing their historical relevance in daily life.[69] This means that the most prominent ideological position of unionists (from a historical perspective, whilst accepting the existence of a fluctuation of constitutional policy during the troubles) is that Northern Ireland's future settlement must be an essential part of the United Kingdom.

Therefore, the refusal to be seen as any less than British is fuelled by the potent blood sacrifices of the previous generation.[70] An example of this powerful sacrifice, prominent in the literature, is the sacrifice of the 36th Ulster Division, which lost 5,000 men on the first day of the Battle of the

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[66] Jim McAuley, 'Memory and Belonging in Ulster Loyalist Identity', *Irish Political Studies* 31, no. 1 (2 January 2016): 122–38, https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2015.1126928. P.123.

[67] 'CAIN: Issues: Politics: Speech by Ian Paisley to DUP Annual Conference, 1993', accessed 2 October 2023, https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/politics/docs/dup/ip_1993.htm.

[68] Christopher Farrington, 'Ulster Unionist Political Divisions in the Late Twentieth Century', *Irish Political Studies* 16, no. 1 (January 2001): 49–71, https://doi.org/10.1080/07907180108406632. P.50

[69] Jim McAuley, 'Memory and Belonging in Ulster Loyalist Identity', *Irish Political Studies* 31, no. 1 (2 January 2016): 122–38, https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2015.1126928. P.138

[70] David Officer and Graham Walker, 'Protestant Ulster: Ethno-History, Memory and Contemporary Prospects', *National Identities* 2, no. 3 (November 2000): 293–307, https://doi.org/10.1080/713687700. P.294.
Brian Graham, 'THE PAST IN THE PRESENT: THE SHAPING OF IDENTITY IN LOYALIST ULSTER', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 3 (January 2004): 483–500, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550490509801. P.490.
"We are part of the United Kingdom; we shared with the rest of the United Kingdom the sorrows of war" Ian Paisley Blair & Brown: The New Labour Revolution (Episode 2), 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9srifONJDY.

Somme.[71] Through this recurring remembrance of the previous generations' sacrifice by a touched community, the ideological position of unionists remains enduring. As the Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore remarked, *"All Ulstermen will carry the spirit of willing sacrifice that embodies the best of British."*[72] This quote is evidence of an individual and personal emotional investment in such a national identity, reinforced by a collective community whose activities promote this identity (that unifies different generations) through religious remembrance, memorials, murals, and media rhetoric.[73] This theory is demonstrated in the reaction to the bombing in Enniskillen on Remembrance Sunday, 1987.[74]

This attack was viewed as in a completely separate class to others during the troubles, as the remembrance service was viewed as sacrosanct, not least to the unionist/loyalist community, whose remembrance of previous generation sacrifice is deeply personal to the community.[75] As a result of this deep attachment, this episode was viewed as an attack on the community at its most vulnerable, with the victims ascending to the level of sacrifice that the war dead held. Therefore, this highlights the profound significance the act of remembrance had across unionists in Northern Ireland.[76]

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[71] David Officer and Graham Walker, 'Protestant Ulster: Ethno-History, Memory and Contemporary Prospects', *National Identities* 2, no. 3 (November 2000): 293–307, https://doi.org/10.1080/713687700. P.298

[72] Ibid P.299

[73] Lee A Smithey, 'Unionists, Loyalists, And Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland', 2020. P.12.

Desmond Bell, 'Acts of Union: Youth Sub-Culture and Ethnic Identity amongst Protestants in Northern Ireland', *The British Journal of Sociology* 38, no. 2 (1987): 158–83, https://doi.org/10.2307/590530. P.167.

[74] H. Robinson, 'Remembering War in the Midst of Conflict: First World War Commemorations in the Northern Irish Troubles', *Twentieth Century British History* 21, no. 1 (1 January 2010): 80–101, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwp047. P.96

[75] Ibid P.97

[76] Ibid P.97

The unionist community was initially committed to the peaceful management of Northern Ireland and achieving its ideological aims through the pre-existing democratic institutions, such as Stormont and Unionist MPs. However, following the events of Bloody Sunday, direct rule was reintroduced, which resulted in institutional exclusion in Northern Ireland for the duration of the Troubles.[77] This exclusion can be seen as a pivotal event that propelled the unionist community towards a violent expression of their concerns in an action that matched republican actions at the time.

The delicate political situation in Northern Ireland, which had stretched to breaking point by 1969, led to the creation and armament of various loyalist paramilitary forces, such as the UDA (1970) and UDF (1966), that would defend the community, resist republican violence, and actively promote the unionist/loyalist cause. In the perceived absence of British support for loyalist communities, coupled with mistrust in existing democratic branches of government and a worsening security crisis, independent paramilitary groups took positions of authority to fill the gap and fight against an increasingly mobilised nationalist campaign.[78] This meant loyalists believed they had the right to respond to IRA actions and defend and support their communities. As a former UDF member said, *"Increasingly, people on our estate began to feel that not only did they have to find ways of defending themselves from the violence of the IRA, but the very people we looked to for security were making our lives more difficult".*[79]

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[77] Jennifer Todd, 'Thresholds of State Change: Changing British State Institutions and Practices in Northern Ireland after Direct Rule', *Political Studies* 62, no. 3 (1 October 2014): 522–38, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12082. P.255

[78].James W. McAuley and Neil Ferguson, '"Us" and "Them": Ulster Loyalist Perspectives on the IRA and Irish Republicanism', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no. 3 (26 May 2016): 561–75, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2016.1155938. P.562.

[79] Ibid. P.563

Furthermore, IRA literature supports this, which explains the intent to create an unstable situation resulting in an ungovernable region.

Given the unionist leadership of Northern Ireland at the time, this point demonstrates a clear threat to the status quo of the Northern Ireland administration, which further legitimised the fear of this threat among unionist and loyalist communities.[80] This delicate situation perpetuated the fear that loyalist communities were vulnerable and that the prevailing political and social momentum at the time was against their way of life. A clear example of this was an intervention by the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, in 1969, who called for United Nations troops to occupy Northern Ireland and construct Irish army infrastructure along the border. This confirmed for unionists that there was a legitimate threat of an Irish invasion, reaffirming their concerns.[81] What resulted from this situation was ordinary people joining loyalist paramilitary organisations in various capacities in response to the changing situation in Northern Ireland from 1969.[82] Furthermore, it is essential to note that, as with all communities, the motivations of every member vary. Although a defensive motivation is well-stated, the literature also makes clear that certain hardliners rejected this and focused their efforts on attacking perceived 'legitimate' IRA targets.[83]

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[80] C.J.M. Drake, 'The Provisional IRA: A Case Study', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3, no. 2 (June 1991): 43–60, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559108427103. P.48.

[81] Gordon Gillespie, '1969: How the Crisis Unfolded', *History Ireland* 17, no. 4 (2009): 16–19. P.18.

[82] 'The Loyalist "defence Groups" That Killed Hundreds', *BBC News*, accessed 2 October 2023, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/49352231 ; S. Bruce, 'Terrorism and Politics: The Case of Northern Ireland's Loyalist Paramilitaries', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 2 (June 2001): 27–48, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550109609679. P.31.

[83] Steve Bruce, 'The Problems of "Pro-state" Terrorism: Loyalist Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 4, no. 1 (March 1992): 67–88, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559208427138. P.69.
James McAuley, '"Just Fighting to Survive": Loyalist Paramilitary Politics and the Progressive Unionist Party', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 3 (1 January 2004): 522–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550490509838. P.526.

Therefore, this reality escalated violence across Northern Ireland and resulted in a demand for an eye for an eye, which resulted in more people being drawn into the violence of the conflict.[84] This means that the unionist community's initial ideological aims and motivations were on borrowed time, as localised violence and defensive manoeuvres perpetuated by the delicate situation escalated into a full-scale war against the IRA and the catholic communities, which in turn responded with equal escalatory actions.

[84] Padraig O'Malley, 'Northern Ireland: A Manageable Conflict?', *The Irish Review (1986-)*, no. 15 (1994): 14–39, https://doi.org/10.2307/29735730. P.30.

Robert W. White, 'On Measuring Political Violence: Northern Ireland, 1969 to 1980', *American Sociological Review* 58, no. 4 (1993): 575–85, https://doi.org/10.2307/2096077. P.583.

THE BRITISH EFFECT

The British government played a significant role in the delicate situation of Northern Ireland, both militarily and politically. Therefore, attempts by the British government to resolve the violence in Northern Ireland and bring about a negotiated settlement through concessions were a highly sensitive issue for unionists. This was due to their belief that the British authorities do not always reciprocate loyalty in Ulster, which further reinforced the matter's sensitivity.[85]

The Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 and its implementation period of 1974 are evidence of the politics of compromise influencing the sectarian violence within Northern Ireland. Within this agreement, proposals included a new executive consisting of power-sharing between two communities, combined with the beginnings of north-south cooperation and supported by British-Irish cooperation.[86] However, this agreement was negotiated during some of the highest periods of mistrust, anger, and fear during the troubles, which had significant consequences. The biggest concern for loyalists was that this agreement would serve as the first step towards a United Ireland, demonstrating the fear element for unionists in the peace agreements.

[85] Frank Wright, 'Northern Ireland and the British-Irish Relationship', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 78, no. 310 (1989): 151–62. P.157.

[86] Gordon Gillespie, 'Sunningdale and the 1974 Ulster Workers' Council Strike', *History Ireland* 15, no. 3 (2007): 42–47. P.42.

Keith Kyle, 'Sunningdale and after: Britain, Ireland, and Ulster', *The World Today* 31, no. 11 (1975): 439–50. P.440.

Thus, they directed their electoral literature to highlight these concerns with slogans such as *'Dublin is just a Sunningdale away'*.[87]

This suggests a clear breakdown of negotiation objectives between loyalists, who sought to reject Dublin's influence, and the British government, which aimed to restore a functioning executive and legislative branch of government in Northern Ireland and was prepared to compromise at the expense of loyalist aims to achieve this.[88] This breakdown creates a vulnerable situation to increased violence under the premise of self-regulation, away from the state's influence.[89]

Furthermore, a worsening security crisis in Northern Ireland exposed this vulnerability following the agreement within Loyalist areas, as clashes between paramilitaries (who felt betrayed by the British) and the army increased, and various groups and factions began collaborating to oppose the policy. As Ian Paisley said, *"I say if they do not behave themselves in the South, it will be shots across the border!".*[90] This indicates a significant shift in violent rhetoric, highlighting the deep dissatisfaction with the proposed agreement.

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[87] Gordon Gillespie, 'Sunningdale and the 1974 Ulster Workers' Council Strike', *History Ireland* 15, no. 3 (2007): 42–47. P.44

[88] Gordon Gillespie, 'The First Northern Ireland Peace Process: Power-Sharing, Sunningdale and the IRA Ceasefires, 1972-76', *Irish Political Studies* 33, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 144–47, https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2016.1142715. P.145

[89] Gordon Gillespie, 'Sunningdale and the 1974 Ulster Workers' Council Strike', *History Ireland* 15, no. 3 (2007): 42–47. P.45

[90] Admin, 'Shots Across The Border', *Broadsheet.Ie* , 10 January 2014, https://www.broadsheet.ie/2014/01/10/shots-across-the-border/.

Furthermore, the literature explores the link between loyalist dissatisfaction with the agreement (that culminated in a workers' strike that had a significant impact) and violent attacks, loyalist car bombs in Dublin and Monaghan, which caused the greatest number of deaths of any single day of the Troubles, during the same period.[91]

Ultimately, the Sunningdale agreement created the political context that played into the weaknesses of the delicate situation in Northern Ireland during this time. For loyalists, the exclusion of their aims from the agreement, brought about by a belief that Britain was prepared to make whatever concessions were necessary to secure an agreement, meant that the only logical conclusion of the accord would be to ensure its failure. This crisis played into the deepest fears of the loyalist community, that their place within the union was up for negotiation and that there was momentum towards appeasing Dublin and nationalists to control the violence. Ultimately, this led to an absence of trust between loyalists and the British government. This created a space for self-regulation. As a result, the unionist/loyalist community, while divided over the Sunningdale agreement, was united in its ideological principles, which were worth defending at this time, even at the cost of more lives.

For the unionist/loyalist community, the impact of the British government continued to play a crucial role in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, especially in 1985 with the Anglo–Irish Agreement.

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[91] Gordon Gillespie, 'The First Northern Ireland Peace Process: Power-Sharing, Sunningdale and the IRA Ceasefires, 1972-76', *Irish Political Studies* 33, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 144–47, https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2016.1142715. P.145.

Gordon Gillespie, 'Sunningdale and the 1974 Ulster Workers' Council Strike', *History Ireland* 15, no. 3 (2007): 42–47. P.45.

The Sunningdale agreement already reveals the political sensitivity surrounding British negotiations with Dublin for the unionist/loyalist communities, which had not dissipated despite its implementation failure. As such, loyalist concerns still existed and remained valid in future negotiations.

As with the previous agreement, an increased Dublin presence was negotiated, to the dismay of loyalist leaders. However, the 1985 agreement included a clause (Article 2, clause B) that gave the Irish government an advisory role in the non-devolved management of Northern Ireland for the first time, a radical shift in the previously pro-unionist position of the British government.[92] This clause, while not inflammatory in language, acts in stark contrast to the cherished unionist belief that the administration of Northern Ireland must fall exclusively to the British Government and that Dublin should be treated as a neighbour and a foreign country. Thus, Dublin was left without any jurisdiction or role in the management of Northern Ireland.[93] As a result, the unionist/loyalist community believed that the British government had betrayed their interests (especially as no unionist party was invited to play any role in this negotiation), restricted their power within new executive bodies and had too readily conceded nationalist/Dublin desires by negotiating this agreement. Consequently, this opened the door to the wrath of the community, which had the potential to be violent.[94]

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[92] 'CAIN: Events: Anglo-Irish Agreement - Document', accessed 3 October 2023, https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/aia/aiadoc.htm.

[93] William V. Shannon, 'The Anglo-Irish Agreement', *Foreign Affairs* 64, no. 4 (1986): 849–70, https://doi.org/10.2307/20042691. P.850.

[94] William V. Shannon, 'The Anglo-Irish Agreement', *Foreign Affairs* 64, no. 4 (1986): 849–70, https://doi.org/10.2307/20042691. P.850.

Michael Connolly and John Loughlin, 'Reflections on the Anglo-Irish Agreement', *Government and Opposition* 21, no. 2 (1986): 146–60. P.148.

Consequently, the Ulster Resistance paramilitary group was formed in 1986 in response to the agreement, which helped unify existing paramilitary groups. It signalled that a robust, violent reaction was not off the table, and the organisation of such an action began to take place.[95]

Another issue was clauses 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution, which claimed de jure sovereignty over the whole island of Ireland, that loyalists wanted to amend. Therefore, any negotiation with Dublin would need these clauses addressed, according to loyalists, as without them, an implicit agreement remains in place, which is unacceptable to loyalists and reveals a lack of leadership by the British government.[96]

Through their loyalty, the unionist/loyalist community held the British administration responsible for the overall management of the region as an equal place of the union. However, in the absence of this, self-regulation occurs, which, motivated by the state's betrayal, creates the possibility of violence and is often the only solution to express concern and protect their interests. This is supported by the literature that shows an increase in loyalist violence following the announcement of this agreement.[97] Following a collapse of relations, a security vacuum was created, and paramilitaries stepped up to fill the void, raising the risk of violent episodes and shifting to more radical action within the loyalist community.[98]

Jennifer Todd, 'Institutional Change and Conflict Regulation: The Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985) and the Mechanisms of Change in Northern Ireland', *West European Politics* 34, no. 4 (July 2011): 838–58, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2011.572394. P.843.

[95] John Barry, 'Northern Ireland: Hardening Borders and Hardening Attitudes', *Beginning to See the Light*, n.d. P.51

[96] Michael Connolly and John Loughlin, 'Reflections on the Anglo-Irish Agreement', *Government and Opposition* 21, no. 2 (1986): 146–60. P.147.

[97] Andrew Silke, 'Ragged Justice: Loyalist Vigilantism in Northern Ireland', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no. 3 (September 1999): 1–31, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559908427514. P.04

[98] Ibid P.05

These consequences were supported by a near-unanimous rejection of the agreement by unionists polled. Such unity had been rare in the broad ideological church of the unionism/ loyalism ideology. Therefore, it raised tensions between a legitimately united, motivated armed community (who were reeling from a perceived humiliating agreement) and their enemies.[99] Moreover, loyalist frustration against a state betrayal manifested as a hostile reaction that would not be easily forgiven. The lack of engagement with loyalist/unionist leaders created the conditions for such a response, as one unionist politician was quoted as saying, "*I have no loyalty to a British government going over the heads of our people, and double-dealing behind our backs with a foreign government.*[100]This provides further evidence that perceived British mismanagement alienated the community that had pledged its loyalty, resulting in a breakdown of trust in state institutions among those people.

The unionist/loyalist belief that Northern Ireland belongs as part of the United Kingdom has deep personal roots for many in the unionist community. Through the sacrifices of war, this identity has been embedded, which, coupled with the sacred acts of remembrance, ensures its relevance in day-to-day life and bridges the divide of time, ensuring that those feelings continue with each generation. Preserving this identity is at the heart of this community; thus, any threat to that is a sensitive issue that provokes genuine fear in all loyal to the crown in Northern Ireland. Key events have brought that fear to the surface throughout the troubles, not least a highly motivated nationalist community demanding change.

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[99] W. Harvey Cox, 'Public Opinion and the Anglo-Irish Agreement', *Government and Opposition* 22, no. 3 (1987): 336–51. P.338.
Feargal Cochrane, 'Progressive or Regressive? The Anglo-Irish Agreement as a Dynamic in the Northern Ireland Polity', *Irish Political Studies* 8, no. 1 (January 1993): 1–20, https://doi.org/10.1080/07907189308406505. P.04

[100] Keith Kyle, 'Politics, Ethnicity and the Irish Troubles', *Contemporary British History* 12, no. 4 (December 1998): 177–83, https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469808581508. P.179

In addition, the British effect greatly impacted the unionist community throughout the Troubles, leading to the breakdown of trust, fears of betrayal, and a vacuum of support and security.

This vacuum is critical, as it explains why unionists and loyalists believed there was no alternative to self-regulating their communities and defending a way of life under threat. In the absence of a guarantee for their place within the union, coupled with this deep patriotism for their home and its identity, loyalists scared for the future believed that there was a justified rationale for taking necessary actions to protect the community. This was to secure their identity for future generations as their predecessors had done in the two World Wars. Consequently, this point serves as a warning for future actions in the event of a withdrawal of their guaranteed position in the union, informing future actors of the enduring importance of this reality.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT 'THE TROUBLES' TO A FAGILE PEACE

There is no doubt that peace was hard-fought and required even greater devotion to ensure its success.[101] Additionally, external actors' commitment to Northern Ireland's success is a crucial factor that cannot be overstated.[102] Historical evidence suggests that an inclusive, ambitious peace process is another key element in achieving a successful agreement, for which a comprehensive description of the process is available in the literature.[103] This section will analyse the aims of peace for both sides, which will support the future analysis of the resilience of the peace agreement.

It is evident in the case of Northern Ireland that the situation was evolving, both politically and militarily. By 1994, this evolution had shifted the context in which previous attempts to resolve the conflict, which had failed, once again opened opportunities for progress towards peace. Furthermore, following bilateral Anglo-Irish confidence-building efforts, tentative ceasefires of unspecified duration by major paramilitary organisations began, marking the start of a process of direct engagement between paramilitary political groups and the British government.

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[101] Andrew Reynolds, 'A Constitutional Pied Piper: The Norther Irish Good Friday Agreement', *Political Science Quarterly* 114, no. 4 (1999): 613–37, https://doi.org/10.2307/2657786. P.614

[102] Ibid. 625

[103] Stefan Wolff, 'THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT AND THE CONFLICT IN NORTHERN IRELAND', *World Affairs*, n.d.

Jennifer Todd, 'PROCESS, PERSPECTIVES AND INTERPRETATIONS: AN ORAL ARCHIVE OF THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT', n.d.

As a result of this process and despite setbacks including isolated high-profile paramilitary attacks (reflecting the consequential suffering of the internal divisions of both sides), in violation of the Mitchell principles of non-violence, a multi-party negotiation started work.

For peace to be brokered, the literature highlights that the aims of both sides of the troubles must be enshrined in constitutional law.[104] For nationalists, the British government's acceptance that a united Ireland (should the majority of people desire it) was not just a possibility but an enshrined scenario. Moreover, the unionist demands for Irish constitutional amendments that had been demanded during the Sunningdale agreement were recognised and acted upon.[105] Both of these developments recognise the need for equality and recognition of the respective aims of each side to facilitate a peace agreement.

Inclusivity was another crucial factor for the peace process, both in negotiations and in the future political framework of power sharing that was fornulated on elecotral allocation rather than party political colation bargening.[106] Its presence (following the cessation of violence by respective paramilitaries because of public exhaustion towards violence) in the Good Friday agreement is one of the key elements that separate this historic agreement from the other failed attempts.[107]

[104] Andrew Reynolds, 'A Constitutional Pied Piper: The Norther Irish Good Friday Agreement', *Political Science Quarterly* 114, no. 4 (1999): 613–37, https://doi.org/10.2307/2657786. P.621

[105] Ibid. P.621

[106] Joanne Mcevoy, 'The Institutional Design of Executive Formation in Northern Ireland', *Regional & Federal Studies* 16, no. 4 (December 2006): 447–64, https://doi.org/10.1080/13597560600989037. P.457.

[107] Andrew Reynolds, 'A Constitutional Pied Piper: The Norther Irish Good Friday Agreement.'P.17.
Andrew Reynolds, 'A Constitutional Pied Piper: The Norther Irish Good Friday Agreement', *Political Science Quarterly* 114, no. 4 (1999): 613–37, https://doi.org/10.2307/2657786. P.624.

The underlying issues that have already been explored play a crucial role in the peace process within Northern Ireland. These issues, including inequality, powerful emotions such as fear and anger, historical loyalties, and strong beliefs about the future of Northern Ireland, required a new radical approach. The peace process initiates this transition by establishing a framework for addressing these issues, which includes honouring and maintaining human relationships, accommodating competing concerns, and committing to mutual respect.[108] Furthermore, the commitment to the future of Northern Ireland, regardless of its present-day constitutional position, reflects the views and beliefs of the population, demonstrating an explicit acceptance of consent and equality among all sides.[109]

Moreover, the peace processes recognised the need for future work without avoiding the critical issues that must be addressed. This means that the Belfast Good Friday Agreement set the precedent that peace would take the form of an ever-evolving issue that prevented an overwhelm of reform that would risk the breakdown of the agreement.[110] Therefore, peace in Northern Ireland remains a complex settlement that requires consent across the island of Ireland (principally established in the dual referendum for the island on 22nd May 1998) and recognised equality for the people who desire it.[111]

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[108] Seamus Dunn and Jacqueline Nolan-Haley, 'Conflict in Northern Ireland after the Good Friday Agreement', n.d. P.1337.
Etain Tannam, 'Explaining the Good Friday Agreement: A Learning Process', *Government and Opposition* 36, no. 4 (2001): 493–518. P.496.

[109] Bertie Ahern, 'The Good Friday Agreement: An Overview', P.1198.
[110] Philip McDonagh, 'The Good Friday Agreement: 1998', *India International Centre Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2004): 12–22. P.21

[111]Bill McSweeney, 'Identity, Interest and the Good Friday Agreement', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 9 (1998): 93–102. P.96

This radical new approach crystallised the new spirit of Northern Ireland's future, moving away from the violence of the past and toward a peaceful future, revealing the authentic aims of the peace process for all sides, free from political obstacles.

The historical, societal, and political context behind the violence and peace on the island of Ireland reveals the personal significance of inclusive political engagement for the people of Ireland, North and South. Furthermore, this context reveals the investments, sacrifices, and compromises that ordinary citizens have made to honour their identity and work towards a better collective future for their home. Moreover, an analysis of this context highlights the sacred, fundamental identities of all who call the island home, encompassing their beliefs, relationships, and faiths, and demands equal respect from all stakeholders to ensure a prosperous future for this land.[112] This work has enabled a relative peace dividend to be enjoyed by those who wish for a future generation to live and grow without the threat of the bomb or the bullet.

However, the human casualties remain in the hearts and minds of many, fuelling authentic and valid opinions that may differ from person to person, but now motivate the work to ensure the continued success of peace. As a result, this analysis demonstrates that the standards expected by participants are and remain high, facilitating the negotiation of complex issues that profoundly affect many: nationalists, unionists, Protestants, Catholics, the universal, the young, the old, the Irish, and the British.

[112] It is vital to recognise the significance of respective overt and covert religious faiths, that fortifies ideological drives for respective citizens sovereign homeland, even as this has evolved to an increasingly nuanced phenomenon in the post conflict period. Thus, the contribution that this has on fuelling divisive conflict, when this is threatened significantly and repeatedly is a critical one, which is acknowledged here.

Furthermore, the complex, multi-dimensional nature of the issues within the political frameworks for the island of Ireland, including the cooperative bodies that engage all the relevant actors, is based on a fundamental shift from entrenched ideological beliefs towards compromised settlements that still honour those beliefs. Therefore, this transition, explored in this chapter, requires a sensitive yet persistent engagement of the highest standards to ensure progress on these critical issues, where the consequences for the people who call the island home are profoundly significant.

However, despite this shift, this chapter has observed that critical, historically fraught political, social, and cultural issues in the region remain relevant in the contemporary context of the post-conflict region and warrant further investigation. These issues include a persistent perceived relative deprivation, an enduring fragile status in the union for unionists, the attractiveness of paramilitary groups and a continuing disconnect between the institutions of the state and the significant sections of the people.

Finally, these observations catalyse this research study, which is taken forward in Chapters Two and Three with a methodological framework that critically analyses the relevant actor discourse on the real-world shocks initiated in these chapters and other observations of external shocks to the region's peace.

CHAPTER 2 ABSTRACT

Chapter 2 of this thesis, following the contextual literature review chapter, is the first (of two) evidence chapter, which introduces the first two identified stresses, the methodological framework and the selected discourse evidence which will be analysed. This chapter begins with an examination of the instability of power-sharing in Northern Ireland, specifically focusing on periods of absence, the political structures and behavioural challenges to the institutions. Furthermore, this chapter explores the progress of peace by examining continuing sectarianism, the presence of peace walls and the continued operation of paramilitaries. Finally, this chapter generates preliminary findings on this thesis's central argument (the Northern Ireland peace is vulnerable to shocks) by analysing these stresses.

Chapter 2 Evidence Part 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the evidence that has been selected for this study by a focused criterion to fit the parameters of this research. To reiterate, this thesis argues that the peace in Northern Ireland is fragile and susceptible to real-world shocks across multiple political, social, and historical topics. Therefore, to comprehensively test the Northern Ireland peace process, four stresses (each with specific vulnerabilities forming a distinct part of the greater stress factor) based on real-world events have been selected in an appropriate order that best links them to each other and the overall context. This first evidence chapter will focus on the initial two stresses: the instability of power-sharing structures since 1997 and the relative (social, political, and economic) deprivation within the region. This is linked to the lack of progress on the ongoing aims of peace and the enduring legacy of the troubles in a post-conflict society. Finally, this chapter builds on the work of Chapter One, which has outlined the historical, political and social context that has contributed to the data being investigated in this chapter.

CRITERIA FOR EVIDENCE

To act as primary data for this research, this thesis has looked for relevant evidence (to the stresses that have been identified, which are based on real-world events), that is timely, and that fits the balance of academic expertise, relevant political discourse, historical accounts, and broad public engagement on specific issues. When considering the relevance of the data for a particular section of this research, it is understood that no collection can be exhaustive and that submitted evidence can be cross-sectionally relevant, which could be selected for multiple sections. Furthermore, to evolve the arguments, each new piece of evidence that is analysed must introduce a new perspective that can include the argument made, new facts, data, or differences of opinion and ideological position. Additionally, relevant examples of the evidence have been depicted in the form of quotations from the broader data source, which are then presented in the figures of this chapter prior to the critical analysis.[113] This representation of the evidence allows for the greatest accessibility to the raw data (included in the appendix) and the relevant examples that form the basis for the discourse analysis of the relevant material.

[113] The data in the evidence chapters are presented in their text-based linguistic form, using direct quotations. They are also presented in this form as figures throughout each part of the analysis in the chapter. This format follows the composition of earlier established academic research see introduction for references.

The participants for this research include leading academic contributors who provide the breadth of discourse needed to cover the relevant elements of this issue comprehensively yet concisely.[114]

Furthermore, an expanded criterion has been used for supplementary data, which includes older pre-2014 academic research, journalist articles, public lectures, surveys, and commentary. This evidence is also relevant to the real-world stresses being explored, which is timely, and is connected to the arguments that the primary data have explored. The evidence is included in the Preliminary Findings section to provide greater context, support arguments and demonstrate a broader consensus of the perspectives being investigated. Finally, due to some limitations of this set of evidence, they do not act to introduce new perspectives or arguments.

[114] Data consists of the political, (*such as the House of Commons and Lords select committee, intergovernmental political agreements, and contemporary British and Irish political figures*) academic, (*Hayward, O'Leary and* McEvoy) social (*primary accounts from regional residents*) and historical (*Seamus Mallon, Jonathan Powell, Mo Mowlam and John Bruton*). In addition, citizens (Undeclared, Unionist and Nationalist) and NGOs (who specifically provide data from the forefront of this issue) are studied in terms of contextual discourse.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

As previously stated in the introduction, the research strategy for this thesis is based on a form of critical discourse analysis, which is argumentation and perspectivization of political, historical, and social discourse. A copy of the detailed methodological framework is included in Appendix X.[115]

[115] In accordance with Vodak's historical approach research strategy, the questions of the evidence chapters will cover context, logical arguments, and links between discourse and real events. The first question is the Logical Reasoning Question, which asks, *How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?* The second question is the Contextual Topical Question, which asks, *What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?* Finally, the third question is the event-specific question, which asks *how the discourse references (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace.*

STRESS 1: THE INSTABILITY OF POWER-SHARING INSTITUTIONS

Source Title: *A Deliberative Forum on Possible Reforms to Power-Sharing Dr Sean Haughey, University of Liverpool Dr Jamie Pow, Queen's University Belfast.*[116] (Appendix A)

Figure 2.[117]

"Although political violence significantly declined after 1998, devolution since then has been characterised by instability, with extended periods during which the Assembly and Executive have been unable to function. Indeed, the power-sharing Assembly has only served a full term twice without some form of institutional collapse. Following a three-year hiatus in devolved government from 2017 to 2020, an institutional reform package was included in the agreement reached in January 2020 to resurrect the devolved institutions. On 11th January 2020, a five-party Executive took office amid hopes of more stable devolved government."

Figure 2: A Deliberative Forum on Possible Reforms to Power-Sharing Dr Sean Haughey, University of Liverpool Dr Jamie Pow, Queen's University Belfast.

[116] Sean Haughey and Jamie Pow, *A Deliberative Forum on Possible Reforms to Power-Sharing* (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2023).

[117] The data in the evidence chapters are presented in their text-based linguistic form, using direct quotations. They are also presented in this form as figures throughout each part of the analysis in the chapter. This format follows the composition of earlier established academic research (see introduction for references), utilising discourse analysis, which isolates relevant excerpts of discourse before in-depth analysis. This forms the primary data, which is the data that has been directly analysed in this thesis using the chosen methodology framework, either through further direct quotation for longer discourse or through specific italicised words directly within the analysis in a style that has precedent in earlier discourse research. For conscience purposes, these are sometimes grouped (although each figure clearly states the author) either by author, period or topic. Additionally, the raw data is contained in separate appendices, included at the end of this thesis.

Figure 2.1

"The decline in political violence was often cited as the most significant outcome to emerge from the introduction of power-sharing in 1998."

Figure 2.2

"The frequency with which the devolved institutions have collapsed, or have appeared close to collapse, featured prominently in discussions about the weaknesses of the current system. This was framed as both a behavioural and an institutional problem. There was widespread criticism of the perceived willingness of some parties to walk away from the institutions when it suited their political purposes. This type of behaviour was invariably described as immature and short-sighted. However, participants were also critical of the institutional structures which facilitate this type of behaviour. In particular, participants expressed frustration that one political party can collapse or prevent the formation of an Executive. Others explained that the devolved institutions keep collapsing 'because of the way the system was built' and identified the ease with which one party can collapse the Executive as one of the system's biggest disadvantages. Several participants argued that steps should be taken to combat the instability which arises from Executive Office resignations."

Figure 2.3

"Although the deliberative sessions did not result in participants identifying one clear favourite as to a preferred model of government, a majority view did emerge in terms of how substantively the governance structures of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) need to be changed."

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 2.[118]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

This evidence discourse challenges the conventional logical assumption of power-sharing stability in the Northern Ireland assembly. This is done by raising the point that despite successful periods of power-sharing executives (which the evidence notes is highlighted as playing a significant part in reducing violent outbreaks post-1998), such as the present-day executive, do not reflect the larger historical and political context. This is because the evidence within this context linguistically argues that power-sharing is '*fragile, unstable, often short-lived, and institutionally/behaviourally problematic'* due to the unilateral political hijacking of the executive, short-sighted, politically motivated behaviour, and stagnant progress on reform.

[118] Sean Haughey and Jamie Pow, *A Deliberative Forum on Possible Reforms to Power-Sharing* (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2023).

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

Furthermore, this evidence explores the resilience of the existing power-sharing structures in the historical context. It alludes to the fact that if there is an established precedent for the collapse of this peaceful institution, often based on a single perspective, within an institutional structure to support such action, there could very well be a repeated pattern of behaviour in the future. This has been argued in the figure by referencing the frequency of instability complaints that citizens of Northern Ireland have regarding the behaviour of power-sharing and the institutions that support it. This is evidenced by Figure 2.2, reporting on the reasoned *frustrations* and *criticism* of the disadvantageous political system. Considering the earlier point that the establishment of agreed-sharing power structures has contributed to a reduction in violent episodes, this evidence logically reasons that any fragility, weakness, or lack of reformist progress highlights a direct threat to the stability of peace. This is through the connection with the power-sharing systematic institution effects in this peace-making/political context in Northern Ireland.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

The inclusion of the role of the Good Friday agreement and the 2017 and 2020 power-sharing agreements within the discourse demonstrates the impact that collaborative political engagement by the identified actors has had on the power-sharing institution, a crucial element for peace in Northern Ireland.

Therefore, as the evidence advocates for a reform-based perspective for the power-sharing structure to mitigate the vulnerabilities that have already been explored, '*a majority view did emerge in terms of how substantively the governance structures of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) need to be changed'*. The specific real-world cost of inaction for the reform advocated suggests that the inaction of relevant actors, whom the people regularly instruct to act in their interests, poses a significant and specific risk to the peaceful role that power-sharing maintains within Northern Ireland.

Source Title: *The St Andrews Agreement, October 2006 and New Decade New Approach Deal To See Restored Government In Northern Ireland Tomorrow 2020, along with supporting evidence from legislative bills and inquiries.*[119] [120] [121] [122] (Appendix B)

Figure 3.
'The St Andrews Agreement, October 2006'. *"We believe the changes by the agreement will enable all the institutions to operate effectively and stably, with all parties engaging in good faith and in a spirit of genuine partnership."*
Figure 3.1
'Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006', *Northern Ireland*, 2006. *"Standing orders of the Assembly shall provide that a member of the Assembly designated in accordance with the standing orders as a Nationalist, as a Unionist or as Other may change his designation only if(a) (being a member of a political party) he becomes a member of a different political party or he ceases to be a member of any political party."*

Figure 3: The St Andrews Agreement, October 2006 and New Decade New Approach Deal To See Restored Government In Northern Ireland Tomorrow 2020, along with supporting evidence from legislative bills and inquiries

[119] 'The St Andrews Agreement, October 2006', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-st-andrews-agreement-october-2006.

[120] 'Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006', *Northern Ireland*, 2006.

[121] 'New Decade New Approach Deal To See Restored Government In Northern Ireland Tomorrow', 9 January 2020, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deal-to-see-restored-government-in-Northern-ireland-tomorrow.

[122] 'New Decade, New Approach Agreement', *House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee*, 8 July 2020.

Figure 3.1.1

"If either the First Minister or the deputy First Minister ceases to hold office at any time, whether by resignation or otherwise, the other(a) shall also cease to hold office at that time."

"The persons nominated under subsections (4) and (5) shall not take up office until each of them has affirmed the terms of the pledge of office."

Figure 3.2

'New Decade New Approach Deal To See Restored Government In Northern Ireland Tomorrow', 9 January 2020,

"The parties agree that a three-year absence of devolved government cannot happen again, and have therefore agreed a package of measures to deliver more sustainable institutions that are more resilient."

Figure 3.3

'New Decade, New Approach Agreement', *House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee*, 8 July 2020.

"Mr (Julian) Smith highlighted the importance of the Government's dedicating time to fostering devolution in Northern Ireland and co-operation between the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive: It does require a huge amount of time in order to make sure that these relationships are continued and looked after on an almost day-to-day basis... it does take time, and it is always going to be difficult for any Government to put the amount of time that is required in an area as tricky as this when there are other things on, but I would encourage that to happen."

Figure 3.3.1

"The most intricate and well-designed institutions will not function if those who inhabit them are not fully and actively supportive of all of their constitutive elements and functions and of the Agreement that established them."

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 3.[123]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse within this evidence supports the reasoning that despite repeated assurances from different perspectives, between 2006 and 2020 and beyond, that stable and effective power-sharing administration would follow unstable episodes, this evidence reveals a different reality for this part of the region's political process. This means that the evidence in Figure 3 advocates a country's reasoning that contradicts the idealist opinion, which forms the discourse of the mentioned repeated assurances, for the stability of these institutions. This reveals how the examination of this discourse reveals the more sobering reality that stability for this political institution has become the exception rather than the norm.

[123] 'The St Andrews Agreement, October 2006', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-st-andrews-agreement-october-2006.

'Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006', *Northern Ireland*, 2006.

'New Decade New Approach Deal To See Restored Government In Northern Ireland Tomorrow', 9 January 2020, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deal-to-see-restored-government-in-Northern-ireland-tomorrow.

'New Decade, New Approach Agreement', *House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee*, 8 July 2020.

Furthermore, this evidence supports the familiar view that the political institutions of the executive and the assembly reinforce and represent the divisions within Northern Ireland by their institutional design.

This is seen in Figure 3.1, which linguistically argues that a semi-fixed *designation* for representatives is required within the standing orders processes of the institution. This means that, when faced with a breakdown in cooperation, as argued in Figure 3.2 as an *absence of devolved government*, which risks the effectiveness of these peaceful institutions, this inbuilt division can drive a further wedge between potential partners. This ultimately poses a risk to the ultimate success of these institutions and the peace they embody.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

Additionally, this evidence's discourse explains the daily dedicated political effort required to foster the best environment for continued cooperation and, thus, maintain stable power-sharing in Northern Ireland. The fragile nature of such an arrangement is revealed in this testimony from Julian Smith in Figure 3.3, whose specific discourse from the mediation process perspective refers to the importance of *dedicating time* to this *tricky area*. Therefore, the continued management of this institutional risk depends on the relevant stakeholder engagement, mediation between the affected parties' differing ideological perspectives, and good faith cooperation from all sides to mitigate such differences. Given the intense requirements to maintain this arrangement in its current form, this evidence demonstrates a weakness in any of the mentioned elements that could

bring about the collapse of power-sharing in the political reality and context in which this peaceful institution operates.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

Finally, the evidence emphasises several relevant risk factors when considering what this discourse reveals about the specific real-world risks that could strain peace institutions. Firstly, Figure 3.2 discourse argues, *"The parties agree that a three-year absence of devolved government cannot happen again"*. This covertly alludes to fear and concern about this problem's repeated occurrence, given that the legislative safeguards prevent a complete absence of political direction. However, additional evidence from the previous Northern Ireland Secretary of State shows that a subsequent post-2020 breakdown of the Northern Ireland executive lasted two years, from 2022 to 2024.[124] This evidence demonstrates that typical political disagreement can potentially disrupt the cooperative power-sharing executive, which breaks the political process that the political solution in post-conflict Northern Ireland depends on for overall stability. By examination of the dates, there is a historical precedent for this breakdown to occur, as evidenced by Figure 3.2's language stating that the breakdown '*cannot happen again'*. This links to the previous evidence of the former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's referral to the '*day-to-day work to maintain this*

[124] 'Secretary of State: Returning Executive Can Unleash Northern Ireland's Potential', accessed 26 August 2024, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secretary-of-state-returning-executive-can-unleash-Northern-irelands-potential.

cooperation,' despite the real-world risks, threatening historically influenced actor behaviour which destabilises this institution of peace.

This perspective is further supported by Figure 3.1.1, presented in legislative discourse regarding the institution's perspective on the real-world risk that would prompt the personal resignation of either the First or Deputy First Minister.

As the legislation's language makes apparent, should the political context force or cause a resignation of either office holder, their executive opposite would automatically see their official term *cease*. This is despite an amendment in 2020 that would see the remaining office holder act in a caretaker capacity as this is subject to formal restrictions as laid out in the subsequent legislative amendment.[125]

Therefore, per the provisions of Figure 3.1.1 and the amending legislation 2020, the evidence demonstrates that any subsequent restoration of power-sharing requires the agreement of the resigning party to nominate an office holder for a restored power-sharing executive/assembly. For example, exercising a veto over the nomination of a speaker. This can occur regardless of the circumstances for the previous collapse and can be carried out without fear of sanction for such an act. Therefore, this evidence has demonstrated that the founding systemic rules of the institutions have an embedded element of risk, as they allow for, with relative ease, the collapse of the very peaceful institution that they create and maintain.

[125] 'New Decade New Approach Deal To See Restored Government In Northern Ireland Tomorrow', 9 January 2020, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deal-to-see-restored-government-in-Northern-ireland-tomorrow. P.24.

Source Title: *'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 4 December 2023 and 'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 22 February 2024.*[126] [127] (Appendix C)

Figure 4.

'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 4 December 2023

"As the Centre for Cross Border Studies said to us: Such instability not only prevents the proper functioning of the Strand One institutions that leaves people without a local government, and departments and civic society organisations without budgetary certainties; it also prevents the North South Ministerial Council operating and means Northern Ireland has no Executive presence at the British Irish Council."

Figure 4.1

Even periods of relative stability, such as between 2007 and 2017, saw serious crises that threatened the viability and limited the effectiveness of the institutions: in 2008, Sinn Fein refused to attend meetings of the Executive for five months and the DUP operated a system of "rolling resignations" in 2015. Alan Whysall also pointed to stand-offs stemming from disputes over flags in 2012 and welfare provision in 2014.

Figure 4: 'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 4 December 2023 and 'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 22 February 2024.

[126] 'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 4 December 2023, https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6941/the-effectiveness-of-the-institutions-of-the-belfastgood-friday-agreement/.

[127] 'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 22 February 2024, https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6941/the-effectiveness-of-the-institutions-of-the-belfastgood-friday-agreement/.

Figure 4.2

Even when the institutions are in place, they are frequently under threat of collapse. Disputes dominate the political discourse leaving little room for addressing day-to-day policy issues. Often the atmosphere is more one of contest than coalition. There is little resilience in the system to withstand or resolve major disagreements between the two largest parties.

Figure 4.3

The Good Friday Agreement was all about good faith, partnership and everybody stretching themselves and working together [...]. We have lost that attitude of partnership, of trust and of trying to take a constructive and businesslike approach to making the institutions work.

What this has meant is that, once the Northern Ireland institutions are back up and running on the foot of a successor agreement, there is limited pressure on, or scrutiny of, authorities as regards the delivery of commitments made therein.

Figure 4.3.1

Some characterised the issue as effectively giving the largest party in each of the Unionist/Nationalist blocs a veto in key votes—the most obvious recent example being the DUP's decision not to nominate a Speaker following the May 2022 elections, which has prevented the 2022 Assembly mandate from carrying out any business. As Alliance put it to us: "It is fundamentally perverse that a 'cross-community vote' explicitly excludes the cross-community Alliance P a r t y.

Figure 4.4

‘The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament’, 22 February 2024.

Voices from the UK or Irish Governments should not be at the forefront of any calls for reform. As a participant in Strands Two and Three, the Irish Government has a clear interest in any such review process. However, matters relating to the Strand One institutions are, and will remain, a matter for the UK Government along with the NI parties.

It is for the restored Executive to deliver on the parties’ commitment.

Given the recent restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive, a review of the Agreement, or amendment of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 is not being considered at this time.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 4.[128]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse within this evidence advances the logical argument based upon the evidence in the previous figures (Figure 2 supported by Figure 3) that advocates the argument of ideological-behaviour influencing institutional vulnerabilities concerning the power-sharing process in Northern Ireland. This is evidenced by the historical perspective of the previous collapse of power-sharing in Northern Ireland after the Good Friday Agreement. Furthermore, this evidence refers to the conventional understanding that the strength of the executive is vulnerable to the political disagreement that often underpins any power-sharing administrations. This evidence provides specific references to perilous real-world events that support this view, as shown in Figure 4.1, which linguistically argues that power-sharing *viability* and *effectiveness* were undermined by the mentioned events.

[128] 'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 4 December 2023, https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6941/the-effectiveness-of-the-institutions-of-the-belfastgood-friday-agreement/.

'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 22 February 2024, https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6941/the-effectiveness-of-the-institutions-of-the-belfastgood-friday-agreement/.

This evidence introduces fresh perspectives that potentially challenge the conventional understanding in 2 parts. Firstly, in Figure 4, the discourse alludes to the unseen political consequences of the collapse of power-sharing by stating, '*(A collapse) also prevents the North-South Ministerial Council operating and means Northern Ireland has no Executive presence at the British Irish Council'.* This reality makes clear that the foundations of the Good Friday agreement's First Strand significantly depend on a functioning executive in a way that occurs covertly and without explicit political discourse from the involved actors at the critical threatening moment of the political process.

Therefore, this political context reveals that the interlinking nature of the peace agreement means that a failure of one institution leads to the wounding of others, potentially hindering peace progress due to an exposed weakness susceptible to real-world common risk factors. Secondly, the discourse in the UK Government's response to the previous evidence challenges the conventional view that reforming such institutions is a matter of political will from the respective interested governments, as suggested in previously discussed evidence. The government's dismissal of the leading voice for reform of the institutional vulnerabilities indicates that a necessary real-world risk to the stability of the peaceful power-sharing institutions is due to a lack of political will on this issue. This is supported by the evidence of a previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in Figure 3.3, who advocated for an increase in government time and political capital for these discussed issues.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

This evidence contextual discourse reveals that the pressure point that strains the power-sharing institutions' current resilience is the turbulence within the cooperative relationship between the two current largest parties of their respective designation. Figure 4.2 clarifies, *'There is little resilience in the system to withstand or resolve major disagreements between the two largest parties.'* Given that the political context that allows the institutions to operate depends on a productive relationship, there is a risk to the institution's resilience that depends on unpredictable behavioural factors operating within a challenging context. This argument supports the argument made in Figure 3.3. Yet, it expands to suggest that the majority of the resilience depends on this dynamic and thus poses a tremendous political risk from a risk management perspective, as agreed by the members compiling this discussed evidence.

However, Figure 4.3.1 takes this argument further, considering the impact of excluding other parties in this concentration of power and responsibility within the Assembly. As the figure makes clear, the current legislative procedure for the Assembly means a veto exists in crucial votes. Whilst this doesn't threaten the stability of the Northern Ireland executive initially, it could be used so that one side is destined for a role in a forthcoming power-sharing executive. This could prevent the formation by blocking the nomination of a speaker, which would avoid a legislative session from beginning, in return for certain concessions.

There is precedent for this in May 2022, when the ideological objectives of a main political party (The DUP) prevented the nomination of a speaker to prevent a legislative session.[129] Furthermore,

[129] Adrian Guelke, 'The Crisis in and over Northern Ireland | ASEN', 9 May 2022, https://asen.ac.uk/blog/2022/05/09/the-crisis-in-and-over-northern-ireland/.

if a cross-community party achieved electoral success but was held back by such a veto, the institution's legitimacy could be called into question. This is especially true if the cross-community party (such as The Alliance Party, but others could emerge) carried a large democratic mandate from the electorate and is *excluded* from the political process. This is through their barrier to realising the full effects of the power sharing institutions because of this political context, which contrasts with the ideologically inclusive intent (rather than implanted practice) of the Good Friday Agreement. Therefore, this discourse highlights a speculative risk to the institution of power-sharing that excluding or debilitating cross-community parties by existing protocols has the potential to undermine the institution's legitimacy, which Figure 2.2 argues would expose the fragility of the current arrangement.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

Finally, the discourse within this evidence makes no further reference to specific real-world risks other than what has been discussed, such as '(*periods of relative stability, such as between 2007 and 2017, saw serious crises that threatened the viability and limited the effectiveness of the institutions*)'. Thus, making clear that the current model lacks the strength of dependable political cooperation, institutional resilience as a safe foundation, or outward support to realistically withstand threats on an ongoing basis within a dynamic political context.

STRESS 1: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The evidence presented in this section acknowledges the power-sharing institutions' significant role in enacting the peace process's objectives. However, it argues that the institutional fundamentals and behavioural consequences are not resilient enough to withstand predictable and unforeseen pressure, as recognised when examining the historical causes of political breakdowns within the broader academic literature.[130] Furthermore, there is an agreement that labelling these institutions as fragile is appropriate and based on the historical resilience of power-sharing, the weak foundations of the power-sharing structure and the forecasting of potential future challenges that the current institutions cannot withstand.

This evidence, which is based on parliamentary enquiries, government responses, academic papers and citizen groups, is targeted at specific reformable elements rather than the overall principles of the universally praised, peaceful institution of power-sharing in Northern Ireland. This is important because it frames the argument from this body of evidence through the perspective of maintenance, management and incremental improvement rather than radical revision. Ultimately this is useful when considering the effective quality of evidence and the practical realities of the political context that this peaceful institution finds itself operating within. Thus, facilitating more accessible findings.

[130] Derek Birrell and Deirdre Heenan, 'The Continuing Volatility of Devolution in Northern Ireland: The Shadow of Direct Rule', *The Political Quarterly* 88, no. 3 (July 2017): 473–79, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12391. P.476.

Consequently, the significance of this finding lies in its potential to unify the collated evaluation under a single perspective and that crystallises the historical breadth of debate to a single judgment. This judgement permits a credible debate over reforming the power sharing institutions, to strengthen a significant vulnerability in the present-day peace in Northern Ireland.

The key question from this evidence is, do the institutions that the examined evidence discusses have sufficient resilience to withstand severe political shocks and continue operating successfully?

The answer from an analysis of this evidence is that the power-sharing institutions within Northern Ireland do not have sufficient resilience when faced with these shocks. Furthermore, the institutions are vulnerable to a wide range of shocks. These stem from unexpected significant challenges to predictable political disagreements, either over policy direction, which requires cooperation or political behaviour which can be independent or linked to the overall policies that are being considered by the assembly and the executive in Northern Ireland. This lack of resilience means that devolution within Northern Ireland is constantly threatened by collapse. The evidence has revealed a significant number of historical precedents to support this argument, and the power-sharing institutions have only completed a full term twice. However, even during these stable periods, the institutions were under consistent threat, which had to be managed. This historical instability is an often-cited example of weakness within power sharing, which, combined with the lack of implementation of reforms within restorative agreements throughout the period (Appendix C), creates a complex yet comprehensive argument as to the resilience of power sharing.

Furthermore, this evidence argues that behavioural and institutional challenges categorise the vulnerabilities within the power-sharing institutions. Both are important; however, upon analysing the entire breadth of evidence, it can be argued that logically, the institutional setup (and the vulnerabilities involved in this) allows disruptive (ideologically motivated) behaviour to occur, resulting in greater commonplace political dysfunction.[131]

Furthermore, most of the forward-thinking proposals for reform focus on addressing institutional vulnerabilities rather than political behaviour, even though this is mentioned as significantly important. It can be argued that following a reform of the institutions, political behaviour will adjust to two or more cooperative partnership-based administrations built upon the spirit of the Good Friday Belfast Agreement. However, this is speculative and a long way off, given the challenges to reform mentioned within the evidence.

The first set of evidence within Figure 2 introduces the universal view that power-sharing has had a significant role in sustaining peace in Northern Ireland (with broad voter support confirmed with post-election polling), even though that role does not reflect the contemporary context.[132] However, it also clarifies that there is a desire for reform, yet there is no consensus on how this should occur. There is a real-world cost of inaction over this matter, which is supported by public commentary on the effectiveness of Northern Ireland politicians. For example, teenager interviewee Louis states, "*You're voted in to represent your constituents and to represent your*

[131] Colin Coulter et al., *Northern Ireland a Generation after Good Friday: Lost Futures and New Horizons in the 'Long Peace'*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526139276. P19-20.

[132] John Garry, Brendan O'Leary, and Jamie Pow, *What Messages Were Voters Sending in the 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly Election? Exploring Attitudes to Power-Sharing, the Protocol, and a Potential Referendum on Irish Unification or Maintaining the Union*, 2023. P.41.

country – do the job. You're there to solve problems, not create them".[133] It should also be noted that there is little transparency in communication over what efforts are underway to reform the institutions, despite the view that such reform needs to occur, which this evidence could not refer to, given its limited scope.

The second set of evidence within Figure 3 argues that the repeated efforts to reform power-sharing over the years and restore a stable executive have not been practically effective, and historical agreements are cited as examples. It also argues that one of the current system's problems is the enforcement of divisions by requiring a sectarian designation, a penalty for *'others',* and the uncooperative culture this creates.[134] This system, which, although problematic as the evidence argues, exists to ensure a minimum safeguarding of cooperation between each side.[135] However, the arguments outlined within this figure dispute its success. Furthermore, it reveals the political effort required to mitigate these problems. It thus offers the beginnings of a solution-based approach built on stakeholder engagement, mediation between the affected parties and good faith cooperation of all sides.

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[133] 'The Teenage Take on the Return of Stormont Power Sharing', *BBC News*, 5 February 2024, sec. Northern Ireland, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-Northern-ireland-68202610.

[134] *Dr. James Waller Presents A Troubled Sleep: Risk and Resilience in Contemporary Northern Ireland*, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kMQaseL1RU.

Coulter, Colin, and Peter Shirlow. 'Northern Ireland 25 Years after the Good Friday Agreement: An Introduction to the Special Issue'. *Space and Polity* 27, no. 1 (2 January 2023): 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562576.2023.2248009. P.08

[135] 'Good Friday Agreement: Does the Peace Deal Still Work?', *BBC News*, 10 April 2023, sec. Northern Ireland, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-Northern-ireland-65184914.

Christopher McCrudden et al., 'Why Northern Ireland's Institutions Need Stability', *Government and Opposition* 51, no. 1 (January 2016): 30–58, https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2014.28. P.05.

Yet, it also cautions this by stating that there are limits to how this would work in practice. There is a limited appetite to stretch these limits beyond what has already been attempted, as supported by future evidence in Figure 4.3.

The final set of evidence within Figure 4 discusses the significant consequences that a breakdown of power-sharing has on the peace-building institutions of the Good Friday Agreement, such as the North/South Council and the British Irish Council. This is supported by the relevant example of the British Irish Council being suspended due to the breakdown of power-sharing in 2017.[136] Furthermore, it argues that responsibility within the system is often concentrated between the two largest designation parties through veto, appointments, and legislative standings. This imbalance creates a vulnerability that cannot withstand a breakdown of cooperation between the two parties, alienates other parties within the executive, does not foster productive cooperation, and reinforces previously discussed divisions.

This section has taken evidence from various sources, including political parties, ministers, citizens' groups, and academics. Such a comprehensive breadth of opinion has been considered. Yet, it arrives at a single conclusion that the power-sharing institutions currently in place are not immune to shocks that have wide-reaching consequences, even if they do not immediately cause a return to historical instability. Simply because the actions of the past are not repeated on the same scale does not mean that a stable political institution is working consistently for the people who elect them. However, as everyone who contributed to the evidence of this section makes clear, this is not happening. There is now an expected instability concerning power-sharing institutions in Northern Ireland.

[136] Kristin Archick, 'Northern Ireland: Current Issues and Ongoing Challenges in the Peace Process', *Northern Ireland*, 2019. P.10

This instability has consequences on the political level, it creates a democratic deficit that skews power to (community-designated) actors who wish to exploit the institutions for political gains. It erodes the cooperation, inclusion and partnership established in the founding agreements and creates a new reality that erodes trust between voters and leaders. Such an erosion can have devastating consequences when stretched out over many years and lead to people believing in a disconnect between themselves, their community, and their representatives.[137]

In Northern Ireland, that reality can bring into question the effectiveness, purpose and power of the political solution, but while it might not immediately return to violent alternatives, it can, under the correct pressure, significantly undermine the overall peace. Therefore, from the evidence, there exists a well-developed argument that within the contemporary peace in Northern Ireland, there exists a foundational instability coupled with a political fragility.

This fragility undermines the spirit of the peace and the people's expectations. It challenges the overall interpretation that the Northern Ireland peace is stable and secure in the face of existing and future shocks. The extent of this reality is comprehensively explored, and it makes clear that these problems exist historically and today and are, whilst complex, fixable through a reform-based political agenda.

Finally, there is the question of whether the arguments, data and analysis of this first stress, the instability of power-sharing, support the central argument of this thesis?

This thesis argues that the peace in Northern Ireland is fragile and susceptible to real-world shocks across multiple political, social, and historical topics.

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[137] Timothy J. White, 'The Challenges of Powersharing in Implementing the Good Friday Agreement: Twenty-Five Years of Intermittent Shared Governance', *Treatises and Documents, Journal of Ethnic Studies / Razprave in Gradivo, Revija Za Narodnostna Vprašanja* 90, no. 90 (1 June 2023): 15–29, https://doi.org/10.2478/tdjes-2023-0002. P.19.

Regarding this specific area, the argument is valid, and the peace that depends on the functioning and resilience of these institutions is vulnerable to the weak foundations of the institutions and the political behaviour they permit.

Thus, producing these consequences of a concerned electorate, unassured that the weaknesses and implications of the past won't happen again. Furthermore, under certain circumstances, such as a non-aligned designation party obtaining electoral success, a democratic deficit can occur.[138] This erodes trust between voters and leaders, through a reduction of political inclusion undermining the functional competence and the faith bestowed by the people in these institutions and the people who run them, which, as history shows, was a key problem in the troubled past.[139] As a result of these findings, a weakness exists in the peaceful institutions that form a part of the overall peace in Northern Ireland, undermining the resilience of the overall peace.

[138] Mary C. Murphy, 'The Rise of the Middle Ground in Northern Ireland: What Does It Mean?', *The Political Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2023): 95–103, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13175. P.99.

[139] Joanne McEvoy and Jennifer Todd, 'Constitutional Inclusion in Divided Societies: Conceptual Choices, Practical Dilemmas and the Contribution of the Grassroots in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland', *Cooperation and Conflict* 58, no. 3 (September 2023): 393–413, https://doi.org/10.1177/00108367221147790. P. 408.

STRESS 2: THE RELATIVE (SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC) DEPRIVATION WITHIN THE REGION, LINKED TO THE LACK OF PROGRESS ON THE ONGOING AIMS OF PEACE AND THE ENDURING LEGACY OF THE TROUBLES IN A POST-CONFLICT SOCIETY.

PART 1: THE LACK OF PROGRESS ON THE ONGOING AIMS OF PEACE.

Source Title:

Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Oral evidence: Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol, HC 157Wednesday 19 May 2021[140]

Witnesses: David Campbell CBE, Chairman, Loyalist Communities Council; Joel Keys, Member, Loyalist Communities Council; Councillor Russell Watton, Member, Loyalist Communities Council; Jim Wilson, Member, Loyalist Communities Council. (Appendix D)

Figure 5.[141]

Chair: Let us turn to something that was not edited. Let me ask Mr Keys. This was in a post of 12 April: "To say violence is never the answer is massively naïve. Sometimes violence is the only tool you have left". You go on to say, "While I don't believe we are at a point that necessitates violence"—"at a point", that is my emphasis—"just yet, our leaders need to step up and take the reins before it's too late". Mr Keys, in hindsight, was that a helpful thing to post on 12 April? Joel Keys: I would stand by the comments. There are certain circumstances where violence is the only tool you have left.

Figure 5: Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Oral evidence: Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol, HC 157Wednesday 19 May 2021

[140] 'Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Oral Evidence: Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol, HC 157', 19 May 2021, https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2216/html.

[141] The data in the evidence chapters are presented in their text-based linguistic form, using direct quotations. They are also presented in this form as figures throughout each part of the analysis in the chapter. This format follows the composition of earlier established academic research (see introduction for references), utilising discourse analysis, which isolates relevant excerpts of discourse before in-depth analysis. This forms the primary data, which is the data that has been directly analysed in this thesis using the chosen methodology framework, either through further direct quotation for longer discourse or through specific italicised words directly within the analysis in a style that has precedent in earlier discourse research. For conscience purposes, these are sometimes grouped (although each figure clearly states the author) either by author, period or topic. Additionally, the raw data is contained in separate appendices, included at the end of this thesis.

Figure 5.1

Joel Keys: Yes, but in reference to my post I was referring to situations where you may have a Government or a state that is genuinely oppressing its citizens. In that circumstance, of course violence is the answer. The minute that you rule violence out completely, you are admitting that you are not willing to back up anything you believe in with anything really important. It was the same reason that Labour got into a load of trouble a while ago by ruling out the use of nukes. You have to have that willingness to back up what you say, back up what you believe in and fight for what you believe in.

Figure 5.2

Our whole remit is about encouraging dialogue and co-operation, rather than confrontation. Joel Keys has put it extremely well. I was his age when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. I was arrested for protesting against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It came to nothing for me, and I was able, through my family, to go into the Ulster Unionist Party and spend the past 30 years in active politics. I hope he takes that same route. The problem is that there is a whole generation that does not have the facility to go into politics. That is the challenge for all our leaders, right across the community, to offer a political solution. Politics has to be seen to work.

Figure 5.3

Joel Keys: However Young people see on the ground that there is an injustice. There is a sort of imbalance in how nationalists and Unionists are treated. The violent outbursts we have seen across the country are a reflection of that. It is a way for these young people to vent their anger and frustrations. While I disagree with the methods of doing so, I understand their frustrations.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 5.[142]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse within this evidence challenges the conventional calculation of peace in Northern Ireland that time is an absolute strategy for stabilising peace. Instead, the discourse clarifies that time does not necessarily remove the inherited precedent of violence during peace. This is argued (from a single source who has an established reputation for this perspective, yet is considered a reliable indicator of wider opinion based on the conditions of an appearance at a parliamentary select committee) through their discourse, that violence is not the solution *just yet*. Therefore, this evidence argues that such a possibility cannot be ruled out, and its appetite within the broader sense has not diminished with time. Instead, a viable and successful alternative to the entrenched historic ideological perspective has to be offered and sustained, which is suggested in the subsequent figure by reasoning that a wider intention exists to '*encourage dialogue and co-operation, rather than confrontation*.' Furthermore, this evidence also reinforces the conventional understanding that the lack of political leadership in Northern Ireland (legitimate or not) has a significant consequence to the extent that it undermines the credibility of the political alternative during high-pressure moments.

[142] 'Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Oral Evidence: Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol, HC 157', 19 May 2021, https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2216/html

This is argued in Figure 5.2, which makes the logical conclusion that for such an institution to be effective (power sharing), the political solution processes must *be seen to work*.

Furthermore, Figure 5.3 restates an established position: that the primary motivation behind the attitudes of the people of Northern Ireland is as much an emotional issue as any other. This has been linguistically argued through the logical discourse that ' violence is a way for young people to vent their anger and frustrations' and as such, this language reveals a reality that can override practical constraints, political logic or the caution of allies. The discourse reasons this point by arguing 'while I disagree with the methods, I understand. Therefore, this evidence advocates that this strength of feeling is still felt today, is valid, and needs to be understood.

Finally, this evidence challenges the view that the political solution is open to everyone within Northern Ireland by arguing that '*There exists the challenge for all our leaders, right across the community, to offer a political solution'*. This derives from a lack of effective representation, generational divide, sectarian policy making, and inequality and deprivation. This means that there exists a lack of political inclusivity (as evidenced by a mean average of 63% turnout in assembly elections since 2003) in Northern Ireland that requires reform of the involved processes, coupled with an inclusive 'offer' to engage relevant social groups to resolve this. Furthermore, as Figure 5.2 makes clear, politics must be seen to work, something that low turnout and political instability challenge. This links to the example in Figure 5.3, which argues that a section of young people is disenfranchised by the political solution and whose legitimate frustrations mean that they see no alternative other than to engage in violent means to express these concerns.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The contextual discourse within this evidence reveals that the Northern Ireland peace process has been forced to test its resilience in the face of outbreaks of violence based on strong convictions. Whilst this is commendable, this evidence argues in Figure 5 that this is not sustainable, with the prospect of it growing seen as a direct result of political inaction and an absence of leadership. This is evident when the discourse argues that '*our leaders need to step up and take the reins before it's too late*'. However, Figure 5.2 offers a solution to the instability by stating that the political solution must be provided on a cross-community basis and in an inclusive manner to engage citizens with the political processes that intend to stabilise peace. This makes clear that the fragile peace within Northern Ireland can endure political progress as demanded by aggrieved citizens across communities, from different perspectives. This is to address the issues that threaten peace in the context of a broad, wide-reaching legislative agenda that intervenes in cross-category issues, which the principles of such action have been argued in Figure 5.3.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

Finally, the evidence from Figure 5 highlights that the real-world risks of the past are not immune to repetition in a present/future Northern Ireland. Given that Figure 5.3 specifically references a perceived injustice between communities that strongly parallels the early context of the Troubles (as discussed in Chapter 2), this discourse warns that similar consequences are not beyond the limits of possibility.

This reality, whilst being an individual's opinion, from a singular ideological perspective, has been made to a select committee of the United Kingdom's parliament and is thus a matter of record that must be given its proper consideration by the relevant stakeholders as Figure 5.2 states, *'Joel Keys (The aforementioned individual) has put it extremely well'*. If this opinion were widely replicated, it would pose a significant real-world risk factor to peace. This evidence reinforces the argument that the political solution and, by extension, the peace must be seen to work for the cross-community majority. This therefore reveals an underlying foundational risk that could covertly threaten peace to the extent that Northern Ireland's virtues of peace could be eroded from a disenfranchised section of society. This is a final critical point, as the founding principles of the agreements were based on equality and consent for and by the people. Therefore, this discourse has provided a sample of a reality that could be under threat, which fundamentally undermines the stability of Northern Ireland's peace, which through this analysis becomes a potential variable, that constitutes part of the specific factors which effect the stability of the peace, which is fully explored, in a results framework in Chapter 3, Figure 20.

Source Title:

Robin Wilson, 'Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report' 4 (2016).[143] (Appendix E)

Ann Marie Gray et al., Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report (Community Relations Council, 2018).[144]

John Topping et al., *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report Number Six* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, 2024).[145]

(Thematically arranged for clearer exposition of evolving incremental data.)

Figure 6.

"'Mixed housing' was a commitment in the Good Friday agreement, along with integrated education. Implementation has only been partial, however. This section of the agreement was inserted at the behest of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, a short-lived party which secured two seats in the first assembly election after the agreement. But its politics of 'civic principles' clashed with Northern Ireland's 'traditional discourses of nationalism and realism, as well as the passive, supplementary political roles they ascribe to women' (Murtagh, 2008). The TBUC strategy thus only supports projects for shared housing and shared neighbourhoods rather than aiming to normalise how people live together across Northern Ireland as a whole, so that segregation becomes a thing of the past. To do more would require dismantling the apparatus of murals, flags, kerbstone-painting and paramilitary memorials, defacing public property, which embed those competing 'traditional discourses'."

Figure 6: Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report 4,5,6

[143] Robin Wilson, 'Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report' 4 (2016).

[144] Ann Marie Gray et al., *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report* (Community Relations Council, 2018).

[145] John Topping et al., *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report Number Six* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, 2024).

Figure 6.1

"As the last monitoring report pointed out in contextualising the flags controversy, Northern Ireland's politico-military conflict has morphed into a politico-cultural one, a series of 'culture wars', since the 1990s ceasefires. This explains the paradox of why arguments over parades and flags have proved more, rather than less, intense in an environment where violence has become much less so."

Figure 6.2

"Still only 7 per cent of pupils in Northern Ireland attend integrated schools, of which there were 63 in the 2015-16 school year. There has been a slowing of the pace of integration, as data from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education show."

"The difficulty is that there is an inherent limit to how many integrated schools can be added to the existing, segregated system, already highly fragmented not only by denomination but also by the grammar/non-grammar divide—not forgetting the small Irish-medium sector."

"In that context, as indicated in the last monitoring report, since the restoration of devolution in 2007, the scale of ambition has been reduced to collaboration among existing schools, with their separate governance structures, across the divide."

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 6.[146]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse within this evidence reasons that despite a commendable reduction in violence, within Northern Ireland, relative peace does not translate into the eradication of sectarian segregation nor reconciliation between communities. Figure 6 cites the example of integrated housing and schools (both aims of The Good Friday Agreement) as evidence to support the argument that segregation is embedded within a culture in Northern Ireland. The discourse logically argues this point through the practical examples described as *a series of 'culture wars'* that find their expression in *murals, flags, paramilitary memorials*, and the targeting of the property of opposing communities, traditional expression by unengaged citizens. This occurs because of their lack of progress on their goals and aspirations, thus reducing participation in the political processes, which has been seen in some cases to date back to the signing of the Good Friday agreement.[147]

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[146] Robin Wilson, 'Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report' 4 (2016).

Ann Marie Gray et al., *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report* (Community Relations Council, 2018).

John Topping et al., *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report Number Six* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, 2024).

[147] *Further 14 Officers Injured in Belfast and Coleraine Disorder | ITV News*, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCUPwhCi8iU.

This reasoning is supported by Figure 6.1, which builds on the previous challenging argument by arguing that a culture war has replaced a political-military conflict. This war finds its tension embedded in the political solution within Northern Ireland, and expressed through '*arguments over parades and flags which have proved more, rather than less, intense'*.[148] This means that the discourse within Figure 6 and supportive related figures exposes a unique perspective on the stability of the peace in Northern Ireland, by alluding to the existence of a form of 'cold war' reinforced by the institutions that provide the foundations of the political solution in Northern Ireland. This has been examined in the Preliminary Findings of stress one and is fought within the politico-cultural space, and experienced in the daily lives of the people of Northern Ireland, through segregated housing, and the lack of integrated spaces (Appendix E) in well-developed areas such as cities.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

This reality is experienced and embedded in some younger people through the setup of schooling, as argued in Figure 6.2. This 'Cold War' has not been resolved during the peace years, as this poses a risk that sectarianism is reinforced, proliferated in influential areas of society, which results in decreased reconciliatory integration. An example that encapsulates this tension founded within segregation and its risk is found in Figure 6.1, which linguistically argues that 'T*here has been a slowing of the pace of integration.'*

[148] 'Ardoyne: Agreement over North Belfast Orange Parade Breaks Down', *BBC News*, 19 June 2024, sec. Northern Ireland, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp66xg9n137o.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

This tension, which exists within the present context within Northern Ireland, highlights the real-world danger that undermines these unresolved issues, the strength of conviction those involved have and the threat to the peace, which undermines the current resilience of the Northern Ireland peace.

Source Title:

John Dixon et al., "When the Walls Come Tumbling down": The Role of Intergroup Proximity, Threat, and Contact in Shaping Attitudes towards the Removal of Northern Ireland's Peace Walls', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 59, no. 4 (2020) and Katy Hayward and Cathal McManus, 'Northern Ireland: Society and Culture', in *The Routledge Handbook of British Politics and Society*, ed. Mark Garnett (Routledge, 2021).[149] [150]

(Appendix F)

Figure 7.

John Dixon et al., "When the Walls Come Tumbling down": The Role of Intergroup Proximity, Threat, and Contact in Shaping Attitudes towards the Removal of Northern Ireland's Peace Walls, *British Journal of Social Psychology* 59, no. 4 (2020)

"In the years following the 1998 Good Friday agreement, which officially brought the era of political violence to an end, peace walls continued to proliferate, with some walls being increased in height and length. A review conducted in 2017 identified 97 structures in Belfast, comprising varying forms of physical barriers."

Figure 7: John Dixon et al., '"When the Walls Come Tumbling down, Katy Hayward and Cathal McManus, 'Northern Ireland: Society and Culture'.

[149] John Dixon et al., '"When the Walls Come Tumbling down": The Role of Intergroup Proximity, Threat, and Contact in Shaping Attitudes towards the Removal of Northern Ireland's Peace Walls', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 59, no. 4 (2020): 922–44, https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12370.

[150] Katy Hayward and Cathal McManus, 'Northern Ireland: Society and Culture', in *The Routledge Handbook of British Politics and Society*, ed. Mark Garnett (Routledge, 2021), https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Handbook-of-British-Politics-and-Society/Garnett/p/book/9780367494810.

Figure 7.1

"In a society seeking to encourage positive relations between historically estranged communities, they act as a deterrent, restricting the forms of cross-community contact that research has repeatedly shown to reduce intergroup prejudice in Northern Ireland and elsewhere (e.g. Hewstone et al., 2006; McKeown & Taylor, 2017; Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns & Voci, 2004). Indeed, around four in ten residents have never interacted with neighbours living on the other side of a peace wall."

"So far, a small number of peace walls have already been successfully removed, including six structures located in north Belfast (Belfast Interface Project, 2017a, p.12), but such progress has been impeded by varying definitional, logistic and political factors (e.g. see Blomquist, 2016; Gormley-Heeney, Morrow & Bryne, 2015). For example, the collapse of the devolved Northern Irish power-sharing Executive and Assembly in January 2017 has made the 2023 deadline for removing the walls increasingly unrealistic."

Figure 7.2

Katy Hayward and Cathal McManus, 'Northern Ireland: Society and Culture', in *The Routledge Handbook of British Politics and Society*, ed. Mark Garnett (Routledge, 2021).

"It is further evident in the continued existence of approximately one hundred "peace walls" in various urban centres such as Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Lurgan and Portadown (Gray, et al., 2018, p. 129) and which exist to separate nationalist areas from unionist areas. This draws attention to the fact that parts of Northern Ireland continue to be characterised by segregation and particular geographic areas to be associated with one community or the other."

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 7.[151]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse within Figure 7 builds on the arguments of Figure 6, which challenge the view that peace has led to reconciliation between opposing communities following a protracted conflict and, by extension, poses no risk to Northern Ireland's peace. Figure 7 expands this argument by asserting that peace walls have *increased in number, height, and length* since the Good Friday Agreement, as evidenced in 2017, when 97 structures existed in Belfast alone, thus underpinning this data argument that Peace Walls have *continued to proliferate*.

Although counter to the name, 'peace walls' in Figure 7.1 make clear that these structures prevent good relations between communities and restrict cross-community contact, with 40% of polled residents being recorded by Figure 7.1 as having *'no contact'* across the walls. This signifies an impact on citizen attitudes because of the structures, as well as holding back progress of integrated elements of society, healing from conflict and which is invested in a shared future.

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[151] John Dixon et al., '"When the Walls Come Tumbling down": The Role of Intergroup Proximity, Threat, and Contact in Shaping Attitudes towards the Removal of Northern Ireland's Peace Walls', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 59, no. 4 (2020): 922–44, https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12370.

Katy Hayward and Cathal McManus, 'Northern Ireland: Society and Culture', in *The Routledge Handbook of British Politics and Society*, ed. Mark Garnett (Routledge, 2021), https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Handbook-of-British-Politics-and-Society/Garnett/p/book/9780367494810.

The logic behind this argument on the effects of peace walls is specifically described in the discourse as a '*deterrent, restricting the forms of cross-community contact'.* Furthermore, the impact of such structures on the relative peace in the region is further nuanced by the visual significance of those who live but visit such sites. Thus, it serves as a reminder of a negative element of peace in the post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Therefore, this threatens the resilience of the peace, which had initially stated ambitions for this reconciled future (supported by the office of the First and Deputy First Minister), as explored in Figure 6. Furthermore, the geography of this segregation, afflicting the most populated areas such as Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Lurgan and Portadown, results in a high percentage of the population living in close proximity to this daily reality, as described within the discourse of this evidence as *various urban centres* enduring this truth. This reveals a cumulative restriction which affects attitudes and proves that the foundation of stability for peace within Northern Ireland remains elusive without progress on this issue.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

Given that the argument made within this discourse describes explicitly the daily life reality for people in Northern Ireland affected by peace walls, all the analysis for this matter is context-oriented. As such, a specific reference to the context of this problem is not overtly mentioned.

However, this discourse describes a summary of the argument in Figure 7.2, which highlights the broader regional context for this problem when it discusses the view that *'This (problem) draws attention to the fact that parts of Northern Ireland continue to be characterised by segregation and particular geographic areas to be associated with one community or the other*'. Therefore, the historically tense consequences of these structures orient the modern-day problem, which segregates, reinforces division and restricts integrational stability.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

Finally, based on the evidence presented in Figure 7, the effects of social attitude are that the lack of progress on the integration of communities and the reinforcement of anonymous views continue through the prominence of these structures. Thus, presenting a real-world stability risk when considering the political context within Northern Ireland. Furthermore, evidence from Figure 7 shows that the attitudes and social implications of peace walls in highly populated areas within Northern Ireland mean that progress on integration and healing from conflict can stall in this area. When there is a lack of progress and a continuation of historical views, a vulnerability exists that, under the right stress, can be exploited to work against the efforts made in the name of peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

By maintaining this sectarian segregation, there exists an absence of understanding and tolerance within the social fabric of peace, which is a necessary component when pressure points occur. This is argued within the discourse, which states, '*they act as a deterrent, restricting the forms of cross-community contact that research has repeatedly shown to reduce intergroup prejudice in Northern Ireland'.* As there has been a universal lack of progress, as evidenced by a 2018 update on the problem, which argues (Figure 7.2), peace walls are *in continued existence.* This is fuelled by political instability that has reinforced the covert need for this divide; thus, progress on this crucial element of peace has not been completed. Consequently, the discourse within this evidence argues that the targets for progress on this issue are increasing, but are *unrealistic*. This real-world reality maintains one overt enduring legacy of the conflict within the present-day peace in Northern Ireland, which must bear the strain of the effects of this problem that risks the success of peace. This demonstrates an exploitable vulnerability under the right circumstances.

STRESS 2 PART 1: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The evidence in this section has argued that there exists an attitude that the necessity for violence results from disagreement (in the absence of a functional political solution), and tension still exists under the right circumstances. Furthermore, it is argued that this tension (built on historical perspectives, a lack of progress on the spirit of peace, and a perceived injustice between communities) is physically demonstrated and reinforced through the failure of meaningful progress to remove peace walls. This is especially apt in densely populated areas, to integrate into social attitudes and the lives of those living in the society of Northern Ireland. This is because a view, as advocated in Figure 5, exists that their political solution is not universally accessible through opportunity for engagement, progress in resolving outstanding issues, a lack of peace dividends, or hope for success within the political framework. This is supported by Katy Hayward's interview (Appendix G), where she argues that the alternative becomes plausible without the political objectives being achieved, trust in the political solution, or the prospect of some form of reconciliation.[152]

Despite coming from different perspectives of both the abstract nature of individual attitudes and the physical realities that impact daily lives, the evidence in this section finds a consensus that argues for an understanding. There is a tangible, observable disconnect between the intentions of peace and the day-to-day realities in the minds and actions of people in Northern Ireland.

[152] Ivan Vejvoda, 'Northern Ireland's Uncertain Peace with Katy Hayward | IWM WEBSITE', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.iwm.at/europes-futures/publication/Northern-irelands-uncertain-peace-with-katy-hayward.

Crucially, this can shift attitudes and actions away from the political/peace context into alternative, potentially unstable ones.[153]

The key question for the evidence within this section is how the progress of the work to deal with the aims of peace translates to the current day-to-day lives of people in Northern Ireland.

The evidence clarifies that the same fears, divisions, and strength of feelings that have existed historically in Northern Ireland are still a (modified) part of the day-to-day reality.[154] Furthermore, this evidence argues that the removal of the majority of violence and the simple passage of time (whilst vital) in Northern Ireland society does not mean that there isn't cultural conflict (partly maintained by segregation of housing and education and the failure of integration) occurring, which embodies the tense frustrations. Based on cultural, social, and historical factors, such tensions have the potential to ignite into a violent physical demonstration because of the lack of confidence in leadership to resolve these problems. This is supported by journalistic fieldwork, which asks one resident whether they would be comfortable going to the other side of the city wearing a catholic school uniform, and was told it was not a safe possibility.[155]

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[153] Kristin Archick, 'Northern Ireland: Current Issues and Ongoing Challenges in the Peace Process', Northern Ireland, 2019. P.13.

[154] Jarman, Neil, and John Bell. 'ROUTINE DIVISIONS SEGREGATION AND DAILY LIFE IN NORTHERN IRELAND', n.d. P.09.

[155] 'Cages around Houses: Life at Belfast's Peace Wall - BBC News NI', accessed 5 September 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcD4mG7YO_8.

Stephen Roulston et al., 'If You Are Not One of Them You Feel out of Place: Understanding Divisions in a Northern Irish Town', *Children's Geographies* 15, no. 4 (4 July 2017): 452–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2016.1271943. P.454.

Something that contrasts with the Belfast/Friday Agreement and demonstrates that much more progress still needs to be made to implement the aims of the peace.[156]

The analysis of the evidence in this section reveals that there still exists an understated complexity to the political/social context that maintains peace in present-day Northern Ireland. Initially, this complexity begins with the understanding that for some people, the political solution is not accessible to everyone, re-legitimising historical attitudes to solving problems within Northern Ireland society. This weakness of the peace can be exploited to significant effect by motivated minority actors who are frustrated with the resources available to solve the problems they endure in their day-to-day lives. This means that the success of this phenomenon erodes confidence in the political leadership in Northern Ireland, which further undermines the legitimacy of the negotiated peace and can result in these exposures coming to the surface during delicate times. Therefore, political action to address this matter could help strengthen the reputation of the political solution that would underwrite a policy of greater stability for the overall peace in Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, the existence of a cold war of culture suggests that the failure of the aims of peace to introduce an integrated society within Northern Ireland has had a genuine consequence that is being felt in the daily lives of citizens across the region.[157] The lack of integration of schools means that this divide passes to the next generation; it is also reinforced with segregation of housing (at minimum 1/3 of housing, calculated by public housing occupancy being 90% segregated, then calculated as a percentage of total housing) in densely populated areas.

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[156] 'The Belfast Agreement', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-belfast-agreement. P.16.

[157] Amanda Hall, 'Incomplete Peace and Social Stagnation: Shortcomings of the Good Friday Agreement', *Open Library of Humanities* 4, no. 2 (10 August 2018), https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.251. P.13.

Thus, reinforcing attitudes of division and mistrust, which are being fought out in this politico/cultural Cold War.[158] This point is further reinforced by a 2023 study that found only 30% of respondents perceived their area of residence as mixed, thus suggesting that attitudes and structures contribute to the lack of truly integrated communities.[159] As long as this status quo continues, it is evident that there is a risk to peace and stability in the region that cannot move forward with the aims of peace in this specific area. Supported by a political arrangement that mandates official designations of leaders into particular communities, the evidence is clear that ¼ of a century past the signing of the initial peace agreement, Northern Ireland remains a (normalised) divided society where programs for reconciliation despite significant investment have failed to bring about the promised widespread societal change. This fundamentally weakens the stability of the institutions that try to maintain peace, the leadership that tries to progress the aims of peace and the social fabric that tries to live by the commands of peace.[160] Therefore, this evidence has made clear that the lack of progress on the aims of peace is still contributing to the instability of the peace in Northern Ireland and reinforcing historical attitudes, social intentions and future planning that maintain this fragile status quo. Therefore, to resolve this instability, this complex's reality must be dissected with reform as the focus of any future political work.

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[158] *Line 18: Belfast Divided*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH_FuiP9WD8.

[159] 'Reconciliation and Deprivation – Twin Challenges for Northern Ireland', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.pivotalppf.org/our-work/news/72/reconciliation-and-deprivation-twin-challenges. P.3.

[160] Teresa García Alcaraz, 'Belfast Has More Peace Walls Now than 25 Years Ago – Removing Them Will Be a Complex Challenge', The Conversation, 26 April 2023, http://theconversation.com/belfast-has-more-peace-walls-now-than-25-years-ago-removing-them-will-be-a-complex-challenge-203975.

'Reconciliation and Deprivation – Twin Challenges for Northern Ireland', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.pivotalppf.org/our-work/news/72/reconciliation-and-deprivation-twin-challenges. P.04.

Moreover, the analysis of this evidence reveals a harsh reality: that the cost of failure, the stalling of progress and the lack of delivery has a price, a fragile and unstable peace that becomes normalised in people's minds. Consequently, this can result in the loss of confidence of the people who maintain it and unconsciously encourages a dangerous alternative, which is the fear of everyone involved.

Finally, there is the question of whether the arguments, data and analysis of this second stress first part, 'the instability of the lack of progress on the ongoing aims of peace', support the central argument of this thesis?

This thesis argues that the peace in Northern Ireland is fragile and susceptible to real-world shocks across multiple political, social, and historical topics. The argument regarding this area is valid in a few specific ways. Firstly, the lack of accessibility of the political solution, coupled with an undertone threat of future violence, shows that the passage of time and a quarter of a century of peace have not removed the option or appeal of violence to a certain section of society. This is even more potent as it finds itself in the minds of younger people, who are the very section of society that the peace has attempted to benefit, being the generation brought up without the threat of the bomb or the bullet. Given this point, there remains a risk that the perceived benefits of peace are not reaching a section of society. Furthermore, there is a risk that they are not enticed by the political alternative, seeing it as not applicable or effective to their perspective. Ultimately, this undermines the stability of the peace in present-day Northern Ireland, given the discussed violent alternative, which undermines the work, spirit and intentions of the 'specifically rejected' peace.[161]

[161] *One Month on the Shankill: Inside Belfast's Loyalist Community after NI's Worst Violence in Years*, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KH3OKE3V9g0.

The second final point, which the data from this evidence has discussed, is the existence of a cultural war that thematically falls in the political/social space that this thesis explores. This point supports the argument of this thesis by revealing that the continued failure of progress on the aims of peace, with continued segregation in schools and housing, which in some instances, especially housing, maintains historical views that oppose the intentions of peace. Furthermore, a cultural conflict (wrapped up in identity, history, and remembrance) embodies frustrations, disagreements, and tension, potentially igniting a violent physical demonstration.[162] Thus, undermining the stability of the peace in Northern Ireland, which reveals a significant area that requires engagement to restore confidence and stability in the peace.

As a result, a disenfranchised youth, an inaccessible political solution, and continued segregation, manifesting in a 'cold' culture war with identifiable pressure points such as parades, flags and identity conflicts, prove that in this specific area, the peace in Northern Ireland is fragile and susceptible to real-world shocks. Consequently, this fragility can evidently destabilise the work of peace, the intentions of the political solution and the hope of a healed, reintegrated society.

Therefore, these findings, coupled with the institutional weakness of power sharing, analysed in Stress 1, reveal a bilateral vulnerability in the region's peace. This vulnerability stems from the peace-derived institution's lack of resilience to endure multiple unexpected shocks and the lack of progress in the spirit of peace. Thus, it serves as an important and specific warning to actors about the present resilience of the region's peace to shocks.

[162] Ray Cashman, 'Visions of Irish Nationalism', *Journal of Folklore Research* 45, no. 3 (2008): 361–81. P.362.

PART 2: PRESENT-DAY PARAMILITARY ACTIVITIES THROUGH DISENFRANCHISEMENT WITH THE PEACE PROCESS. THIS RESULTS IN HEIGHTENED TENSIONS, INCREASED DIVISION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS, AND FRACTIONAL RADICALISATION WITHIN BOTH COMMUNITIES. WHICH IS LINKED TO THE DEPRIVATION AND PRESERVATION OF AN ERODING COMMUNAL IDENTITY.

Source Title:

'Assessment on Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', accessed 11 July 2024, 'The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', 7 June 2016, 'The Effect of Paramilitary Activity and Organised Crime on Society in Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Affairs Committee', 24 January 2024.[163] [164] [165] (Appendix H/I)

Figure 8

'Assessment on Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland',

All the main paramilitary groups operating during the period of the Troubles remain in existence, including the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), Red Hand Commando (RHC), Ulster Defence Association (UDA), Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). Seventeen years after the 1998 Belfast Agreement, paramilitary groups remain a feature of life in NI; the UDA, UVF and INLA have continued to recruit, and all of the paramilitary groups maintain a relatively public profile despite being illegal organisations.

Figure 8: 'Assessment on Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', 'The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', 'The Effect of Paramilitary Activity and Organised Crime Northern Ireland Affairs Committee'

[163] 'Assessment on Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-on-paramilitary-groups-in-Northern-ireland.

[164] 'The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', 7 June 2016, https://www.Northernireland.gov.uk/publications/fresh-start-panel-report-disbandment-paramilitary-groups-Northern-ireland.

[165] 'The Effect of Paramilitary Activity and Organised Crime on Society in Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Affairs Committee', 24 January 2024, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmniaf/43/report.html.

Figure 8.1

'Assessment on Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland',

Members of these paramilitary groups continue to engage in violent activity, both directed by local leadership and conducted without sanction. Violence and intimidation are used to exercise control at a community level. The scale has vastly reduced from the period of the Troubles but still includes paramilitary-style assaults and, on occasion, murders; members of all groups have carried out murders since the 1998 Belfast Agreement.

Figure 8.2

'The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', 7 June 2016.

Notwithstanding the progress outlined above, paramilitary activity continues in Northern Ireland. Almost twenty years after the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the greatest threat to security is the armed campaigns of what have come to be known as Dissident Republican (DR) groups.5 Hoax and real security alerts caused by these groups continue to force people out of their homes and disrupt traffic,6 business and other aspects of daily life.

Some members and former members of paramilitary groups on ceasefire continue to engage in violent activity to intimidate and exercise control in communities where they operate. In some cases this activity is directed by local leadership but it can also be conducted without sanction. The scale of the problem has vastly reduced since the height of 'the Troubles' but brutal physical attacks continue.

Figure 8.3

'The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', 7 June 2016.

There are numerous factors that lead some young people to consider joining paramilitary groups. These include problems at home, educational underachievement and unemployment. However, these factors alone do not directly lead to young people becoming involved with paramilitary groups; other, more complex, factors are also at play, such as a quest for identity, resentment generated by stigmatisation and exclusion from decision-making, and frustration with the lack of opportunities for productive engagement. There is a need for capacity building programmes for hard to reach youth, as well as programmes to tackle addictive behaviours or bullying and intimidation and to reduce the risk that such young people become drawn into paramilitary groups.

Once they are involved, it can then be difficult for a young person to leave the group, even if they no longer wish to remain. They may feel they have no way out of the situation, particularly as it would appear that some paramilitary groups insist on a substantial sum of money as an exit fee. Such sums are likely to be beyond the means of most young people.

Figure 8.4

'The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', 7 June 2016.

It is important to recognise that as the prospects of sustained peace and security grow, communities' needs, expectations and priorities frequently evolve. In some particularly disadvantaged communities, the 'peace dividend' has not been perceived to yield the expected benefits, and a situation of continuing insecurity and poverty has generated frustrations and resentment. In post-conflict societies, preventing a reoccurrence of violence is sometimes described as 'negative peace', whereas an approach that addresses issues of prosperity and social and economic stability enables a more sustainable 'positive peace'.

Figure 8.5

'The Effect of Paramilitary Activity and Organised Crime on Society in Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Affairs Committee', 24 January 2024,

Paramilitarism is an enduring and malignant legacy of the Troubles, which continues to cause harm in Northern Ireland today - whether that be physical or psychological harm to victims and survivors of violence perpetrated by paramilitary groups, harm to communities through coercive control, or the perpetuation of societal trauma in Northern Ireland. It is a persistent but complex phenomenon that necessitates a sustained and multi-faceted response from public services across the piece.

Figure 8.6

'The Effect of Paramilitary Activity and Organised Crime on Society in Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Affairs Committee', 24 January 2024,

The continued presence of paramilitary groups, 25 years on from the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, represents a festering wound on society in Northern Ireland. Given the delineation of responsibilities between the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive in tackling terrorist and paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland, the lack of an Executive impedes attempts to develop a collaborative and mutually reinforcing approach to tackling terrorism, paramilitary activity, and organised crime. The lack of an executive and sustainable funding arrangement for public services also creates an uncertain environment for organisations that provide vital services such as youth and educational services.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 8.[166]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse in this evidence challenges the overt view that paramilitaries no longer exist or significantly impact Northern Ireland today. It reveals that major paramilitaries such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) are still active and *recruiting*.

Furthermore, it also reveals that these groups do not exist in name only, as some might believe (given the significant reduction of paramilitary operations during the peace in Northern Ireland), but instead continue to engage in *violence, murders, and control over communities*. This action impacts daily life and poses a significant security risk in Northern Ireland.

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[166] 'Assessment on Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-on-paramilitary-groups-in-Northern-ireland.

'The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', 7 June 2016, https://www.Northernireland.gov.uk/publications/fresh-start-panel-report-disbandment-paramilitary-groups-Northern-ireland.

'The Effect of Paramilitary Activity and Organised Crime on Society in Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Affairs Committee', 24 January 2024, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmniaf/43/report.html.

This challenges the view that a substantial reduction in paramilitary operations equals disbandment and the loss of operational effectiveness. Therefore, this risks the stability in Northern Ireland as it undermines faith in the police force and security services, which has a precedent of raising tensions.

Moreover, the lack of success over paramilitary activity at the community level, which reports that at least 1/3 of people are still living in communities that suffer from *fear* and *intimidation* from paramilitaries, increases the tension between people and policymakers, which could be argued as strengthening paramilitaries' understated appeal. This argument is supported by the evidence in Appendix J, which claims that paramilitaries are exploiting the troubled relationship between people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and the devolved administration. Thus, the gap between extricated citizens and the political process is widened in a manner that transcends historical ideological rationales. Furthermore, this reality can be seen as effective in enticing a new generation to bolster the ranks/membership, which the political solution has already let down. This is suggested in the evidence of Figure 8.3 that deprivation, lack of opportunity, and passionate cultural/political views entice younger people towards paramilitary organisations, which continues those groups' influence on the peace in Northern Ireland over the long term. This is further supported by Figure 8.3, which clarifies that the opportunity to leave such groups is incredibly *limited* and *out of reach* for most young recruits. Consequently, this further challenges the view that such groups operate on a casual basis without the formal structures of historical periods, which might be partially true. It is therefore evident that this evidence argues that clear boundaries enforce participation, power, and control, thus revealing the power that such organisations continue to have and the fragile basis on which they continue to operate in their current manner.

Finally, this evidence challenges the expectations and judgements that peace remains static over time. Instead, it argues that such expectations and judgements evolve, which means that deprivation and inequality (as a lack of a peace dividend) between communities, coupled with the vulnerability created that is exploited by paramilitaries, is understandably framed as an evolving hostile environment. This harms the reputation of peace and removes access to the political solution, which reduces its reach and effectiveness. This can encourage alternative solutions in which paramilitaries can take a leading role, as evidenced by the discourse reasoning of paramilitary continued recruitment. The increase of the community presence of paramilitaries across communities in Northern Ireland during sensitive times, such as political crises, cultural struggles and economic downturns, undermines the stability of the peace in Northern Ireland. Therefore, this is the reality that the evidence in Figure 8.6 presents, where the *impediment* of positive work on this critical problem can occur when it is argued that action is needed after the damage caused by the absence of political leadership in Northern Ireland in recent years.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The current resilience within the examined context is an essential area of enquiry for this research. The evidence within Figure 8 alludes to specific points that strain the strength of the peace, even as it continues to hold today. Firstly, the continued existence of various fragmented paramilitaries and their splinter groups creates an unstable environment where gang warfare, territory disputes, and member rivalries over leadership, objectives and operations strain the peace from the specific citizen and broad politico-social perspective.

This is because, as Figure 8 makes clear, the cooperation of these groups is through voluntary agreements to the terms of *ceasefire* (given that they have not been forcibly/voluntarily disbanded post the end of the troubles), which can be revoked under the right circumstances. Therefore, this volatile environment of great instability that the work of peace-building operations must operate reveals a weak point in the resilience of peace in Northern Ireland in this important specific area.

Furthermore, the current volatility of the existence of paramilitaries, which affects the strength of resilience that the peace in Northern Ireland has, is vulnerable in other ways. Firstly, the existence of these groups within the political context undermines the spirit of the peace perspective, which maintains a philosophy that is opposed to the work of paramilitary organisations, their illegal status and their role in present-day society. This is important because it erodes confidence in the institutions of peace, which is evident in Figure 8.3 when considering young people and their motivations to join paramilitary organisations, which the discourse linguistically affirms is the result of '*exclusion from decision-making and frustration with the lack of opportunities for productive engagement'*.

Furthermore, this long-term damage to the trust of these institutions is a serious concern, given the evidence in Figure 8, which is concerned with the younger members of society who have been left behind in the political solution. Thus, they are susceptible to being enticed by paramilitary groups, often for a long time. Finally, the active existence of paramilitary organisations actively undermines the work of the political solution, including funded programs to combat the impact of paramilitaries on the vulnerable. Based on the evidence considered, including other submissions, it is reasonable to argue that such efforts, when successful, undermine the success of the political solution.

This occurs by fostering greater division, lessening trust in the political and police institutions, which actively work to ensure the success of peace in Northern Ireland, as well as highlighting a negative peace which relies on the presence of paramilitaries in specific communities that underpins a raw inequality. Therefore, it is evident from the discourse's reasoning that this is a burden that the peace in Northern Ireland must endure. Yet such a burden risks weakening the foundations of the peace, especially during stress points of social, economic and political significance. Thus resulting in a permanent strain on the resilience of peace in Northern Ireland, which hangs over the success of peace in the social, economic and political environment within present-day Northern Ireland.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

The discourse in this evidence makes specific references to young people joining paramilitaries and the rationale and risk that this poses, not least the destabilising of communities who try to maintain localised peace and stability within their environment. This is specifically argued in Figure 8.6, which argues that '*The lack of an executive and sustainable funding arrangement for public services also creates an uncertain environment for organisations that provide vital services such as youth and educational services.'* The real-world risk is that a take-up in recruitment, especially for young people, at the community level, coupled with a destabilised or ineffective political situation that doesn't empower the youth-targeted educational services to address this problem. Thus, risking a vulnerable section of society being drawn to a life that counters the work, spirit and intentions of the peace in Northern Ireland.

Source Title: John Jupp and Matt Garrod, 'Legacies of the Troubles: The Links between Organised Crime and Terrorism in Northern Ireland', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism.* Siobhan McAlister et al., *'It Didn't End in 1998': Examining the Impacts of Conflict Legacy Across Generations* (Centre for Children's Rights, 2021). Kit Rickard and Kristin M. Bakke, 'Legacies of Wartime Order: Punishment Attacks and Social Control in Northern Ireland', *Security Studies* 30, no. 4 (8 August 2021.[167] [168] [169]

Figure 9.

John Jupp and Matt Garrod, 'Legacies of the Troubles: The Links between Organised Crime and Terrorism in Northern Ireland', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 45 (4 November 2019): 1–40, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1678878.

All of the more prominent paramilitary organisations operating during the Troubles remain in existence, some of which continue to recruit new members, acquire money, weapons and explosives, and retain and even develop their capacity for resuming violent campaigns in the future should they consider it desirable, despite being on cease-fire and ostensibly committed to peace.

Figure 9: John Jupp and Matt Garrod, 'Legacies of the Troubles, Siobhan McAlister et al., 'It Didn't End in 1998', 'Legacies of Wartime Order: Punishment Attacks and Social Control in Northern Ireland'.

[167] John Jupp and Matt Garrod, 'Legacies of the Troubles: The Links between Organized Crime and Terrorism in Northern Ireland', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 45 (4 November 2019): 1–40, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1678878.

[168] Siobhan McAlister et al., *'It Didn't End in 1998': Examining the Impacts of Conflict Legacy Across Generations* (Centre for Children's Rights, 2021).

[169] Kit Rickard and Kristin M. Bakke, 'Legacies of Wartime Order: Punishment Attacks and Social Control in Northern Ireland', *Security Studies* 30, no. 4 (8 August 2021): 603–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2021.1976822.

Figure 9.1

Siobhan McAlister et al., *'It Didn't End in 1998': Examining the Impacts of Conflict Legacy Across Generations* (Centre for Children's Rights, 2021).

The legacy of the Conflict is having a lasting impact on the daily lives of young people in particular communities. Chronic sectarianism, segregation, violence and differential policing (real or perceived) are very much part of this legacy.

Figure 9.2

As a result, young people often felt fearful and unsafe in their communities. They also linked attacks on young people with poor mental health, problematic drug and alcohol use (as a coping mechanism), and suicide. Indeed, some research has explored the link between paramilitary intimidation with male suicides. Of the 402 deaths recorded as suicides between 2007-2009, Mallon et al. (2019) found that for 19 male suicides, there were incidents of paramilitary intimidation in the twelve months prior to death.

Figure 9.3

Hargie, O'Donnell and McMullan have found that paramilitary-style groups also play a role in contributing to social exclusion. They interviewed young people from deprived interface areas of Belfast. Their findings suggested that the existence of paramilitary groups rendered cross-community socialising non-existent, as they discouraged young people from engaging with the community on the other side of the walls, and they posed a genuine danger to anyone from the 'other' community if they visited their area. Young people in the study were reluctant to travel outside of their neighbourhoods to socialise or seek employment.

Figure 9.4

Kit Rickard and Kristin M. Bakke, ‘Legacies of Wartime Order: Punishment Attacks and Social Control in Northern Ireland’.

As several of our interviews suggested, “ (Historically) you just did not call the police.” This was either because the police was not present, you mistrusted them, or you feared being labelled a “tout,” an informer and traitor within your community.

Figure 9.5

Both Republican and Loyalist armed groups have instrumental incentives to exercise social control. They do so to show they are politically relevant to their communities—either through compliance or fear—for operational reasons.

As during the conflict, this strategy aimed to undermine the legitimacy of the state while promoting themselves as the rightful guardians of peace to “gain the support of elements of the local population while simultaneously taking control of others through fear and retribution.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 9.[170]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse within this evidence builds on the reasoning in Figure 8 that paramilitaries do not exist in name only by arguing that these groups can go further by '*recruit new members, acquire weapons and build up their operational capacity to resume violent campaigns'*. This reinforces the fragile, peaceful status quo in which these paramilitaries currently exist, based on peaceful cooperation fuelled by a currently operationally advantageous situation to peace, which is subject to the delicate elements of the modern-day peace in the region.

Furthermore, Figure 9.5 argues further, building on the previous two arguments by stating that throughout the peace, paramilitaries have built up self-appointed roles as the '*rightful guardians of the peace through fear and enforced compliance*.'

[170] John Jupp and Matt Garrod, 'Legacies of the Troubles: The Links between Organized Crime and Terrorism in Northern Ireland', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 45 (4 November 2019): 1–40, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1678878.

Siobhan McAlister et al., *'It Didn't End in 1998': Examining the Impacts of Conflict Legacy Across Generations* (Centre for Children's Rights, 2021).

Kit Rickard and Kristin M. Bakke, 'Legacies of Wartime Order: Punishment Attacks and Social Control in Northern Ireland', *Security Studies* 30, no. 4 (8 August 2021): 603–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2021.1976822.

This builds up long-lasting support/acceptance within the local communities that haven't necessarily dissipated through time and establishes a normal state within the social fabric of communities that is difficult to remove, even in areas that do not have an overt paramilitary presence or support. Moreover, this evidence makes clear that the continued existence of paramilitaries is not simply a concern from a violent operational capacity perspective, as Figure 9 has argued. Yet, based on the resilience of the peace, the historical reputations (as expressed in Figure 9.2, based on the findings of a link between violence from paramilitaries to *poor mental health, suicide amongst men and problematic coping mechanisms*) from these groups are a concern within a negative peace context. This context is focused on simply avoiding a violent breakdown of the present peace, where common challenging occurrences have a realistic possibility (calculated by capability and intent from Figure 8/9) of erupting into a violent scenario. Therefore, through this analysis, an identifiable violent scenario becomes a potential variable that constitutes part of the specific factors that affect the peace's stability, which is fully explored in the results framework in Chapter 3, Figure 20.

Furthermore, the discourse within Figure 9.1 argues that the lasting effects of the troubles that paramilitaries significantly contributed to continue to have a lasting harmful impact on young people by way of '*chronic sectarianism, segregation and a violent perception of violence in Northern Ireland*.' This impact, coupled with Figure 9.4 linguistic argument of citizen attitudes toward policing (who argue that there exists a historically rooted reluctance to report to the police over '*feared being labelled a "tout," an informer and traitor*'), makes clear that historical attitudes and practical effects have endured cross-generation on these specific issues.

This includes repeated patterns of violence (linked to paramilitary groups, as argued in recent media sources[171]) towards police over multiple problems, including political, economic, social and international, or a rejection of the role of the police in societies and communities. Consequently, this creates a space for an increased paramilitary presence at the local level because of continued historical attitudes finding a place in present-day (overt minority) actions in Northern Ireland. Hence, this reveals a weakness and exploitable vulnerability in the peace, which significantly depends on a legitimate cross-community police institution that can effectively address such issues.

Finally, the social exclusion effect from paramilitaries explored in Figure 9.3 can be seen according to the evidence to contribute to a danger facing members of other communities (in clearly segregated areas of residence) if they visit their (the paramilitary) community. This complex discourse stresses the resilience of the peace by describing the '*danger to anyone from the 'other' community if they visited their area',* which emphasises the dangers these groups pose (as supported in the critical analysis of Figure 8) to '*external'* citizens in some segregated areas. This argument's effects are further linguistically described in the figure, using the discourse of '*non-existent cross-community socialising'.* This reality underlines the fragility of such a perilous, unreconciled context that can impact up to a 1/3rd of residents of Northern Ireland today, where individual safeguarding is required to avoid dangerous challenges.

[171] Vincent Kearney, 'Loyalist Paramilitary Link to Violence in Belfast - PSNI', 6 August 2024, https://www.rte.ie/news/2024/0806/1463578-belfast-unrest/.

Agence France-Presse, 'Man Charged with Attempted Murder of Northern Ireland Police Officer', *The Guardian*, 10 February 2024, sec. UK news, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/10/man-charged-with-attempted-of-Northern-ireland-police-officer.

This context is operating under an unstable element of negative peace, which, when considered with the previous points made in this critical analysis, lacks effective management of this concern in present-day Northern Ireland. Consequently, this undermines the cross-community work undertaken under a renewed, newly formed political mandate, which reveals that two sides of this complex peace arrangement in this specific area counteract each other, slowing progress and undermining a positive trajectory of peace in present-day Northern Ireland. As a result, a situation emerges that weakens the strength of resilience for the Northern Ireland peace, which in this area remains fragile.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The evidence within this evidence references the present-day and historical context in Northern Ireland concerning active paramilitaries. It is argued that the legacy of the conflict in the form of the continued presence of paramilitaries binds the historical reality with the present-day effects in describing '*a lasting impact on the daily lives*. Thus, the historical, social and political context of this issue continues to have a significant adverse effect that strains the intentions of peace in Northern Ireland. This is evidenced by the argument that these effects, such as *'the Chronic sectarianism, segregation, violence and differential policing (real or perceived)',* have the risk of enduring effects of the troubles, which hinders progress from shifting towards a realised widespread positive peace for the region. Such a hindrance has the potential to shift opinion away from the perceived peace dividend and into alternative contexts that are more unstable and dangerous. Secondly, the role of paramilitaries in enforced social exclusion retains the danger of conflict between groups as well as the state.

Thus, undermining the spirit and action of the peace process whilst simultaneously solidifying the perceived influence of these groups, which, as already discussed, offer serious effects on a local and national level, that reduces the stability of the political/social solution in Northern Ireland.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

This final point underwrites the combination of real-world risks that have been argued in the evidence of Figure 9, which depend on the current influence and strength of these paramilitaries, who are still in existence and have already been judged as having potentially significant operational capabilities. Moreover, considerable negative effects on the daily lives of people, (*the link between paramilitary intimidation with male suicides*) through their comprehensive influence (*promoting themselves as the rightful guardians of peace)* and understated covert/overt influential reach (*strategy aimed to undermine the legitimacy of the state)*, actor influenced events which undermines the spirit, practical effort, and the political roadmap towards a future positive peace.

STRESS 2 PART 2: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The discourse within the evidence in this section has argued that paramilitaries who existed during the Troubles are still active today in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, they retain operational capabilities such as recruitment, fundraising and procuring or maintaining weapon stockpiles.[172] There is agreement amongst the analysed evidence that these paramilitaries exist across different communities and points of view, and although they have reduced their overt operational effectiveness (as evidenced by a reduction in violent paramilitary events since the Good Friday agreement), they exist on a ceasefire basis of cooperation rather than necessity. Therefore, it can reasonably be argued that the status quo is a camouflage of peaceful intentions rather than the beginning of peaceful inclusion in the political process towards reconciliation. This argument is supported by interviews on the ground with residents in Northern Ireland, who attest to the continued presence and effectiveness of paramilitary groups.[173]

Furthermore, the evidence within this section has argued that the impact of these paramilitaries in present-day Northern Ireland affects communities that are particularly vulnerable to the influence of these groups.

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[172] As per the UK government report on paramilitary operations, a significant daily counter operation by the intelligence branch of the PSNI continues in the region. This operation relies on covert HUMIT operations, open-source intelligence monitoring, (OSNIT) and intrusive communication surveillance (SIGINT) to counter and limit the effectives of these organisations. 'Assessment on Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', accessed 4 April 2025, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-on-paramilitary-groups-in-northern-ireland.

[173] *Is Belfast over Its Troubles? | Growing up in Northern Ireland*, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jIXa6a_Ffo.

Furthermore, those targeted are struggling to manage political, social and economic shocks, in the region which these groups have managed to exploit to increase their influence and effectiveness within communities.[174] This happens despite ongoing work to reduce this influence as mandated by the political solution. Yet, according to the evidence, this work has not resulted in a permanent resolution to these problems. Upon analysis of the evidence in this section, there is a consistent agreement that the effects and impacts of these paramilitaries are a serious problem in Northern Ireland that has been recognised by both the government of the United Kingdom and the Northern Ireland Executive. Consequently, such a presence within Northern Ireland undermines the spirit of the peace and actively works against the positive trajectory that stakeholders are trying to advance regarding the future of peace in Northern Ireland.[175]

The key question from this evidence is whether the continued existence of paramilitaries in their current operational state is a risk that exposes vulnerabilities to the peace in Northern Ireland?

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[174] 'Derry Riots: How Poverty and Deprivation Breeds Violence', *openDemocracy* (blog), accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/derry-strabane-riots-deprivation-Northern-ireland-good-friday-agreement/.

Luke Butterly and 15 May 2023, 'Good Friday Agreement: Most Deprived Areas Still Waiting on Peace Dividend', *The Detail*, accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.thedetail.tv/articles/good-friday-agreement-north-s-most-deprived-areas-still-waiting-on-peace-dividend-25-years-later.

'NI's Most Deprived Areas Still Waiting on "Peace Dividend" 25 Years Later', *BelfastTelegraph.Co.Uk*, 15 May 2023, sec. Northern Ireland, https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/Northern-ireland/nis-most-deprived-areas-still-waiting-on-peace-dividend-25-years-later/1789909464.html.

[175] 'A Fresh Start - The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan', 10 February 2016, https://www.Northernireland.gov.uk/publications/fresh-start-stormont-agreement-and-implementation-plan. P.28.

The evidence in this section is unified in agreement that whilst a significant and important body of work exists to combat the effects of paramilitaries from a renewed political mandate, this problem continues to strain the heart of the peace in Northern Ireland.[176]

Specifically, the variety of paramilitaries, their historical reputation, the traumatic emotional connotations, the complex role they play in certain communities, and the potential operational capabilities and recruitment of young people all contribute to an unstable context in which the peace has to operate.[177] This argument about the recruitment of young people is supported by further research by Dr Adrian Johnston, head of the International Fund for Ireland, who stated, *"We are aware from programmes we run that there are young people as young as 15 being approached by paramilitary organisations"*.[178] Although it is impossible to predict how sustainable such an unstable context is, the evidence within this section is unified in the message that it is a challenge that requires action to prevent such instability from worsening and alleviate such groups' adverse effects on the broader society.

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[176] 'Executive Programme for Tackling Paramilitary Activity and Organised Crime', Executive Publications (Northern Ireland executive, 11 October 2017), https://www.Northernireland.gov.uk/articles/executive-programme-tackling-paramilitary-activity-and-organised-crime-0. P.48.

[177] Siobhán McAlister et al., 'Gender, Violence and Cultures of Silence: Young Women and Paramilitary Violence', *Journal of Youth Studies* 25, no. 8 (14 September 2022): 1148–63, https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2021.1942807. P.1150

[178] 'Terrorist Groups Are Still Recruiting Children in Northern Ireland', *BelfastTelegraph.Co.Uk*, 16 November 2015, sec. Northern Ireland, https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/Northern-ireland/terrorist-groups-are-still-recruiting-children-in-Northern-ireland/34203373.html.

John F Morrison, 'The Violence of Peace: Post Good Friday Agreement Paramilitary Vigilantism in Northern Ireland', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2024, 1–22. P.05.

Therefore, it is clear from the findings of this section (in combination with the wider contextual data on the subject) that the arguments, data and analysis of this Second Stress Part Two, 'Present-day Paramilitary activities through disenfranchisement with the peace process', support the central argument of this thesis. Arguing that the peace in Northern Ireland is fragile and susceptible to real-world shocks.

Consequently, these findings, coupled with the bilateral vulnerability previously derived in Stress 1 and Stress 2 part 1, highlight the societal impact of the politico-social effects of a fragile post-conflict settlement, which endures the modified existence of historically violent groups. Thus, further reinforcing the importance (for political stability and social prosperity) of sustained actor engagement, to reform and improve such a settlement.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the evidence for the first two stresses to the peace in Northern Ireland that are being analysed in this thesis. Furthermore, this chapter presents the discourse analysis methodology selected to analyse the evidence for both current and future subsequent stresses to the Northern Ireland peace. This first evidence chapter selects the evidence from a balance of relevant material that is included as raw data within the appendix. Following this, the specific evidence for the appropriate section is included as figures that have been analysed using a critical analysis of the discourse with three specific research questions.[179]

The first stress focuses on the instability of power-sharing in Northern Ireland, where the periods of absence, the political structures and behavioural challenges have contributed to a vulnerability that strains the peace in Northern Ireland, which citizens polled have argued requires reforming. Additionally, the second stress firstly examines the progress of peace since the major political agreements by analysing the accessibility of the political solution and any links to violent behaviour that undermine the work of peace and continued sectarianism within Northern Ireland. This is physically manifested in the sustained presence of peace walls and their effects in reinforcing historical attitudes and hindering progress to a converted, integrated society.

[179]Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

Finally, the effects of the continued operation of paramilitary groups will be examined. Through this analysis in this chapter, the resilience and the vulnerabilities of the peace in Northern Ireland have been tested against these specific stresses, and the findings will contribute to a distinctive understanding of this question in Chapter 3.

Following this examination of all the evidence for specific stress, the evidence is analysed in a preliminary findings section that questions how the evidence findings (from the critical analysis) fit in with the broader research question/central argument of this thesis. This chapter, from the two examined perspectives, finds that multiple vulnerabilities within the current peace in Northern Ireland make it fragile in these areas, which, given their foundations in political and social contemporary contexts as well as historical precedents, have the potential to threaten the peace.

Chapter 3 will examine the third and fourth stresses proposed in the introduction of this thesis, the impact of Brexit on the resilience of the Northern Ireland Peace Process, and, secondly, the impact of a future border poll on the island of Ireland. This chapter will continue with the stated research methodology that started in Chapter 2 as it examines the two new stresses as the second part of the evidence for this thesis.

CHAPTER 3 ABSTRACT

Chapter 3 of this thesis, following the first evidence chapter (Chapter 2), is the second (and final) evidence chapter which introduces the second 2 stresses, the selected discourse evidence that will be analysed and the applied results framework. This chapter begins with a 4-part examination of the consequences of Brexit to the fragile peace, explicitly focusing on the delicate context that made Brexit so impactful, as well as the fragmentation of unionism, the deterioration of British-Irish relations and the lack of understanding from actors on the sensitivities of Northern Ireland. Furthermore, this chapter explores the use of creative ambiguity in the peace agreements and the impact on contentious issues such as a future border poll. Moreover, analysing these stresses, this chapter generates preliminary findings on this thesis's central argument (the Northern Ireland peace is vulnerable to shocks). Finally, the data from the evidence and analysis is applied through the applied results framework against the stress of a future border poll.

Chapter 3 Evidence Part 2

INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues applying the methodological framework to the introduced evidence for the third and fourth stressors selected for this study by a focused criterion to fit the parameters of this research. To reiterate, this thesis argues that peace in Northern Ireland is fragile and susceptible to real-world shocks across multiple political, social, and historical topics. Therefore, to comprehensively test the Northern Ireland peace process, four stresses (each with specific vulnerabilities forming a distinct part of the greater stress factor) based on real-world events have been selected in an appropriate order that best links them to each other and the overall context.

This second evidence chapter will focus on the latter two stresses firstly, 'The Divisive (Multi/Cross Contextual) Consequences of Brexit to The Fragile Peace In Northern Ireland' and secondly, 'The Risks from The Vulnerabilities Within the Good Friday Agreement, Coupled with The Sustained Rise in Political Capital From 'Radical' Political Parties, Who Will Also Frame an Unprepared Future Border Poll which is assessed through an Applied/Results Framework. This framework is used to conceptualise the variables of the complex (political/social/historical) instability for a post-conflict society in Northern Ireland and apply them to real-world stress. This framework serves as an important tool, for the topic owing to its, expressed context, which reasons that, because peace agreements are written (through an at-the-time necessity) with the past in mind, for the immediate (implementable) present, without much consideration or detail for the future,

the variables that create, a context for peace at the time of the agreement, do not endure post agreement.

Ultimately, this can and has, in the case of Northern Ireland, stressed the stability of the overall peace in the region. Finally, this applied framework is based on the systemised variables, which are linked to specific risk factors established through the research's analytical findings on this topic. This includes both the implicit and explicit variables, which form both parts of the framework (Figure 20) that are to be applied to the future real-world stress of a border poll for the island of Ireland. Yet it is also applicable to any future real-world shock to the peace. It informs actors where, specifically in the (tested) peace, targeted engagement and support are needed to reinforce stability in the region. Finally, this chapter builds on Chapter 2's introduction to the evidence, articulating the first stresses on the peace in Northern Ireland. This occurs by examining the recent stress of the Brexit events, extracting the generated factors from this and Chapter 1 stresses and applying them through the results framework to the stress of a future border poll.

CRITERIA FOR EVIDENCE

This chapters criteria for evidence follows the specifics for evidence detailed in Chapter 2. The key points of this criteria are as follows:

To act as primary data for this research, this thesis has looked for relevant evidence to the real world stresses , timely evidence, and evidence that fits the balance of academic, ploitical, historical and social discourse. Furthermore, to evolve the arguments, each new piece of evidence that is analysed must introduce a new perspective that can include the argument made, new facts, data, or differences of opinion and viewpoint.

Additionally, relevant examples of the evidence have been depicted in the form of quotations from the broader data source, which are then presented in the figures of this chapter before the critical analysis.[180] This representation of the evidence allows for the greatest accessibility to the raw data (included in the appendix) and the relevant examples that form the basis for the discourse analysis of the relevant material. The participants for this research include leading academic contributors, poltical figures and historical discourse who can provide the breadth of discourse needed to cover the relevant elements of this issue comprehensively yet concisely.[181]

Furthermore, an expanded criterion has been used for supplementary data, which includes older pre-2014 academic research, journalist articles, public lectures, public surveys, and public commentary. This evidence is also relevant to the real-world stresses being explored, timely, and connected to the arguments that the primary data have explored. The evidence is included in the Preliminary Findings section to provide greater context, support arguments and demonstrate a broader consensus of the perspectives being investigated.

[180] This data is presented in their text-based form, using direct quotations. They are also presented in this form as figures throughout each part of the analysis in the chapter. This format follows the composition of earlier established academic research see introduction for references.

[181] Data consists of the political, (such as the House of Commons and Lords select committee, intergovernmental political agreements, and contemporary British and Irish political figures) academic, (Hayward, O'Leary and Renwick) social (primary accounts from regional residents) and historical (Seamus Mallon, Jonathan Powell, Mo Mowlam and John Bruton). In addition, citizens (Undeclared, Unionist and Nationalist) and NGOs (who specifically provide data from the forefront of this issue) are studied in terms of contextual discourse.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

As previously stated in the introduction, the research strategy for this thesis is based on a form of critical discourse analysis, which is argumentation and perspectivization of political, historical, and social discourse. A copy of the detailed methodological framework is included in Appendix X.[182]

[182] In accordance with Vodak's historical approach research strategy, the questions of the evidence chapters will cover context, logical arguments, and links between discourse and real events. The first question is the Logical Reasoning Question, which asks, *How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?* The second question is the Contextual Topical Question, which asks, *What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?* Finally, the third question is the event-specific question, which asks *how the discourse references (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace.*

STRESS 3: THE DIVISIVE (MULTI/CROSS-CONTEXTUAL) CONSEQUENCES OF BREXIT TO THE FRAGILE PEACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WITH HISTORICAL PRESENT AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS THAT THREATEN THE STABILITY OF PEACE.

STRESS 3: INTRODUCTION

Brexit was one of the most constitutionally, politically, socially and economically consequential peacetime sagas Britain, Ireland, and the wider European region faced post-war. As a result, this area is a relevant case study for considering the resilience of the peace in Northern Ireland, from a recent perspective, encompassing the historical, cultural, social, and political variables that stress the region's peace.

To achieve this, this study explores the special post-conflict circumstances and divisions that created vulnerabilities that Brexit exposed. This sets up the context, which facilitates the further exploration of the impacts of Brexit in subsequent parts. Additionally, this study examines the deterioration of British-Irish relations at the bilateral and supranational levels with the EU, the impact of subsidies within the supranational framework, and the links between this deterioration and the undermining of the peace agreement. Thirdly, unionism's internal and external instability during Brexit is explored, specifically how this translated to wider regional instability. Part 4 posits that, through a lack of understanding around the sensitivities in Northern Ireland, by building on the previous work of this thesis, the Brexit saga involved the use of political bargaining and negotiated advancement, which undermined the stability of the region's peace.

Finally, Brexit also has the potential to find legitimate relevance in every discussion of political, social, and economic significance post-2016. Therefore, this reality means the consideration of Brexit can easily engulf other areas of enquiry or result in a less than comprehensive analysis of the relationship between Brexit and the specific topics of concern for the research. Therefore, as it would be impossible to comprehensively exhaust all the effects of Brexit despite the authentic links Brexit has to the topics considered, this chapter focuses primarily on those effects that closely relate to the stability of peace in Northern Ireland.

PART 1: THE IMPACT OF SOVEREIGNTY AND IDENTITY POLITICS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF BREXIT AND ITS AFTERMATH ON PEACE AND STABILITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

Source Title: *Hayward, K. 'Beyond Unionism versus Nationalism: The Rise of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland'.*[183] (Appendix K)

Figure 10[184]

There would be no Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland were it not for the particular 'demographics and divisions' on the island of Ireland, and in Northern Ireland in particular. The origins of the Protocol lie in the common objective of the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU) to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland, as would otherwise logically occur as a consequence of Brexit. This objective is inseparable from two others: to address the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland and to protect the 1998 Belfast Good Friday Agreement in all its dimensions.1 Historical conflict is the looming shadow behind all three objectives.

Figure 10: Hayward, K. 'Beyond Unionism versus Nationalism: The Rise of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland'.

[183] Hayward, K. 'Beyond Unionism versus Nationalism: The Rise of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland'. *The Political Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (April 2020): 461–66. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12857.

[184] The data in the evidence chapters are presented in their text-based linguistic form, using direct quotations. They are also presented in this form as figures throughout each part of the analysis in the chapter. This format follows the composition of earlier established academic research (see introduction for references), utilising discourse analysis, which isolates relevant excerpts of discourse before in-depth analysis. This forms the primary data, which is the data that has been directly analysed in this thesis using the chosen methodology framework, either through further direct quotation for longer discourse or through specific italicised words directly within the analysis in a style that has precedent in earlier discourse research. For conscience purposes, these are sometimes grouped (although each figure clearly states the author) either by author, period or topic. Additionally, the raw data is contained in separate appendices, included at the end of this thesis.

Figure 10.0.1

(There exists) the political imperative of avoiding a hard border to be bound with the moral imperative of upholding a peace process. This is often taken to mean that, by inference, a hard border would lead to an outbreak of violent conflict It is less about what might provoke violence and more about what the Belfast Good Friday Agreement is intended to manage – namely a small region placed in a fragile state of limbo by centrifugal political forces connected to differing national identities and affiliations within it. The UK's withdrawal from the EU – and with it a form of disconnection from Ireland – posed a risk to the underpinning pillars and assumptions of the peace process itself.

Figure 10.1

Importantly, this 'identity' is not merely that of national citizenship; nor is it simply that of national identification. Instead the 'identity' that is relevant here is that of a constitutional preference, namely unionist or nationalist. This specific form of political aspiration has thus been transmuted into the most significant of all identities and divisions in Northern Ireland. More than that, most other identities are seen to be subsumed within it.

There are no political principles or communities that have sustained political salience in Northern Ireland other than unionist/nationalist.

Figure 10.2

This is why the UK's exit from the EU, and the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland with it, have been so portentous for political divisions within Northern Ireland. The indications up to 2016 were that the majority of the population in Northern Ireland were relatively comfortable with devolved status within the UK in a context of common EU membership.

Figure 10.2.1

In the case of Brexit, Sinn Féin's Remain position was justified on the grounds that 'a situation where part of our country is in the EU and the other part outside would cause huge problems in terms of the economy, free movement and have serious political consequences... no nationalist or republican should play any part in reinforcing the partition of our country'. Unionists had typically maintained a wariness of European integration, reflecting in part some of the ambiguities in the official British approach to the European project.

The (very strongly pro-Leave) TUV has an influence beyond its size – mainly because of the DUP's fear that a failure to be hardline enough on the issues that matter most to unionists will see it lose supporters to the TUV.

Figure 10.2.2

The non-aligned Alliance Party and Green also campaigned to Remain, thus meaning that all but three of the eight parties recently endorsed by election to the NI Assembly were agreed on a pro-Remain position, and two of the pro-Leave parties held just 3 seats between them.

Figure 10.3

Northern Ireland has long had a dominant socio-political cleavage that has centred upon two opposing visions of its constitutional status. Brexit has meant a rapid and severe adjustment to the framework in which that constitutional status is to be shaped and determined.

What has been quite clear is that Brexit has uprooted both nationalism and unionism from the ways they had settled in the post-1998 Belfast Good Friday Agreement context. But the picture is more complicated than simple green versus orange. The conditions for cooperation across the island and between Great Britain and Ireland have been made more difficult by Brexit.

There can be little doubt that the conditions of discomfort for nationalists in the UK and for unionists in a united Ireland have also been worsened by this change

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 10.[185]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The logically reasoned discourse in this evidence argues that the *uniquely divisive* circumstances in Northern Ireland impacted the political, social, operational and constitutional *consequences* of Brexit. As a result, during a contemporary complex stress to the peace, such as Brexit with its impactful multiple implications, the *historical conflict* remains a felt presence that influences the present objectives for managing a complex stress to the peace in the region. This, therefore, reminds observers of the continued presence of the historical conflict that shapes the consensus around its continued effects during political events in post-conflict Northern Ireland. A consensus reinforced by the recent example of Brexit informs future tests of the resilience of Northern Ireland's peace.

Furthermore, the discourse in Figure 10.0.1 and Figure 10.1 supports this argument by linking the historically violent context with a present-day failure of the political objectives, resulting in a description of a '*provoked outbreak of violent conflict*'. This is important as it reminds the involved parties of the realities of the small region's daily *fragile* management through an *agreement* which links and maintains the perspective of those of differing political, constitutional, and social

[185] Hayward, K. 'Beyond Unionism versus Nationalism: The Rise of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland'. *The Political Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (April 2020): 461–66. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12857.

aspirations in *limbo*. Thus, Brexit provokes the stability of these aspirational areas and associated pillars of peace, which remains (by a reasoned consensus) crucially relevant to a broad cohort of involved actors, from different perspectives during such stress, as evidenced by the *sustained*, challenging regional divisions.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The contextual discourse within this evidence reveals that the historically potent matters of identity, sovereignty, and the constitutional settlement in Northern Ireland and consequential events, such as the multi-layered complex events of Brexit, are linked and provide a unique opportunity to stoke political divisions. This is evidenced in the discourse of Figure 10.2, which depicts a post-agreement comfort with the devolved status of Northern Ireland.

However, this context is easily disrupted by the real-world stresses to the peace, revealing its fragility. This is demonstrated in Figure 10.2.1's discourse, which argues Brexit was akin to the *partition* of a nationalist country, as opposed to some Unionists' internal struggle to be *hardline enough* in opposition to reassure supporters of their constitutional position. This was in lockstep with the *British approach,* thus disrupting any post-agreement comfort and once again '*reflecting' a divisive context*. Such a divisive context fails to support the hope of a collective political landscape in Northern Ireland that *transcends* the historical divide as suggested in the discourse of Figure 10.2.2.

Therefore, despite a relative post-conflict comfort, Brexit was highly apt to divide the region along historic ideological perspectives. Thus, their emergence is revealed to push the political factions to a hardline position, reflecting the continued latent divisive politico-cultural context.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

This discourse references two actor-influenced events specific to the real-world risks that threaten the peace and present future risks. Firstly, Figure 10.3 refers to the uprooting of unionism and nationalism from the post-Good Friday settlement, which can refer to the historical initial uprooting following the uncertainty of the unexpected result of the Vote to Leave the European Union on 23rd June 2016. In addition to the uprooted future that deviates from the post-conflict *status quo* because of the post-Brexit arrangement/protocol that is a result of and a catalyst for the divisions in Northern Ireland. This reality results in an uncertain and divisive constitutional settlement in Northern Ireland, an ongoing and real-world risk factor to the post-conflict arrangements.

This point, on the risk factors of real-world concerns to the stability of peace from the context of Brexit, underlines the significance to the vulnerable elements, which encompasses "*the particular 'demographics and divisions"* of citizens whose role ensures the continued support for the consented arrangements. Therefore, Brexit from this evidence perspective acts in a way that risks the continued support of the institutions, tolerances, and acceptance of opposed constitutional preferences, which therefore risks the fragile balance of day-to-day maintenance of complex perspectives.

Source Title: *Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland', and Canavan, Miceal, and Oguzhan Turkoglu. 'Effect of Group Status and Conflict on National Identity: Evidence from the Brexit Referendum in Northern Ireland and Murphy, Mary C. 'Northern Ireland and Brexit: Where Sovereignty and Stability Collide?' Journal of Contemporary European Studies 29, no. 3 (3 July 2021):* [186] [187] [188] (Appendix L/M)

Figure 11

Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland',

The recognition of sovereignty over Northern Ireland, internationally, and within Ireland, has shifted in the aftermath of the 2016 Brexit referendum. The framework that governs this relationship between Ireland, the UK and Northern Ireland was redefined with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in 1998. In the altered political circumstances of the Brexit negotiations, this redefinition has produced unanticipated consequences.

Figure 11: 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland', 'Effect of Group Status and Conflict on National Identity: Evidence from the Brexit Referendum in Northern Ireland', Etc.

[186] Eileen Connolly and John Doyle, 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2019): 217–33, https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2019.30.13.

[187] Miceal Canavan and Oguzhan Turkoglu, 'Effect of Group Status and Conflict on National Identity: Evidence from the Brexit Referendum in Northern Ireland', *Journal of Peace Research* 60, no. 6 (1 November 2023): 921–34, https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221111824.

[188] Mary C. Murphy, 'Northern Ireland and Brexit: Where Sovereignty and Stability Collide?', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 29, no. 3 (3 July 2021): 405–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2021.1891027.

First, it underpinned the high level of support given to the Irish government and to the provisions of the GFA by the EU as an institution, and by EU member states, manifested in the refusal of the EU to negotiate a land border on the island of Ireland. For the UK this was an unforeseen outcome as its negotiation strategy was based on the EU prioritising the importance of accessing the UK economy over Irish claims under the GFA. Second, the undermining of the political stability and relative consensus created by the GFA has led to a new discourse on Irish unity across the island of Ireland, including on the potential shape of a new Ireland.

Figure 11.1

Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland'

One consequence of the 2016 referendum in the UK on membership of the European Union and the subsequent negotiation process has been a significant shift in discourse on Irish unity in the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. This change has been visible in the mainstream media, on social media and in the findings of opinion polls. This shift has been driven by the undermining of the status quo that the Good Friday Agreement embodied, and by the perceived damage that the re-imposition of a land border on the island would do to the economy north and south. The tangible negative impacts which have shaped this debate have been re-enforced by a shift in the way in which sovereignty over Northern Ireland is recognised internationally.

This is demonstrated by the EU's collective opposition to a negotiated deal that included the imposition of a land border on the island of Ireland, based on its support for the provisions of the GFA. The question of sovereignty over Northern Ireland, and the nature of that sovereignty, has been fundamental to Ireland's relationship with Northern Ireland and with the UK government since the partition of the island in 1920.

Until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the Irish government faced an international consensus that the UK government was the sovereign power in Northern Ireland and that the Irish government had no role in the territory. As an international treaty, the Good Friday Agreement redefined this relationship, however, the full significance of this redefinition only became apparent during the period of negotiations between the UK and the EU that followed the Brexit referendum.

Figure 11.2

Canavan, Miceal, and Oguzhan Turkoglu. 'Effect of Group Status and Conflict on National Identity.

For many people national identity forms an intrinsic part of how they understand themselves and their place in the world. This is further compounded where national identities are engaged as part of violent intergroup conflict. Identities activated in enduring intergroup conflict seep into many aspects of daily life, shaping attitudes and behaviour. Research consistently highlights that conflict experience hardens identities and prolonged exposure to intractable conflict engenders antagonistic intergroup attitudes which persist long after intense conflict has abated.

Figure 11.3

As a result, individuals who grow up in the environment of ongoing intergroup conflict are shaped indelibly by this experience; it influences their attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and identity in enduring ways which are likely to persist into adulthood

(Therefore) Despite being a UK-wide referendum, Brexit became inextricably linked with British identity, as evidenced by the portmanteau Brexit (British-exit). Furthermore, while the vote was ostensibly a binary choice regarding membership of a supranational institution, it represented a contest over many other significant social, political, and economic issues. Leaving the EU is a profound constitutional change, removing or transforming many rights and obligations people have as citizens.

Figure 11.4

Murphy, Mary C. 'Northern Ireland and Brexit: Where Sovereignty and Stability Collide?'

Brexit lends new significance to old arguments around borders, identity and sovereignty, and is feeding the forces of contestation and change in Northern Ireland. The EU referendum vote and the tortuous attempts to extract the UK

from the EU revealed a pronounced disconnect between where difficulties in acknowledging and accommodating the distinctiveness of Northern Ireland's situation and its peace settlement were encountered.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 11.[189]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse in this evidence reasons Ireland's persistent yet understated stake in the political sphere concerning Northern Ireland and how Brexit has shifted this into an overt internal and external claim through '*altered political circumstances'* of Brexit. These alternative political circumstances reveal a clear shift in the political dynamics underpinning the region's stability. Furthermore, Figure 11's discourse argues that Brexit has created an international recognition of Ireland's stake in Northern Ireland by acknowledging a de facto '*redefining'* of the Good Friday Agreement, which has produced *unanticipated consequences*.

[189] Eileen Connolly and John Doyle, 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2019): 217–33, https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2019.30.13.

Miceal Canavan and Oguzhan Turkoglu, 'Effect of Group Status and Conflict on National Identity: Evidence from the Brexit Referendum in Northern Ireland', *Journal of Peace Research* 60, no. 6 (1 November 2023): 921–34, https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221111824.

Mary C. Murphy, 'Northern Ireland and Brexit: Where Sovereignty and Stability Collide?', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 29, no. 3 (3 July 2021): 405–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2021.1891027.

Therefore, as it is widely accepted that Brexit has led to undermining political stability and the relative consensus achieved post-agreement, this would reveal a further vulnerability to the post-agreement peace consensus on such terms. Thus, reigniting historically divisive issues, as the evidence argues, which happened during Brexit, where renewed discourse on constitutional matters emerged.

As a result, this example from Figure 11 reaffirms the challenging consequences of a breakdown in consensus (from the political actor to the engaged citizen perspective) and political stability.

Furthermore, Figure 11.2 discourse argues that within the political context, the potency of hardened identity pertains to the post-conflict region and is intrinsic to understanding attitudes and antagonistic behaviour. As a result, such a shift in international and bilateral public understandings of the respective roles over Northern Ireland, from the political (linked to the sensitive cultural) rather than the legal perspective, presents a stability concern. Figure 11.3 demonstrates this by arguing that Brexit became linked to the attitudes of British Identities (a highly contentious issue in Northern Ireland, with potent historical emotions, with present-day implications) across Britain, with Brexit (British Exit) including in Northern Ireland.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The contextual discourse within this selected evidence argues that the political shifts away from the historically established status quo over the land border on the island of Ireland (during Brexit) and the shifting dual jurisdictional claims over sovereignty for the region.

This is the fundamental element of the relationships between the involved actors post-conflict and is a concerning element when considering the impact on the resilience of the existing peace for the region.

Therefore, this dynamic reinforces the previously examined argument that competing complex shifts on specific issues (separate from the relationship factor) away from the envisioned context for peace negotiated with the Good Friday Agreement independently destabilise with a negative impact on the peaceful status quo. However, when considering the actor dynamics over this stress and on this specific part, of sovereignty and identity politics within the context of Brexit raises a concerning context of a binary choice that surpasses sensitive individual social, political and economic decisions. This is wrapped up in enduring attitudes, beliefs and behaviours shaped by the past, as Figure 11.3 affirms '*individuals who grow up in the environment of ongoing intergroup conflict are shaped indelibly by this experience*.' and endure through this contested context. Thus, shaping the future management of peace.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

This discourse alludes to the Good Friday Agreement's underlying provisions for self-determination, the potential for a united Ireland, and its multiple actor influenced contentious events. Moreover, this has become a mythos that has bound together cooperation within a peaceful arrangement for significant actors involved in the peace of Northern Ireland post the Good Friday Agreement and is further analysed in stress 4.

Furthermore, as Figure 11.4 references, the significance of this risk factor's impact on historical arguments, such as the border and its relationship to identity and sovereignty, references a real-world risk factor of re-negotiating the border arrangements, which have been opened due to Brexit.

Moreover, it is clear from the discourse articulated from the evidence in Figure 11, as a result of the Brexit and post-Brexit events, there is a risk of future uncertainty over the issue of the border. This is as a result of future political, societal, constitutional and economic disruptions, (such as those which required the Windsor framework and resulted in a breakdown of unionist participation in power sharing) which given its significance in the debate of identity and sovereignty in Northern Ireland, results in a concern for overall future stability.

Ultimately, this occurs, not exclusively because of the risk factors of Brexit, but is developed by the events of Brexit, which will influence and shape the future risk factors that involve this issue.

STRESS 3 PART 1: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

A unique reality in Northern Ireland, centred around the political and social makeup, founded with division, provides a unique vulnerability to maintaining stability and securing peace in Northern Ireland when faced with the stress factor of Brexit for the region. Raw differences over identity and sovereignty fuel this vulnerability, as well as the cooperation and compromise that manage this vulnerability in post-conflict Northern Ireland.[190] Furthermore, there is agreement from this evidence that this reality has prompted a challenging period for Northern Ireland, as the specific context in Northern Ireland during Brexit has had to be absorbed. Additionally, the vulnerability has extended to the sensitive constitutional and jurisdictional questions that disturb the post-conflict status quo, such as the influence of Ireland's (and the broader EU collective's) interests over the region within this context.

Furthermore, this evidence has argued that Brexit highlighted the societal and political divides in Northern Ireland. This occurred with votes falling primarily along party/ politically expressible sectarian lines, such as in sectarian-dominated areas, with nationalists voting remain and unionists voting leave in these areas. Furthermore, this was represented at the party-political level amongst the major parties of Sinn Féin (Remain) and the DUP (Leave).[191]

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[190] Orla Muldoon, 'The Damages of Brexit in Northern Ireland', accessed 2 November 2024, https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/damages-brexit-northern-ireland.

[191] 'House of Lords - Brexit: Devolution - European Union Committee', accessed 26 October 2024, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldeucom/9/906.htm.

Just as power-sharing structures explored in the previous chapter have an inherent classification along historical dividing lines, so did Brexit, which exacerbated divisions over sensitive constitutional matters. It is also clear that the unexpected, although argued as a necessary (by some) element of Irish involvement in Northern Ireland during and after the referendum, has been a potentially significant factor in the instability in the status quo that had been relatively achieved post-conflict in the region.

Whereby concerns over identity, sovereignty, and political opinions partly and definitively defined by conflict have been tested with significance in Northern Ireland, as supported by the conclusions of the House of Lords, EU select committee report post-referendum.[192] As a result, the evidence for this, the analysis of this part of the stress to the peace in the region through the impact of Brexit, clearly contextualises the complexities in managing such stress from a stability perspective, establishing the foundations for the subsequent parts of the third stress.

Finally, the key element of this evidence regarding the stability of the peace in Northern Ireland is to what extent Brexit has disrupted the status quo that tolerates differences of identity and sovereignty in a managed constitutional settlement without conflicting jurisdiction.

Brexit has significantly upset this arrangement, with lasting impacts on the divisive future arrangements for Northern Ireland, (such as the flux nature of border arrangements, governance of the Northern Ireland institutions and economic autonomy) given the explored effects of the referendum on the status quo regarding conditions that underpin the post-conflict agreements and

[192] Ibid

Catriona Shelly and Orla Muldoon, 'The Damages of Brexit in Northern Ireland: A Social Psychological Analysis', *The Psychologist* 35 (1 May 2022): 24–27. P.25

cooperation.[193] In this introductory submission of evidence for Brexit as a stress to the stability of peace in Northern Ireland, it has become apparent that Brexit is uniquely placed to test the vulnerabilities which are based on sensitive understandings of deeply held social, economic, political and constitutional matters in Northern Ireland, with long-lasting impacts.[194]

Therefore, these findings demonstrate how a real-world external shock (Brexit) tests the fundamental contentions issues in Northern Ireland, which have been contextualised in Chapter 2s findings, of institutional, behavioural, cultural, and socially challenging vulnerabilities. Thus, demonstrating the impact of unexpected events on a delicate post-conflict settlement in Northern Ireland, and proving it as a politically moral necessity, the need for further engagement and reform to address these matters.

[193] JESS SARGEANT, 'The Windsor Framework', 27 March 2023, https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/windsor-framework.

[194] Jonathan Stevenson, 'Does Brexit Threaten Peace in Northern Ireland?', *Survival* 59, no. 3 (4 May 2017): 111–28, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2017.1325606. P.115

PART 2: THE DETERIORATION OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND RELATIONS (BI-LATERALLY AND AS IRELAND BEING AN EXTENSION OF THE EU) DURING BREXIT AND ITS AFTERMATH UNDERMINED THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT, WHICH IMPACTED THE STABILITY OF PEACE.

Source Title: Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland' and Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Northern Ireland Peace Process'.[195] [196] APPENDIX L

Figure 12

'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland'

The peace process was facilitated by the integration of the Irish state and the UK in the EU, including the open borders and cross-border co-operation, which is part of that wider EU integration process. Although as an institution the EU had not played a substantial role during the conflict nor been involved in the peace negotiations,20 the structural organisation of the EU and its policy framework was essential to the operation of the GFA, as it underpinned all aspects of cross-border co-operation.

Figure 12: Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland' and Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Northern Ireland Peace Process'.

[195] Eileen Connolly and John Doyle, 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2019): 217–33, https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2019.30.13.

[196] Eileen Connolly and John Doyle, 'Brexit and the Northern Ireland Peace Process', in *The Law & Politics of Brexit: Volume III: The Framework of New EU-UK Relations*, ed. Federico Fabbrini (Oxford University Press, 2021), 0, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192848468.003.0004.

The EU recognised and also financially supported the peace process and peace agreement, giving ongoing support to post-conflict reconstruction, reconciliation and cross-border initiatives. As a result of this ongoing process the level of economic and social integration between the

two parts of the island was positively transformed in terms of economic integration, the rationalisation of some public services and crucially the free movement of people.

Figure 12.1

The support given by the EU, and the governments of its member states, during the Brexit negotiation process, for Ireland's demand that there a should be no hard border on the island, was a demonstration of the impact of the change in the recognition of sovereignty embedded in the Good Friday Agreement. The support Ireland received was not just the expected level of support for a member state against a state in the process of leaving, it was strongly based on the recognition of the rights of the Irish government, and of the nationalist population of Northern Ireland, under the Good Friday Agreement, and it reflects the EU's own self-image as a peace-building organisation.

From this perspective Northern Ireland was no longer purely a domestic matter for the UK, and although it was still recognised as the sovereign government, this sovereignty was qualified. Compared to the historic pattern of international and European lack of engagement, from Ireland's independence to the Good Friday Agreement, this was a significant shift in the international recognition of sovereignty over Northern Ireland.

(Therefore) The Brexit negotiations demonstrate how perceptions of sovereignty and international practice on sovereignty related issues are strongly contextual.

Figure 12.2

'Brexit and the Northern Ireland Peace Process'

Although the EU had not been a significant actor in the peace process, its institutional framework underpinned the Agreement. Key to this was the absence of a visible border on the island in the context of the Single Market. While

not without problems, the Agreement successfully put in place a fragile balance that facilitated greater cross-border integration and the emergence of 'normal life'. This balance was disturbed by the Brexit debate, the referendum, and the negotiations that followed, as on the island of Ireland the issue of the border and the relationship between the two parts of the island was inevitably part of this debate.

Figure 12.3

It (The Irish Government) was also concerned that the combination of the disruption to all-island economic integration14 and the loss of EU subsidies15 would have a significant impact on the weak economy of Northern Ireland, which together with the failure of the peace process that a hard border would symbolize, would have serious consequences for political stability.

Figure 12.4

Brexit broke the fragile political balance that was put in place by the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, and while the Protocol preserves the integrity of that Agreement, the debate on Brexit and the process of the negotiation of the TCA have both deepened and shifted political cleavages in Northern Ireland. Even if the Protocol can function smoothly and without disputes, the clock cannot be reset, and politically the island of Ireland is a different place in 2021 compared to 2016, prior to the Brexit referendum.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 12.[197]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse in this evidence argues that a key pillar in the successful management of peace in Northern Ireland contains several underpinnings, yet unseen aspects. Figure 12 clarifies the EU's perceived role in this work; despite not being directly involved in the peace negotiations, its role in facilitating the success of the negotiated peace would become a significant element in the UK withdrawal from the body post-2016. This challenges a substantial part of the Brexit debate where such claims were disputed but countered by supporters, who recognise EU efforts in the operation of peace, '*in cross border co-operation, financial support, and economic and social integration*'. Given the fractious nature of the debate surrounding membership of the EU, such benefits and their respective effects on the peace in Northern Ireland demonstrate the broader role of supranational partners in the operational success of peace in Northern Ireland.

[197] Eileen Connolly and John Doyle, 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2019): 217–33, https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2019.30.13.

Eileen Connolly and John Doyle, 'Brexit and the Northern Ireland Peace Process', in *The Law & Politics of Brexit: Volume III: The Framework of New EU-UK Relations*, ed. Federico Fabbrini (Oxford University Press, 2021), 0, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192848468.003.0004.

During Brexit, this was relevant especially around social integration, which became more evident because of the stress of Brexit. Thus, raising uncertainty over its future availability highlights these actors' key role in the region.

Furthermore, this evidence argues that Brexit has initially and continually challenged the consensus established in the Good Friday Agreement that the affairs of Northern Ireland are solely the constitutional affairs of the United Kingdom's internal union. This is highlighted in the discourse emphasising the EU Brexit ideological perspective, by reasoning in Figure 12.1 "*Northern Ireland was no longer purely a domestic matter for the UK,".*

This is important as it builds on the previous point of Brexit and widens the field of responsible parties for the success of operational peace in the region. Therefore, as Figure 12.1 contends, the European Union provided unprecedented and *unexpected* support for the member state of Ireland and interested parties such as nationalist citizens in Northern Ireland. Thus, reflecting the efforts of external actors (in this context, the EU) in support of the intentions of preserving the institutions of peace in the region. This means international practice for sustaining peace is context-dependent, explicitly on the relations between the involved actors. Consequently, it is revealed that since 2016, the delicate balance of the status quo in Northern Ireland has depended on a covert element: the continued cooperation of the ideologically invested actors in its success. Therefore, this means that a deterioration in such partnerships could undermine the operational success of the peace in Northern Ireland, reopen historically fraught issues such as sovereignty (internal and external facing), and weaken the enshrined tenets such as citizen rights that were won in the post-conflict negotiated settlements.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

From the analysis of the stress of Brexit to the Northern Ireland peace, the context of Brexit is an all-encompassing element of specific, detailed points. The discourse from this evidence, such as Figure 12.2, argues that within the Brexit context, the Northern Ireland peace agreement maintained a fragile balance of competing visions that manifested in the invisible border with its eventual reduced trading and social friction on the island of Ireland. Such an arrangement resolved previously explored concerns from the nationalist opinion of deeper ties and cooperation between the north of Ireland and the Republic (Strand 2 of the Good Friday Agreement) in an arrangement that, according to this evidence, facilitated collaboration and the emergence of normality.

However, the impact of Brexit is highlighted in the discourse by describing the '*disturbance' to this balance* (previous evidence has also argued to involve competing communities' cooperation through power sharing and strand three cooperation). Furthermore, throughout the Brexit context of the debate, referendum and subsequent negotiations, a lasting disturbance (that cannot be reset according to Figure 12.4) to the fragile nature of post-conflict agreement, on a crucial factor of the relationship between the two parts of the island as well as the 'super' actors involved (GB for NI) and (EU for IRE) occurred. Thus, highlighting the point that the fundamentals of partnership between actors, which are foundational to peace, are even more crucial in a destabilised political context.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

The discourse in this evidence describes a singular real-world risk that threatens the sustainability of peace in Northern Ireland due to Brexit. Figure 12.1 argues that, historically, the EU played a role in the operational success of the negotiated peace in Northern Ireland. One of the ways this occurred was through EU subsidies (including the PEACE programmes) that Figure 12.3 argues have played a significant role in impacting the *weak* Northern Ireland economy, which, conversely, would signify a failure of the peace process in the event of any degradation to that investment.[198] Consequently, it is crucial to note that this demonstrates the wide-reaching political links to other areas of enquiry, such as the economic element that Brexit encapsulates.

Therefore, it is clear Brexit's destabilising effects on the confidence for peace in the region are not limited to the social integration effect of a hard border nor the political degradation of the spirit of cooperation and partnership that underpinned the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent peace. This shows that from this evidence highlighting the socio-economic factor, the maintenance of the productive relationships that the relevant actors obtained pre-Brexit is vital for maintaining the peace investment offered for the region. Thus, this demonstrates how the destabilising effect of Brexit on peace in Northern Ireland is not resettable, as the context in which peace now operates continues to evolve within the new disputed arrangements.

[198] Katy Hayward and Mary C Murphy, 'The EU's Influence on the Peace Process and Agreement in Northern Ireland in Light of Brexit', *Ethnopolitics* 17, no. 3 (2018): 276–91. P.285.

Source Title: Kearney, Jarlath, Peter Shirlow, and Etain Tannam. 'Partition to Partnership to Brexit: Strategically Reinvigorating the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement' and 'The UK Government's Northern Ireland Policy after Brexit: A Retreat to Unilateralism and Muscular Unionism'.[199] [200] (APPENDIX N)

Figure 13.

The first page of the Agreement lays out the aim of reconciliation in six paragraphs. Paragraph two states: 'we firmly dedicate ourselves to the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust'.5 Paragraph five states: 'we will endeavour to strive in every practical way towards reconciliation and rapprochement'.6 The Agreement recognises that resolving Northern Ireland's conflict requires dealing with the 'totality of relationships' across the three strands.7 The British-Irish relationship was seen as crucial because both governments, by acting as de facto guarantors for their respective communities (the British government for unionists and the Irish government for nationalists), would lessen insecurity and thereby enable cooperation and mutual compromise.8 British Irish intergovernmentalism implies that, acting in good faith, both governments together manage the joined-up framework that provides balanced outcomes and parity between Northern Ireland's traditional identities.

Figure 13: Kearney, Jarlath, Peter Shirlow, and Etain Tannam. 'Partition to Partnership to Brexit: Strategically Reinvigorating the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement' and 'The UK Government's Northern Ireland Policy after Brexit.

[199] Jarlath Kearney, Peter Shirlow, and Etain Tannam, 'Partition to Partnership to Brexit: Strategically Reinvigorating the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement', *The RUSI Journal* 167, no. 3 (27 October 2022): 14–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2022.2124078.

[200] Conor J. Kelly and Etain Tannam, 'The UK Government's Northern Ireland Policy after Brexit: A Retreat to Unilateralism and Muscular Unionism', *Journal of European Public Policy* 30, no. 11 (2 November 2023): 2275–2302, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2023.2210186.

Figure 13.1

Institutionalised Ireland UK cooperation became an important cornerstone of the peace process and the 1998 Agreement, as evidenced by how the overarching British-Irish Agreement – as an international intergovernmental treaty – formally wrapped around the 1998 peace agreement. The approach encapsulated the need to enshrine institutionally and legally the 'totality of relations'.12 Under the Agreement, the three strands are interdependent and interlocking: and that in particular the functioning of the Assembly and the North/South Council are so closely interrelated that the success of each depends on that of the other.

Figure 13.2

The UK Government's Northern Ireland Policy after Brexit:

A core impact of the Brexit referendum result was a sharp decline in British Irish cooperation. Since the referendum, the absolutist definition of sovereignty adopted by the Conservative government (Keating, 2022), has contradicted the 1998 Agreement's multi-level and shared approach. The unilateralism of the UK government from 2016 to 2022 directly contravened Strand Three as a pillar of the British–Irish partnership which protects the 1998 Agreement. It also created a reciprocal (lasting at least until 2020) adversarial response from the Irish government. The Dublin government under Leo Varadkar was clearly appalled at the reversal of bilateralism and at the British bargaining approach to UK-EU negotiations.

Thus, a cycle of adversarial relations occurred, similar to the early Troubles and a core pillar of the peace process was undermined.

Figure 13.3

'In the past, the role of developing ideas, fostering debate, and promoting and brokering compromise has been taken by a close partnership of the British and Irish governments'. A key method of avoiding crises in Northern Ireland is to return to a long-term partnership approach to policy. The 1980s onward demonstrates that institutionalised British–Irish cooperation helps policy learning, whereby appropriate lessons are 'drawn about the specific type of failures involved in past, present, and future policies and policy proposals'

Figure 13.4

In future, partnership with the Irish government in creating policy in Northern Ireland and using the Agreement's bilateral institutions fully will be required to prevent more crises like the Irish border or Protocol disputes. Particularly if there is a referendum on unification, but also to deal with the many aspects of Brexit that will continue to affect practical life on the island.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 13.[201]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse in this evidence argument is rooted in the discourse of the Good Friday Agreement, which is applied in the context of Brexit. This argument that the evidence advocated is specifically focused on the relationships that underpin the agreement and how vital they are to its success and the peace in Northern Ireland, working optimally for those it intends to serve. Given the flux nature of the involved parties' relationships during the Brexit events, any deviation from the principles of this matter (as per the agreement) would have significant consequences when assessing the stability and success of peace in Northern Ireland under this explored stress of Brexit.

As Figure 13 states, the agreement (acting as an international *intergovernmental treaty*, which denotes the importance of the multi-actor dynamic required for its success) dedicates itself to *'reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust*' whilst detailing *'the totality of relationships across three strands*'. This vital point makes clear that no one relationship can be disregarded when acting in the spirit of the agreement and the commitments of peace.

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[201] Jarlath Kearney, Peter Shirlow, and Etain Tannam, 'Partition to Partnership to Brexit: Strategically Reinvigorating the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement', *The RUSI Journal* 167, no. 3 (27 October 2022): 14–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2022.2124078.

Conor J. Kelly and Etain Tannam, 'The UK Government's Northern Ireland Policy after Brexit: A Retreat to Unilateralism and Muscular Unionism', *Journal of European Public Policy* 30, no. 11 (2 November 2023): 2275–2302, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2023.2210186.

Thus, revealing that the strains on Irish-British relations during Brexit, as argued in Figure 13.2, where there suffered a sharp decline in cooperation between the two parties, would strain the principles of the peace agreement by the removal of mutual trust, bilateral cooperation and the reversal of long-term partnerships in favour of *utilitarianism*.

This point is further explored in Figure 13.1's argument that the peace in Northern Ireland resulted in constitutional amendments (through British acts of parliament and amended clauses in the Irish constitution) for future management of the region in both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Therefore, demonstrating an interrelated dependence of both parties, constitutionally, something the event of Brexit provides a direct challenge to, which logically supports the reasoning that the consequence of Brexit leads to the reduction of such necessary and mandated cooperation between nominated actors. Thus, testing the commitments of peace resulted in increased division in Northern Ireland.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The discourse in Figure 13.3 argues from a unique perspective on a contextual basis, looking at the relationship between the previous success of the British-Irish relationship, safeguarding peace in the region, and looking to the future following the consequential cross-issue impacts of Brexit. When the political context between Britain and Ireland allows for the '*development of ideas, fostering debate and brokering compromise,'* there exists a policy space for progress. However, the evidence in this section suggests that the opposite is true, with consequences specific to Northern Ireland, as Brexit shows.

Therefore, moving forward, this discourse advocates a return to the relative success of the past and appropriate lessons from the failures of the past are learned. This proves that managing the political context is undeniably important when it impacts the bilateral relations of the two signatories of the Good Friday Agreement. Thus, based on this evidence, the costs of failure in this regard are evident, as a return to an actor-influenced crisis in Northern Ireland is best avoided.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

The evidence in 13.4 argues that the potential future border poll on the island of Ireland has the potential to strain the bilateral partnership of Britain and Ireland, similar to the events of Brexit. The previously discussed evidence of Figure 13 highlights the divergence from the spirit and operation of the Good Friday Agreement, such as the provisions of the *Agreement's* strand three *bilateral institutions*. Therefore, in the event of such a strain, this evidence reinforces the argument that this partnership is vital to the sustainability of successful peace in the region. Furthermore, significant past events have produced lessons to be learned to strengthen collaboration during difficult moments and avoid repeating the negative consequences, such as the decline of cooperation between both actors during Brexit.

Therefore, by raising the concern over the potential future strain in the face of a highly significant border poll, the evidence reveals an ongoing vulnerability to the resilience of peace in Northern Ireland in this area of partnership and cooperation.

Finally, through this analysis, the vulnerable nature of the bilateral partnership between Britain and Ireland becomes a potential variable that constitutes part of the specific factors that affect the stability of peace, which is fully explored in Chapter 3, Figure 20.

STRESS 3 PART 2: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

This section's discourse has argued for the necessary continued cooperation between Ireland and the United Kingdom, which has been recognised by international actors for the first recorded time during Brexit, as argued in Figure 12. This reasoning is supported within the primary literature of the European Union, where it claims, *'The UK's obligations in international law, via its commitments to uphold the Good Friday Agreement, are owed to Ireland. A breach is also a breaking of the commitment to the people of Northern Ireland to uphold the arrangements contained in the Good Friday Agreement*[202]*'.* It is clear from this argument that the obligation of commitment to the corporation detailed within the Good Friday Agreement is externally recognised, thus legitimising the importance of such obligations for all involved.

Additionally, the evidence argues that, during Brexit, the specific issue of continued investment in Northern Ireland transcended the direct economic impact and directly influenced attitudes toward peace and continued confidence in the political solution. However, such an arrangement results from the careful diplomatic relations between the involved actors, including the European Union, which has become strained due to the long-lasting effects of the Brexit events.

Figure 13 expands on these points by emphasising the impact of a relationship deterioration on the spirit and operational success of the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent peace agreements. Furthermore, it argues that given the makeup of the agreement, no one relationship bound by the agreement takes precedence.

[202] Jonathan Tonge, 'The Impact and Consequences of Brexit for Northern Ireland', n.d. p.583.

Therefore, the evidence argument that Brexit led to a deterioration of cooperation between Britain and Ireland strains the principles of the agreement and undermines the operational success of Strand 3 of the Good Friday Agreement. This point is supported by clause two of the British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC) section of Strand 3 in the Belfast Good Friday agreement, which states that the conference will act as the operational mechanism to bring together the promotion of bilateral cooperation at all levels of mutual interest within the competencies of both governments.[203] This clause is further supported by clause 5, which specifically references the special interest of Northern Ireland as it pertains to mutual concerns, including non-devolved matters. This, therefore, directly implicates the bilateral relationship between the two parties in the region's peace through this mechanism, thus removing any doubt over its importance to the stability of the peace when faced with matters beyond the devolved level of governance.

Furthermore, this argument is applied within Figure 13 to the future scenario of a border poll, which reinforces the importance of this specific element to the Brexit stress on the peace in the region. Given the results of the multi-dimensional strain to peace during Brexit, such vulnerabilities that have been explored could reasonably be seen as a concern when faced with a comparable real-world event. In this evidence, the decline of cooperation between both actors against the intentions of the peace agreement provides a potential repeatable lesson in the event of another significant strain on peace.

Finally, the key question is whether the evidence, arguments and analysis presented in this section support the central argument of this thesis, which argues that the peace in Northern Ireland is fragile and susceptible to real-world shocks across multiple political, social, and historical topics.

[203] 'The Belfast Agreement', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-belfast-agreement. P.15.

The argument is valid as it has explored the effects of removing mutual trust and reduced cooperation between Dublin and London and regional political actors, leading to the threat of unilateral action over implementing post-Brexit arrangements. Consequently, this would undermine Strand Three institutions of the NI peace, thus highlighting the institutional vulnerability to political bilateral strains between the core national actors who guarantee the peace.

Ultimately, these findings highlight the essential interconnecting actor relationships mandated by the peace agreement, which go beyond the power-sharing institutions. Thus, just as Stress One exposed the vulnerability in the institutional foundation of power sharing, these findings have exposed how reduced trust and cooperation between Great Britain and Ireland (who are linked to power sharing through the relationships of Strands in the GFA) meaningfully impact the region's fragile post-conflict settlement. Consequently, affecting the region's political stability, through their embodiment of identity and impacting the social prosperity, explored in Stress 2 part 2, as evidenced by the social disorder (coupled with disenfranchisement of the political solutions) targeted at key actors during Brexit. Therefore, such findings reveal another crucial element of the peace settlement that isn’t immune to consequential shocks and instability for the region.

PART 3: THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL INSTABILITY AND FRAGMENTATION OF UNIONISM/UNIONIST'S SETTLEMENT POST BREXIT, WITH WIDE REACHING EFFECTS ON THE STABILITY OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE.

Source Title: Kelly, Conor J., and Etain Tannam. 'The Future of Northern Ireland: The Role of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement Institutions' and 'NORTHERN IRELAND'S 2022 ASSEMBLY ELECTION: OUTCOME AND IMPLICATIONS∗', n.d. [204] (Appendix O)

Figure 14.

The Future of Northern Ireland

Since the 2016 Brexit referendum, a series of crises has gripped Northern Ireland's politics. This has had a destabilising effect across society, which has arguably been felt most acutely by political unionism.

A SERIES OF crises in recent years have destabilised Northern Irish politics. Brexit is, of course, the core source of instability. Since late 2019, unionism has been particularly affected, as the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol was negotiated and took effect. The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (B/GFA), although 'a 'remarkable' achievement, has been 'tarnished in execution' and not fully brought about the reconciliation and stability it set out to achieve.1 Though cultural and political grievances between communities in these islands subsided in its aftermath, it has been regarded by many unionists as not adequately serving their aims.

Figure 14: Kelly, Conor J., and Etain Tannam. 'The Future of Northern Ireland: The Role of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement Institutions' and 'NORTHERN IRELAND'S 2022 ASSEMBLY ELECTION: OUTCOME AND IMPLICATIONS

[204] Conor J. Kelly and Etain Tannam, 'The Future of Northern Ireland: The Role of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement Institutions', *The Political Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2023): 85–94, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13172.

Since the peace process, a culture war began to emerge between unionists who felt their Britishness was not being respected and republicans who felt unionists were reluctant to embrace parity of esteem.

Brexit greatly exacerbated underlying unionist tensions and insecurity by precipitating calls for a 'border poll' on Irish unification, principally by Sinn Féin, but also from a host of civic organisations and moderate nationalist leaders. It is seen to contribute to a destabilisation of unionism.

Figure 14.1

The culmination of the meandering Brexit withdrawal negotiations was the Ireland/ Northern Ireland Protocol. Some unionist politicians (including two former First Ministers and other prominent politicians) applied for judicial review of the Protocol, which they alleged conflicts with the Act of Union 1800, as it breaks the intra-UK customs union, and the B/GFA, because it undermines the principle of consent.

Figure 14.2

Thus, Brexit and the Protocol have both caused and compounded a sense of crisis within unionism. The UK government's confrontational stance about implementing the Protocol provides some respite for unionists, but only reassures fears in the short term and on a single issue. Arguably, the more fundamental causes of anxiety can be traced back much further, as unionism emerged from the peace process deeply divided on whether to support the Agreement's accommodations. Since that time, a narrative has taken hold in some quarters that the Agreement's provisions went too far and constituted a sell-out to nationalism, and the republican movement in particular.

Figure 14.3

The perception of unionism as the losers of the political process has re-emerged against a backdrop of failing to maintain its majority status at the 2017 and 2019 Assembly and Westminster elections.

The growing ambivalence (and at times hostility) towards the Agreement is worrying, given it was negotiated as a delicate balance offering permanent protections for both communities' identities, as well as incentives for both to sign the Agreement

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Figure 14.4

The central dilemma that political will is necessary in the first place to develop the B/GFA institutions is difficult to resolve. . It is not that the Agreement was misconceived, but that it was never properly implemented. Brexit shows that its robust implementation is now more important than ever. The crises which have gripped Northern Ireland are being most acutely felt by political unionists, who feel the Agreement has been used to advance nationalists' interests at their expense since 1998. The deep grievances over the Protocol and the manner in which it was negotiated are the latest and most prominent manifestation of this sentiment.

Figure 14.5

The desire for functioning institutions should be separated from the unification debate. The Agreement provides a framework for stability within the current constitutional arrangement. Linking the Agreement to a unification agenda only lessens the chance of its creative development and unionist engagement.

Figure 14.5.1

'NORTHERN IRELAND'S 2022 ASSEMBLY ELECTION: OUTCOME AND IMPLICATIONS

For the first time in Northern Ireland's history, Sinn Fein won the largest number of seats in the 90- member Assembly, surpassing the DUP. Decreased support for the DUP appears to be driven by dissatisfaction with the party's leadership on Brexit and internal party divisions.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 14.[205]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse in this evidence argues that the crises which have gripped Northern Ireland's politics during Brexit have destabilised political unionism. Furthermore, it is argued that Brexit '*exacerbated unionist tensions and insecurity*,' revealing vital points. Firstly, this evidence challenges the consensus that the political solution, given its preferential reputation as a *remarkable achievement,* is immune to destabilising tension internally, which impacts the external stability of peace in the region. In this example, unionists have a perceived destabilising effect of a political crisis that the political solutions haven't managed to mitigate. Figure 14.1 discourse articulates this by describing the problems unionists need to reconcile, the consequences of Brexit, and the historically *sacred* act of the Union of 1800. Thus, eroding the community's '*principle right of consent'* over its status. This is a vital and valid concern over the stability of the ongoing peace in Northern Ireland, as it highlights the present divisions rather than the intended reconciliation involving a *core* guarantor of the peace.

Secondly, as Figure 14 argues, sensitive interlinking real-world events, such as Brexit and a future hypothetical border poll, become a potent destabilising cocktail that requires careful handling.

[205] Conor J. Kelly and Etain Tannam, 'The Future of Northern Ireland: The Role of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement Institutions', *The Political Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2023): 85–94, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13172.

As the evidence reveals, Brexit has exacerbated existing insecurities and tensions between the two communities. When applied to the hypothetical border poll, it is clear this is not the optimal context for securing the stability objectives of the post-conflict peace, which, as Figure 14 argues, would aggravate the unionist tensions regarding the erosion of the '*respect for their Britishness*'. This occurs by advancing the nationalist campaign (to hold a border poll) and materially shifting the status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. Thus, this confirms the argument that the events of Brexit have destabilised the political guarantors of the peace in Northern Ireland, undermining the intended achievements of the negotiated peace agreements in Northern Ireland.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The contextual discourse within this evidence argues that Brexit has caused and compounded a crisis-led context within the Northern Ireland unionist political community, with little reassurance from the stance of the UK government other than the recent confrontational posture adopted in the short term.

This reveals a fundamental level of anxiety amongst Unionists within this explored political context, which, given the fluid nature of the stress of the events, is an indication of vulnerabilities within the peace in the region. Figure 14.2 argues that unionists operate in a context that encapsulates the divisive struggle over whether to support compromises and accommodations within the Belfast Good Friday agreement, especially when dealing with a politically, economically and socially divisive real-world event such as Brexit.

This is an essential point because it demonstrates that when faced with challenging circumstances, the compromises and accommodations made in the name of peace do not always endure amongst everybody (especially by hardliners who believe the negotiations were too compromising) in a complex context.

This point is further explored in Figure 14.3, which argues that Unionists perceive themselves as the losers of the political process, which, when confronted with a divisive and challenging context such as Brexit, produces a level of hostility towards the agreement that encapsulates peace and its institutions. This is incredibly concerning and alludes to a destabilising effect that challenges the stability of peace within the explored context, which would require careful handling owing to the sensitivities of the legitimate feelings and concerns by a core guarantor of the peace agreement, in this case, the Unionist community. Therefore, through this analysis of the accepted losing assessment of peace from a core guarantor, this becomes a potential variable that constitutes part of the specific factors that affect the peace's stability, which is fully explored in Chapter 3, the Figure 20 framework.

Finally, it is argued in Figure 14.4 that this evolved context during Brexit has a damaging effect on the operational success of the peace in the region by undermining the work of the peace institutions that require the political will of the now *deeply aggrieved* party. This is a concern for the stability of the peace, and the events of this context during Brexit show a diminished effectiveness of the peace institutions. Consequently, this evidence discourse reveals a context that questions the stability of the intentions, spirit, operational effectiveness and sustainability of the work of the political peace in Northern Ireland when faced with a key actor's *ambivalence* to this political reality. This ultimately serves as a key reminder that such ambivalence and negative internal turmoil of a key actor (regardless of designation) has a profound destabilising effect.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

The discourse in this evidence refers to 2 real-world events that have links to the underlying stability of the Northern Ireland peace within the context of Brexit. Firstly, Figure 14.5.1 argues the consequences of the instability of Brexit and the impact on unionism translated to '*dissatisfaction'* from voters and towards the political leadership within the unionist community, as confirmed in the latest Northern Ireland assembly elections. This reveals the fragility within the mandate of the core community political grouping, which can lead to a more hardline approach (as occurred from key unionist representatives during Brexit) to the problems that threaten peace and stability. Thus, occurring as a response to voter dissatisfaction over such division, something that would move further away from the intended spirit of the peace agreement, which could not foresee such a scenario. Consequently, this reinforces the instability of the institutions and thus verifies the concern from the perspective of stability and operational success.

Finally, Figure 14.5 references the potential union debate in its evidence, which, as other evidence has done, poses questions about maintaining stability within this scenario. However, this evidence advances this argument by reorienting the discussion to the present-day challenges by stating an overemphasis on the border poll on the island of Ireland. This is *linked* as a solution to the perceived unrelated challenges the region currently faces. However, this is not conducive to the development of the idea nor unionist engagement on this and other matters that require sufficient cross-community engagement, which concurs with the stability framework, proven by the functioning institutions ('*within the current constitutional arrangement'*) as established by the agreement.

Therefore, this proves how easily discourse can shift from the focus of stability for the current peace to the ideological perspective as a preference over the former, without resolving the underlying cause of the present instability.

Source Title: Diamond, Patrick, and Barry Colfer. 'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?' and Newson, Nicola. 'Union of the United Kingdom: Under Stress?' and Hayward, K, 'Beyond Unionism versus Nationalism: The Rise of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland'. [206] [207] [208] (Appendix P)

Figure 15

'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?

The historic achievement of the B/GFA was that, for unionists, it normalised the position of NI within the UK; for nationalists, the Agreement essentially took the border out of the island of Ireland.

The impact of UK withdrawal from the EU on Irish unity? Without question, the 'hard' Brexit pursued by recent UK governments has served to bolster pro-Irish unity opinion in NI. The 2016 referendum has undermined the political cohesion of the Union

This hostility was fuelled by opposition to the introduction of a 'border in the Irish sea' that creates further barriers between GB and NI than existed prior to Brexit and the introduction of the TCA/NIP.

Figure 15: Diamond, Patrick, and Barry Colfer. 'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?' and Newson, Nicola. 'Union of the United Kingdom: Under Stress?' Etc.

[206] Patrick Diamond and Barry Colfer, 'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?', *The Political Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2023): 104–14, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13197.

[207] Nicola Newson, 'Union of the United Kingdom: Under Stress?', *House of Lords Library*, 16 June 2022, https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/union-of-the-united-kingdom-under-stress/.

[208] Hayward, K, 'Beyond Unionism versus Nationalism: The Rise of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland', *The Political Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (April 2020): 461–66, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12857.

Figure 15.1

Foster remarked that the imposition of a border in the Irish Sea was a 'blood red line' that was non-negotiable for unionists, representing an existential threat to their territorial and national identity. As such, Brexit has further undermined the pluralistic dimension of the B/GFA, inflicting a major shock on the institutions and processes underpinning NI's politics and on Irish-UK relations in general. That instability defines the context in which the conduct of a border poll would unfold.

Figure 15.2

'Union of the United Kingdom: Under Stress?'

". Under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, if the first minister resigns, the deputy first minister also ceases to hold office. Therefore, Mr Givan's resignation meant that Michelle O'Neill of Sinn Féin ceased to be deputy first minister. The Northern Ireland executive was no longer able to meet as it is chaired jointly by the first and deputy first ministers. Other executive ministers stayed in post, but they could not make decisions on contentious or cross-cutting issues. The move ultimately resulted in the Northern Ireland executive being unable to function fully in the run-up to the scheduled assembly elections in May 2022.

Explaining this stance to the assembly on 13 May 2022, Paul Givan stated that the "Irish Sea border has fundamentally undermined the Belfast Agreement [and] has changed our relationship with the United Kingdom". He said that his party had "received a mandate in the assembly election to remove the Irish Sea border" and that would need to be respected.

Figure 15.3

Posters appeared in loyalist areas threatening violence if the sea border is not removed and papers reported widely on simmering frustration among loyalist communities and risk of violence. The Loyalist Communities Council wrote to the Prime Minister to inform him that they had withdrawn their support of the Belfast Good Friday Agreement. Simmering tensions and frustration came to a head from the beginning of April 2021. There were unauthorised loyalist parades, some of which resulted in confrontation with the police, and some protests against the Protocol resulted in violent disturbances. The violence spread, and intensified as loyalist youths assaulted a press photographer and petrol bombed a bus in West Belfast. Police were assaulted with bottles, bricks, fireworks, and petrol bombs. By the end of the week, more than 88 officers had been injured. No doubt reflecting the sense of unrest in unionism, late Spring of 2021 featured an overhaul in the leadership of the two main unionist parties.

Figure 15.4

Even more fundamentally to many unionists, the Protocol is seen to shake the foundations of the UK itself. A judicial review on whether the Protocol breached the Act of Union of 1800 was taken by a coalition of unionists and pro-Brexit former MPs and MEPS. The judge ruled that, whilst the Protocol does conflict with the Act of Union, it does not breach it because the sovereign UK Parliament enacted the EU Withdrawal (Agreement) Act (2020), thus superseding parts of the Act of Union.45 This only confirmed the fears and suspicions of unionists – namely that the Protocol undermines Northern Ireland's place in the union, and that the UK Parliament and Government are acting to exacerbate this division.

Figure 15.5

The Brexit negotiations gave Unionists the opportunity to reassert the primacy of the link with the UK, and from this perspective their preference was for a land border on the island. As a result, they view the Protocol both as a defeat and a threat that Northern Ireland will inevitably slide towards a united Ireland.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 15.[209]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse in this evidence logically argues that given the original settlement the Good Friday/ Belfast agreement sought, which established the *'nominalising of NI position in the UK, for unionists'* as well as the removal of the border on the island of Ireland, post-conflict Northern Ireland would not have to manage this arrangement in peace times. However, it is clear from the evidence in Figure 15 that the (*hard*) Brexit events have *'undermined the political cohesion of the union'*; as a result, the political understanding over the political settlement established by the agreement has been disturbed. Such a disturbance has repercussions for the parties to the agreement, who have seen their acceptable status quo upset by external events. This is a crucial point when considering the impact of Brexit on the stability of peace in Northern Ireland, given that a core element of peace is the political understanding between two opposing (albeit increasingly nuanced) sides bound by elective '*political cohesion*'.

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[209] Patrick Diamond and Barry Colfer, 'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?', *The Political Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2023): 104–14, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13197.

Nicola Newson, 'Union of the United Kingdom: Under Stress?', *House of Lords Library*, 16 June 2022, https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/union-of-the-united-kingdom-under-stress/.

Hayward, K, 'Beyond Unionism versus Nationalism: The Rise of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland', *The Political Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (April 2020): 461–66, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12857.

Therefore, upsetting this arrangement undermines the external stability of the unionists' position within the United Kingdom. This is secured by the consent of the people, through a delicate relationship between unionists and the rest of the United Kingdom (akin to the delicate relationship between nationalists and the Republic of Ireland), which has been exposed during the events of Brexit. This is evidenced by the discourse referring to *hostility* between GB and NI unionists over the barrier of the border in the Irish Sea. Consequently, this disrupts the political cohesion, undermines peace and stability, and exposes the danger of stresses such as Brexit, which shift the agreed-upon position of those core parties of the peace agreements. Finally, the discourse in this evidence claims that the hostility between GB and the Unionist community has occurred because of a perceived yet arguably unintended '*bolstering of pro-Irish unity opinion'*, which is a sentiment directionally opposed to the Unionist *position* yet is partially the political supervisory responsibility of the United Kingdom. Therefore, a *bolstering* of this matter destabilises the *normalised position* of unionists in Northern Ireland post-conflict, is perceived as the consequence of the British Government's Brexit policy and further disrupts the relationship between these two core actors, with implications for the stability of the negotiated peace.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The contextually based discourse in this evidence is initially argued in Figure 15.1. The evidence remarks on the Unionists' resolute feelings in describing the *'blood red line'* in which they viewed the proposed border in the Irish Sea. This represents the emotional context that such issues have on the unionist community.

This context resulted in an unsatisfactory conclusion in the settlement they decried as a *red line*, which would be represented as an *'existential threat to territory and national identity'*. This is a crucial point from the perspective of stability of peace when considering the politically operational context, as it reveals the emotionally charged feeling that encapsulates the expressed issues within the stress of Brexit. Additionally, this evidence advances this deduction by signifying the future context in which a border poll would operate. Therefore, given the *shock* to the political institutions that *underpin* Northern Ireland politics, it is reasonable to conclude a similar effect in an equally emotionally charged stress to unionists in the region, such as a future border poll. Consequently, this evidence highlights the precarious context that Northern Ireland politics operates within, especially from the unionist perspective, as the events of Brexit have revealed.

Additionally, the contextual discourse in Figure 15.2 argues that the political contextual framework established by the Act of 1998 results in a *cessation* of cooperation when one side withdraws from the executive and the absence of decision-making on *contentious* and cross-community cutting issues. Given the wide-reaching impact of the events of Brexit and the emotion attached to unionists' dissatisfaction with the shift in political status from the agreed status quo, this reality appears to be an inevitable consequence of Brexit in Northern Ireland, thus destabilising the political settlement achieved post-conflict.

This is evident from the discourse of unionists expressed within this evidence, which decrees that the result of Brexit's Irish Sea border *undermines* the Belfast Agreement, in contrast to the political unionists' *mandate,* which resulted in the cessation of the operation of the Agreement's political institutions.

Consequently, it is clear from this discourse that the breakdown of cooperation from a core faction of the political will, which secures the peace in the region, resulted in an unsustainable, unstable political context during Brexit, with further (perceived *mandated*) destabilising repercussions on the devolved settlement. Thus, reinforcing historical views, and undermining the success of the political framework established through previous political agreements.

Therefore, the discourse in Figure 15.4 makes the argument that underscores the contextual reality that Brexit shocked unionists in Northern Ireland, which would implicate the stability of the peace in Northern Ireland. As Figure 15.4 argues, the negotiations of Brexit shook the union's foundations (rooted in the Act of Union 1800), which confirmed the *fears* of unionists in Northern Ireland. These fears that the stability of the unionists' position in the union has been eroded without consent, coupled with the complexity of this reality, are due to the British Government. Thus, weakening the relationship between the two is a *divisive* context for unionists, as the previous contextual analysis of Figure 15.2 shows, which has repercussions that impact the stability of the political framework of peace in the region. Consequently, this creates an unstable political context that the involved actors must manage.

Finally, this concern over consent for unionists reveals a potential variable that constitutes part of the specific factors that affect the peace's stability, which is fully explored in the results framework of Chapter 3, Figure 20.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

The discourse in this evidence references real-world risks to post-conflict arrangements. Firstly, Figure 15.3 references the events of April 2021, which publicised unionist/loyalist dissatisfaction with the events of Brexit due to *frustration* amongst *loyalist communities* with the risk of *violence*. This indicates how Brexit destabilised unionist cooperation with the political settlement and the shift away from the peace-building institutions towards the unstable alternative. This *simmering* of tension suggests a lack of acceptable resolution to the previously discussed concerns of the unionist community within the existing political context and the agreement's mechanisms to resolve such concerns.

Furthermore, the rejection of these mechanisms is clear as the discourse in Figure 15.3 refers to *unauthorised* parades and protests resulting in violent disturbances.

Additionally, the discourse in Figure 15.3 provides a detailed description of the most recent real-world threat to the stability of peace in the region by depicting the violent reaction from unionist communities in the spring of 2021 to the events of Brexit.

This potent discourse primarily outlines the ultimate consequences of the breakdown of the political institutions, the cost of ignoring the emotional connection a community has to their perceived constitutional settlement, the fragmentation of a community when faced with stress to the cohesion of peace operating in Northern Ireland, and the cumulative impact, this has on a fragile status quo. This is evident in Figure 15.3 discourse, which explains violent disturbances which are reminiscent of the historical instability in Northern Ireland, '*the spreading of intensified violence*'.

Ultimately, such discourse, which describes further disorder of '*assaults with bricks, fireworks and petrol bombs'*, serves as a reminder of the strength of feeling over these explored issues and the ramifications of mismanagement. Therefore, this episodic violence again carries a significant historical connotation of a time of instability and entrenched attitudes away from the political framework. Consequently, this attitude in Northern Ireland, away from the political framework, reinforces the contemporary importance of stability within the existing peace for Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, the discourse in Figure 15.3 refers to the real-world political risk to the stability of peace in Northern Ireland by referencing the political turmoil of the *overhaul* of political leadership during this period of *unrest for unionism*. Thus, referring to the real-world culmination of building the external fragmentation of Unionism/Unionist Settlement Post, Brexit has led to internal fragmentation electorally and politically, where a significant divergence from the Good Friday institutional framework has compounded instability with peace in Northern Ireland.

Finally, the discourse argues that Brexit provided a unique opportunity for unionists in Northern Ireland to *reassert* their *link* with the rest of the United Kingdom. Yet this concluded in a *defeat*, which is a serious concern for unionists, who have reservations about advancing their aims following the GFA agreement and believe their settlement is *under threat*, which has been argued in previous evidence discourse within this section. Furthermore, the *slide* towards a united Ireland confirms this fear of a real-world threat. As a result, it is evident from this evidence that unionists' dissatisfaction over the events of Brexit and their management risks the stability in the region from a constitutional and political point of view, as this evidence in Figure 15.5 explicitly references an economic perspective.

STRESS 3 PART 3: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

This section argues that through a complex political, social, economic and constitutional crisis in the region, political unionism in Northern Ireland has become destabilised with wide-reaching consequences. There is agreement across the evidence that this destabilisation has occurred due to arousing the internal divisions within unionism and stoking insecurity within the community during Brexit. Consequently, this has weakened unionist confidence within the political framework of the union and Northern Ireland's special arrangements, provoking an internal and external political crisis.

Firstly, the diverse sources of evidence within Figure 14 argue that the achievements of the Good Friday agreement do not prevent the effects of complex crises borne from cultural and political grievances about its execution, nor its framework to endure such events. This is demonstrated in Figure 14.2, which describes the consequences of Brexit as *"Brexit's Protocol have caused and compounded a crisis within unionism"*. This is furthered by the perception that unionists have been the losers of the political processes, the effects of which have been highlighted in electoral "frustration" and resulted in the destabilised unionist community.[210] This evidence highlights the unionist community's significant role in the post-conflict management of the peace in Northern Ireland, as it acts as a core guarantor of the peace. Consequently, this point reaffirms the significance of stability in the region when this or another community faces internal and/or external crises due to real-world stress.

[210] Jude Webber, 'Northern Ireland's Unionists Grapple with Fragmenting Support', *Financial Times*, 12 July 2024, sec. Northern Ireland, https://www.ft.com/content/3b58e0b7-bc9c-4a91-a068-b891385dbdb1.

Orla Muldoon, 'The Damages of Brexit in Northern Ireland', accessed 2 November 2024, https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/damages-brexit-northern-ireland.

Furthermore, the second set of evidence within Figure 15 argues that despite the constitutional solidity of unionism as far as the political frameworks allow, the respective political confidence in the constitutional status of unionism is precarious regarding internal "*cohesion*" and external events. Figure 15 highlights this point with the example of a developed '*hostility'* between GB and NI unionists over the border in the Irish Sea, and as a result, disrupts the political cohesion, undermines the stability of peace, and exposes the danger of constitutional stresses such as Brexit.[211]

Moreover, Figure 15's evidence argues that real-world events rooted in wide-reaching complexities could probe and expose the vulnerabilities in the existing status quo and political framework that reassure unionists.

Figure 15.2 argues Brexit resulted in damage to the political contextual framework that was established by the 1998 agreement, resulting in a 'cessation' of cooperation in the event of one side withdrawing from the 'executive' and the absence of decision-making on '*contentious'* and cross-community cutting issues. Thus, reaffirming the consequential nature of The Internal and External Instability and Fragmentation of Unionism.[212]

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[211] David Phinnemore, Et al., 'Testing The Temperature 9 | Participation for Protection (P4P) | Queen's University Belfast', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/post-brexit-governance-ni/ProjectPublications/OpinionPolling/TestingTheTemperature9/. P.09.

'Testing The Temperature 10 | Participation for Protection (P4P) | Queen's University Belfast', accessed 6 November 2024, https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/post-brexit-governance-ni/ProjectPublications/OpinionPolling/TestingTheTemperature10/.

Is Brexit Threatening Peace in Northern Ireland? | DW News, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vv5yKWokKz8.

The News Room, 'Edwin Poots: Potential for Paramilitary Violence If Protocol Not Changed, Warns Outgoing DUP Leader', *Belfast News Letter* (blog), 23 June 2021, https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/brexit/edwin-poots-potential-for-paramilitary-violence-if-protocol-not-changed-3283525.

[212] 'The Belfast Agreement', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-belfast-agreement.

Therefore, the key question from this evidence is whether the arguments, data and analysis of this section on the instability of political unionism during the events of Brexit (stress 3) support the central argument of this thesis, which argues that peace in Northern Ireland is fragile and susceptible to real-world shocks across multiple topics, including political, social, and historical.

Regarding this specific area, the argument is sound as it reminds key actors of the importance of the key political forces in Northern Ireland (including those whose political, social or constitutional positioning don't naturally align with) having confidence in the political framework established for the post-conflict region. Coupled with the successful operational implementation of the peaceful interests for Northern Ireland. It is, therefore, clear that deep and widespread instability is a consequence for the region when this confidence is shaken.

Ultimately, these findings expose how the fragile elements of the Northern Ireland peace, are linked to actor involvement with the respective institutions of peace. Consequently, these findings highlight the consequences of these tentative variables, breaking down with impacts on other political strands such as Strands 2 and 3 of the peace framework.

Therefore, the importance of ensuring continued cooperation cannot be overstated, as the lifeblood of peace in the region depends on it, owing to the trickle-down effects on the social and cultural prosperity dynamics. Thus, reminding actors of their responsibility to their role as a guarantor of the peace through accommodating their partners, internal challenges, to ensure continued cooperation.

Cillian McGrattan, 'Interpreting the Northern Ireland Protocol: The Politics of Distrust', *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 30, no. 2 (2 April 2024): 209–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2024.2345037. P.216

PART 4: THROUGH A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE SENSITIVITIES AROUND NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE USE OF THESE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AS A POLITICAL NEGOTIATION POINT DURING THE BREXIT SAGA, THE STABILITY OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE FACED, UNIQUELY SIGNIFICANT TRIALS.

Source Title: Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland'. Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Northern Ireland Peace Process'. In *The Law & Politics of Brexit:* [213] [214] (Appendix Q)

Figure 16

'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland'

While the referendum campaign in Northern Ireland was dominated by discussion on the economic implications for a fragile post-conflict economy, the loss of the open land border on the island and the impact on the peace process; in the rest of the UK the Irish border was hardly discussed during the referendum campaign.

Figure 16: Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland'. Etc

[213] Eileen Connolly and John Doyle, 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2019): 217–33, https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2019.30.13.

[214] Eileen Connolly and John Doyle, 'Brexit and the Northern Ireland Peace Process', in *The Law & Politics of Brexit: Volume III: The Framework of New EU-UK Relations*, ed. Federico Fabbrini (Oxford University Press, 2021), 0, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192848468.003.0004.

nor did it feature in the initial post-referendum statements of the UK government.

A major speech by Prime Minister Theresa May in January 2017 referred to the relationship between the UK and Ireland but only as a commitment to 'the maintenance of the Common Travel Area with the Republic'.

Figure 16.1

The prime minister also strongly stated that a hard border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK was 'unacceptable'.25 Even at this early stage in negotiations this position was contradictory as it was clear that in the event of Brexit a hard border would be required either between the north and south of Ireland, or in the event of Northern Ireland being given a special status, between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

Figure 16.2

Given the contradictions in the UK government's position, the nature of the border on the island of Ireland become the major issue which prevented an agreement between the UK and the EU that was acceptable to both sides.

Figure 16.3

The Irish government had from September 2016 lobbied intensely on the negative impact that a post-Brexit hard border would have on Ireland and on the Northern Ireland 'peace process'.

The Irish government also feared that the combination of the disruption to the slowly emerging post-conflict, all-island economic integration30 and the loss of EU subsidies31 would have a significant impact on the economy of Northern Ireland which might have serious consequences for political stability.

It was also feared that if custom posts and security installations were built on the border, they would be used by groups who have opposed the peace process, as a strong mobilisation tool, seeking to collapse the peace process in its entirety.

For Irish nationalists, a hard border would symbolise the collapse of the peace process and would be seen to mark an end to a process of gradual reform and integration.

Figure 16.4

The EU also expressed concerns about the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland: its negotiation directives published on 22 May 2017 explicitly stated that nothing in the final agreement with the UK should 'undermine the objectives and commitments set out in the Good Friday Agreement' and that negotiations should 'in particular aim to avoid the creation of a hard border on the island of Ireland', while respecting the Union's legal order.

The position of the Irish government was also strengthened by the formal decision of the European Council that in the event of a future vote in favour of Irish unity, Northern Ireland would be deemed to be automatically within the EU, without the need for a Treaty agreement or a vote of other members.

The UK government was surprised at these decisions and was even more surprised that both the EU negotiation team and the wider EU27 remained united on this issue even when the talks became difficult.

Figure 16.5

In the debate on the question of the Irish border there was a conflict between a traditional model of UK territorial sovereignty, in which only the UK government had the right to determine the future relationship of Northern Ireland to the EU and to the Irish state, and that of the EU, which rested on an international treaty (the GFA) between the UK and another EU member state. The EU drew on that treaty to justify its negotiating position with regard to the question of the Irish border.

It was on this basis that the EU supported the Irish government's perspective. This is a very significant shift in international attitudes to Northern Ireland from the position that existed prior to the GFA. This change was not internalised or understood within the British political establishment, which was unprepared for the EU's attitude and consistently underestimated the EU's resilience on this point.

Figure 16.6

The deep divisions in Northern Ireland on its constitutional status will remain a source of friction in the EU–UK relationship. Brexit broke the fragile political balance that was put in place by the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, and while the Protocol preserves the integrity of that Agreement, the debate on Brexit and the process of the negotiation of the TCA have both deepened and shifted political cleavages in Northern Ireland.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 16.[215]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The logically reasoned discourse in this evidence reinforces the consensus established within the peace agreements in Northern Ireland by reaffirming the significance of the UK (Westminster-based) government's direction and rhetoric (or lack thereof) over the region of Northern Ireland. This is evidenced in Figure 16, which argues that the key regional-focused issue during the events of Brexit was scarcely discussed during the campaign.

Nor did these issues, of economic implications for the *fragile* post-conflict economy, the *loss* of an open border and the *impact* on the peace process feature in post-referendum statements from the UK government. Instead, *only* specific commitments to the Common Travel Area were referenced.

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[215] Eileen Connolly and John Doyle, 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2019): 217–33, https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2019.30.13.

Eileen Connolly and John Doyle, 'Brexit and the Northern Ireland Peace Process', in *The Law & Politics of Brexit: Volume III: The Framework of New EU-UK Relations*, ed. Federico Fabbrini (Oxford University Press, 2021), 0, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192848468.003.0004.

This highlights that reinforcing the established roles of the United Kingdom government as a significant actor did not necessarily translate into reassuring discourse over these issues for those affected in the region on the island of Ireland. Ultimately, this prevented appropriate and effective groundwork from stabilising these problems before the external shock.

Furthermore, this evidence discourse highlights the incompatibility of actors' intentions during Brexit through *contradictory* negotiation positions that became *unacceptable* to the involved parties. The logical reasoning of this discourse, evidenced in Figures 16.1 and 16.2, demonstrates the fragile supporting role that actors have over the *special status* of Northern Ireland. Consequently, the failure to manage such responsibility with due deference to the area's sensitivity results in an unheeded *political (in)stability* as defined within the reasoning of the discourse in Figure 16.3. This point is given further context by the discourse in Figure 16.2, which signifies the consequences of this political instability and sheds light on its importance.

Therefore, these consequences within the figure point to the border status on the island of Ireland, a pinnacle point of success and achievement in the post-conflict society and economy on the island of Ireland, which remains vulnerable, as this evidence alludes to complex shocks such as Brexit. This is demonstrated within the discourse of Figures 16.1 and 16.2 by describing a *closed border* on the island owing to failure due to political disagreement. Consequently, this evidence's logical reasoning argues for recognising the delicate nature of these significant issues during such a shock to ensure stability.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

Firstly, this evidence acknowledges the enduring framework that the Good Friday/ Belfast agreement is embedded in the political, economic and social new contexts in Northern Ireland. This embedded framework is represented in the face of the shocks of the events of Brexit, 18 years after signing, as shown by its consistent and widespread *explicit* reference in the political discourse during Brexit over the *concern* of undermining the objectives and commitments of the Agreement. Moreover, this evidence also establishes the context of high-level actors' responsibility for the pillars of the agreement during this stress. Figure 16.4 demonstrates the consequences of this responsibility from the EU perspective by arguing that every actor with a special interest in the island of Ireland, from the context of the maintenance of the fragile peace, must reconcile with the fact that every decision, whether agreed in collaboration or taken unilaterally has a respectful opposite reaction that requires sensitive management as it impacts *future relationships*.

Furthermore, the decision by the European Union (as an interested party along with member state Ireland) to first unilaterally express a negotiation directive between the United Kingdom and the EU that included the demand for a final agreement not to undermine the Good Friday agreement had significant reactions. Consequently, this demand did not facilitate the intended stability that the region had attempted to maintain during the period. Due to the existence of a respectable opposite reaction to decisions, the explicit statement from the European Union and associated parties (potentially) unintentionally shocked the efforts of their opposite numbers in the UK government. Thus, as Figure 16.6 argues, it negatively influenced the conclusive result of the period by *'deepening and shifting political cleavages in Northern Ireland'*.

Ultimately, this highlights that sensitive management is required for such contentious issues concerning Northern Ireland, given that such consideration was not entirely applicable during Brexit.

Figure 16.5 reasons the EU staked a claim over the future arrangements for the island of Ireland, which partially conflicted with the strict interpretation of the Good Friday Agreement. This settlement enshrined the principles of the Act of Union 1801, where only the UK government had the right to determine the future status of the union. However, the EU challenged this convention during Brexit in their negotiations with the United Kingdom. Subsequently, on the matter of the border, the treaty was invoked by the EU to *justify* its negotiation position. This '*significant shift in international attitudes'* provoked a now predictable, respectable, confused opposite reaction to this change. Thus, reinforcing a context vulnerable to unilateral *attitudes*, even when made with innocent intent, that inadvertently shift the issues, actors and the region away from the spirit and operational success of the negotiated peace in Northern Ireland. Therefore, this demonstrates how actor intent destabilises the operational success of these problems, from the stability perspective, when made with ideological predispositions.

Finally, the consequences of these contextually influenced actions are argued in Figure 16.6, which claims that the *politically problematic* conclusion to the Brexit process, including the unilateral attitudes of specific actors involved with the process, *"break the fragile political balance in Northern Ireland"*. A statement of discourse which is a clear divergence from the principles of the peace agreements. Thus, the links between the fragile political context in the region, the consequence of the attitudes and actions of the representative actors, and the future destabilising effects pose a problem for the successful resilience of the peace in Northern Ireland.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

The evidence in Figure 16.3 argues that the events of Brexit risked a scenario feared by the Irish Government that directly impacts the successful operation of the negotiated peace. Firstly, it describes the concern of disrupting the economic *integration* on the island of Ireland, enabled by the open border, facilitated by EU integration, and maintained by the enduring peace in the post-conflict society in the North. This fear is common within the evidence as it represents the most tangible divergence from the operations of the peace for the island, which was threatened during Brexit. This threat serves as a reminder of the fragility of the specific tenets that make up the present-day operations of the peace in the region, all of which suffer from the problem of fragility in the emerging post-conflict society, economy and political institutions in Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, the evidence refers to the real-world risk of the loss of EU subsidies for the region, as it would have a *significant impact* on the economy of Northern Ireland. Such an impact could have profound consequences on political stability in the region. This finding is consistent with the analysis of other stresses, which has found a direct link between economic deprivation and opportunities for opponents of peace to shift the operational context away from the efforts of peace and reconciliation towards division and instability. This point is further reinforced in this evidence discourse, which explicitly references *'groups opposed to the peace process'*, capitalising on these vulnerabilities as a tool to *mobilise* support or to *collapse* the ongoing peace *process* as it still is defined (26 years post-Good Friday/Belfast agreement as of 2024/25). Thus, demonstrating the fragility of the peace, which is seen to be tested during real-world events, forming a part of broader stresses to the negotiated peace.

Source Title: Diamond, Patrick, and Barry Colfer. 'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?' and Murphy, Mary C. 'Northern Ireland and Brexit: Where Sovereignty and Stability Collide?' and Kelly, Conor J., and Etain Tannam. 'The UK Government's Northern Ireland Policy after Brexit: A Retreat to Unilateralism and Muscular Unionism'. [216] [217] [218]

(Appendix R)

Figure 17

Diamond, Patrick, and Barry Colfer. 'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?

The question of NI's constitutional status bedevilled the entire Brexit negotiations (2016–20).

Philip Rycroft, claimed that former PM, Theresa May, only woke up to the NI border question after her infamous Lancaster House speech where she imposed red lines on the negotiations. Rycroft reflected: 'It took the Prime Minister a long time ... to work out just how fundamental this was for the [UK] Union'.9 Her successor as Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, was determined to deliver Brexit and viewed a border in the Irish Sea as a price worth paying to reclaim national sovereignty.

Figure 17: Diamond, Patrick, and Barry Colfer. 'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?' and Murphy, Mary C. 'Northern Ireland and Brexit: Where Sovereignty and Stability Collide?'

[216] Patrick Diamond and Barry Colfer, 'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?', *The Political Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2023): 104–14, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13197.

[217] Mary C. Murphy, 'Northern Ireland and Brexit: Where Sovereignty and Stability Collide?', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 29, no. 3 (3 July 2021): 405–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2021.1891027.

[218] Conor J. Kelly and Etain Tannam, 'The UK Government's Northern Ireland Policy after Brexit: A Retreat to Unilateralism and Muscular Unionism', *Journal of European Public Policy* 30, no. 11 (2 November 2023): 2275–2302, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2023.2210186.

Figure 17.1

Murphy, Mary C. 'Northern Ireland and Brexit: Where Sovereignty and Stability Collide?

There was no serious or significant attention paid to how Brexit might impact on Northern Ireland's tenuous and delicate political situation (see Burke Wood and Gilmartin 2020). There was no sense that the timing, even the very fact of the referendum, might prove challenging for a region in transition from conflict to peace.

This obliviousness to Northern Ireland's particular situation was evident across both Remain and Leave campaign groups while few within either the Conservative Party or Labour Party broached the subject during the referendum period. And this was despite the acute concerns expressed by the Irish government1 and nationalists in Northern Ireland about the referendum outcome and its potential implications for Ireland, north and south.

Figure 17.2

This lack of awareness of Northern Ireland's particular situation resulted in a marked lack of consideration, preparation, or contingency planning for the fallout from the Leave vote for Northern Ireland. More tellingly, it also overtly revealed an evident disconnect between Britain and Northern Ireland: a lack of basic awareness at elite (and public) level as to the potential for the Irish border issue to be problematic. This hinged not just on day-to-day detachment and disconnection of peoples, it also underlined the limited appreciation, and in some cases, the dissatisfaction with the kind of constitutional and political construct the UK had become after 1998.

The rupture which Brexit has occasioned in UK politics has had far-reaching consequences for Northern Ireland including economic upheaval, political instability, and constitutional uncertainty.

Figure 17.3

By 2008, both governments had become complacent about Northern Ireland, but in 2016 the Irish government were well aware of Brexit's threat to stability. The UK government was clearly not. Institutional memory and knowledge of the peace process and the 1998 Agreement was weak in Britain, with some politicians admitting to never having read the Agreement. This in itself reflected an apathy to Northern Ireland, which was not electorally important to the Conservative Party. It is also clear that some members of the Conservative government have not fully supported the Agreement since 1998, including leading Brexiteer Michael Gove.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 17.[219]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse within this evidence (Figure 17) is logically reasoning that during Brexit, the UK government and specific senior figures involved in the process failed to initially *wake up* to the issues on the island of Ireland. These issues included the border and future arrangements (sensitively wrapped into questions of constitutional status and identity for Northern Ireland. Consequently, this challenges the pre-Brexit consensus that, as a co-guarantor of the peace in Northern Ireland and the framework established for the continued operation of those peace arrangements, the British government would understand the *fundamental* nature of the issues facing the region. Furthermore, it is clear from this evidence that such issues could be rationalised as a tolerable price to pay in the pursuit of reclaiming national sovereignty.

[219] Patrick Diamond and Barry Colfer, 'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?', *The Political Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2023): 104–14, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13197.

Mary C. Murphy, 'Northern Ireland and Brexit: Where Sovereignty and Stability Collide?', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 29, no. 3 (3 July 2021): 405–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2021.1891027.

Conor J. Kelly and Etain Tannam, 'The UK Government's Northern Ireland Policy after Brexit: A Retreat to Unilateralism and Muscular Unionism', *Journal of European Public Policy* 30, no. 11 (2 November 2023): 2275–2302, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2023.2210186.

This argument's importance is rooted in the fact that, as the evidence discourses argue, the responsible minister for resolving these issues during Brexit was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Theresa May and Boris Johnson.

Moreover, the discourse in Figure 17.1 advances this concern by arguing that the lack of *'serious or significant attention rooted in the obliviousness"* of the political establishment spanning both major Leave and Remain campaigns during the referendum, together with the major political parties in Britain to the *delicate and challenging* political situation in Northern Ireland. Therefore, this discourse highlights the specific concern that there was a lack of importance placed on the issues of the region. Furthermore, coupled with a failure of the effort to resolve these concerns during the events of Brexit, it is clear from the evidence that Northern Ireland remained exposed to the complex challenges and potential implications posed by this stress to their post-conflict transition, prior to, during and post-Brexit. This is in part due to the widespread obliviousness (despite the expressions of acute concerns) at the heart of the British political and governmental leadership. Thus, highlighting the significant responsibility political campaigns have (acting as political/social actors in the region), which is a crucial point that can inform future actors during external shocks.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The contextual discourse in Figure 17.2 argues that, owing to the sensitive context in the region, the *lack of awareness* shown by the political elite led to a problematic fallout for Northern Ireland.

The context for this fallout was established by the '*lack of consideration and preparation*' for Brexit, although this criticism is not solely applicable to Northern Ireland during Brexit. However, the *particulars* of the sensitive Northern Ireland region make the impact of this concern more profound and reinforce the argument that the political and social post-conflict framework is vulnerable to such circumstances with far-reaching consequences. It is, therefore, clear that such consequences resulted from a perceived disconnect between Britain and Northern Ireland over a lack of *appreciation* for the day-to-day realities and a disconnection between the political actors and the people. As a result, it is argued within this evidence that Northern Ireland suffered '*economic upheaval, political instability, and constitutional uncertainty*' in a destabilised political context.

Therefore, this exposes the importance that key political actors and partners (who guarantee the peace) understand the complex nuances of the Northern Ireland post-conflict settlement, its operation, and the links between the settlement, its operation, and the continued overall stability of the post-conflict (peacebuilding) framework. Furthermore, including the role they and the actor play in influencing decisions in maintaining such arrangements in Northern Ireland within the challenging context.

Finally, the discourse within Figure 17.3 reveals the realities of the realistic context where such importance hadn't been heeded across the political and constitutional divide. This is evidenced by reference to both the Irish and British governments' suffering from a period post-2008 of complacency until 2016, which, from the perspective of stability and prosperity of the peace in Northern Ireland, is a concerning argument given both countries' role as co-guarantors of the peace.

Additionally, this argument raises the concern that given the negative, wide-reaching consequences for the region during Brexit, which stressed peace, such as political complacency from the responsible governments, weakened the preparedness of the region's negotiated peace in the face of a significant shock such as Brexit.

Furthermore, the evidence argues that this complacent context before Brexit was partly (from the British perspective) the result of *weak institutional memory* and a lack of knowledge concerning Northern Ireland and its peace process. This argument is a potent warning of weakness to the Northern Ireland peace, not with the specific region or its institutions as other evidence has described, but with the higher political level of the national government, which has been demonstrated in the real-world stress of Brexit. Finally, this argument is reinforced within the discourse of Figure 17.3 regarding political *apathy* towards Northern Ireland, as well as a lack of political *importance*. Thus, demonstrating within the contemporary context (evidenced in Figure 17.3 discourse, referencing senior British political figures and parties) a higher level of vulnerability to the political elements of the peace in the region. Ultimately, this vulnerability was exposed during the external shock of Brexit and undermined the strands of the peace agreements that call upon this higher level of political engagement.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

Finally, the discourse within this evidence makes no further reference to specific real-world events that risk the peace in Northern Ireland other than what has been discussed.

STRESS 3 PART 4: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The section's evidence argues that it is necessary to highlight the importance of a higher level of engagement at the cross-government level on the issues facing Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the evidence has expressed a focused argument on the consequences of the higher-level actors' lack of attention, obliviousness, and weak institutional memory on the stability of Northern Ireland's peace during a complex, multi-impacting stress to the region's negotiated peace.[220]

Firstly, the evidence within Figure 16 argues that high-level actors are responsible for managing the delicate status quo that respects the individual interests and requirements for continued widespread cooperation in the political solution in Northern Ireland.[221] The consequences of failing to adhere to this argument are evidenced in Figure 16.5, where it is argued that the EU's justification for a negotiating position that (arguably) didn't represent all interests over the border challenged and provoked a confused reaction from their opposite 'partners'. Thus, highlighting the consequences of unilateral attitudes would inadvertently shift the issues, actors and the region away from the spirit and operational success of the negotiated peace in Northern Ireland.

[220] Katy Hayward, 'A Report Prepared for the Irish Central Border Area Network.', n.d. P.78.

[221] David Phinnemore and Katy Hayward, 'UK Withdrawal ("Brexit") and the Good Friday Agreement', n.d. P.09. Anton Spisak, 'A New Equilibrium in Northern Ireland: Can It Last?', 2024.

Furthermore, Figure 16.4 argues that every actor with a special interest in the island of Ireland, from the context of the maintenance of the fragile peace, (especially during a stressful context such as the events of Brexit), must reconcile with the fact that every decision, whether agreed in collaboration or taken unilaterally has a respectful opposite reaction that requires sensitive management as it impacts future relationships.

Consequently, these contextually influenced actions and unilateral attitudes during Brexit broke the fragile political balance, diverged from the principles of the peace agreements and ultimately stressed the Northern Ireland peace by returning to purist ideological endeavours.[222] This demonstrates the links between the fragile political context in the region, the consequence of the attitudes and actions of the representative actors, and the future destabilising effects, which pose a problem to the successful resilience of the peace in Northern Ireland, as explicitly argued in this section.

Furthermore, Figure 17/17.1 reasons that there is a vital responsibility on the co-guarantors of the peace to fully wake up to the sensitivities and importance of the issues on the island of Ireland and that understanding such importance was fundamental to the peace framework and its success.[223] Therefore, the lack of serious attention during the Brexit campaign from major British political groups to the impact of Brexit on the delicate political situation in the region caused Northern Ireland to become uniquely exposed to the complex challenges and political implications of this stress on the peace process.

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[222] Cillian McGrattan, 'Interpreting the Northern Ireland Protocol: The Politics of Distrust', *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 30, no. 2 (2 April 2024): 209–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2024.2345037. P.222

[223] David Phinnemore and Katy Hayward, 'UK Withdrawal ("Brexit") and the Good Friday Agreement', n.d. P.09. P.10

The key question is whether the evidence, arguments, and analysis presented in this section support the central argument of this thesis, which argues that the peace in Northern Ireland is fragile and susceptible to real-world shocks across multiple topics, including political, social, and historical.

The argument is valid regarding this area as it articulates that the lack of understanding of the sensitivities around NI created greater instability. This occurred on both sides, firstly by the EU, which used Northern Ireland's special status as a bargaining political point, which, when coupled with a lack of understanding by the British government, led to the inevitable consequences from both sides' unilateral postures. This resulted in a damaging political negotiating process focused on preserving their respective negotiating position rather than the delicate balance in NI, which reveals clearly that Brexit arrangements in the region needed a scalpel rather than a political hatchet.

Consequently, this incurred significant consequences on the vulnerable elements of the existing peace for Northern Ireland. Through the previous analysis of stress on the peace, the findings have highlighted the interlinking impacts that these consequences have, including on power sharing structures, social and cultural disorder, British and Irish mistrust and reduced co-operation, and internal political fragmentation, ultimately leading to a weakened peace, which Brexit has exposed.

Finally, testing the resilience for the negotiated peace (through conscious actions or ignorance) is not always in the region’s best interests. Hence, when the context allows (determined through exploring historical patterns for optimal future conduct) for a de-stress of the resilience of the peace, such an opportunity is in the gift of the involved parties, to the betterment of the aspirations of those affected parties and those they represent. Brexit demonstrates this point with unquestionable clarity and thus produces a lesson that applies to future real-world events for the region.

STRESS 4: THE RISKS FROM THE VULNERABILITIES WITHIN THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT, COUPLED WITH THE SUSTAINED RISE IN POLITICAL CAPITAL FROM 'RADICAL' POLITICAL PARTIES, WHO WILL ALSO FRAME AN UNPREPARED FUTURE BORDER POLL WHICH IS ASSESSED THROUGH AN APPLIED/RESULTS FRAMEWORK.

PART 1: THE RISKS FOUND IN VULNERABILITIES WITHIN THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT COUPLED WITH THE SUSTAINED RISE IN POLITICAL CAPITAL FROM 'RADICAL' POLITICAL PARTIES.[224]

Source Title: John Nagle, 'Between Conflict and Peace: An Analysis of the Complex Consequences of the Good Friday Agreement' and Paul Dixon, *Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process: In Defence of Politics*, *Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process.*[225] [226]

(Appendix S)

Figure 18: John Nagle, 'Between Conflict and Peace: An Analysis of the Complex Consequences of the Good Friday Agreement' and Paul Dixon, Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process: In Defence of Politics, Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

[224] The data in the evidence chapters are presented in their text-based linguistic form, using direct quotations. They are also presented in this form as figures throughout each part of the analysis in the chapter. This format follows the composition of earlier established academic research (see introduction for references), utilising discourse analysis, which isolates relevant excerpts of discourse before in-depth analysis. This forms the primary data, which is the data that has been directly analysed in this thesis using the chosen methodology framework, either through further direct quotation for longer discourse or through specific italicised words directly within the analysis in a style that has precedent in earlier discourse research. For conscience purposes, these are sometimes grouped (although each figure clearly states the author) either by author, period or topic. Additionally, the raw data is contained in separate appendices, included at the end of this thesis.

[225] John Nagle, 'Between Conflict and Peace: An Analysis of the Complex Consequences of the Good Friday Agreement', *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 2 (1 April 2018): 395–416, https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx030.

[226] Paul Dixon, *Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process: In Defence of Politics*, *Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process: In Defence of Politics*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91343-8.

Figure 18

'Between Conflict and Peace: An Analysis of the Complex Consequences of the Good Friday Agreement'

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA)1 represented a new framework for peaceful political contestation to replace violent conflict as the key relationship between Irish nationalists and Ulster unionists. The architects of the GFA intended to realise this objective by crafting political institutions adhering to the principle of power–sharing and 'parity of esteem' for both group's identities.

Figure 18.1

The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) provided an exercise in 'constructive ambiguity' (Dixon, 2002), the premise that it could be sold to nationalists and unionists as simultaneously advancing their rival aspirations. Rather than resolve the question of self–determination, the GFA incentivised those who could successfully frame themselves as the best parties to either deliver Irish unity or secure the long–term future of the union.

Figure 18.2

The modifications to the Good Friday Agreement specified in St Andrews did little to fundamentally alter the 'constructive ambiguity' at the heart of the peace process. For unionists, the revised Agreement still represented the fortification of the union, while nationalists continued to frame it as a port of call en- route to Irish unification (Wilford, 2010).

Figure 18.3

Paul Dixon, Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process

The Belfast Agreement 1998 was 'written so that each protagonist could interpret it as a victory for his tradition' (Rawnsley 2000: 138). For pro-agreement unionists the Agreement strengthened the Union while for republicans it

was a step on the road to a united Ireland. Government officials have acknowledged that there have been points when 'ambiguity was the only way to keep the boat afloat'

Figure 18.4

Given the polarisation of republicans and unionists in Northern Ireland and the difficulty of managing support for the Agreement, there needed to be a certain amount of ambiguity to give the various parties and governments the 'wriggle room' to shift the political ground .

Figure 18.5

According to key Labour figures who managed the peace process, the 'constructive ambiguity' that enabled the BFA to be agreed undermined trust in the political process and became increasingly problematic. Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland during the negotiations on the BFA argued, '... That the Good Friday Agreement was open to multiple interpretations proved to be both a strength and a weakness – but it was the only way to get an agreement between all the different parties' (Mowlam 2002: 231). Jonathan Powell argues, 'The ambiguity that had been initially constructive became destructive over time'.

Figure 18.6

The problem remains, however, that little attempt has been made to persuade rather than manipulate important sections of the population to support the peace process (although the boundary between persuasion and manipulation is grey). The political capital of key pro-Agreement politicians and parties has been eroded as the choreography of the process and the use of political skills have been publicly exposed.

This exacerbates the political environment of public scepticism and distrust of the political process that was the justification for the use of manipulation by elites in the first place. The result is that the Agreement is balanced precariously on a still polarised population.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 18.[227]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The logically reasoned discourse in this evidence argues that fundamental to the Good Friday Agreement was a framework that would enable a peaceful relationship between Irish Nationalists and Ulster Unionists. This argument (Figure 18) reinforces the agreement consensus that the subsequent *political peace* post-agreement is based on managing the *parity* relationship between these two groups, whose respective identities are distinct. As a result, this reveals that the vulnerability of the peaceful political framework arises from the incompatible origins of both sides that enter such a relationship. Thus, resulting in a greater susceptibility to risks that occur against the continued peaceful relationship, due to the involved actors engaging from incompatible ideological perspectives.

Furthermore, Figure 18.1 advances the last point of the incompatible origins, facilitating a weakened resilience to the peace by illustrating the use of *constructive ambiguity* in the Good Friday Agreement.

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[227]John Nagle, 'Between Conflict and Peace: An Analysis of the Complex Consequences of the Good Friday Agreement', *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 2 (1 April 2018): 395–416, https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx030.

Paul Dixon, *Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process: In Defence of Politics*, *Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process: In Defence of Politics*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91343-8.

This was necessary to provide *incentives* for both sides to '*simultaneously advance their rival aspirations*' in a future peace, as shown by the agreement choosing to delegate rather than resolve the question of self-determination, as this would be shifted to the leading parties of both sides.

Consequently, this discourse reveals that the logic of the historic agreement was to empower the parties of the new political relationship to advance their aspirations through the agreement, without a definitive resolution. However, such an arrangement places a strain on the stability of the political framework, as on the political level, such arrangements prevent reconciliation and preserve the focus of such political engagement on the contentious issue of self-determination. Thus, bonding the rival parties in a predominantly inharmonious relationship, which has the potential for compatibility problems that can undermine the stability of the political framework that the agreement initially established.

Finally, this reasoned discourse argues that these arrangements built out of the *ambiguity* of the agreement and its obstacles to stability were not fundamentally *altered* during the modifications of the historic St Andrew's agreement. This is evidenced in Figure 18.2, which describes a *revised* agreement, thus emphasising the enduring problems argued in Figures 18 and 18.1, which were relatively enacted from 1998 to 2006, and had future relevance through the event of an Irish Unification vote.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

Figure 18 discourse reveals a complex dual context of pre- and post-agreement in Northern Ireland and the effects on the stability of the negotiated peace in the region.

The vulnerability of the peace is emphasised in the discourse of Figure 18.3/18.4, which describes how the fragile context of the Good Friday Agreement meant that ambiguity was at points the only way to keep the peace *afloat.* Thus, reinforcing that the necessities required for the successful negotiation of the initial agreements were not considering the longer-term future challenges that could undermine the efforts. Therefore, this introduces the delicate element that is a constant link between the context of pre- and post-agreement in Northern Ireland. Therefore, it is apparent that when faced with significant stress (such as a border poll) to the negotiated peace, many years post-agreement, the stability of the peace agreement could not be optimal for the evolved political challenges to the agreement, owing to these dual problematic contexts.

Furthermore, the politically relevant discourse in this evidence argues that, despite initial positives from the ambiguity of the agreement, the problems with the political process soon became apparent. This is evident in the discourse of Figure 18.5, which argues that an undermining of trust resulted from this ambiguity. It is, therefore, clear that a mistrustful context between the relevant parties, including those bound in the post-agreement political relationship, is a sub-optimal (yet historically necessary) arrangement to endure the oncoming stress to the nature of the peace. This argument is supported by the political discourse of the secretary of state during the negotiations, remarking that the *multiple interpretations* that facilitate the constructive ambiguity, for both sides, acted as an initial strength yet would become a weakness. Thus, underlining the concern that supports an important argument of this thesis, that the strengthened context in which the Good Friday Agreement was signed is not the same as the one in which it must operate 25 years on.

Moreover, this argument is supported by the discourse in Appendix T's example for considering the sustained increase of political capital for *radical* parties that lead politics in Northern Ireland.[228]

This example argues that the intended implemented mechanisms for moderation and inclusivity in the peace agreements' electoral systems of PR-STV and the d'Hondt algorithm of mandatory coalitions reflect the desire for a consociationalism democracy. This offered legitimacy to all sides, thus reducing the political divisions between the two communities, which did not endure the test of time. Consequently, the analysis that ethnic outbidding, where there exists a shifting to radical party-political positions, to claim the strongest ethnic identity for their respective community vote base, has allowed the extreme parties of the DUP and Sinn Fein to dominate the political arena and emerge as political leaders of their respective communities. This, coupled with the historical and continued (although diminished) threat of violence for voters, has been found to foster an attitude that is disinclined towards compromise when considering the respective ethnonational interests, which was clearly unintended at the time of the peace agreement.

[228] John Nagle, 'Between Conflict and Peace: An Analysis of the Complex Consequences of the Good Friday Agreement', *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 2 (1 April 2018): 395–416, https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx030.

Paul Teague, 'Brexit, the Belfast Agreement and Northern Ireland: Imperilling a Fragile Political Bargain', *The Political Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (October 2019): 690–704, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12766.

James Tilley, John Garry, and Neil Matthews, 'The Evolution of Party Policy and Cleavage Voting under Power-Sharing in Northern Ireland', *Government and Opposition* 56, no. 2 (April 2021): 226–44, https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2019.20.

Noam Peterburg and Odelia Oshri, 'Front and Centre? Northern Irish Electoral Behaviour in the Age of Brexit', *Irish Political Studies* 39, no. 1 (2024): 79–98.

Therefore, this perspective reveals that the intended strength of the PR–STV voting system, through the ranking of preference for each vote, is to benefit accommodating candidates and parties, (as opposed to other majoritarian systems designed to produce clear winners and losers such as first past the post (FPTP) used in Westminster) became a weakness in practice. This is evident during the deterioration of the influence of moderate and moderate community-designated parties such as the SDLP, Alliance, and UUP.

Finally, this argument is linked to the concern of stability to the peace, stemming from the vulnerabilities of the Good Friday Agreement, and specifically the issue of the increased political capital (within the negotiated political framework of the peace agreement) of radical parties who will frame the debate of a border poll. As the example of the agreement has argued, the intended mechanisms of the negotiated political framework failed to account for the rise of these radical parties, who have worked within (sometimes outside when politically convenient) the established framework. Thus, these parties have legitimised themselves as leading political players in a context designed to limit such legitimacy. Consequently, during a prescribed referendum which is designed to segregate and maximise the profile of the radical position, in a process of outbidding for a one-person-one-vote structure of a referendum. Therefore, such leading parties can use the political process from the negotiated agreement to maximise the effect of the respective campaigns during the constitutional vote, thus widening the gap between communities, reducing the effects of political partnership and the attractiveness of compromised politics. As a result, this context has a clear danger of destabilising the enduring peace during the stress of a border poll.

Therefore, the peace agreement in Northern Ireland was negotiated with the past in mind, to be implemented in the immediate present and without too much consideration for the future.

Additionally, this point is supported in the discourse by Johnathan Powell, asserting that such arrangements (borne through the ambiguity) that were *constructive* became *destructive* over time. Thus, revealing a weakened peace in post-conflict Northern Ireland, at the exact point when it is to be tested with the real-world stresses, such as a divisive border poll.

Finally, the contextually based discourse expressed in Figure 18.6 argues that because of this ambiguous agreement, a nuanced political context of '*public scepticism and distrust*' of the political process, enabled by the enhanced prominence of political actors of pro-agreement and the prominence of anti-agreement actors, has resulted in a *precarious balance* for the modern-day agreement.

Thus, it is clear, that for a described split population, good will-based actions in favour of the commitments of the agreement in the face of hostile events for individual sides, such as suffering a defeat in a border poll, are seemingly more unlikely, as the created context does not naturally foster such behaviour. Consequently, a precarious agreement that does not naturally inspire continued cooperation by dissatisfied parties in a polarised context is vulnerable to events of greater polarisation over sensitive issues, such as a border poll.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

As per the introduction of Stress 4 the evidence and analysis for this section is entirely focused on the perspective of a real-world event of a border poll on the island of Ireland. As a result, individual consideration of "discourse referencing (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace" does not apply

to stress 4. Therefore following the discourse analysis methodology, it is clear that owing to the precarious status of the peace, the strained relationship between the radical parties engaged in the current political framework, the sensitive nature of the future constitutional settlement for the region, and the complex but delicate planning required for a referendum on this matter, a future border poll on the island of Ireland has the vulnerable elements consistent with other explored stresses to the peace, and is thus being considered as real-world stress to the peace in this section of evidence.

PART 1: THE RISKS FOUND IN VULNERABILITIES WITHIN THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT CONTINUED.

Source Title: Rory Montgomery, 'The Good Friday Agreement and a United Ireland', and : Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland'. [229] [230] (Appendix U)

Figure 19

'The Good Friday Agreement and a United Ireland'

(As) The article (discourse) looks at what the Agreement says or implies about a future process of unification. It concludes that, while some essential points are clearly defined, most are mentioned only in passing, or not at all, leaving a great deal unsettled.

Figure 19.1

How a united Ireland as provided for in the Agreement might eventually need to be established in practice was a far from immediate issue. In 1998 the prospect that a majority might in the foreseeable future favour a united Ireland seemed remote

Figure 19: Rory Montgomery, 'The Good Friday Agreement and a United Ireland', and : Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland'.

[229] Rory Montgomery, 'The Good Friday Agreement and a United Ireland', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2021): 83–110, https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.2021.0012.

[230] Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Figure 19.2

It has been argued by some, most fully and eloquently by Séamus Mallon in his memoirs,16 that 'The only way we can have peace in Ireland as a whole is when a significant number of people in both Northern communities give their consent to a constitutional settlement, along with the people of the South'.

Figure 19.2.1

'I believe it is time to move—both myself and the nationalist community in both jurisdictions—towards a realisation that we have two options: one is to hold a premature Border Poll and, in the event of a narrow vote for unity, face into the risk of another period of instability and violence; the other is to move towards an agreed Ireland in a slow, progressive way, and maybe leave the end product to a future time.'

Figure 19.3

The counterarguments have been strongly made, including on a number of occasions by Professor Colin Harvey. He has said that Altering the GFA [Good Friday Agreement] in order to accommodate a new weighted majority rule would be a mistake...While there are genuine concerns about how unionism/loyalism would respond to a vote for constitutional change, and legitimate questions about how that community will be accommodated in a new Ireland, the response of nationalism/republicanism should also be factored into the assessment. Changing the rules at this point would be disastrous...and undermine a faith in the promises of the Agreement that is already being tested to the limit.

Figure 19.4

Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland'

The late Seamus Mallon, formerly deputy leader of the SDLP and the first deputy First Minister under the 1998 Agreement, provoked a debate within Irish nationalism by arguing in his memoirs, written with Andy Pollak, that unification should not be sought on the basis of a narrow 50% + 1 majority. The authors argued that such an outcome 'could lead to a major resumption of violence'

Figure 19.5

They also argued that nationalists should not push for a vote 'until there is wider and deeper acceptance for it among the unionist community' (176), and that the governments 'should not agree to the holding of a Border Poll unless they were absolutely certain it would lead to a peaceful and stable outcome for the island of Ireland'.

In the face of such calls, the last Fine Gael-led government maintained that a unity referendum would be 'disruptive and destructive' and would constitute a deliberate provocation of the unionist community (Halpin 2018). When campaigning for the Fine Gael leadership in 2017, Leo Varadkar said, 'The demand for a border poll is alarming. It is a return to a mindset in which a simple sectarian majority of 50% plus one is enough to cause a change in the constitutional status of the North.' He continued, 'Bouncing Ulster Protestants into a unitary Irish state against their will would be as grievous a wrong as was abandoning a large Catholic minority in the North on partition'.

Figure 19.6

A second factor complicating the Secretary of State's decision is that the Act does not specify the franchise for the referendum—it would be set out in the Order calling the poll —and therefore does not define the group within which the likelihood of a majority for Irish unification is to be judged.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 19.[231]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The discourse within this evidence links the arguments of the ambiguities and implications of the peace agreements to a future border poll. This evidence initially argues that only the most *essential* elements of a border poll are established in the agreement; the rest is *unsettled*, which challenges the established reasoned consensus that the terms of the Good Friday Agreement encompass the entire negotiated points of a border poll. Therefore, as this is not the case, the discourse in Figure 19 posits the possibility that, owing to the sensitivities in the region regarding such particulars, the status quo of the peace agreement could be stressed by the need for revisiting the *ambiguous/unsaid* terms for a border poll. This demonstrates that the existing status quo for peace is not a permanent arrangement and could feasibly be strained over the issue of the border poll due to the ambiguity of the peace agreement that facilitated the framework of the present peaceful status quo.

[231] Rory Montgomery, 'The Good Friday Agreement and a United Ireland', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2021): 83–110, https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.2021.0012.

Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021

Furthermore, this evidence reinforces the point that the ambiguous nature of specific parts of the agreement was because of an established negotiation approach focused on dealing with the past and implementing a peaceful framework for the present.

However, it is clear from Figure 19.1 discourse that such an approach meant a lack of *immediacy* for the *practical establishment* of a border poll, as the prospect was remote at the time. This proves the argument that through the implementation of the peace agreement over the years, the context for the post-conflict region can shift, even though the framework of a static agreement remains. This is demonstrated when the agreement is faced with real-world stresses, and the agreement's peace ignites over such issues, in potentially unstable circumstances, that were unforeseen at the time of the agreement. This supports this thesis argument that a high-quality political re-engagement using the established and evolved political framework is a necessity covertly mandated by the agreement and its implementation.

Secondly, this evidence reasons that the intended negotiated agreement for peace in Northern Ireland struggles due to the compromising negotiation, ambiguity and tentatively sensitive framework to practically implement its intentions in a way that secures peace and stability on the island of Ireland, especially during a border poll. This is evidenced in the discourse of Figure 19.2, which states that the '*peace for the whole of Ireland*' within the potential stress of a border poll depends on the *consent* of a *significant* number of people from both communities to a changed constitutional settlement. This reveals that the practical implementation of elements of the peace agreement might go further than the logical consensus of the peace agreement to ensure continued peace post-agreement.

This argument is reinforced further by the discourse in Figure 19.2.1, which contends that a narrow unity vote would strain the peace in the region, by '*risking another period of instability and violence*'. Thus, demonstrating the risk to Northern Ireland's peace by a potential border poll on the island of Ireland, especially a premature vote, absent from the necessary preparations. Such preparations have been argued as vital in the discourse of Figure 19.6, where complex (currently 'unspecified' in the agreement) arrangements over the referendum have yet to be settled. These include questions, timelines, and franchise arrangements, all of which are matters that complicate the border poll and could impact the likely result of the vote, highlighting the danger of a premature vote. It is also clear that the vulnerabilities of the peace agreement are apparent from multiple perspectives, including the position and its counterpoint. This is argued in Figure 19.3, which alludes to a *mistake* to *alter* the terms of the Good Friday Agreement to *accommodate* this issue. Therefore, the strength of the Good Friday Agreement to state its terms on this issue explicitly becomes a weakness when neither its undermining alteration nor its proposed arrangements are optimal for this sensitive issue of a border poll.

Consequently, this supports the established consensus from the evidence in Figure 18.5 that such strengths of the agreement, when agreed, can evolve into vulnerability that '*tests the agreement to its limit*', in the future implementation of its commitments.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The political discourse in Figure 19 argues that a complicated context exists in the region, within which a proposed border poll would have to operate practically. This argument is apparent in Figure 19.4, which argues that this *unstable* (Figure 19.2.1) context offers an outcome following a vote which results in a '*major resumption of violence*', where the language of *resumption* links the historic challenge to the present-day risks. As a result, it is evident that the sensitivities of all the argued (non-actor) elements of such an event are a serious primary concern, thus reinforcing the argument that the precarious nature of the agreed peace is vulnerable to such a complex event. This is supported in Figure 19.5, which argues for mitigating such a reality by focusing on a *peaceful and stable* outcome. The argument's validity is apparent by the cross-border support for the position to support peace and stability when considering a border poll, which has been described as a *deliberate provocation* to unionists by the discourse of Irish political leaders. Thus, revealing a vital awareness from actors whose influence over this risk correlates with stability in the region. Accordingly, the context in Northern Ireland means that the political relationships established through the peace agreement must be considered by all actors involved in the border, given the commitments of the peace that link them together at the political level. Therefore, the nature of the peace agreement, based on *simple sectarian terms*, is a weakness when viewed from the perspective of Northern Ireland's evolved post-conflict context, which maintains sectarian elements, but also has commitments to the responsibilities of political and social partnership and where possible reconciliation.

It is clear, therefore, that a sectarian-based border poll, as interpreted in the agreement, could weaken the commitments within the present context, as the discourse in Figure 19.5 remarks, leading to one community being *bounced* into a changed constitutional status. Thus, it greatly destabilised the commitments of peace by removing the conditions of equality and consent and *abandoning a community* against their will. Consequently, this reinforces the importance of actors understanding the present (peace agreement-influenced) context in Northern Ireland (as affirmed in Figure 19.5, political discourse) while considering the appropriate mitigating steps when considering the stress of a border poll for the island of Ireland.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

As per the introduction of Stress 4, the evidence and analysis for this section are entirely focused on the perspective of a real-world event, a border poll on the island of Ireland. As a result, individual consideration of "discourse referencing (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace" does not apply to stress 4.

STRESS 4 PART 1: EXPEDITED PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The evidence examined in this section argues that a negotiated peace agreement for Northern Ireland, based on incompatible origins, is vulnerable to the pursuit of opposing ambitions. Therefore, the post-agreement must manage a parity relationship between such groups. This has required creative ambiguity within the peace agreement to bridge the gaps, but consequently, it weakens its resilience by empowering rival aspirations without reconciliation or resolution. As a result, there is a consensus, within this evidence, that the strains on this delicate relationship founded on an ambiguous framework will apply during a future border poll for the island of Ireland.

The first set of evidence within Figure 18 argues that the strengths of ambiguity that facilitated the successful conclusion of negotiating a peace agreement turned into a weakness following the agreement. This was due to mistrust emerging between the key parties, who guaranteed the agreement over the multiple interpretations of certain key aspects, which were facilitated through the creative ambiguity needed to reach an initial agreement.[232] This reinforces a key argument of this research that the prevalent mindset during the agreement did not endure post-agreement, and those specific constructive strengths of the initial agreement became destructive to the fragile nature of maintaining peace in the region. Moreover, the multiple interpretations allowed for the radical parties of opposing sides to establish their credibility as the guardians of peace instead of the envisioned rise of moderation that the peace agreements mechanisms intended to form.

[232] Colum Crowley, 'Lessons from the Architects of the Good Friday Agreement', *Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement*, March 2023. P.32

Consequently, despite attempts at moderation in specific areas, the ethnic outbidding has resulted in the radical parties assuming the leading role in a distrusted political framework. Therefore, this weakens the spirit of compromise, moderation, and coalescing around the common good in moments of extreme stress, to the overall peace in the region.[233]

The second set of evidence within Figure 19's reasoning links the arguments of creative ambiguity and its implications with a future border poll. Figure 19 argues that (through necessity at the time) only the essential details of the poll were established in the final peace agreement. More specific details remain unsettled due to a belief that this was not an imminent concern that needed resolution, and to allow trust in key areas to be built before addressing other contentious areas. Consequently, this raises the important point that revisiting the ambiguous/unsaid terms for a border poll (where there exists a consensus to resolve such terms pre-vote) that builds upon the evidence of Figure 18 could, in the current (unforeseen) fragile context, stress the peace.

[233] Ibid. P.22

Martin Melaugh, 'CAIN: Politics: Elections: Results of Elections Held in Northern Ireland Since 1968' (CAIN Web Service, 7 May 2024), https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/politics/election/elect.htm.

Paul Mitchell, Geoffrey Evans, and Brendan O'Leary, 'Extremist Outbidding In Ethnic Party Systems Is Not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland', n.d. P.16

David Mitchell, Etain Tannam, and Sarah Wallace, 'The Agreement's Impact on Political Cooperation', *Irish Political Studies* 33, no. 3 (3 July 2018): 283–310, https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2018.1466498. P.291.

In specific terms, this evidence cautions against a period of significant instability when addressing the issue of a border poll, especially a premature one, where these critical but sensitive preparatory issues have not been reconciled, such as work on reassuring the 'losing' community in a close result. Thus, deliberately provoking core guarantors of the peace, whose inclusion is needed for a peaceful and stable outcome.[234]

The key question from this evidence is whether the arguments, data and analysis of this section on the vulnerabilities of the Good Friday Agreement (stress 4) support the central argument of this thesis, which argues that the peace in Northern Ireland is fragile and susceptible to real-world shocks across multiple topics, including political, social, and historical.

Regarding this specific area, the argument is credible as it proves the theory that the political context that facilitated the peace agreement in Northern Ireland is not duplicated during the period of operational implementation for the specific priorities of the agreement framework. This is crucial as it highlights those unresolved matters, such as preparatory work for a future border poll, whilst not conducive to the mistrustful context of the agreement negotiation, do not have a more favourable context guaranteed post-agreement.

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[234] '90% of Loyalists Say United Ireland Vote Risks Return of Violence', *BelfastTelegraph.Co.Uk*, 2 May 2021, sec. Republic of Ireland, https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/90-of-loyalists-say-united-ireland-vote-risks-return-of-violence/40378939.html.
Colin Harvey, 'A Border Poll This Decade Remains Likely and Preparing for It Is Essential', *The Irish Times*, 10 December 2022, https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/2022/12/10/a-border-poll-this-decade-remains-likely-and-preparing-for-it-is-essential/.
Jody Corcoran, 'Poll: Two Thirds Say United Ireland Vote Risks Return to Violence', *Irish Independent*, 2 May 2021, sec. Irish News, https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/poll-two-thirds-say-united-ireland-vote-risks-return-to-violence/40378476.html.
Jon Tonge, 'The 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly Elections: Polling, Power-Sharing, Protocol', *Political Insight* 13, no. 2 (1 June 2022): 10–13, https://doi.org/10.1177/20419058221108775. P.13
Brendan O'Leary, 'Getting Ready: The Need to Prepare for a Referendum on Reunification', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2021): 1–38, https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.2021.0032. *Abstract*

The problems of mistrust between radical parties, unstable consequences, and bargaining through boycotting peace institutions have not been eroded by the creative ambiguity in the Good Friday Agreement. This results in a delicate problem in preparing for the established border poll in the region.

PART 2: IMPLEMENTING THE APPLIED/RESULTS (EXPLICIT FACTORS 1-3) FRAMEWORK TO THE RISK OF AN UN/MIS-PLANNED BORDER POLL ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND.

Figure 20:[235]

THE APPLIED/RESULTS FRAMEWORK	
A Framework To Conceptualise The Variables Of The Complex (Political/Social/Historical) Instability For A Post Conflict Society In Northern Ireland.	
Framework Context: The explored peace agreements are agreed with the past in mind for the immediate present without much consideration and detail for the future problems.	
EXPLICIT POLITICAL FACTORS	**IMPLICIT SOCIETAL BASED POLITICAL FACTORS**
1. The breakdown of power sharing structures and associated political institutional solutions.	**4.** The alienation of a minority through the removal of their perceived equality and consent rights.
2. A reduction in the visible effectiveness of the Strand 3 institutions.	**5.** Reinforced sectarian divisions - that prevent reconciliation and fuel a negative peace.
3. The 'accepted' consequence of internal and external political fragmentation of the perceived or expressed 'losing' side.	**6.** A deviation away from peaceful expressions of protest and conflict resolution - through violent protests, sectarian and political violent targeting.

Figure 20: THE APPLIED/RESULTS FRAMEWORK: A Framework To Conceptualise The Variables Of The Complex (Political/Social/Historical) Instability For A Post Conflict Society In Northern Ireland.

[235] This novel framework developed through the culmination of the analysis of actor discourse in this study, identifies implicit and measurable explicit variables which expose specifically where the Northern Ireland peace is vulnerable which allows for this framework to be applied to any future real-world shock to the peace, and informs actors, where specifically in the (tested) peace targeted engagement and support is needed to reinforce stability in the region. *Supplementary Material 2*

EXPLICIT POLITICAL FACTORS SUBSECTION 1: THE BREAKDOWN OF POWER SHARING STRUCTURES AND ASSOCIATED POLITICAL INSTITUTIONAL SOLUTIONS.

Source Title: Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL,* and Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland'.[236] [237]

(Appendix V)

Figure 21

Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS',

There is also the danger of significant groups of people boycotting referendums. Northern nationalists, led by the SDLP, boycotted the last Border Poll on unity in 1973. What is to stop unionists doing the same in a future such poll?

Figure 21.1

'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland'

There has been a previous referendum, or 'border poll', in 1973 (and) The nationalist community boycotted the vote. As a result The poll did not succeed in taking the border out of politics or bringing greater stability.

Figure 21: Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', UCL, and Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland'.

[236] Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

[237] Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Figure 21.2

There were concerns in all communities that unionists might not participate in the debate or that their views would not be heard. One unionist said: 'I'd fear as well that any referendum taking place in the near future would get such a hostile react from the Loyalist and Unionist communities, such as a boycott, which would make the whole exercise pointless.'

Figure 21.3

The possibility of a long transition, though, raises two particular difficulties. The first is the indeterminacy of joint arrangements for governance. What they would mean in concrete terms is unclear. The devolved institutions would presumably go on exercising legislative and executive powers as before.

Figure 21.4

Meanwhile, the legitimacy of the institutions in the North, which its electors had voted to end in favour of unity, might feel undermined.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 21.[238]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

Figure 21's logically reasoned discourse (sub-section 1 of the applied/results framework to a future border poll) argument makes clear that if a criterion for the stability to peace in Northern Ireland is broad, cross community political engagement with the established political framework, then an absence of such engagement is a real-world risk to the stability of peace. This is evidenced in Figure 21.2, which argues that, during a future border poll on the island of Ireland, the *concern* of a lack of *participation* and the consequential lack of debated views would be an explicit risk to the stability of the peace. Moreover, the discourse reasoning that, coupled with a *hostile* reaction from one community within this process, could result in a *boycott* of participation and recognition of the outcome.

Accordingly, it is clear from such discourse that a rupture in the consensus-based agreement for the political framework would occur, thus de-legitimising the entire political process, or as the discourse specifically reasons, such a (political) exercise would be *futile* from the stability perspective.

[238] Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Consequently, it is clear (Figure 21.4) that such an outcome (including a fragmented outcome across the entire island) would contribute to the breakdown of confidence in the political structures and institutions. This is coupled with an '*undermining of their legitimacy'* to enact solutions to contentious issues, during a *difficult, long transition* (Figure 21.3) or political aftermath period, as per subsection 1 of the complex variable instability factors in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The context-dependent political discourse of Figure 21 reasons that the specific issue of boycotting border polls has a historical precedent within the historical context of the resolution of Northern Ireland's constitutional status. Consequently, as in 1973, when *significant* groups of the electorate boycott such a political process, on grounds of questionable legitimacy as an evolving argument, this influences the context in which such actions can be repeated with similar effects. Therefore, from a stability perspective, such a danger highlights the need to mitigate the problem for any future poll, demonstrating the enduring challenging political context even in the post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Finally, this conclusion is supported in Figure 21.1 discourse which exposes the concern of repeated historical outcomes, such as in 1973, the failure of cross community consent and equality of outcome,(which became requirements for a lasting peace agreement in May 1998), '*did not succeed*' in brining greater stability to the region. Nor does it mitigate the political relevance of the issues, which are concerns that continue to endure in the present context, in which a future border poll would be carried out.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

As per the introduction of Stress 4, the evidence and analysis for this section is applying the applied results framework (Figure 20), which conceptualises the variables of the complex instability for a post-conflict society in Northern Ireland, to the real-world risk of a future border poll. As a result, individual consideration of "discourse referencing (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace" does not apply to stress 4.

Explicit Political Factors Subsection 2: A Reduction in The Visible Effectiveness of The Strand 3 Institutions.

Source Title: Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland and John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls' and 'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament'. [239] [240] [241]

(Appendix V)

Figure 22

The British–Irish Council (BIC) has met regularly as required by the Agreement, but, while a convivial forum for communication, it has been regarded by many as a little lacklustre.

How the BIIGC has operated, and how it has been viewed by different actors, has varied over time. The 1998 Agreement states: The Conference will bring together the British and Irish Governments to promote bilateral co-operation at all levels on all matters of mutual interest within the competence of both Governments. … there will be regular and frequent meetings. Although the BIIGC met frequently between 2002 and 2006, when the Northern Assembly was not functioning, it did not meet at all from 2007 to 2017.

Figure 22: Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland and John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls' and 'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament'.

[239] Ibid

[240] John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 110, no. 439 (2021): 309–14.

[241] 'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 4 December 2023, https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6941/the-effectiveness-of-the-institutions-of-the-belfastgood-friday-agreement/.

Spurred on in part by the crisis in power-sharing in Northern Ireland, and the growing pressures on British–Irish relations arising from the Brexit process, it met three times in 2018–19, but then it did not meet for two years.

Figure 22.1

There are different views of the importance of the BIIGC, perhaps reflecting diverging perspectives on the role of formalised British–Irish cooperation in preserving stability in Northern Ireland. Many unionists prefer that it not meet at all, arguing that it dilutes British sovereignty. Many nationalists prefer that it meet regularly so that the full Agreement is maintained and the governments can act together as its guarantors. Others have seen the BIIGC as relatively unimportant, so long as cooperation takes place somewhere.

The British–Irish Inter-Governmental Conference (BIIGC), under Strand Three of the Agreement, is the appropriate forum for the discussion of any differences between the governments on the interpretation of the Agreement. Its remit includes non-devolved functions (including potential unification referendums) but this does not allow for any arbitration of disputes.

Any future referendums would require close cooperation between the two governments.

Figure 22.1.1

John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls',

The focus now should instead be on making all the three strands of the Good Friday Agreement yield their full potential.

Figure 22.2

'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement'

As with Strand Two, submitters and witnesses generally took the view that East/West relations under Strand Three had been neglected, and as such the 'totality of relationships' encapsulated by the Agreement had been undermined.

Figure 22.3

Similarly, the BIC was sometimes cited as representing part of a package deal that allowed unionists agree to Strand Two's North South arrangements, by balancing it with 'East-West' arrangements. It was seen as a talking shop, lacking dynamism. The deeper logic of developing of both the BIIGC and the BIC as ensuring reconciliation across the islands—the totality of relations—was not appreciated.

Politicians and officials in both Ireland and the UK have "Misunderstood the importance of institutionalised relations, believing that it was easier to contact counterparts when required, as issues arose, and that the BIIGC was not necessary.

Figure 22.4

Strand 3 has never really developed in the way that it should have. There should be much more dynamism there. There was a clear misunderstanding that the BIIGC's role was meant to be on-going from 1998 to frame and manage broad relationships and prevent crises. It seems its deeper significance has not been appreciated.

Naomi Long MLA, who commented: "These bodies are potentially very powerful, but I have to say they have often been performative in how they have been delivered."233 Her party had already told us in written evidence that the Strand Three institutions are "often overlooked and lack profile within the Assembly and Executive".

"The absence of sustained commitment to maintaining a good working relationship between the two governments has been an important contributory factor to some of the problems that have affected Northern Ireland, even before the Brexit wedge pushed them further apart.

Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP, put it to us that]perhaps the east-west relationship is, of the three sets of relationships covered by the agreement, the one that has been least invested in. We would like to see that addressed."249 Dr Tannam similarly concluded that it is time, "given the challenges ahead, to implement Strand Three robustly."

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 22.[242]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The logically reasoned discourse in Figure 22 (subsection 2 of the applied/results framework to a future border poll) argues that there exists a reasoned consensus that the Strand Three institutions of the Good Friday Agreement have suffered from a lack of effectiveness and optimisation following the peace agreement. This is an important argument when applied to a real-world risk to the stability of peace, as it is also acknowledged that despite this reality, the importance of the institutions for the region's stability remains vital. This is evidenced in the discourse of Figures 22 and 22.3, which describes a *lacklustre* forum of bilateral cooperation at the British Irish Council, which hasn't appreciated the need to *ensure reconciliation* across the islands. Furthermore, while the overall role of the strand three institutions is viewed with importance as to their presence in delivering on the agreement's principles, the specific importance is contested by different actors, including Britain and Ireland.

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[242] Ibid

John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 110, no. 439 (2021): 309–14.

'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 4 December 2023, https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6941/the-effectiveness-of-the-institutions-of-the-belfastgood-friday-agreement/.

Moreover, the concerns from this argument are proven in Figure 20's historical political discourse, where political crises in the region, including '*pressures on the British-Irish relations*', resulted in an absence of participation, demonstrating a reduction of the involvement and effectiveness of the institutions.

This argument is advanced in Figure 22.1 discourse, which highlights a similar reality with the 2nd of the three strands, the BIIGC, revealing a *difference* of views as per its role in *preserving stability* in Northern Ireland. Therefore, the differing perspectives from both main communities as to participation with the institutions reflect a similar reality throughout the enactment of the Strand Three element of the peace agreement, which undermines stability in the region, within the sphere of this element of the negotiated peace. However, despite this, the political discourse highlights a separate reasoning for the absence of effectiveness from the Strand Three institution, which is *'relatively unimportant as long as cooperation takes place elsewhere'*. However, from the stability perspective, this reasoning does not account for the reasoning of the nationalist community that argues a part of the guarantees of the peace agreement is the multi-actor engagement with the Strand Three institutions of the peace agreement.

Without such engagement, it is not clear that the stability of a key element of the agreement exists. Furthermore, it is necessary for the political solution to be seen as working and practically working, which is provided by the frameworks of Strand Three. Therefore, the engagement with this element of the agreement, (despite the lack of arbitration of disputes, which can undermine the effectives of the institutions during a breakdown of bi lateral cooperation, thus leading to the endurance of instability for the region) allows for the visible political guarantor of the peace in the region, especially during potential risks to the peace, such as a potential unification referendum.

Consequently, such discourse connects with the risk factor explored in the applied framework through subsection 2. It reveals the logic behind a renewed effort before any such political vote for a *'focus on (ensuring) all three strands yield their full potential'*.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The contextual discourse in Figure 22.4 reveals a contemporary political context in the region where the development, understanding, and publicising of the Strand Three institutions have been *overlooked* by the other involved actors, and stands as a part of the negotiated peace in Northern Ireland. This concerning reality, which, as Figure 22.4 argues, has broad cross-political spectrum acknowledgement, undermines the effectiveness of the institutions, as a direct result of this lack of investment. Thus, this language reflects a failing of political engagement. Consequently, this context, for the efficacy of Strand Three, which is reinforced in the devolved power sharing (Strand One) institutions, creates an overshadowed problem that contributes to problems and is ill-placed to tackle '*future (stability) challenges ahead*'. Therefore, a future border poll is a relevant scenario where any future referendum would require close cooperation. Such reasoning particularly pertains to the effectiveness of the Strand Three 'East/West' relationships, which have been *'undermined'* and '*neglected'* (Figure 22.2), setting up a problematic context, in the face of real-world stresses of a politically, historically and socially complex unity referendum.

Furthermore, this lack of political engagement and its consequences for institutional effectiveness, also has a significant consequence for socio-political tone, whereby if within this context of an external shock, representatives of engaged citizens, cannot engage publicly and effectively, in line with the peace framework, why should the social dynamics of these citizens not follow such an example. Thus, proving the critical nature of this variable in terms of stability for the region.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

As per the introduction of Stress 4, the evidence and analysis for this section is applying the applied results framework (Figure 20) which conceptualises the variables of the complex instability for a post-conflict society in Northern Ireland, to the real-world risk of a future border poll.

As a result, individual consideration of "discourse referencing (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace" does not apply to stress 4.

EXPLICIT POLITICAL FACTORS SUBSECTION 3: THE 'ACCEPTED' CONSEQUENCE OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION OF THE PERCEIVED OR EXPRESSED 'LOSING' SIDE.

Source Title: Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021 and Senator Mark Daly, 'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland', *Joint Oireachtas Committee*, and Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL.* [243] [244] [245]

Figure 23.

'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland'

Particularly difficult though unpredictable political consequences might arise if unification were defeated on a split vote: a vote for unification in the North but not the South, or vice versa. This scenario would seriously threaten political stability. If a vote for unification was won in the North, but lost in the South, nationalism would be left orphaned, with the long cherished united Ireland ideal being abandoned by Irish voters in the South.

Figure 23: Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021 and Senator Mark Daly, 'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland', Joint Oireachtas Committee, and Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', UCL.

[243] Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

[244] Senator Mark Daly, 'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland', *Joint Oireachtas Committee*, 18 July 2019.

[245] Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

Figure 23.1

Some voiced fears of 'ethnic cleansing', loss of British identity, or discrimination in a united Ireland. One unionist said: (I am) extremely fearful for the future if this takes place and scared for my life due to high level of support between Republican political parties and paramilitary groups. [...] I would be fearful that certain cultural groups could only commemorate behind closed doors and secretly as they would be fearful of physical and emotional attacks. I would be forced to live in a state I have no wish to be a part of and feel I would not be welcome in..

Figure 23.2

'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland'

Bearing in mind the narrative that many Unionists see, that of a military fighting against terrorist grouping, Nationalism, especially Sinn Fein has done little to counter the narrative that a united Ireland would be foisted upon unionists as a victory of one people over another. In fact Unionists today fear that the actions of those that tried, and often succeeded, in causing them harm would be held up as an example to future generations.

Figure 23.3

"For those who cling to the binary, and there are many unionists who do, the fear is that their identity is denied

Perhaps the most important aspect of the division in Northern Ireland is the understanding that for some, the conflict is of identity and not politics. Unionists rightly fear that in a united Ireland the symbols and identity that they hold dear will be removed from them.

In these settings people, sensing a real or perceived loss of identity, culture, future, and control over decisions impacting their own well-being, chose extreme paths. In many cases these have been quickly followed by violence, hate, intolerance, and conflict. In the context of Northen Ireland this is vitally important.

As local areas have become more segregated and homogenized over the last 40 years, there is increased likelihood of environments emerging where intolerance is reinforced and increased.

Figure 23.4

What it makes clear is the "mother of all fears" for the Unionist community is "effectively our home would become a foreign state". Within that overarching fear is the belief that they could not "really be British in a United Ireland" that they would be "assimilation" and they would effectively become "second class", "planter citizens" in a United Ireland. There is also a fear of "Triumphalism" by nationalists and republicans. The pressing need to address these and all the other fears in the unionist community in advance of a referendum is clear.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 23.[246]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The logically reasoned discourse in Figure 23 (subsection 3 of the applied/results framework to a future border poll) judges that a key risk factor to the stability of peace in Northern Ireland during a border poll would be heavily weighted on the *political consequences* of a vote. Consequently, such scenarios as a split vote between Ireland's north and south would '*seriously threaten political stability'*. This is because of a vote's binary choice/results, which determines a winner and a loser. Whilst this is a widely established convention of such votes, in such a delicate theatre as post-conflict Northern Ireland, the *orphaning* of the *losing* party would lead to significant instability.

This is highlighted in this political discourse referencing the emotive discourse of *feelings of abandonment* for a significant actor in the present day working of the peace in the region.

[246] Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Senator Mark Daly, 'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland', *Joint Oireachtas Committee*, 18 July 2019.

Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

Consequently, this emotive consequence following a border poll links with subsection 3 of the framework that highlights the consequential nature of an accepted internal/political fragmentation of an expressed losing side. This could destabilise participation in enduring political solutions that appear to be at risk of a negative outcome following a poll.

This argument is supported in Figure 23.2 discourse, highlighting a perceived lack of refutation to the narrative that unification would be seen as a '*justified'* triumphal victory of one group of people over another. This discourse highlights the divisive reality of the outcome of an established binary border poll, which unequalised voters based on the ballots cast, which, in a delicate post-conflict balance, presents a problem from the stability risk perspective. Consequently, as this delicate balance currently transcends the peace's social, political, and historical segments, radical adjustments to this, following a democratic exercise, raise anxiety in those who express themselves or perceive themselves as the losers. Thus, further destabilising the equality and consent mechanisms of the peace framework.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The contextual, reasoned discourse of Figure 23 argues that Northern Ireland's delicate post-conflict balance, facilitating the enactment of the peaceful framework, is vulnerable to complex fears following a division into winners and losers following a binary process of a border poll on the island of Ireland.

This is evidenced in Figure 23.3, which reasons that in Northern Ireland, conflict isn't exclusive to a political understanding but rather a broader-reaching entity that affects *identity* (an exposed vulnerability during a border poll), culture, and jurisdictional *future determination*, which are to be debated during a future poll.

Consequently, losing such determination, on either side, through the instability of outcome is also applicable for proponents of a united Ireland, following a rejection. Accordingly, a real and perceived loss will be felt, with comparable consequential divisions of the opposite scenario, and therefore, in the context of Northern Ireland, it is a vital matter. This is based on social, political, and historical elements provoked in real-world risks, which are pertinent to subsection 3 of the framework as they relate to a future context, reinforcing these divisive elements.

Finally, this discourse argues that shifts to the *extreme* often accompany such *real or perceived loses*' in the region, highlighting the sensitive importance of the issue. Coupled with the threat of '*violence, hate and conflict*' based on the enduring historical '*ethnic and identity discrimination*' (Figure 23.1), which is an explicit unstable variable to the post-conflict contemporary historically founded political and social context in the region.

Furthermore, this is supported in Figure 23.3, argument of increased segregation in specific areas of this context, which increases the likelihood of '*reinforced intolerance*'. Consequently, this exposes division, where segregated classes of winners and losers are established during a border poll, rupturing reconciliation progress, within the fragile post-conflict context in Northern Ireland.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

As per the introduction of Stress 4, the evidence and analysis for this section is applying the applied results framework (Figure 20) which conceptualises the variables of the complex instability for a post-conflict society in Northern Ireland, to the real-world risk of a future border poll. As a result, individual consideration of "discourse referencing (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace" does not apply to stress 4.

PART 2: IMPLEMENTING THE APPLIED/RESULTS FRAMEWORK (IMPLICIT FACTORS 3-6) TO THE RISK OF AN UN/MIS - PLANNED BORDER POLL ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND CONTINUED.

IMPLICIT SOCIETAL BASED POLITICAL FACTORS SUBSECTION 4: THE ALIENATION OF A MINORITY THROUGH THE REMOVAL OF THEIR PERCEIVED EQUALITY AND CONSENT RIGHTS.

Source Title: John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', UCL and Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland.[247] [248] [249] (Appendix W)

Figure 24

The history of Northern Ireland since 1920 demonstrates the danger of attempting to impose, by a simple majority, a constitutional settlement and an identity on a minority who feel they have been overruled. Those pressing for an early border poll on Irish unity, which would have to take place in both parts of Ireland, should reflect on this. Such a poll could repeat the error of 1920 and add to divisions, rather than diminish them.

Figure 24: John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', UCL and Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland.

[247] John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 110, no. 439 (2021): 309–14.

[248] Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

[249] Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Figure 24.1

The Downing Street Declaration says that Irish unity should be achieved 'by those who favour it, persuading those who do not, peacefully and without coercion or violence'. I do not think a poll in favour of unity, carried by a small margin, and before a majority of the unionist community have been persuaded of the merits of Irish unity, could truly be said to meet that criterion, agreed between the governments in the Declaration (Even if) It might be legally valid.

Figure 24.2

What have nationalists said to them so far that would show them how their British heritage and ethos would be respected in a united Ireland? Those who favour a border poll have an obligation to spell out exactly how the British identity, and monarchist ethos, of the unionist population might be given the required 'equal treatment and respect', across the whole island in the wake of Irish unity. The centrality of this issue of 'consent of the governed' is reinforced by the terms of the Framework Agreement I reached as Taoiseach.

Figure 24.3

A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS'

The concept of "parallel consent", modelled on a clause in the Good Friday Agreement which required that key decisions of the Northern Ireland Assembly "would require the support of parties representing both traditions"

I believe parallel consent in an Irish unity Border Poll is unrealisable, since the majority of unionists will never vote for unity. However it does serve to open the debate about whether some kind of super-majority will be needed to ensure that a significant minority of unionists give their consent to unity in order to make that unity workable.

Figure 24.4

Some unionists and respondents identifying as neither stated that their fears could not be addressed in the event of a referendum: they simply opposed such a vote. Coordination and planning would therefore be essential. Both supporters and opponents of the UK's departure from the EU agree that the lack of preparation ahead of the UK's 2016 referendum was detrimental to both the referendum process and the subsequent developments, undermining confidence in the result and perhaps leading to a suboptimal outcome. Such procedural failings could have damaging consequences if repeated on the question of Irish unification.

Figure 24.5

While in principle there would be no need for any changes to be made if the unity proposition was defeated in either jurisdiction, in reality, there could be many political consequences that would need attention. Referendums on this issue would have the potential to polarise political discourse over a period of years. Keeping constructive politics and the Agreement machinery in operation during this period might require much care and attention.

If the vote was narrowly against unification, this might become the focus of politics in the ensuing years, with proponents of unity looking to further referendums after the statutory interval of seven years.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 24.[250]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The logically reasoned discourse from Figure 24 (subsection 4 of the applied/results framework) argues that the fragile peace framework's historical element is applicable when considering any future stress event on the peace for the region, in consensus with others acknowledging submitted reasoned discourse. This is evidenced in Figure 24, which refers to the '*danger'* of repeating history by '*imposing constitutional settlements and identities on a minority*', which signals the enduring link between the region's historical precedents and the present-day risks to the established peace. This is vital as it reaffirms the delicate nature of the post-conflict status quo, the enduring identity aspirations of a significant part of that status, and risks of political impositions, overruling minority consent, and creating further divisions. Thus, deviating from the established articles of peace for the region post-conflict.

Furthermore, the historical elements of the peace framework are linked to the political and legal constitutional elements within this discourse.

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[250] John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 110, no. 439 (2021): 309–14.

Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Therefore, as Figure 24.1 argues, a strictly legal validity towards a future constitutional settlement does not necessarily translate into a sustained political one, recognising the desire for majority peaceful persuasion established during the peace agreement 98.

Finally, it is reasoned in Figure 24.2 that as the minority and majority segregated prominence shifts over time and as the constitutional settlement evolves, the articles of equality, consent, and respect remain a vital responsibility of the actors and leading citizen voices. This responsibility is focused on the minority regardless of the lack of political/constitutional attractiveness to that endeavour, to avoid the historical divides from appearing in a present-day risk to the stability of peace established in the negotiated peace framework for a post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The contextual discourse in Figure 24 demonstrates the challenging element of the fragile post-conflict debate in Northern Ireland. Figure 24.3 reasons this by describing where to protect the inclusion and political investment of the minority, through equality of both dominant traditions and action through the consent of these respective parties within a post-conflict society. Hence, this has enabled a framework in which peace has emerged for the region, and the contemporary political context that a border poll is compared to within the discourse.

However, this reality is viewed within this discourse as *unreasonable* for a border poll, as a majority of unionists (who could reasonably make up the minority grouping in a future vote) will never *consent* to the option of unity. Consequently, without deliberate planning, the existing political context in Northern Ireland, which attempts to facilitate the political framework of progress away from division, does not apply to the stress of a future border poll for the region. However, this is made more complex, owing to the discourse in Figure 24.4, which highlights that a number of voters (who were not exclusively unionists) could not have their fears addressed before a vote. Thus, revealing how vital, high-quality harmonisation between the various actors and planning (before any vote, as evidenced in the comparative discourse to the Brexit referendum, absence of preparedness) is to resolve a perceived and realised lack of equality and consent during this stress. A consequence would be a sub-optimal outcome similar to the Brexit referendum and '*damaging consequences*' to the post-conflict consensus.

Finally, these consequences are highlighted in Figure 24.5, arguing that *many political consequences* await the aftermath of a vote requiring consideration. Furthermore, these would stress the pre-vote political framework of the previously explored, perceived (likely to have been withdrawn by the community that emerges as the perceived minority losers of a vote) and expressed equality and consent. Thus, this demonstrates the importance of engagement of the outcome for those relevant actors in polarising stress on the peace in the region.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

As per the introduction of Stress 4, the evidence and analysis for this section apply the applied results framework (Figure 20), which conceptualises the variables of the complex instability of a post-conflict society in Northern Ireland to the real-world risk of a future border poll. As a result, individual consideration of "discourse referencing (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace" does not apply to stress 4.

IMPLICIT SOCIETAL-BASED POLITICAL FACTORS SUBSECTION 5: REINFORCED SECTARIAN DIVISIONS - THAT PREVENT RECONCILIATION AND FUEL A NEGATIVE PEACE.

Source Title: John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Nicola McEwen and Mary C Murphy, 'Brexit and the Union: Territorial Voice, Exit and Re-Entry Strategies in Scotland and Northern Ireland, Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021 and Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', UCL. [251] [252] [253] [254]

Figure 25

'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls'

There is little evidence that this type of persuasion is taking place within Northern Ireland between the two communities. In some senses they are more polarised than ever, and are talking past, rather than with, one another. Brexit has accentuated this.

Figure 25: 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review, Nicola McEwen and Mary C Murphy, 'Brexit and the Union: Territorial Voice, Exit and Re-Entry Strategies in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Etc

[251] John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 110, no. 439 (2021): 309–14.

[252] Nicola McEwen and Mary C Murphy, 'Brexit and the Union: Territorial Voice, Exit and Re-Entry Strategies in Scotland and Northern Ireland after EU Exit', *International Political Science Review* 43, no. 3 (2022): 374–89.

[253] Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

[254] Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

Figure 25.1

Reducing a complex issue, with many nuances and gradations, to an oversimplified Yes/No question is hazardous. The binary choice in itself excludes creativity and compromise. As the Brexit experience in 2016 has shown, it can also lead to the oppression of minority viewpoints, lasting division, and unforeseen consequences.

Figure 25.2

'Brexit and the Union:

The calling of a border poll would undoubtedly be a moment of high political drama that would be potentially destabilising, illicit strong, contested reactions.

Figure 25.3

Working Group on Unification Referendums

Leo Varadkar said, 'The demand for a border poll is alarming. It is a return to a mindset in which a simple sectarian majority of 50% plus one is enough to cause a change in the constitutional status of the North. In an interview, the new Taoiseach said, 'a border poll is far too divisive at this stage and doesn't deal with the more fundamental issue of how we continue to live and work together'.

Figure 25.4

Fears that minorities would be intimidated during the referendum were raised across all groups. 'I worry that violence and intimidation could rise (from one or both "sides") in the lead-up to a referendum, and that this could affect the vote. Intimidation at voting stations could also present itself.'

Figure 25.5

Overall, 16% of respondents across all communities were concerned that a referendum would be divisive and polarising. A nationalist said: 'I fear that some parties will use the referendum campaign to stoke fear, division and sectarianism in order to influence the electorate.'

Respondents from each community expressed concerns that divisive political campaigning and fake claims would be used to manipulate public opinion.

A unionist said: 'That a referendum, even if it doesn't result in a UI, will open the Pandoras box of more referenda every 7 years & that this will continue until Sinn Féin in particular create as much division & hatred as possible to make NI unworkable.'

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 25.[255]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The logically reasoned discourse in Figure 25 (subsection 5 of the applied/results framework) argues that the reasoned consensus that affirms the complexity of the issues in Northern Ireland is exposed during the stress of a referendum. This is evidenced in Figure 25.1, which declares that the nuanced complexities of Northern Ireland should not be reduced to a binary question of yes or no without further consideration. Moreover, the discourse warns of the *hazards* that could befall the region by a democratic exercise that will '*exclude creativity and compromise*' by nature. This is an essential point as it is evident that a significant parameter of peace, post-agreement in Northern Ireland, has been a prominent, if not sustained, reduction of division between divided communities' post-conflict. The consensus of the evidence regards this shift as a product of reconciliatory efforts coupled with institutional setups that foster cooperation and compromise from extreme perspectives, such as power-sharing institutions.

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[255] John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 110, no. 439 (2021): 309–14.

Nicola McEwen and Mary C Murphy, 'Brexit and the Union: Territorial Voice, Exit and Re-Entry Strategies in Scotland and Northern Ireland after EU Exit', *International Political Science Review* 43, no. 3 (2022): 374–89.

Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

Figure 25.1's argument reopens the concern that a binary choice could remove the presence of these efforts, as a precedent was found in the Brexit referendum of 2016. Therefore, the discourse argues that it is clear from this example that lasting division with unforeseen consequences that were present during this example apply to the complex and nuanced status quo found in post-conflict Northern Ireland. This status quo, which comprises an increase in the division between communities segregated by a yes/no (or an abstention) vote, makes up a delicate post-conflict society vulnerable to a lack of reconciliation post a rupture of political compromise and cooperation.

Moreover, this vulnerability is supported in Figure 25's discourse, which reasons that reconciliation (including opposing views of a future for the island of Ireland) between opposing communities regarding a border poll has '*little evidence of taking place'*. Consequently, division and polarisation have occurred with limited cross-community dialogue over this stress. Therefore, an existing division and lack of reconciliation efforts in the region, over a future border poll, reinforces the divisive, often sectarian ('*two communities'*) polarisation effect that a border poll imposes on the fragile post-conflict social/political/ historically cultural elements before a poll has been arranged. Finally, according to Figure 25.2, this effect is extended to an arranged future border poll where further '*destabilising political drama*' between leading actors who influence social/political reactions could materialise. Thus, this acute scenario demonstrates the enduring risks to the vulnerable, post-conflict peace settlement.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The contemporary contextual political discourse of Figure 25.3 reveals the '*divisive'* consequences of a border poll (despite being democratically mandated through a peace agreement and endorsed through a referendum of that agreement), which prematurely relies on the strict interpretation of the agreement of a sectarian majority. Consequently, this discourse highlights the links between a border poll's contentious effects and a social, political and historically cultural context that profoundly lacks measurable reconciliation in an evolving constitutional political context.

Such division is explored in Figure 25.4, which records the social concerns of intimidation across the political spectrum, leading to a referendum. Thus, further straining the accepted status quo for post-conflict Northern Ireland, as divisions appear prior, during and after a vote, including from those who are entrenched in a particular '*side'* of the debate. Accordingly, this discourse reveals an anxious context that people will endure towards sections of the political and social debate, challenging the ability for a stable peace during this stress.

Finally, a border poll widely feared divisive and polarising effects existed across all communities, where divisive political campaigning and manipulation concerned the electorate. Given the collective nature of the political system in Northern Ireland, the *'divisive, polarising and manipulative'* behaviour of a referendum will be an evident shock to the post-conflict status quo established through successive agreements. In the context of Northern Ireland, the '*sectarian effect'* is an equal concern from a stability perspective. This is due to the historical, political and social acrimony that, whilst mostly absorbed through a cohesive political system, an enduring negative peace and social restructuring two decades post-agreement, remains a concern (subsection 5, implicit societal-based political factors).

This is especially relevant during a time of stress to the peace that divides along such lines, and is on a historically potent issue for both respective communities.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

As per the introduction of Stress 4, the evidence and analysis for this section apply the applied results framework (Figure 20), which conceptualises the variables of the complex instability of a post-conflict society in Northern Ireland to the real-world risk of a future border poll. As a result, individual consideration of "discourse referencing (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace" does not apply to stress 4.

IMPLICIT SOCIETAL BASED POLITICAL FACTORS SUBSECTION 6: A DEVIATION AWAY FROM PEACEFUL EXPRESSIONS OF PROTEST AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION - THROUGH VIOLENT PROTESTS, SECTARIAN AND POLITICAL VIOLENT TARGETING.

Source Title: Senator Mark Daly, 'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland', Kristin Archick, *Northern Ireland: The Peace Process, Ongoing Challenges, and US Interests* and : Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland'. [256] [257] [258]

(Appendix W)

Figure 26

'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland'

"There is a lot of young loyalists out there, who missed the war, champing at the bit for military glory and I can see us living in a land that will return to violence and murder"

"What are the implications for the nation of Ireland to have a very significant section of its population NOT having allegiance to the new state – and not wanting to? Does the history of republican violence not warn us against this being even contemplated (to say nothing of tit-for-tat violence and the associated and deepening criminality)?

Figure 26: 'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland', Kristin Archick, Northern Ireland: The Peace Process, Ongoing Challenges, and US Interests and : Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland'.

[256] Senator Mark Daly, 'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland', *Joint Oireachtas Committee*, 18 July 2019.

[257] Kristin Archick, *Northern Ireland: The Peace Process, Ongoing Challenges, and US Interests* (Congressional Research Service, 2024).

[258] Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Figure 26.1

"It's not like you fight a long war and get beaten. The Prods are unbeaten.

"I don't see where the Garda [sic] and the Irish Army have the resources to contain major riots in over 70 towns, plus getting their units wiped out in well-staged killing grounds. They would have to raise a Catholic gendarmerie, like the B Specials, and then you will have civil war, way beyond the Troubles II and more like Bosnia".

Figure 26.2

Northern Ireland: The Peace Process, Ongoing Challenges 2024

Some concerns exist in Ireland about unification, including the possibility that it could spark renewed loyalist violence in Northern Ireland.

Figure 26.3

'Working Group on Unification Referendums.'

Fears that violence could break out due to a referendum were actively voiced across all groups, especially among younger respondents, including by 15% of nationalist respondents, 21% of unionists, and 27% of those who identified as neither. One identifying as neither said: 'I feel anxious when I hear it discussed, because I know it'll cause violence, but I also feel hopeful for a brighter future.'

Figure 26.4

Nationalists tended to fear loyalist violence. One wrote: 'My fear is that hardline unionism and loyalism would not accept the outcome and react violently.' Unionists and respondents identifying as neither specifically shared fears of republican violence, though some expressed concerns about loyalist violence too.

One unionist said: 'We will have to live in fear of the IRA.' Respondents across all communities shared their fears that those on the losing side could fail to accept the results, which, among other things, could lead to violence.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FROM FIGURE 26.[259]

Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

The logically reasoned discourse in Figure 26 (subsection 6 of the applied/results framework) argues that within the existing status quo in Northern Ireland, a notable enthusiasm exists for the deviation away from peaceful conflict resolution within the established political framework. Importantly, for this evidence, such arguments are reasoned within the application of future real-world stress (as outlined within the applied/results framework), specifically a border poll on the island of Ireland. Therefore, as the discourse in Figure 26 argues, there exists a restrained drive amongst '*a lot of young loyalists'* whose experience of conflict has not been individually (historically) influenced. Accordingly, the fear of a reoccurrence of violence when such restraint is lifted during stress, to the status quo, is apparent. Furthermore, this fear is linked to the continued influence of the region's historical elements on the current peaceful reality, which can '*return'* to the people's minds, with wide-reaching '*implications for the nation of Ireland*'.

[259] Senator Mark Daly, 'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland', *Joint Oireachtas Committee*, 18 July 2019.

Kristin Archick, *Northern Ireland: The Peace Process, Ongoing Challenges, and US Interests* (Congressional Research Service, 2024).

Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

This fear is a significant concern for maintaining stability in the region during the stress of a border poll. This is expressed in Figure 26.1 by those who acknowledge the mindset that '*the long war isn't beaten*', which reveals the continuation of the principles of the conflict, through the absence of defeat, by a community who maintain the protestants are *unbeaten* in their dissensions.

Furthermore, the concern over stability is reasoned by the discourse, which reveals that significant groupings (including those who do not publicly identify) reject *allegiance* to the political and democratic process of the constitutional evolution expressed in a border poll. This concern is applicable for either outcome, through *renewed violence* (Figure 26.2) in a mirror of the historical republican violence, that evolved to the (targeted) '*tit for tat violence*' which destabilises and rejects the established peaceful framework.

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

The contextual discourse in Figure 26.1 reveals how a delicate political, social and cultural context in Northern Ireland today translates to an applied border poll in favour of unification. This context is expressed through the discourse in Figure 26.1 that argues that following unification, there exists a concern (from the stability of peace perspective) that the security infrastructure is resourcefully ineffective against *major widespread riots*. This concern is taken further in the discourse, which describes a sectarian class between a section of society and the state through a *catholic gendarmerie*, in which an empowered civil war could follow. Consequently, this discourse proves that the delicate political, social and cultural context in present-day Northern Ireland, borne out of a compromised historical settlement, endures despite the outcome of the future border poll.

This, therefore, demonstrates the consequential importance of the concerns for stability in this real-world stress, where the abandonment of a peaceful and political framework remains a real threat that undermines the stability of peace in the region.

However, given that the violent element of the delicate context is transferable, based on the outcome of a referendum, it stands to reason that this element is exposed pre-vote. This is argued in Figure 26.3 discourse of voter respondents, who express a consensus for fearing violence could erupt during a referendum, raising anxiety regarding the political, social and cultural stress of a referendum amongst unionists, nationalists and neither. Thus, highlighting the cross-community effects of this element, and the enduring concern that violence will emerge, caused by stress to the vulnerable peace, even amongst those who are optimistic/convenient for it and its opportunities.

Finally, this cross-community fear of violence links this element of the delicate peace with the historical memories of complex, multi-actor internal violence referred to as *'tit for tat'* in previous discourse, underlining the enduring concern that is applied to the border poll. Figure 26.4 directly addresses this by arguing that in a border poll, '*nationalists fear loyalist violence' and 'unionists fear republican violence'*, and some are concerned about violence from their own grouping. This complex reality reveals the power that a return to any violence has on the people, the continued presence of paramilitaries, empowered through a stress on the peace, and a rupture of the established peace through the '*failure of accepting the result by the losing side*'. This discourse reaffirms the delicate context that any vote operates in and the potentially violent consequences which deviate from the peaceful framework.

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

As per the introduction of Stress 4, the evidence and analysis for this section apply the applied results framework (Figure 20), which conceptualises the variables of the complex instability of a post-conflict society in Northern Ireland to the real-world risk of a future border poll.

As a result, individual consideration of "discourse referencing (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace" does not apply to stress 4.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the evidence for the last two stresses to the peace in Northern Ireland that are being analysed using the thesis's selected discourse analysis methodology. This second evidence chapter selects the evidence from a balance of relevant material included as raw data within the appendix. The specific evidence for the appropriate section is included as figures analysed using a critical analysis of the discourse with three specific research questions.[260]

The first stress focuses on the strains of Brexit on the Northern Ireland peace in 4 parts. Firstly, this stress explored the special post-conflict circumstances and divisions that created vulnerabilities that Brexit exposed. This set up the context, which facilitated the further exploration of the impacts of Brexit in subsequent parts. Additionally, this study examined the deterioration of British-Irish relations at the bilateral and supranational levels with the EU, the impact of subsidies within the supranational framework, and the links between this deterioration and the undermining of the peace agreement. Thirdly, the internal and external instability of unionism during the events of Brexit is explored with specific attention to how this translated to wider instability for the region, which diverged from the peace agreement institutional framework.

[260] Logical Reasoning Question: How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?

Contextual Topical Question: What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?

Event Specific Question: How does the discourse reference (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?

Finally, Part 4 posits that through a lack of understanding around the sensitivities in Northern Ireland, by building on the previous work of this thesis, the Brexit saga involved the use of political bargaining and negotiated advancement, which undermined the stability of the region's peace and operational effectiveness.

Following this examination of all the evidence for the specific stress, the evidence is analysed in a preliminary findings section that questions how the evidence findings (from the critical analysis) fit in with the broader research question/central argument of this thesis.

Finally, this chapter uses the findings of the examined stresses to generate an applied results framework. This framework has identified the overall context in which the vulnerabilities to the Northern Ireland peace occur, namely that the explored peace agreements are agreed with the past fresh in mind, to be implemented for the immediate present and without much consideration and detail for the future problems.

This context underpins the examination of this research, in pursuit of revealing vulnerabilities to the peace presented in this framework. Furthermore, this allows for the framework to conceptualise the variables of the complex (political/social/historical and cultural) instability for post-conflict Northern Ireland. These vulnerabilities can be categorised into two parts. First are the explicit political factors that cover the peace institutions and the fragmentation of established designations, which suffer from a perceived or expressed loss, and second are the implicit factors that comprise alienation of minority interests, sectarian divisions, and shifts away from peaceful expressions and conflict resolution. Additionally, this framework, which conceptualises these variable factors, can be applied to real-world stresses to judge risk against future instability in peace for the region; this chapter does this by applying the framework to a future border poll on the island of Ireland.

Moreover, this novel framework which identifies implicit and measurable explicit variables which expose specifically where the Northern Ireland peace is vulnerable which allows for this framework to be applied to any future real-world shock to the peace, and informs actors, where specifically in the (tested) peace targeted engagement and support is needed to reinforce stability in the region.

Therefore, this chapter, building on the work of Chapter 2, exposes multiple vulnerabilities within the current peace in Northern Ireland (which are expressed in the framework) and therefore makes it fragile to real-world external shocks. Ultimately, this fragility is borne in an evolving fragile context rooted in political, social, cultural and historical complications which have the potential to threaten the peace.

Finally, Chapter 4 will summarise the findings of Chapters 2 and 3 and then present proposals to contribute to the six problematic variables identified through the submitted evidence and discourse analysis, which make up the applied results framework in Figure 20.

CHAPTER 4 ABSTRACT

Chapter 4 of this thesis follows the research study of this thesis conducted in Chapters 1 – 3 by reorienting the central arguments of the thesis to the practical policy application for each of the vulnerable variables of the results framework (Chapter 3).

Chapter 4: Practical Application of Research Findings

INTRODUCTION

This thesis began with establishing credibility for the problem of Northern Ireland by recognising that the importance of peace enduring for the post-conflict region transcends the statistics, theories, and individual ideologies that try to rationalise this issue. Therefore, it is appropriate that this chapter, which has absorbed the previous chapters' research and proposes recommendations that satisfy the research objectives and engage with the research findings, reaffirms this point from the beginning. From this perspective, the recommendations of this thesis serve several vital purposes.

Firstly, the recommendations of this chapter are designed to reorient the discussion towards the principles of this research. This belief is that despite the vulnerabilities to the Northern Ireland peace, there are greater opportunities for a strengthened agreement, a more collaborative relationship between the relevant actors, improved engagement, and a more stable, prosperous, and resilient future.

Secondly, these recommendations are designed to provide a concluding highlight of the specific areas this research has identified as vulnerable according to its framework, which could each require greater social and political policy interventions from stakeholders to address these vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, this intention invites a further debate on the central arguments, the results framework, and the specific recommendations, which can be regarded as a successful research outcome.

Both recommendation resolutions mitigate the limitations of including recommendations in such a research study, that the intended audience has limited influence over the practical implementation of any recommendation, and that recommendations can stray from the research findings and objectives. Finally, these recommendations, while not conclusive to the problem and arguments of the island of Ireland from this research perspective, do provide a conclusive contribution to this research study, by evolving the studies' findings into a practical application.

RECOMMENDATION 1: A REFERENDUM EVERY 10 YEARS TO TEST THE PUBLIC APPETITE FOR A BORDER POLL.

This thesis recognises a perceived democratic deficit from some voices in Northern Ireland that the sole responsibility of calling a border poll, falling on the Secretary of State's (for Northern Ireland) interpretation of the public view, is lacking. This study also recognised that this problem generates a complex and unresolved debate within the literature, even amongst those with the same ideological objective. Therefore, this thesis has recommended advancing the debate in a radical novel avenue.

This thesis proposes that every 10 years, alongside scheduled assembly elections in May, a referendum is held to test whether there is a majority for a referendum to be held within the next 18 months.

The advantage of this proposal is that a border poll on the island of Ireland could not be handled unless there was significant support in the North, which would demonstrate cross-community enthusiasm for a vote. Secondly, it would alleviate the ambiguity that is the current responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, which would be partially replaced with a democratic check. However, if it was clear before the next scheduled vote that a majority through commissioned polls and public opinion forums, the Secretary of State could retain the power to call a referendum when they saw fit outside of the schedule. Furthermore, an additional advantage to this recommendation is that by binding only a referendum to test the public support for a border poll to assembly elections, it incentivises those political parties involved in power sharing to remain committed to the government of the day to fully participate in such a vote.

This would address subsection one of the results frameworks, highlighting the vulnerabilities of weakened power sharing in Northern Ireland for the stability of peace in the region.

This recommendation directly addresses the vulnerability within the results framework of this research study, which raises the concern of weakness of power-sharing institutions (Variable 1) by tying such a vote with assembly elections, incentivising political parties to remain committed to power sharing.

The limitation of this proposal is that it would require renegotiating the legal framework for the Belfast Good Friday agreement and is unlikely to win support amongst unionist parties. However, it would deal with the concern of the non-aligned and Nationalist stakeholders. Whilst this limitation is significant, it does raise the interesting considerations that dealing with the ambiguities of the Good Friday agreement through stakeholder engagement, specifically around contentious issues such as a future border poll, is in people's best interest from a stability perspective. More importantly, this proposal stresses the importance of planning for a future referendum, and whilst it may be practically challenging to renegotiate the specifics of the legal framework that underpins the Belfast Good Friday agreement, an inclusive discussion over its shortcomings with regards to a border poll would be in everyone's best interest.

RECOMMENDATION 2: REFORMING NEW DECADE NEW APPROACH TO STRENGTHEN POWER SHARING'S PRACTICAL AND PUBLICLY PERCEIVED STABILITY PART 1.

This thesis acknowledges the critical progress made in stabilising the power-sharing institutions in the New Decade New Approach Agreement. However, it is recommended that further reform is needed to strengthen the practical and publicly perceived stability of power sharing, considering the recent unstable periods in institutions that have been post this agreement. Whilst the New Decade New Approach agreement states that ministers shall exist in a care caseworker capacity in the event of a breakdown of the power-sharing government of the day, the agreement states this only lasts for 24 weeks. Thus, as the events of Brexit and the DUP withdrawal from power sharing show, 24 weeks can expire, and further political mechanisms can be employed to ensure that a power-sharing government does not form. Therefore, ***this proposal recommends that the 24 weeks should be extended to a period of a year (and could, over time, be increased to gradually de-incentivise sudden withdrawals) and should be renewable at the discretion of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, rather than through the devolved mechanism.*** Furthermore, direct rule via primary legislation should be realistically proposed to incentivise negotiations for a return to power sharing.

This recommendation directly addresses the vulnerability within the results framework of this research study, which raises the concern of the weakness of power-sharing institutions (Variable 1). This is achieved by strengthening the stability of the power-sharing institutions by extending the duration and significance of the caretaker capacity role of executive ministers whilst simultaneously reducing the consequential practical impact of a party withdrawing on people's daily lives in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, by utilising the option of direct rule (via primary legislation in Westminster), which disincentivises nationalist parties withdrawing from power sharing over its unpalatable nature with this community, as well as disincentivises unionists due to their reduced influence in direct rule. Moreover, the opportunities of devolved power sharing become much more attractive for the cost of returning to a power-sharing arrangement, which is a significant advantage of this recommendation.

A limitation of this recommendation is the implication that political parties are not currently sufficiently incentivised to be part of power sharing in Northern Ireland. Whilst this recommendation does not seek to establish this narrative, the historical evidence since power sharing reveals that small changes are enough to destabilise power sharing in the region. Thus, Northern Ireland would benefit from a strengthened institution.

RECOMMENDATION 3: REFORMING NEW DECADE NEW APPROACH TO STRENGTHEN POWER SHARING'S PRACTICAL AND PUBLICLY PERCEIVED STABILITY PART 2.

New Decade New Approach was the last multi-actor agreement that reformed the political mechanisms of the Northern Ireland peace process outside of Brexit. As such, it is well placed to be the vehicle to iterate and improve for greater practical and publicly visible stability. It is vital that, outside the controlled environment of an election, sectarian politics is minimised, which is the objective of the electoral and executive systems in place in Northern Ireland. Therefore, ***this thesis proposes that the offices of the First and Deputy First Ministers should be renamed to the Joint First Minister.*** Both leading parties of their respective communities have proposed this change at different times, yet not when they occupied the office of first minister. This type of political one-upmanship directly contradicts the spirit of the peace agreement; as such, it is time to reform this problem and take a simple yet significant step towards progress in this area of vulnerability for the peace.

This recommendation directly addresses the vulnerability within the results framework of this research study, which raises the concern of weakness of power-sharing institutions (Variable 1) by strengthening the stability of the power-sharing institutions. This is achieved by removing self-imposed limitations of perceived winners or losers of power sharing, which destabilise the incentive for the leading party of the 2nd placed electoral community from joining the executive.

The advantage of this recommendation is that it would remove the implicit yet self-imposed stigma of the office of deputy first minister (which reinforces sectarian divisions, Variable 5 of the results framework), and now that both parties have occupied the office.

Publicly, such a change will convey to the electorate a sense of collaboration between the two sides as well as an investment that goes beyond the political considerations and instead is focused on the collective benefit for the region.

RECOMMENDATION 4: IMPROVE THE PUBLIC EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLITICAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN WITH AN ANNUAL FIXED-DATE SUMMIT.

The recent shocks that have affected the Northern Ireland peace process have reaffirmed the importance of all three strands working harmoniously to enact the best principles of the peace agreements for the region. Furthermore, this research identified that a weakness for the peace was a visible reduction in the effectiveness of the Strand Three institutions, highlighted most prominently during the events of Brexit.

In order to ensure that the political solution is seen to be working for the people of Ireland north and south, ***this thesis recommends that a face to face summit (modelled on the bi lateral summit every year between the Taoiseach and the President of the United States) is held between the PM and the Taoiseach on or around the 10th of April the anniversary of the singing of the good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland.*** There is precedent for this recommendation through the summit-level provision in the setup of the British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference, and both leaders have scheduled calls on this day with each other in previous years. Yet, the impact and advantages of a face to face summit cannot be overstated as, it would allow for a reaffirming of the principles of peace, which can be forgotten in a post conflict society, a public re engagement between the core guarantors of the agreement, and if the leaders of the devolved executive were invited would allow for any gaps in the effectiveness of the various strands to be addressed.

This recommendation directly addresses the vulnerabilities in the region's peace, described in variable two, a reduction in the visible effectiveness of strand three institutions, which highlights the destabilising consequences of reduced visible successful co-operation (such as the absence of this strand three institution for example 2007 – 2017 and 2019 – 2021) between the two guarantors of the peace agreements.

Peace monitoring is important, and such a summit would regularly reinforce this by elevating the priorities of regional peace to the top of the political agenda each year for a relatively small political investment by the involved actors, which is a significant advantage of this recommendation. Furthermore, the public-facing nature of such summits allows for progress assessment by the regional electorate, scrutiny by the invited press, and a public-oriented point of reference for debate, which the political institutions can further advantage if this were to occur regularly.

The limitation of this recommendation is the initial political investment of a first summit. However, once the details have been formalised and the intended outcomes from both sides have been agreed upon, this limitation should decrease year on year.

RECOMMENDATION 5: LOWER THE VOTING AGE FOR ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS TO INCLUDE 16- AND 17-YEAR-OLDS.

This research study has established that a significant vulnerability to the peace in Northern Ireland is the alienation of a specified minority against another group. This is established in the results framework Variable 4, which outlines how an absence of equality and consent within a group can destabilise peace. A prolific example of this occurring in the post-conflict society is the alienation of young people from the political solution. Feeling locked out of the political solution from young people, especially those with responsibilities and obligations that mirror older voters, is common in democracies; however, in the case of Northern Ireland, this concern is far more potent, given that the consequences of this disenfranchisement have more violent and significant consequences. This problem is apparent by recent examples of violent episodes in Northern Ireland, where young people locked out of the political process have deeply felt complex frustrations (which can be reinforced by attempts to pacify from elected representatives, who these people do not have any influence with). This effect is coupled with a sentiment of lacking the ability to influence change in their communities other than engaging in violence, which is expressed in variable 6 of the results framework.[261]

Therefore, this thesis recommends lowering the voting age for Assembly elections (not national) to 16- and 17-year-olds.

[261] Variable 6 describes a deviation away from peaceful expression of protest and conflict resolution.

By widening the voting age to accommodate this group, Northern Ireland can encourage more people to be actively engaged in the political alternatives to violence, paramilitary associations, and extreme attitudes towards the political institutions. Furthermore, by giving young people a role in the region's peaceful future, the peace agreements' aspirations can be worked towards with new ideas and purpose, which is a significant advantage of this recommendation.

However, a limitation of this recommendation is the requirement for multiple parties of the assembly to consent, even if their perceived political advantage is limited. Consequently, developing this recommendation would require careful and persistent engagement to persuade those who can assent to the nonpartisan benefits of such a policy to ensure peace and stability in the region.

RECOMMENDATION 6: TO PRESERVE PEACE AND STABILITY FOR THE ISLAND OF IRELAND, IMPLEMENT A FRESHLY NEGOTIATED Mitchell PRINCIPLES 2.0 PRIOR TO A FUTURE BORDER POLL.

As this thesis has tested the vulnerability in the peace agreement, it has credibly examined the details and process that led to an agreement in 1998. A significant part of that successful process was the development of the Mitchell principles (after Senator George Mitchell), which included the multi-party negotiations that brought about a successful peace agreement.

In Chapter 3, the results framework was applied to the future stress of a border poll on the island of Ireland and concluded that this would be a wide-reaching stress that would impact every area of vulnerability identified through this research study; as such, this recommendation addresses the vulnerabilities 1-5 of the results framework. Therefore, in accord with the evidence of this study, proper planning for a border poll will be required to preserve stability and peace during this stress. Consequently, this thesis recommends a new agreement, the Mitchell Principles 2.0, between the British and Irish governments as well as the political parties of Northern Ireland prior to a referendum.

This agreement would principally affirm commitments to the following.

i. ***Unionists commit to the peaceful transfer of sovereignty in the event of a vote to reunify.***
ii. ***Nationalists commit to the peaceful retention of sovereignty by the United Kingdom in the event of a rejection of reunification.***
iii. ***All parties commit to the continued engagement of the political framework prior to, during, and after the vote, including the continued participation of the power-sharing executive and the rejection of violent reactions for as long as it is required.***
iv. ***All parties commit to immediately acknowledging and respecting the losing community's concerns.***
v. ***All parties commit to engage with the newly established (post-vote) minority community in Northern Ireland.***

The advantage of this recommendation is that the political institutions' priority of stability, cooperation and security is established before any sectarian political divisions that a binary border poll will ignite. Furthermore, the apt name reiterates the importance of multi-actor commitments to these issues, which are classed as above the individual political ambitions of the respective sides, in accordance with the spirit and intentions of the negotiated peace in 98.

Moreover, this agreement establishes an opportunity for commitments of the core actors prior to the vote which could be utilised to establish agreement of contentious issues over procedure, rules of implementation and information distribution, which have been widely idenfied as necessary open, that will affect the enduring stability of the peace in the region during this stress.

However, the limitation of this recommendation is the political capital investment for multi-party negotiations required during a significant stress for the peace that will require actors' involvement across different critical issues. Furthermore, the lack of agreement on the principles could be a destabilising event, which would require sensitive handling. However, this concern is consistent throughout any attempts at further agreement in Northern Ireland and might not be a reason to prevent negotiations in some form.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has applied the expressed findings of the results framework in Chapter 3 to the practical evidenced based policy interventions that could address these findings and contribute to an enhanced debate in their respective areas of vulnerability in the Northern Ireland Peace Process. Whilst it is impossible to definitively address these problems in the practical context within this research study, these recommendations contribute by considering the prior research and the novel results framework and then applying policy decisions that could impact the resolution of the research findings.

Recommendation One is designed to address the perceived democratic deficit of the ambiguity of the Good Friday Agreement, by contributing to the debate on ensuring that a secure majority in the North would welcome a forthcoming border poll.

Recommendations Two and Three propose that by reforming the New Decade New Approach agreement, power-sharing institutions could be reinforced through extended caretaker powers for ministers, stronger consequences for withdrawing from power sharing and a new collaborative description of the office of First and Deputy First Minister with a Joint First Minister.

Recommendation Four advocates for a renewed public bilateral commitment between the two guarantors of the peace agreement, with a committed annual summit between Ireland and Great Britain.

Recommendation Five Proposes to address the alienation of young people from the political solution by widening participation in assembly elections to include 16 and 17-year-olds.

Recommendation Six advocates for the creation of the Mitchell Principles 2.0, designed to ensure future stability for the region in the event of a border poll.

Finally, these recommendations demonstrate that despite the vulnerabilities within the Northern Ireland peace process, which can be exposed during shocks, tangible opportunities exist to mitigate, prepare, and solidify the peace today and for the future, which is an exciting moment for stakeholders to engage with.

Conclusion

THESIS SUMMARY

This thesis, “Bloody Ireland: The Unfinished Work of The Northern Ireland Peace Settlement”, has been an inductive study of the present-day reality of the peace in Northern Ireland. This study has aimed to probe the region's vulnerability in the context of the politics of deeply divided societies in the face of external shocks, with a view towards an innovative analytical framework applicable to future shocks and recommendations that address these vulnerabilities.Therefore, through examining real-world shocks to the peace, this thesis has found that the Northern Ireland Peace Process is unfinished in its work, vulnerable to external real-world shocks and requires reforming interventions to mitigate these vulnerabilities. Thus, such a conclusion, implicates actors and stakeholders to publicly reengage with the problem of Northern Ireland as a matter of political and social responsibility. Stakeholders should address current vulnerabilities and assist in steering the region towards peace, stability and prosperity as an anchored partner on the island of Ireland, and an important member of the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, in pursuit of this conclusion this research study has identified specific variables which expose where the Northern Ireland peace is vulnerable.

Thus, allowing for this framework to be applied to any future real-world shock to the peace, and informs actors, where specifically in the (tested) peace targeted engagement and support is needed to reinforce stability in the region thus making a distinctive contribution to this research.

Ultimately, once these specific vulnerabilities have been identified, this thesis offers targeted recommendations (such as widening voting participation, reforms to reinforce power sharing and a new pre-border poll multi-party negotiated commitment to peace and the political solution) to address them, thereby laying the groundwork for future practical action and research.

This work begins with an introduction that presents the research context within this thesis. Furthermore, it introduces the central arguments of this thesis and explains how they relate to the current explored context. Finally, it describes the methodology of this thesis, including the theoretical biases underlying this analysis, the research strategy, and how the findings will be presented within the two evidence chapters.

Chapter One examines the over 120-year Anglo-Irish history, as presented in a contextual literature review, and the significant foundations that key events laid for the people of Ireland, North and South. Additionally, it explores the opposing ideological positions, including the historical events that have cemented these positions and contributed to violence, as well as the specific elements required to shift the region from violence to a substantive peace process.

Chapter Two is the first evidence chapter, which enacts the research strategy by investigating the first two political topics of the thesis, referred to as stress factors, which consider the past and present context of power-sharing institutions and relative (social, political, and economic) deprivation within the region, linked to the lack of progress on the ongoing aims of peace.

These aims included continued sectarianism and the enduring legacy of the troubles in a post-conflict society including segregation and paramilitary groups.

Chapter Three is the second evidence chapter, which continues the research strategy to investigate the impact of the final two present and future stress factors, firstly the impact of Brexit on the resilience of the Northern Ireland Peace. Secondly the impact of the ambiguities in the Good Friday Agreement on a future border poll on the island of Ireland is studied. In the second part of Chapter Three, this research study creates a novel framework that finds implicit and measurable explicit variables that specifically expose where the Northern Ireland peace process is vulnerable.

This enables this framework to be applied to any future real-world shock to the peace, and informs actors, where specifically in the (tested) peace, targeted engagement and support are needed to reinforce stability in the region.

Chapter Four presents the practical application of the research findings. This chapter examines how this thesis's research findings, grounded in the centeral argument relate to their practical application. It also explores how such findings could be proposed from a solution-focused perspective, thereby positively contributing to addressing the problems associated with this issue in a logical and evidence-based manner. Ultimately, by doing so, this chapter reorients the debate toward a consensus-based agenda of peace, stability, and prosperity, enabling the conclusion of this thesis to focus on the future potential of Northern Ireland.

In summary this thesis identifies a problem (vulnerability within the Northern Ireland peace) establishes credibility as a piece of research (through a comprehensive contextual literature review), robustly analyses the real-world shocks to the peace, creates a framework of the specific vulnerabilities to the peace which can be applied to future research as well as future shocks.

Finally, this study presents specific recommendations that address the established vulnerabilities within the Northern Ireland peace.

THESIS FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTION

This thesis has found that the passage of time from a peace agreement isn't sufficient to mitigate the real-world stresses that the post-conflict society endures and time heals the wounds of history, it doesn't cleanse the disorder that fuelled such conflict. This can be partly attributed to the embedded context resulting from the peace agreement, which is that the peace agreement that ended the substantive violence was agreed with the past in mind for the initial (then) present, without too much thought and consideration to the long-term future. As a result, many years after the agreement, the fragile elements of the peace agreement are exposed despite the peace essentially holding, which has been proven through a comprehensive exploration of the real-world events that have stressed these fragile elements.

Furthermore, through this study, this thesis has identified specific variables from these real-world shocks to the region's peace, which expose where the Northern Ireland peace is vulnerable. Within this thesis, these results have formed the basis of a framework which identifies and designates their origins and impact which allows for this framework to be applied to any future real-world shock to the peace, and informs actors, where specifically, targeted engagement and support is needed to reinforce stability in the region. Thus, making a distinctive contribution to this research.

Finally, this research study and its findings make several novel contributions to research and the Northern Ireland debate. Firstly, through the examination of how the real-world shocks impact,

consolidating their enduring destabilising effect on the region's peace, which confirms the existence of the vulnerability in today's peace in Northern Ireland, which contributes to the debate of continued instability in the region by explaining how this instability can manifest.

Secondly, by reasoning the consequences of this vulnerability to peace, this research study has confirmed the existence of the enduring effects on present-day problems in the region based on the ambiguous circumstances of the peace agreement.[262] This contributes to the study of Northern Ireland's continued instability by explaining why such instability endures despite the substantive peace agreement. Finally, by creating a novel framework that identifies and designates the origins and impact of vulnerabilities on the Northern Ireland peace, this thesis contributes a mechanism which can be applied to any future real-world shock to the peace. It informs actors where, specifically in the (tested) peace, targeted engagement and support are needed to reinforce stability in the region.

[262] As confirmed in the Research Findings, the peace agreement that brought an end to the substantive violence, was agreed with the past in mind for the initial (then) present without too much thought and consideration to the long-term future.

RESEARCH STUDY LIMITATIONS ON RESEARCH FINDINGS

A practical limitation of research resources and time prevented the addition of primary discourse through interviews that would have supported the evidence included in this study. It would have unlocked interesting areas of discussion around discourse through an evolving context in Northern Ireland, comparisons and debates between primary and secondary sources of discourse on the vulnerability of the region's peace. Additionally, this would have facilitated a debate around the framework's applicability to future unspecified shocks, coupled with future evidence based policy recommendations to mitigate the implicit and explicit vulnerabilities from this research study.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the stated research limitations of this study futher research would be advatangous. Firstly, this could entail a future study to engage political, social, and academic stakeholders on the framework's applicability to unspecified shocks. This could stimulate a new debate on quantitatively measuring the resilience of the peace outside of the standard calculation of the reduction of violent episodes across time.

Finally, future research focusing on involved actors will stimulate the debate on future evidence based policy recommendations to mitigate the implicit and explicit vulnerabilities from this research study, which would advance the debate in the field.

CLOSING THESIS DISCOURSE

Northern Ireland is a complex and unique case. Complex in the long, rich historical and cultural imprints that continue to influence daily life, as well as the assimilating structures that try to encompass fundamentally opposing constitutional ambitions that often overshadow the vital work of maintaining peace and stability for the region. Its uniqueness stems from its success as a peace agreement as well as its relationship to the United Kingdom, as a country with devolution yet being territorially connected to another sovereign state. Yet, while its historical, cultural, social, political and constitutional instabilities remain, a complacent attitude cannot be optimal and remains the overall responsibility of the United Kingdom to invest in the hard work of persistent engagement, for as long as its people desire it to be so.

Just as at the start of the peace process it was recognised that it was the first duty of the political actors to try and forge a collaborative and peaceful path for the region, it should also be recognised that the same responsibilities with equal required determination still exist today. In the post-conflict society, the work shifts from the bloody conflict to destabilising nuanced variables, each with multiple perspectives, but not without acknowledging the good work that collectively brought people to this point. Despite the problematic shocks in an institutional framework that needs sustained attention, this work endures to preserve a fragile prize. So, by recognising this work, which encompasses the political, social, personal and academic, the debates within an established peaceful structure can mature to ensure benefits for those who call the island home.

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APPENDICES

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL 1:

FIGURE 1 DISCUSSION

Figure 1 demonstrates that certain key events have acted as anchor points that have cemented the different attitudes towards Britain on the island of Ireland since the act of Union 1801. Additionally, it shows how key events could invite subsequent historically significant moments that, when combined, lead to the eventual partition of the island of Ireland. One of the first important events that acted this way was the great famine between 1845 and 49. This event was a foundation for an anti-British view on the island for the nationalist community. Furthermore, it served as an actual event as evidence of the British mismanagement view. Moreover, the potato famine acted as an example of inequality that the act of union perpetrated, whereby the people of Ireland were treated as second-class to those on the mainland. This reinforces the belief that the island of Ireland is not served best by British governance; this belief, combined with the human cost and the forced emigration that accompanied this episode, further reinforced the desire for an

alternative settlement. Furthermore, the human casualties of the famine also enrich the emotional fuel that drives anti-British sentiment. Moreover, this event can be traced as a credible starting position for the nationalist cause, demonstrating that this historical period created powerful societal feelings about the Irish question.

The second key event that helped cement the contentious relations between Ireland and Britain was the failed legislative attempts to redefine Ireland within the British sphere of influence. To resolve the position of Ireland within Britain, the home rule bills were introduced in Parliament; both of the first two attempts were defeated with Ulster (made up of 6 counties that would form Northern Ireland: Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Derry/Londonderry and Tyrone) opposed, to the home rule where unionism was in the majority. The failure to resolve the concerns of the people of Ireland through this means provided a lasting belief in the people that Britain could not manage the Irish problem and that a peaceful resolution could not be relied upon to provide a permanent answer. The 1912/13 paramilitary formations in both unionist (Ulster Volunteer Force) (that opposed the home rule bills proposed by the British Parliament) and nationalist (Irish Volunteers) (who supported Irish autonomy) communities prove this. Combined with the human costs that have already occurred, these failed legislative attempts invite a radical alternative that is apparent through the formation of paramilitary groups. Therefore, it becomes clear that early in the Irish problem process, the perceived need for an armed solution was preferable to both sides.

What becomes apparent when examining the period between 1801 and 1920 is that certain events became the foundation of people's respective opinions that entrenched their opposition. Two significant events that occurred in the period were World War I and the Easter Rising. The first was World War I. As Figure 1 explains, the high number of casualties was Irish soldiers' sharing of the blood of war reaffirmed in the unionist camps that their identity was part of a single United

Kingdom. This human sacrifice (in both world wars) provided an unshakable patriotism through the fighting of a common enemy that would mean Ulster would forever be part of the United Kingdom, and any attempts to remove this identity would invoke a radical response.

On the other hand, for the nationalist community, the Easter Rising contained a human cost as the resistance to British rule transitioned from constitutional reform towards armed struggle. As a result, it became an emotional root for those who supported Irish independence and, ultimately, a united Ireland. Furthermore, the documentation of the following event overwhelmingly presented the British treatment of Irish republicans (who subsequently became martyrs within Irish history) in a negative perspective that became entrenched.

From a nationalist perspective, the lives lost are uniformly accepted as a price for freedom from British rule, and as such, cements the view that those lives lost must be held as proof for a perceived better alternative (a free and united Ireland). The quote from Éamon de Valera supports this in a letter to Michael Collins after the Rising: The Irish Republic "is daily sealed by the lifeblood of those who proclaimed it. Moreover, every one of us they shoot brings more people to our side."[263] This anti-British view, combined with previous events that contributed to this feeling, highlights a causality for the hostile sentiment of nationalists towards the British during this period.[264]

The aftermath of the Easter Rising and British management and public reaction significantly influenced future Anglo-Irish relations. Therefore, a spotlight on the British response to the Easter

[263] Eileen Morgan, 'Ireland's Lost Action Hero: "Michael Collins," a Secret History of Irish Masculinity', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 2, no. 1 (1998): 26–42. P.30

[264] Guy Beiner, 'Between Trauma and Triumphalism: The Easter Rising, the Somme, and the Crux of Deep Memory in Modern Ireland', *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 2 (April 2007): 366–89, https://doi.org/10.1086/510892. P.367

Rising is raised within the literature as a crucial element in understanding the consequences of the Easter Rising on Irish-Anglo relations and the broader Irish problem. In this case, the stand-out catalyst for public outrage towards the British was the executions of the organisers, especially the seven signatories of the Irish Proclamation.[265] The executions allowed those sympathetic to the cause of the Rising to claim a morality over the British that endeared them to the public/electorate. However, most importantly, this event led to the accidental creation of martyrs for the executed leaders, which established a powerful emotional connection between the leaders and the people. This began to eclipse British rule and resulted in the power of the Easter Rising leaders enduring today.

The Easter Rising is one of the most significant episodes of British mismanagement of the Irish problem. As a result, the Easter Rising became the beginning of the end of unilateral British rule over the island of Ireland. For unionists, this marks the beginning of the backsliding of British rule over the island. Equally for nationalists, the Easter Rising is the beginning of creating an Ireland nation whose identity is unquestionably separate from Britain.

The election of 1918 was the first democratic indication of support for the cause of the Easter Rising, where a nationalist majority was formed and temporally shifted the nationalist response to the Irish problem from a violent one to a political alternative[266]. As Laffin makes clear, this response manifested in creating a united, competent nationalist party that could lead the factions of nationalism and win the support of a majority of an electorate. This mission became the priority for nationalist leaders during the period, so the democratic campaign became more important than

[265] Maureen Buckley, 'Irish Easter Rising of 1916', *Social Science* 31, no. 1 (1956): P.55
[266] Michael Laffan, 'The Unification of Sinn Fein in 1917', *Irish Historical Studies* 17, no. 67 (1971): P.353

the violent one.[267] To prevent the movement's failure, the party was required to undergo significant reform to ensure electoral victory and become a political entity capable of carrying the views of most Irish people, demonstrating that the political change at the time was a two-way process.[268]

However, due to the internal party work carried out by Sinn Féin in 1918, the party managed to secure 73/105 seats. This result reflects the changing attitudes of the Irish electorate, which had crystallised around a unified separatist party, Sinn Féin.[269] This result was a significant moment as it propelled Sinn Féin into a powerful position. However, its uncompromising nature over self-determination (coupled with a lack of engagement from both sides over Ulster) for the entire of Ireland led to division that would result in a conflict over the future of Ireland.[270] As a result, this decision would lead to a deepening of the issue in time.[271]

It is clear from exploring the years between 1800 – and 1921 that Anglo-Irish relations form the bedrock of the Irish problem, superseding even the dispute of sovereignty; as its historical context shows, it is the relations between people, factions and communities that drive the conflict and disagreement over the question of Ireland self-determination. This conflicting relationship concludes after a period of war negotiation and treaties (see Figure 1), resulting in the final key event of the period, the partition of the island of Ireland. This final and everlasting event drives

[267] Ibid. P.353

[268] Ibid. P.378

[269] Alan de Bromhead, Alan Fernihough, and Enda Hargaden, 'Representation of the People: Franchise Extension and the "Sinn Féin Election" in Ireland, 1918', *The Journal of Economic History* 80, no. 3 (September 2020): 886–925, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050720000376. P.886

[270] John Bruton, 'The 1918 Election and Its Relevance to Modern Irish Politics' 108, no. 429 (1918). P.101

[271] Ibid. P.102

the forthcoming divisions within Northern Ireland in the form of The Troubles. This separation of territory (ultimately created through each vital moment explored through the 120 years) demonstrates how the troubles for each community have been built up over the long period of Anglo-Irish relationships, a fact that has continued to fuel these divisions many years since.

Partition was the division of territory and, specifically from the British perspective, the retention of 6 counties in Ulster to become Northern Ireland and remain part of the United Kingdom.[272] This was established in Clause 2 of the Government of Ireland Act 1920, with the Irish Free State comprising the remaining counties of Ireland.

It is suggested in the literature that this proposal arose as an attempt to settle the Irish question from the British perspective to avoid future conflict following the Anglo-Irish treaty, which concluded the Irish War of Independence (see Figure 1).

Furthermore, there was a political appetite to utilise this window of opportunity in Anglo-Irish relations to reach a compromised settlement. This is evidenced by the votes cast for the legislation, which comprised British votes, as Irish MPs had withdrawn from Westminster.[273] It is, therefore, clear that the desire to create something out of this opportunity resulted in a lack of focus on the details and consequences of the proposed and enacted settlement, which is why the British government ordered a boundary review to ensure that areas of the catholic majority were not included within the newly created boundaries of the united kingdom, however, once this opportunity passed this idea was not enacted. Therefore, the original conditions of the legislation

[272] 'Government of Ireland Act 1920' (King's Printer of Acts of Parliament), accessed 1 September 2023, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/10-11/67/contents/enacted.

[273] Kevin R. O'Shiel, 'The Problem of Partitioned Ireland', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 12, no. 48 (1923): 625–38. P.626

remained law.[274] This historical evidence suggests the existence of a pre-established conflict within Ulster through its very creation. This is because a territory born out of conflict can still carry the divisions of that conflict, which are as fundamental as its geographical borders, as the evidence proves is the case with Northern Ireland. This partition (the culmination of over 100 years of Irish-Anglo relations) brought about a significant change to the island of Ireland, mainly through a highly condensed period in which partition was negotiated to resolve the problem. However, it led to an Ulster settlement lacking the finessed detail needed to satisfy the various factions it geographically and politically housed.

This resulted in a divided community within Ulster, despite being regarded as a unionist territory on the surface, with no further engagement to settle the problems this would create. Therefore, this period resulted (for both Britain and the Island of Ireland) in a divided Ulster under the flag of the United Kingdom, with no evidence of resolution for this issue, which would fuel the period of conflict in the region known historically as the troubles.

[274] Thomas E. Hachey, 'One People or Two? The Origins of Partition and the Prospects for Unification in Ireland', *Journal of International Affairs* 27, no. 2 (1973): P.236.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL 2:

THE APPLIED/RESULTS FRAMEWORK	
A Framework To Conceptualise The Variables Of The Complex (Political/Social/Historical) Instability For A Post Conflict Society In Northern Ireland.	
FRAMEWORK CONTEXT: *The explored peace agreements are agreed with the past in mind for the immediate present without much consideration and detail for the future problems.*	
EXPLICIT POLITICAL FACTORS	**IMPLICIT SOCIETAL BASED POLITICAL FACTORS**
1. The breakdown of power sharing structures and associated political institutional solutions.	**4.** The alienation of a minority through the removal of their perceived equality and consent rights.
2. A reduction in the visible effectiveness of the Strand 3 institutions.	**5.** Reinforced sectarian divisions - that prevent reconciliation and fuel a negative peace.
3. The 'accepted' consequence of internal and external political fragmentation of the perceived or expressed 'losing' side.	**6.** A deviation away from peaceful expressions of protest and conflict resolution - through violent protests, sectarian and political violent targeting.
FRAMEWORK FUTURE APPLICATION: *This framework can be applied to any future real-world shock to the Northern Ireland peace, and can inform actors, which specific vulnerable area in the peace, targeted engagement and support is needed to reinforce stability in the region.*	

APPENDIX PART 1

FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE FOR STRESS 1: THE INSTABILITY OF POWER-SHARING INSTITUTIONS (CHAPTER 2: EVIDENCE PART 1)

APPENDIX A: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Haughey, Sean, and Jamie Pow. *A Deliberative Forum on Possible Reforms to Power-Sharing*. Northern Ireland Assembly, 2023.

Introduction.

Although political violence significantly declined after 1998, devolution since then has been characterised by instability, with extended periods during which the Assembly and Executive have been unable to function. Indeed, the power-sharing Assembly has only twice served a full term without some form of institutional collapse. Following a three-year hiatus in devolved government from 2017 to 2020, an institutional reform package was included in the agreement reached in January 2020 to resurrect the devolved institutions. On 11th January 2020, a five-party Executive took office amid hopes of more stable devolved government.

Attitudes towards the current system.

Participants generally found it easier to identify weaknesses in the current model of power-sharing. These weaknesses, relate to both institutional and behavioural issues.

The frequency with which the devolved institutions have collapsed, or have appeared close to collapse, featured prominently in discussions about the weaknesses of the current system. This was framed as both a behavioural and an institutional problem. There was widespread criticism of the

perceived willingness of some parties to walk away from the institutions when it suited their political purposes. This type of behaviour was invariably described as immature and short-sighted. However, participants were also critical of the institutional structures which facilitate this type of behaviour. In particular, participants expressed frustration that one political party can collapse or prevent the formation of an Executive. Others explained that the devolved institutions keep collapsing 'because of the way the system was built' and identified the ease with which one party can collapse the Executive as one of the system's biggest disadvantages. Several participants argued that steps should be taken to combat the instability which arises from Executive Office resignations.

The level of cooperation between the parties has been poor and that there has been an absence of genuine power-sharing, or a sense of partnership, within the Executive.

The perception that ethnonational ('orange and green') issues dominate the political agenda, at the expense of more pressing issues, was evident across the discussion groups. Some participants cited flags policy and the Irish language as particularly prominent examples in this regard. Others argued that the parties generally place too much emphasis on Northern Ireland's past and do not focus sufficiently on contemporary problems.

Others were critical of the manner in which cross-community consent is conceptualised and measured in the Assembly. For example, it was argued that the focus on securing agreement between unionists and nationalists has perpetrated the idea of there being only two communities in Northern Ireland, whereas, in reality, this is not the case. Similar sentiments were echoed elsewhere, with participants commenting that neutral or non-designating voices struggle to be

heard because of the precedence afforded to nationalism and unionism within the institutions. Some participants were also critical of the design of the Executive Office. In one discussion group it was argued that the existence of a 'First Minister' and 'deputy First Minister' gives rise to controversy because the impression conveyed by the different titles is one of power imbalance or hierarchy, whereas in reality the positions are coequal. This, it was argued, has led to unnecessary disputes and acrimony over which party and political tradition holds the first ministership.

Reform

although the deliberative sessions did not result in participants identifying one clear favourite as to a preferred model of government, a majority view did emerge in terms of how substantively the governance structures of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) need to be changed. Before and after the event, participants were presented with a series of statements on the governance structures of the GFA and asked to select the statement which best reflects their view. As Figure 1 shows, the perception that GFA structures require no change was a minority view before the event (13%) and fewer participants took this view after the discussion groups concluded (4%). On the other hand, the statement that the GFA structures need 'to undergo some changes to work better' was the plurality view before the event (42%) and emerged as the clear majority view (70%) after the event. The view that the GFA was no longer a good basis for governing Northern Ireland and needed to be 'substantively changed' reflected the position of 16% of participants before the event and 20% of participants after the event. Support for removing the GFA structures entirely was minimal before (7%) and after (2%) the event.

How should institutional reform be decided?

*"It should be democratically decided. A referendum, absolutely. What we have now was picked at referendum and what we have next should be. I'd be in the streets protesting if it was decided by somebody else." Female, 60+, ABC1, Catholic, Neither**

"Referendum. Otherwise, if you're leaving it up to MLAs are you going to get a fair call on it?" Female, 45-59, ABC1, Catholic, Nationalist

APPENDIX B: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence Source 1:

'The St Andrews Agreement, October 2006', accessed 11 July 2024,

Power sharing and the political institutions

"Both Governments remain fully committed to the fundamental principles of the Agreement: consent for constitutional change, commitment to exclusively peaceful and democratic means, stable inclusive partnership government, a balanced institutional accommodation of the key relationships within Northern Ireland."

"We believe the changes by the agreement will enable all the institutions to operate in an effective and stable manner, with all parties engaging in good faith and in a spirit of genuine partnership."

Evidence Source 2:

'Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006', *Northern Ireland*, 2006.

First Minister, deputy First Minister and Northern Ireland Ministers Appointment following Assembly election.

"The persons nominated under subsections (4) and (5) shall not take up office until each of them has affirmed the terms of the pledge of office."

Vacancies in the office of First Minister or deputy First Minister

"If either the First Minister or the deputy First Minister ceases to hold office at any time, whether by resignation or otherwise, the other(a) shall also cease to hold office at that time."

"The persons nominated under subsections (4) and (5) shall not take up office until each of them has affirmed the terms of the pledge of office."

Community designation

"Standing orders of the Assembly shall provide that a member of the Assembly designated in accordance with the standing orders as a Nationalist, as a Unionist or as Other may change his designation only if(a) (being a member of a political party) he becomes a member of a different political party or he ceases to be a member of any political party."

Presiding officer

"Subject to sub-paragraphs (5) to (7), the Transitional Assembly may elect a person(a) to fill any vacancy in the office of presiding officer or deputy presiding officer, or (b) to replace a presiding officer or deputy presiding officer who appears to members of the Transitional Assembly to be unable, unfit or unwilling to perform his functions (whether because of illness or otherwise)."

"A person shall not be elected under sub-paragraph (4) without cross-community support."

Evidence Source 3:

'New Decade New Approach Deal To See Restored Government In Northern Ireland Tomorrow', 9 January 2020,

Sustainability of the Institutions

"The parties agree that a three-year absence of devolved government cannot happen again, and have therefore agreed a package of measures to deliver more sustainable institutions that are more resilient."

"The parties have agreed to return to the institutions on the basis of good faith, mutual respect and trust - underpinned by strong working relationships. The Parties have agreed that effective measures are needed to improve the sustainability of the institutions, to increase public confidence and increase the resilience of the institutions so that they can better withstand political difficulties, challenges and disagreements."

Appointment of FM/dFM & Providing continuity of decision making

"Ministers remaining in office will be required to act at all times within well-defined limits. This is to include the requirement to act in accordance with the Ministerial Code and the requirement for an Executive Committee to consider any decisions that are significant and controversial or cross-cutting and, as appropriate, the restrictions that are in place during a pre-election period. In the absence of a functioning Executive Committee, Ministers will consequently not be able to take decisions which are significant or controversial."

Evidence Source 4:

'New Decade, New Approach Agreement', *House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee*, 8 July 2020.

Institutional reform

"Mr (Julian) Smith highlighted the importance of the Government's dedicating time to fostering devolution in Northern Ireland and co-operation between the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive: It does require a huge amount of time in order to make sure that these relationships are continued and looked after on an almost day-to-day basis... it does take time, and it is always going to be difficult for any Government to put the amount of time that is required in an area as tricky as this when there are other things on, but I would encourage that to happen."

"Dr Rice cautioned that "the most recent period of difficulty far exceeded" the extended time limits set out in the agreement and that New Decade, New Approach "is not clear on what would happen should this timeframe be exceeded"

"Also, the changes in themselves cannot counteract a situation where a party or parties decides to bring an Executive to an end. For example, if these new measures had been in place in January 2017, we do not think that they would have prevented the collapse of the institutions or led to their restoration any sooner."

Dr Kevin McNicholl, a participant in the Political Settlements Research Programme, agreed that "the experience of the last collapse does suggest that time is not necessarily enough for successful negotiations to be completed".

"The most intricate and well-designed institutions will not function if those who inhabit them are not fully and actively supportive of all of their constitutive elements and functions and of the Agreement that established them."

APPENDIX C: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence Source 1: 'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 4 December 2023.

The 'Others'

The Alliance Party, which as the largest grouping of MLAs designating as 'Other' is most conspicuously disadvantaged by the present procedure, argued that it represents a "flawed and clumsy" attempt to ensure cross-community support.84 Some characterised the issue as effectively giving the largest party in each of the Unionist/Nationalist blocs a veto in key votes—the most obvious recent example being the DUP's decision not to nominate a Speaker following the May 2022 elections, which has prevented the 2022 Assembly mandate from carrying out any business. As Alliance put it to us: "It is fundamentally perverse that a 'cross-community vote' explicitly excludes the cross-community Alliance P a r t y."

Stability

The institutions have been dormant for some 40% of the time they have been in existence and have been characterised by a "start-stop" dynamic.

Dr McEvoy and Professor McCulloch argued that such a veto—whereby either of the largest parties from the Unionist/Nationalist blocs refuses to nominate a First or Deputy First Minister—has the effect of "paralyzing the whole process for everyone else" and has become a "major source of government ineffectiveness," while thwarting cross-community cooperation.

Furthermore, as the Centre for Cross Border Studies said to us: Such instability not only prevents the proper functioning of the Strand One institutions that leaves people without a local government, and departments and civic society organisations without budgetary certainties; it also prevents the North South Ministerial Council operating and means Northern Ireland has no Executive presence at the British Irish Council.

Even periods of relative stability, such as between 2007 and 2017, saw serious crises that threatened the viability and limited the effectiveness of the institutions: in 2008, Sinn Fein refused to attend meetings of the Executive for five months and the DUP operated a system of "rolling resignations" in 2015.98 Alan Whysall also pointed to stand-offs stemming from disputes over flags in 2012 and welfare provision in 2014.

Even when the institutions are in place, they are frequently under threat of collapse. Disputes dominate the political discourse leaving little room for addressing day-to-day policy issues. Often the atmosphere is more one of contest than coalition. There is little resilience in the system to withstand or resolve major disagreements between the two largest parties.

There is broad consensus that the Strand One institutions are unstable and prone to collapse. The current system of nomination to the positions of First Minister and Deputy First Minister gives, in

effect, a single party a veto over Executive formation and thus the continued functioning of democratic government in Northern Ireland. It also prevents the proper functioning of the institutions under Strands Two and Three of the Agreement. There is also consensus that even when functioning, the threat of collapse looms large over the institutions, with a pervasive culture of dispute rather than business-like cooperation. It is also apparent that there is insufficient incentive for parties to avoid exercising their power of veto. The result is a highly temperamental system of government.

Relationships and political will

The Good Friday Agreement was all about good faith, partnership and everybody stretching themselves and working together [...]. We have lost that attitude of partnership, of trust and of trying to take a constructive and businesslike approach to making the institutions work.

What this has meant is that, once the Northern Ireland institutions are back up and running on the foot of a successor agreement, there is limited pressure on, or scrutiny of, authorities as regards the delivery of commitments made therein. As a result, substantial policy issues that have been at the centre of political disputes and institutional collapses since 1998 have been 'addressed' in successor agreements, yet delivery of the related policies is, at least in some instances, still pending or has not been implemented in line with the terms of the relevant agreement.

Evidence Source 2: ‘The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament’, 22 February 2024.

Response:

Voices from the UK or Irish Governments should not be at the forefront of any calls for reform. As a participant in Strands Two and Three, the Irish Government has a clear interest in any such review process. However, matters relating to the Strand One institutions are, and will remain, a matter for the UK Government along with the NI parties.

It is for the restored Executive to deliver on the parties’ commitment.

Given the recent restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive, a review of the Agreement, or amendment of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 is not being considered at this time.

APPENDIX PART 2

FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE FOR STRESS 2:THE RELATIVE (SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC) DEPRIVATION WITHIN THE REGION, LINKED TO THE LACK OF PROGRESS ON THE ONGOING AIMS OF PEACE AND THE ENDURING LEGACY OF THE TROUBLES IN A POST-CONFLICT SOCIETY. (CHAPTER 2: EVIDENCE PART 1)

APPENDIX D: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence source: Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Oral evidence: Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol, HC 157Wednesday 19 May 2021

Witnesses: David Campbell CBE, Chairman, Loyalist Communities Council; Joel Keys, Member, Loyalist Communities Council; Councillor Russell Watton, Member, Loyalist Communities Council; Jim Wilson, Member, Loyalist Communities Council.

Q728 Chair: It might, but one can only quote it in double inverted commas if one has actually said it. Let us turn to something that was not edited. Let me ask Mr Keys. This was in a post of 12 April: "To say violence is never the answer is massively naïve. Sometimes violence is the only tool you have left". You go on to say, "While I don't believe we are at a point that necessitates violence"—"at a point", that is my emphasis—"just yet, our leaders need to step up and take the reins before it's too late". Mr Keys, in hindsight, was that a helpful thing to post on 12 April?

Joel Keys: I would stand by the comments. There are certain circumstances where violence is the only tool you have left. For example, I do not think the people living under Kim Jong-un's sort of dictatorship are going to get anywhere with peaceful protests any time soon.

Q729 Chair: I am not talking about North Korea, Mr Keys. I am talking about Northern Ireland.

Joel Keys: Yes, but in reference to my post I was referring to situations where you may have a Government or a state that is genuinely oppressing its citizens. In that circumstance, of course violence is the answer. The minute that you rule violence out completely, you are admitting that you are not willing to back up anything you believe in with anything really important. It was the same reason that Labour got into a load of trouble a while ago by ruling out the use of nukes. You have to have that willingness to back up what you say, back up what you believe in and fight for what you believe in.

Our whole remit is about encouraging dialogue and co-operation, rather than confrontation. Joel Keys has put it extremely well. I was his age when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. I was arrested for protesting against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It came to nothing for me, and I was able, through my family, to go into the Ulster Unionist Party and spend the past 30 years in active politics. I hope he takes that same route. The problem is that there is a whole generation that does not have the facility to go into politics. That is the challenge for all our leaders, right across the community, to offer the political solution. Politics has to be seen to work.

Q771 Ian Paisley: Mr Keys, you are a young guy. I do not know if you are late teens or early twenties, but you are a young guy. You are a post-Troubles generation. You have indicated to us today that basically, if it comes to it, violence would have to be used if things were really bad. While that might be an ideological or theological question, whatever, I want to turn to you about your actual activity. Have you ever taken steps to step in and stop any of your young associates being involved in violence?

Joel Keys: Of course. Most recently, on Good Friday, I was arrested at the demonstrations at Sandy Row. I have been very open about the fact that I was there to dissuade a 13-year-old and his brother from engaging in the violence. Some people may have opinions or perceptions of what they think I might believe, but my actions back up that I maintain that violence is an absolute last resort. Up until you are pushed to that point, we should be doing everything to discourage our young people from potentially ruining their lives with criminal records. Also, there is the obvious: a riot is not a safe place to be for anyone, let alone a 13-year-old child.

Joel Keys: However Young people see on the ground that there is an injustice. There is a sort of imbalance in how nationalists and Unionists are treated. The violent outbursts we have seen across the country are a reflection of that. It is a way for these young people to vent their anger and frustrations. While I disagree with the methods of doing so, I understand their frustrations.

APPENDIX E: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Thematically arranged for clearer exposition of evolving incremental data.

Evidence Source:

Robin Wilson, 'Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report' 4 (2016).

Ann Marie Gray et al., Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report (Community Relations Council, 2018),

John Topping et al., *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report Number Six* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, 2024).

Sectarian Housing

"'Mixed housing' was a commitment in the Good Friday agreement, along with integrated education. Implementation has only been partial, however. This section of the agreement was inserted at the behest of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, a short-lived party which secured two seats in the first assembly election after the agreement. But its politics of 'civic principles' clashed with Northern Ireland's 'traditional discourses of nationalism and realism, as well as the passive, supplementary political roles they ascribe to women' (Murtagh, 2008). The TBUC strategy thus only supports projects for shared housing and shared neighbourhoods, rather than aiming to normalise how people live together across Northern Ireland as a whole, so that segregation becomes a thing of the past. To do more would require dismantling the apparatus of

murals, flags, kerbstone-painting and paramilitary memorials, defacing public property, which embed those competing 'traditional discourses'."

"In September 2017, it was reported that four Catholic families were forced to leave their homes in a mixed housing development Cantrell Close, off the Ravenhill Road in south-east Belfast (Irish News, 29 September 2017). The NIHE confirmed that a number of families had presented themselves as homeless, claiming sectarian intimidation (BBC NI News, 29 September 2017). It was claimed that loyalist paramilitaries had been behind the intimidation and the PSNI confirmed that the Paramilitary Task Force were involved in the investigation of the incidents (Belfast Telegraph, 28 September 2017). The intimidation of 178 Cohesion and sharing the families was widely condemned by local political leaders on all sides. A week after the families left their homes, it was reported that some of the UVF flags which had been flying were removed by community workers from the East Belfast Community Initiative (EBCI) (BBC NI News, 9 October 2017). Other flags were not removed until December 2017, and political flags reappeared in 2018. The incident raised important questions as to what body is responsible for the removal of flags from public spaces. The PSNI have publicly stated that they are not responsible for flag removal unless there is 'a substantial risk to public safety' or where it is believed that a criminal offence has taken place. (Belfast Telegraph, 15 September 2017). In June 2018, banners depicting republican attacks including the Shankill and Enniskillen bombings, the La Mon bombing and Bloody Friday were erected around the Global Crescent and Cantrell Close developments. The banners included the hashtag 'Stand up against sectarianism' and their erection was supported by the EBCI. The Chief Executive of the social housing scheme responsible for the mixed housing estate was noted as saying: 'There was no consultation with the people who live in this area and the imagery used

is not appropriate for a shared living scheme which is home to families from all backgrounds. We strongly feel that this is not an appropriate way to display events of the past' (Belfast Telegraph, 4 June 2018). In the context of the constraints associated with the development of mixed housing developments, the lack of clarity over who, and how, to man."

"When asked about relations between Catholics and Protestants in five years' time, NILT respondents have become more pessimistic: 59 per cent in 2016 felt that relations would be better in five years' time, compared with 31 per cent in 2022. In addition, the proportion thinking that inter-communal relations will get worse has risen from four per cent in 2016 to 15 per cent in 2022"

"In 2012, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) set a target of removing all walls by 2023, however, limited progress has been achieved to date The Chair of the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), Adrian Johnston, recently observed that the work of the IFI's Peace Walls Programme to build the confidence of communities living near peace walls has been hindered by the lack of political progress, in the absence of a NI Executive (Belfast Telegraph, 23 May 2018)."

Culture Wars

"As the last monitoring report pointed out in contextualising the flags controversy, Northern Ireland's politico-military conflict has morphed into a politico-cultural one, a series of 'culture wars', since the 1990s ceasefires. This explains the paradox of why arguments over parades and flags have proved more, rather than less, intense in an environment where violence has become much less so."

As with lamppost flags, bonfires erected without any approval continued to cause significant problems in the monitoring period. In the summer of 2015, a bonfire set alight on the eve of 12 July in east Belfast comprised so many wooden pallets and was so close to housing that more than 50 occupied homes in the street were boarded up in advance to resist the impact and a number of Dimension Three 128 households were evacuated. The massive bonfire tipped over when lit, requiring the attention of 35 firefighters in six appliances (Belfast Telegraph, 11 July 2015; BBC NI news, 12 July 2015). In February 2016, the SDLP environment minister, Mark H Durkan, proposed that bonfire organisers would be required to obtain a licence from their local authority but a 'loyalist community worker' said this would be 'unworkable' (Belfast Telegraph, 8 February 2016).

"The obvious challenge for policy makers is how to respond. The search for a solution to the issue of bonfires is part of the wider 'culture war' debate in which opinion in NI remains largely divided along sectarian lines."

"When asked about relations between Catholics and Protestants in five years' time, NILT respondents have become more pessimistic: 59 per cent in 2016 felt that relations would be better in five years' time, compared with 31 per cent in 2022. In addition, the proportion thinking that inter-communal relations will get worse has risen from four per cent in 2016 to 15 per cent in 2022"

Integrated and shared education.

"Still only 7 per cent of pupils in Northern Ireland attend integrated schools, of which there were 63 in the 2015-16 school year. There has been a slowing of the pace of integration, as data from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education show."

"The difficulty is that there is an inherent limit to how many integrated schools can be added to the existing, segregated system, already highly fragmented not only by denomination but also by the grammar/non-grammar divide—not forgetting the small Irish-medium sector."

"In that context, as indicated in the last monitoring report, since the restoration of devolution in 2007 the scale of ambition has been reduced to collaboration among existing schools, with their separate governance structures, across the divide."

APPENDIX F: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence Source: 1

John Dixon et al., '"When the Walls Come Tumbling down": The Role of Intergroup Proximity, Threat, and Contact in Shaping Attitudes towards the Removal of Northern Ireland's Peace Walls', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 59, no. 4 (2020):

"Northern Ireland Executive (2013) proposals to dismantle Northern Ireland's interface barriers commonly known as 'peace walls' - by 2023 provide a compelling case study of the nature of such resistance and may thus provide important clues about how it might be overcome. In this society, peace walls are broadly defined as any "...kinds of physical interface barriers that keep communities apart – including walls, gates and security barriers". (Byrne, Gormley-Heenan, Morrow, & Sturgeon, 2015, p.3). The building of peace walls began during Northern Ireland's political conflict (19691998) but has continued throughout the peace process. Their ongoing role in maintaining divisions between Catholic and Protestant communities has been emphasized by both academic researchers and policymakers."

"In the years following the 1998 Good Friday agreement, which officially brought the era of political violence to an end, peace walls continued to proliferate, with some walls being increased in height and length. A review conducted in 2017 identified 97 structures in Belfast, comprising varying forms of physical barriers."

"First, in a society seeking to move beyond sectarianism, they represent an increasingly anachronistic symbol of sectarian division, a tangible sign that segregation remains institutionally supported and normative. As Boulton (2014, p.105) observes, "...whilst the barriers were originally intended to stop violence, in fact they have served to formalise, symbolise, and in some respects heighten, the differences between each side." Second, in a society seeking to promote freedom of movement and sharing of everyday spaces (Northern Ireland Executive Office, 2013), they continue to limit the day to day movements, routines and behaviours of local residents (e.g. see Leonard's (2018) poignant research with Belfast teenagers). Third, in a society seeking to encourage positive relations between historically estranged communities, they act as a deterrent, restricting the forms of cross-community contact that research has repeatedly shown to reduce intergroup prejudice in Northern Ireland and elsewhere (e.g. Hewstone et al., 2006; McKeown & Taylor, 2017; Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns & Voci, 2004). Indeed, around four in ten residents have never interacted with neighbours living on the other side of a peace wall."

"So far, a small number of peace walls have already been successfully removed, including six structures located in north Belfast (Belfast Interface Project, 2017a, p.12), but such progress has been impeded by varying definitional, logistic and political factors (e.g. see Blomquist, 2016; Gormley-Heeney, Morrow & Bryne, 2015). For example, the collapse of the devolved Northern Irish power-sharing Executive and Assembly in January 2017 has made the 2023 deadline for removing the walls increasingly unrealistic."

"Byrne and colleagues reported that most residents living near interface barriers did not want such barriers 'to come down now'. They also found a decline over time in respondents' support for barrier removal in the future (2012: 44%; 2015: 35%) and, correspondingly, an increase in the number of respondents who would simply 'like things left the way they are now' (2012: 22%; 2015: 30%)."

Evidence Source 2:

Katy Hayward and Cathal McManus, 'Northern Ireland: Society and Culture', in *The Routledge Handbook of British Politics and Society*, ed. Mark Garnett (Routledge, 2021).

"It is further evident in the continued existence of approximately one hundred "peace walls" in various urban centres such as Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Lurgan and Portadown (Gray, et al., 2018, p. 129) and which exist to separate nationalist areas from unionist areas. This draws attention to the fact that parts of Northern Ireland continue to be characterised by segregation and particular geographic areas to be associated with one community or the other. The "Fresh Start" Agreement, negotiated primarily between the DUP, Sinn Féin and the British and Irish Governments in November 2015 as a means of giving fresh impetus to the Stormont House Agreement of the previous year, outlined the parties commitment to promoting 'a culture of tolerance, mutual respect and mutual understanding at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and encourage shared and integrated education and housing' (NIO, 2015, p. 38). Although there is evidence of some improvement in regards to the housing situation, much more needs to be done as has recently been highlighted by the Fifth Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report:"

As the issues of both policing and housing demonstrate, the goal of building a shared society is complex and faces many difficulties. For nationalists, change is a must in order to build a society that better reflects their sense of identity and cultural heritage. For unionists, such change is seen to represent a danger to their sense of Britishness and, indeed, the British character of the state.

APPENDIX G: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

*****_Supplementary source, whose relevant transcription of the discourse has been included within the appendix as no easily accessible transcript is available or producible._

Evidence Source: Ivan Vejvoda, 'Northern Ireland's Uncertain Peace with Katy Hayward.

"My bigger concern I think is the fact that fundamental to the Good Friday Belfast Agreement is the fact that democratic and peaceful means are the ways by which people should achieve their political objectives and we don't have democratic or peaceful means of doing that at the moment and we haven't had properly for a number of years and that's my biggest concern.

If you don't have trust in those institutions and if they're not functioning, and if people find it very difficult to imagine them properly functioning ever again, then, well, what are we talking about now? So that's my worry. It's not a sort of a resurgence of the troubles all of a sudden. It's that the alternative is not satisfactory in democratic terms."

Even now, so many years on, people will say we haven't had reconciliation, and they don't really see any prospect of it either. Yet at the same time, the one thing that is very striking about Northern Ireland is, I don't like the word resilient really, but how resilient and passionate and determined and committed people working in civil society organizations are in Northern Ireland.

And I think there's a great experience that they have. And having seen, you know, real needs being met through their charitable work. in the most vulnerable areas in Northern Ireland and being determined to build bridges and to make connections and build friendships in very difficult times, like that has persisted.

APPENDIX H: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence Source: 1

'Assessment on Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', accessed 11 July 2024, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-on-paramilitary-groups-in-northern-ireland.

All the main paramilitary groups operating during the period of the Troubles remain in existence: this includes the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), Red Hand Commando (RHC), Ulster Defence Association (UDA), Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). Seventeen years after the 1998 Belfast Agreement, paramilitary groups remain a feature of life in NI; the UDA, UVF and INLA have continued to recruit and all of the paramilitary groups maintain a relatively public profile in spite of being illegal organisations.

However, the most serious current terrorist threat in NI is not posed by these groups but by dissident republicans (DRs) — paramilitary groups not on ceasefire and who reject the 1998 Belfast Agreement (the so-called 'new' IRA, Oglaigh na hEireann and the Continuity IRA). In addition to numerous paramilitary-style assaults, DRs have mounted between 15 and 40 terrorist attacks each year since 2000, which are primarily directed against PSNI officers. Their activities pose a severe threat to NI's security and stability and, at any given time, a terrorist attack is highly likely. There is also a smaller threat posed by dissident loyalist paramilitary groups.

Members of these paramilitary groups continue to engage in violent activity, both directed by local leadership and conducted without sanction. Violence and intimidation are used to exercise control at a community level. The scale has vastly reduced from the period of the Troubles but still includes paramilitary-style assaults and, on occasion, murders; members of all groups have carried out murders since the 1998 Belfast Agreement.

Members of these paramilitary groups, to different degrees, are also involved in other serious criminal activity, which harms communities and damages the financial prosperity and

A summary of MI5 and PSNI intelligence gathering tools and mechanisms of oversight is contained in an annex to this report.

Members of these paramilitary groups, to different degrees, are also involved in other serious criminal activity, which harms communities and damages the financial prosperity and reputation of NI. This includes large-scale smuggling operations, fuel laundering, drug dealing and extortion of local businesses. Although the majority of paramilitary weapons were decommissioned, some were not and individual members have since procured small numbers of firearms. The IMC has already reported that some quantities of weaponry under the control of members of the UVF, UDA and PIRA may not have been decommissioned.

Evidence Source 2.

'The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland', 7 June 2016, https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/fresh-start-panel-report-disbandment-paramilitary-groups-northern-ireland.

Paramilitarism During Peace Years

"A three person panel will be appointed by the Executive by the end of December with the task of bringing back to the Executive for agreement and action a report before the end of May 2016 with recommendations for a strategy to disband paramilitary groups". In December 2015, the First and Deputy First Ministers appointed a three-person panel consisting of Lord Alderdice, John McBurney and Professor Monica McWilliams.

None of the groups we have met was prepared to use the word "disband", even in a situation where their structures and activities had been transformed or withered away.

Much has changed since the landmark ceasefires of 1994. Significant steps have been taken by paramilitary groups on ceasefire to transition further. However, over 20 years after the ceasefires, paramilitary groups continue to exist and the activities of some of their members continue to impact adversely upon everyday life for many individuals, businesses, public services and communities in Northern Ireland.

Notwithstanding the progress outlined above, paramilitary activity continues in Northern Ireland. Almost twenty years after the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the greatest threat to security is the armed campaigns of what have come to be known as Dissident Republican (DR) groups.5 Hoax and real security alerts caused by these groups continue to force people out of their homes and disrupt traffic,6 business and other aspects of daily life.

Some members and former members of paramilitary groups on ceasefire continue to engage in violent activity to intimidate and exercise control in communities where they operate. In some cases this activity is directed by local leadership but it can also be conducted without sanction. The scale of the problem has vastly reduced since the height of 'the Troubles' but brutal physical attacks continue.

Young People

There are numerous factors that lead some young people to consider joining paramilitary groups. These include problems at home, educational underachievement and unemployment. However, these factors alone do not directly lead to young people becoming involved with paramilitary groups; other, more complex, factors are also at play, such as a quest for identity, resentment generated by stigmatisation and exclusion from decision-making, and frustration with the lack of opportunities for productive engagement. There is a need for capacity building programmes for hard to reach youth, as well as programmes to tackle addictive behaviours or bullying and intimidation and to reduce the risk that such young people become drawn into paramilitary groups.

Once they are involved, it can then be difficult for a young person to leave the group, even if they no longer wish to remain. They may feel they have no way out of the situation, particularly as it would appear that some paramilitary groups insist on a substantial sum of money as an exit fee. Such sums are likely to be beyond the means of most young people.

Many consultees have highlighted the link between social deprivation and continued paramilitary activity. Educational under-attainment and difficulties accessing employment have been cited as significant obstacles for communities. These issues hold individuals and communities back and they contribute to the conditions which can be used to justify continued recruitment of young people into paramilitary groups. Despite significant investment in some neighbourhoods, the levels of deprivation are still high. Long-term change will require further focused government intervention.

Social Deprivation

It is important to recognise that as the prospects of sustained peace and security grow, communities' needs, expectations and priorities frequently evolve. In some particularly disadvantaged communities, the 'peace dividend' has not been perceived to yield the expected benefits and a situation of continuing insecurity and poverty has generated frustrations and resentment. In post-conflict societies, preventing a reoccurrence of violence is sometimes described as 'negative peace', whereas an approach that addresses issues of prosperity and social

and economic stability enables a more sustainable 'positive peace'. A comprehensive cross-departmental approach to communities in transition is needed to tackle both these aspects of peace building.

APPENDIX I: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence Source: 'The Effect of Paramilitary Activity and Organised Crime on Society in Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Affairs Committee', 24 January 2024, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmniaf/43/report.html.

Paramilitarism is an enduring and malignant legacy of the Troubles which continues to cause harm in Northern Ireland today - whether that be physical or psychological harm to victims and survivors of violence perpetrated by paramilitary groups; harm to communities through coercive control; or the perpetuation of societal trauma in Northern Ireland. It is a persistent but complex phenomenon that necessitates a sustained and multi-faceted response from public services across the piece.

Low prosecution rates for those who commit violent crime can act as a barrier to reporting the crimes of paramilitary groups and also serve to perpetuate the impunity with which these groups act. An effective criminal justice system that is able to identify perpetrators of paramilitary violence and bring them to justice is therefore of paramount importance. The Government must work with the Executive to improve prosecution rates for paramilitary-style attacks and introduce a safeguarding approach to paramilitary activity, which includes organised criminal gangs

engaged in drug dealing and other illicit activities, to enable its prosecution as coercion, modern slavery and child criminal exploitation. Alongside this, the Government must ensure that policing and security agencies in Northern Ireland are appropriately resourced to deal with terrorism and paramilitary activity, as it pledged to do so as part of its commitments under New Decade, New Approach agreement. Police numbers are falling and funding is inadequate, and this impacts on efforts to investigate and prevent paramilitary activity. We call on the Government to ensure that NI receives funding in 2024, and on a recurrent basis thereafter, which enables the PSNI to increase its roll to at least 7,500 officers.

If a young person is drawn into one of the loyalist groupings at the present time, for example, it is not necessarily that they want to be tutored and trained to be a drug dealer. They may feel that they want to join that group in order to fight the protocol or to defend against a border poll, or some other action that has a political bent or veneer—call it what you will—to it. It is not about being recruited as an apprentice criminal to know how to counterfeit, extort, human traffic or any of those dimensions, necessarily. That is what creates this added layer of complexity to dealing with the groups.

Naomi Long MLA told us that data collected by the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme suggested that "between 15% and 30% of people in Northern Ireland live in an area that experiences paramilitary fear and intimidation",34 although Ms Long explained that some areas experience this more than others.35 Other contributors pointed to the progress made in Northern Ireland in recent decades towards a more peaceful society, but explained to us the reality that

many communities in Northern Ireland are still living with intimidation by groups and in fear of retribution if this intimidation is challenged.

There is a live debate as to whether the current scope of national security, as it relates to Northern Ireland, should be revised to include threats other than those to democracy and the state, such as paramilitary activity like drug dealing, extortion and murder, to enable greater joint working between law enforcement agencies in Northern Ireland and security and intelligence services where appropriate. Some think it should be expanded; others believe that the current scope is sufficient to enable collaboration. We recommend that the Government undertake an updated analysis of paramilitary activity and organised crime in Northern Ireland when determining the scope of national security for its next national security strategy to ensure that all relevant groups and activities are caught within its ambit.

Memorials, commemorative artefacts and flags glorifying paramilitary groups serve as a visual signifier of the coercive control that such groups attempt to have over communities and can retraumatise the victims and survivors of paramilitary violence. The PSNI does not always have sufficient political support to remove paramilitary flags.

There is a correlation between paramilitary activity, deprivation, mental health issues and trauma. We therefore support the trauma-informed and public health approach of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme.

The continued presence of paramilitary groups, 25 years on from the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, represents a festering wound on society in Northern Ireland. Given the delineation of responsibilities between the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive in tackling terrorist and paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland, the lack of an Executive impedes attempts to develop a collaborative and mutually reinforcing approach to tackling terrorism, paramilitary activity, and organised crime. The lack of an Executive, and the lack of sustainable funding arrangements for public services, also creates an uncertain environment for organisations providing vital services such as youth and educational services.

APPENDIX J: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence Source 1: John Jupp and Matt Garrod, 'Legacies of the Troubles: The Links between Organized Crime and Terrorism in Northern Ireland', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 45 (4 November 2019): 1–40, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1678878.

All of the more prominent paramilitary organizations operating during the Troubles remain in existence, some of which continue to recruit new members, acquire money, weapons and explosives, and retain and even develop their capacity for resuming violent campaigns in the future should they consider it desirable, despite being on cease-fire and ostensibly committed to peace.

The main paramilitary groups examined within this model are the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), Ulster Defense Association (UDA), Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Action Against Drugs (AAD), as well as violent dissident Republicans groups, including the "Real" Irish Republican Army (RIRA), "New" IRA (NIRA), "Continuity" IRA (CIRA), and O glaigh na Eireann (ONH). We concentrate on these groups because, in developing the Northern Ireland model, an evidence-led approach is adopted, and they were discussed during interviews. Additionally, the UDA, UVF, and INLA are proscribed terrorist organizations and are among the main targets being investigated by the newly established Paramilitary Crime Task Force.55 Moreover, dissident Republican groups, such as CIRA, NIRA, and RIRA, which are not on cease-fire and wage armed campaigns, continue to pose the greatest threat to Northern Ireland's national security.

Additionally, individual members of paramilitary groups continue to engage in violent paramilitary assaults and murders in order to terrorize and ultimately exercise control over local communities, both directed by local leadership and conducted without sanction, and continue to represent a serious threat to Northern Ireland's national security.

Evidence Source 2: Siobhan McAlister et al., *'It Didn't End in 1998': Examining the Impacts of Conflict Legacy Across Generations* (Centre for Children's Rights, 2021).

The legacy of the Conflict is having a lasting impact on the daily lives of young people living in particular communities. Chronic sectarianism, segregation, violence and differential policing (real or perceived) are very much part of this legacy.

In recent studies, paramilitary activity and sectarian violence has been reported as continuing to affect young people, particularly in working class communities and socio-economically deprived, mostly urban and interface, areas

As a result, young people often felt fearful and unsafe in their communities. They also linked attacks on young people with poor mental health, problematic drug and alcohol use (as a coping mechanism), and suicide. Indeed, some research has explored the link between paramilitary intimidation with male suicides. Of the 402 deaths recorded as suicides between 2007-2009, Mallon et al. (2019) found that for 19 male suicides, there were incidents of paramilitary intimidation in the twelve months prior to death.

Hargie, O'Donnell and McMullan have found that paramilitary-style groups also play a role in contributing to social exclusion. They interviewed young people from deprived interface areas of Belfast. Their findings suggested that the existence of paramilitary groups rendered cross community socializing non-existent, as they discouraged young people from engaging with the community on the other side of the walls, and they posed a very real danger to anyone from the 'other' community if they visited their area. Young people in the study were reluctant to travel outside of their neighbourhoods to socialise or seek employment.

In another study conducted in six different economically deprived neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland, young people experienced/were involved in different types of violence, including sectarian violence, rioting and racist violence (all perceived as part of defending their neighbourhoods) as well as experiencing paramilitary-related violence. Overall, many experienced and/or witnessed high levels of community violence, which they felt was part of community life.

Evidence Source 3: Kit Rickard and Kristin M. Bakke, 'Legacies of Wartime Order: Punishment Attacks and Social Control in Northern Ireland', *Security Studies* 30, no. 4 (8 August 2021): 603–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2021.1976822.

Armed groups "may be coercive, even brutal, but they may nevertheless be perceived as legitimate by many in the populations under their control." Research on criminal gangs reveals similar dynamics, where gang members are both feared and revered due to the order they provide.

As several of our interviews suggested, "you just did not call the police." This was either because the police was not present, you mistrusted them, or you feared being labelled a "tout," an informer and traitor within your community.

Both Republican and Loyalist armed groups have instrumental incentives to exercise social control. They do so to show they are politically relevant to their communities—either through compliance or fear—for operational reasons.

As during the conflict, this strategy aimed to undermine the legitimacy of the state, while promoting themselves as the rightful guardians of peace to "gain the support of elements of the local population while simultaneously taking control of others through fear and retribution.

APPENDIX PART 3

FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE FOR STRESS 3:THE DIVISIVE (MULTI/CROSS CONTEXTUAL) CONSEQUENCES OF BREXIT TO THE FRAGILE PEACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WITH HISTORICAL PRESENT AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS THAT THREATENS THE STABILITY OF PEACE. (CHAPTER 3: EVIDENCE PART 2)

APPENDIX K: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Thematically arranged for clearer exposition of evolving incremental data.

Evidence Source: Hayward, K. 'Beyond Unionism versus Nationalism: The Rise of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland'. *The Political Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (April 2020): 461–66. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12857.

The Impact of Sovereignty and Identity Politics Within the Context of Brexit and Its Aftermath on Peace and Stability in Northern Ireland.

There would be no Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland were it not for the particular 'demographics and divisions' on the island of Ireland, and in Northern Ireland in particular.

The origins of the Protocol lie in the common objective of the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU) to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland, as would otherwise logically occur as a consequence of Brexit. This objective is inseparable from two others, as set out in Article 1(3) of the Protocol: to address the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland and to protect the 1998 Belfast Good Friday Agreement in all its dimensions.1 Historical conflict is the looming shadow behind all three objectives. Yet the Protocol was primarily driven by the prospect of a new separation about to occur. It is an effort to marry the UK's political imperative of leaving the EU single market and customs union with the EU's legal imperative of protecting the integrity of the same. Furthermore, both parties considered the political imperative of avoiding a hard border to be bound with the moral imperative of upholding a peace process. This

is often taken to mean that, by inference, a hard border would lead to an outbreak of violent conflict, after nearly a quarter century of relative calm. But the rationale is more nuanced than this. It is less about what might provoke violence and more about what the Belfast Good Friday Agreement is intended to manage – namely a small region placed in a fragile state of limbo by centrifugal political forces connected to differing national identities and affiliations within it. The UK's withdrawal from the EU – and with it a form of disconnection from Ireland – posed a risk to the underpinning pillars and assumptions of the peace process itself.

Importantly, this 'identity' is not merely that of national citizenship; nor is it simply that of national identification. Instead the 'identity' that is relevant here is that of a constitutional preference, namely unionist or nationalist. This specific form of political aspiration has thus been transmuted into the most significant of all identities and divisions in Northern Ireland. More than that, most other identities are seen to be subsumed within it. Left/right, class, gender, rural/urban, liberal/progressive – there are no political principles or communities that have sustained political salience in Northern Ireland other than unionist/nationalist. A consequence of this is that complex demographics tend to be subsumed rather crudely into the political sphere. Most particularly, religious and national identities are assumed to be alternative markers for political aspiration.

This is why the UK's exit from the EU, and the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland with it, have been so portentous for political divisions within Northern Ireland. The indications up to 2016 were that the majority of the population in Northern Ireland were relatively comfortable with devolved status within the UK in a context of common EU membership.

In the case of Brexit, Sinn Féin's Remain position was justified on the grounds that 'a situation where part of our country is in the EU and the other part outside would cause huge problems in terms of the economy, free movement and have serious political consequences... no nationalist or republican should play any part in reinforcing the partition of our country'. Unionists had typically maintained a wariness of European integration, reflecting in part some of the ambiguities in the official British approach to the European project. The TUV has an influence beyond its size – mainly because of the DUP's fear that a failure to be hardline enough on the issues that matter most to unionists will see it lose supporters to the TUV. The TUV was very strongly pro-Leave in 2016. The DUP's pro-Leave campaign in 2016 focused on its traditional Euroscepticism,

The non-aligned Alliance Party and Green also campaigned to Remain, thus meaning that all but three of the eight parties recently endorsed by election to the NI Assembly were agreed on a pro-Remain position, and two of the pro-Leave parties held just 3 seats between them. Some speculated that this informal coalition around Remain meant a new type of political landscape in Northern Ireland, i.e. more centrist and transcending the green/orange divide.

Northern Ireland has long had a dominant socio-political cleavage that has centred upon two opposing visions of its constitutional status. Brexit has meant a rapid and severe adjustment to the framework in which that constitutional status is to be shaped and determined.

What has been quite clear is that Brexit has uprooted both nationalism and unionism from the ways they had settled in the post-1998 Belfast Good Friday Agreement context. But the picture is

more complicated than simple green versus orange. The conditions for cooperation across the island and between Great Britain and Ireland have been made more difficult by Brexit. There can be little doubt that the conditions of discomfort for nationalists in the UK and for unionists in a united Ireland have also been worsened by this change.

APPENDIX L: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence Source 1: Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland'. *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2019): 217–33. https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2019.30.13.

The Impact of Sovereignty and Identity Politics Within the Context of Brexit and Its Aftermath on Peace and Stability in Northern Ireland Continued…

The recognition of sovereignty over Northern Ireland, internationally, and within Ireland, has shifted in the aftermath of the 2016 Brexit referendum. The framework that governs this relationship between Ireland, the UK and Northern Ireland was redefined with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in 1998. In the altered political circumstances of the Brexit negotiations, this redefinition has produced unanticipated consequences. First, it underpinned the high level of support given to the Irish government and to the provisions of the GFA by the EU as an institution, and by EU member states, manifested in the refusal of the EU to negotiate a land border on the island of Ireland. For the UK this was an unforeseen outcome as its negotiation strategy was based on the EU prioritising the importance of accessing the UK economy over Irish

claims under the GFA. Second, the undermining of the political stability and relative consensus created by the GFA has led to a new discourse on Irish unity across the island of Ireland, including on the potential shape of a new Ireland.

One consequence of the 2016 referendum in the UK on membership of the European Union and the subsequent negotiation process has been a significant shift in discourse on Irish unity in the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. This change has been visible in the mainstream media, on social media and in the findings of opinion polls. This shift has been driven by the undermining of the status quo that the Good Friday Agreement embodied, and by the perceived damage that the re-imposition of a land border on the island would do to the economy north and south. The tangible negative impacts which have shaped this debate have been re-inforced by a shift in the way in which sovereignty over Northern Ireland is recognised internationally.

This is demonstrated by the EU's collective opposition to a negotiated deal that included the imposition of a land border on the island of Ireland, based on its support for the provisions of the GFA. The question of sovereignty over Northern Ireland, and the nature of that sovereignty, has been fundamental to Ireland's relationship with Northern Ireland and with the UK government since the partition of the island in 1920. Until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the Irish government faced an international consensus that the UK government was the sovereign power in Northern Ireland and that the Irish government had no role in the territory. As an

international treaty, the Good Friday Agreement redefined this relationship, however, the full significance of this redefinition only became apparent during the period of negotiations between the UK and the EU that followed the Brexit referendum.

Divisions in the party-political context in Northern Ireland during Brexit.

In the 2016 UK referendum on Brexit, Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU with 56% voting against Brexit. The division on Brexit reflected the political division between Unionists and Nationalists, while voters from the 'middle ground' also voted for continued membership of the EU.21 This voting behaviour aligns with the positions of the Northern Ireland political parties. The two major Irish nationalist parties, Sinn Féin and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), supported continued EU membership, as did the centrist Alliance Party. The major unionist party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), campaigned to leave. The Ulster Unionist Party officially supported 'remain' but a majority of its supporters voted to leave and the party changed its leader and its policy position after the referendum.

The Deterioration of Britian and Ireland Relations (Bi-Laterally and As Ireland Being an Extension of the EU) During Brexit and Its Aftermath, Undermined the Good Friday Agreement Which Impacted the Stability of Peace.

The UK government, under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, formally accepted that Northern Ireland's place within the UK rested on the desire of a majority of the population. If, in the future, there was evidence that a majority in Northern Ireland wanted to 'form part of a united Ireland', the British government committed to holding a referendum17 and in the event of a vote for Irish unity to legislate for a united Ireland.18 The Irish government, and the Irish nationalist community in Northern Ireland, retained the political objective of Irish unity, but recognised this

required the consent of a majority of voters in Northern Ireland. Irish nationalists recognised that the fluidity of the Agreement on the ultimate end point is central to its success, as it has allowed both unionists and nationalists to work within its framework.19 The peace process was facilitated by the integration of the Irish state and the UK in the EU, including the open borders and cross-border co-operation which is part of that wider EU integration process. Although as an institution the EU had not played a substantial role during the conflict nor been involved in the peace negotiations,20 the structural organisation of the EU and its policy framework was essential to the operation of the GFA, as it underpinned all aspects of cross-border co-operation. The EU recognised and also financially supported the peace process and peace agreement, giving ongoing support to post-conflict reconstruction, reconciliation and cross-border initiatives. As a result of this ongoing process the level of economic and social integration between the two parts of the island was positively transformed in terms of economic integration, the rationalisation of some public services and crucially the free movement of people.

The support given by the EU, and the governments of its member states, during the Brexit negotiation process, for Ireland's demand that there a should be no hard border on the island, was a demonstration of the impact of the change in the recognition of sovereignty embedded in the Good Friday Agreement. The support Ireland received was not just the expected level of support for a member state against a state in the process of leaving, it was strongly based on the recognition of the rights of the Irish government, and of the nationalist population of Northern Ireland, under the Good Friday Agreement, and it reflects the EU's own self-image as a peace-building organisation.

From this perspective Northern Ireland was no longer purely a domestic matter for the UK, and although it was still recognised as the sovereign government, this sovereignty was qualified. Compared to the historic pattern of international and European lack of engagement, from Ireland's independence to the Good Friday Agreement, this was a significant shift in the international recognition of sovereignty over Northern Ireland.

The Brexit negotiations demonstrate how perceptions of sovereignty and international practice on sovereignty related issues are strongly contextual. Attempts by Ireland from the 1920s to the 1960s to raise British sovereignty over Northern Ireland in international organisations were ineffectual, as the UK's position as the sovereign state was undisputed internationally. The majority of Irish nationalists, north and south, consented to the settlement provided by the Good Friday Agreement, and were willing to allow the process of ongoing negotiation to evolve over time without a pre-determined end point. Brexit, and the threat of a hard border, has undermined this consensus in a manner that may not be possible to restore, even if a withdrawal agreement without a hard land border is concluded, or if Brexit is reversed. The way in which the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement and majority opinion in Northern Ireland were ignored, in order to pursue a concept of Brexit based on a narrow form of English nationalism, supported by a section of Ulster unionism, has started a debate on the future of the island which has gained momentum. This discourse on the island of Ireland is more significant as it is taking place in the context of the EU's assertion of its right to uphold the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement, creating what is now a new international status quo.

Evidence Source 2: Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Northern Ireland Peace Process'. In *The Law & Politics of Brexit: Volume III: The Framework of New EU-UK Relations*, edited by Federico Fabbrini, 0. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192848468.003.0004.

The Deterioration of Britian and Ireland Relations (Bi-Laterally and As Ireland Being an Extension of the EU) During Brexit and Its Aftermath, Undermined the Good Friday Agreement Which Impacted the Stability of Peace Continued…

The conflict in Northern Ireland was not resolved by the Belfast Good Friday Agreement as the fundamental political differences between those who wanted Northern Ireland to remain a British territory and those who wanted it to be reunited with Ireland remained the key political division. The Agreement recognized Northern Ireland as a contested territory with a bi-national identity and provided a framework in which democratic politics could function, and political violence was virtually eliminated. Although the EU had not been a significant actor in the peace process, its institutional framework underpinned the Agreement. Key to this was the absence of a visible border on the island in the context of the Single Market. While not without problems, the Agreement successfully put in place a fragile balance that facilitated greater cross-border integration and the emergence of 'normal life'. This balance was disturbed by the Brexit debate, the referendum, and the negotiations that followed, as on the island of Ireland the issue of the border and the relationship between the two parts of the island was inevitably part of this debate.

What became clear during the Brexit negotiations was that the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, as an international agreement signed by Ireland, a Member State of the EU, had changed external perceptions of the UK's sovereignty over Northern Ireland. This was a very significant shift from the position that existed prior to the Agreement. The position of the Irish government was also strengthened by the formal decision of the European Council that, in the event of a future vote in favour of Irish unity, as provided for in the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland would be deemed to be automatically within the EU, without the need for a Treaty agreement or a vote of other members.

It (The Irish Government) was also concerned that the combination of the disruption to all-island economic integration14 and the loss of EU subsidies15 would have a significant impact on the weak economy of Northern Ireland, which together with the failure of the peace process that a hard border would symbolize, would have serious consequences for political stability. The EU endorsed the Irish government's position, when on 29 April 2017 the European Council agreed that the EU's Article 50 negotiation guidelines would include the Irish border question as one of three key issues to be addressed in the initial phase of negotiations.

The EU negotiation directives published in May 2017 explicitly stated that nothing in the final agreement with the UK should 'undermine the objectives and commitments set out in the Good Friday Agreement' and that negotiations should 'in particular aim to avoid the creation of a hard border on the island of Ireland', while respecting the EU's legal order.

The UK decision to agree the Northern Ireland Protocol also precipitated an increase in political tensions in Northern Ireland, already heightened by Brexit. (Therefore) Within Northern Ireland, the political divisions on Brexit in the 2016 referendum campaign followed the major pre-existing political cleavages. The referendum results strongly reflected this division and the positions of the Northern Ireland political parties.

However, the way in which the UK chooses to implement the Protocol, increased political opposition from the Unionist community, or negative impacts of EU–UK disputes in other areas are all likely to make implementation problematic, as the first few months of the Protocol's operation demonstrated.

The deep divisions in Northern Ireland on its constitutional status will remain a source of friction in the EU–UK relationship. While the TCA has set a new framework for EU–UK relations, the politically problematic nature of the Northern Ireland Protocol attached to the WA means that its implementation will go beyond the regulation of trade. Brexit broke the fragile political balance that was put in place by the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, and while the Protocol preserves the integrity of that Agreement, the debate on Brexit and the process of the negotiation of the TCA have both deepened and shifted political cleavages in Northern Ireland. Even if the Protocol can function smoothly and without disputes, the clock cannot be reset, and politically the island of Ireland is a different place in 2021 compared to 2016, prior to the Brexit referendum.

APPENDIX M: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence Source 1: Canavan, Miceal, and Oguzhan Turkoglu. 'Effect of Group Status and Conflict on National Identity: Evidence from the Brexit Referendum in Northern Ireland'. *Journal of Peace Research* 60, no. 6 (1 November 2023): 921–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221111824.

The Impact of Sovereignty and Identity Politics Within the Context of Brexit and Its Aftermath on Peace and Stability in Northern Ireland Continued…

As noted, for many people national identity forms an intrinsic part of how they understand themselves and their place in the world. This is further compounded where national identities are engaged as part of violent intergroup conflict. Identities activated in enduring intergroup conflict seep into many aspects of daily life, shaping attitudes and behavior. Research consistently highlights that conflict experience hardens identities and prolonged exposure to intractable conflict engenders antagonistic intergroup attitudes which persist long after intense conflict has abated (Bar-Tal, 1998; Hadzic, Carlson & Tavits, 2020; Nair & Sambanis, 2019). These attitudes, such as the justness of one's goals and in-group unity, create a durable distance between identity groups (Bar-Tal, 1998; Tint, 2010). Therefore, we argue that conflict identities will be very resistant to change irrespective of fluctuations in the meaning or status. The effect of conflict experience is particularly strong when individuals are born into and exposed to enduring conflict during their formative years, as conflict becomes an inseparable part of their daily lives

As a result, individuals who grow up in the environment of ongoing intergroup conflict are shaped indelibly by this experience; it influences their attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and identity in enduring ways which are likely to persist into adulthood

Despite being a UK-wide referendum, Brexit became inextricably linked with British identity, as evidenced by the portmanteau Brexit (British-exit). Furthermore, while the vote was ostensibly a binary choice regarding membership of a supranational institution, it represented a contest over many other significant social, political, and economic issues. Leaving the EU is a profound constitutional change, removing or transforming many rights and obligations people have as citizens.

The impact of Brexit in Northern Ireland is highly salient and potentially relates much more to the character of national identity than mainland Britain, particularly given the flexibility in choice of national identity available to people in Northern Ireland.

Evidence Source 2: Murphy, Mary C. 'Northern Ireland and Brexit: Where Sovereignty and Stability Collide?' *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 29, no. 3 (3 July 2021): 405–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2021.1891027.

The Impact of Sovereignty and Identity Politics Within the Context of Brexit and Its Aftermath on Peace and Stability in Northern Ireland Continued…

The evolving process of peace consolidation which followed was interrupted by the June 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union (EU). In Northern Ireland, a majority voted in favour of Remain. The referendum campaign, however, was different in tone and content to the rest of the UK (see Murphy 2016). It focused less on migration and 'taking back control', and more on issues, such as the future status of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the implications of a Leave vote for the (fragile) peace process and the impact on trade and policies.

This conception of sovereignty (During the Brexit Referendum), however, clashes with the post-sovereign character and content of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The principles and institutions established by the Agreement move beyond the old frameworks for political order by creating a series of novel and interlocking territorial, cross-territorial and cross-national institutions.

Northern Ireland's ability to influence the withdrawal process was severely constrained by the collapse of Northern Ireland's devolved institutions in January 2017. In the absence of a

functioning Northern Ireland Assembly, Northern Ireland lost a forum wherein discussion of Brexit might have taken place between the various political parties. Northern Ireland, however, was not alone in being unable to influence the UK's withdrawal negotiations. The Scottish and Welsh devolved units expressed serious frustration with the lack of opportunities and gateways for inputting to the UK negotiation process and for limiting the hollowing out of devolved powers which materialised in the Internal Market Act (2020). In these ways, Brexit brought the weaknesses of the UK's devolution settlement into sharp focus and 'created new tensions between the UK government and the devolved administrations' (Greer 2018, 136).

Brexit lends new significance to old arguments around borders, identity and sovereignty, and is feeding the forces of contestation and change in Northern Ireland. The EU referendum vote and the tortuous attempts to extract the UK from the EU revealed a pronounced disconnect between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK where difficulties in acknowledging and accommodating the distinctiveness of Northern Ireland's situation and its peace settlement were encountered. Brexit highlights the limited knowledge and appreciation at the UK centre of highly politicised and contested issues with direct ramifications for different territories within the UK, and indeed for the British state itself. Relatedly, Brexit heralds in a period of political and constitutional instability for the UK polity.

The Deterioration of Britian and Ireland Relations (Bi-Laterally and As Ireland Being an Extension of the EU) During Brexit and Its Aftermath, Undermined the Good Friday Agreement Which Impacted the Stability of Peace Continued…

The Northern Ireland peace process was built on the back of close British-Irish cooperation (see Tannam 2001). The provisions set out in the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement accommodate formal cooperation between the two states on issues related to Northern Ireland. This provision departs from the UK's historic adherence to the traditional tenets of national sovereignty by institutionalising an approach to Northern Ireland which encompassed elements of shared sovereignty including, for example, NorthSouth institutions. The transformation in British–Irish relations during this period facilitated a progressive deepening of a previously strained political relationship and helped to sustain the peace process during troubled periods after 1998. . The strength and depth of that relationship, however, was challenged during the EU referendum campaign, and following the vote, relations between the two neighbouring states were unsettled as both embarked on different future trajectories – one inside the EU, the other outside (see O'Brennan 2019).

Brexit begs questions about the nature and depth of altered British-Irish relations and how the relationship can be maintained and nurtured post-Brexit. Keeping the border open between north and south demonstrates some continuing acceptance of a shared sovereignty framework. However, the relationship has been fractured (at least temporarily) not just by the decision and act of the UK leaving the EU, but also by an altered perspective on UK national sovereignty which does not

fully accommodate the post-sovereign framework within which Northern Ireland's stability is situated. In the aftermath of Brexit, the Irish government has signalled its support for re-energising and reinvigorating British-Irish relations by engaging more deliberately and effectively with the institutions created by the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (see Irish Government 2020). The British government, however, appears less enthusiastic than their Irish counterparts in terms of engagement with the British-Irish Council (see Murphy 2018, 107) and is more circumspect in its commitment to British-Irish cooperation. Vocal support for enhanced cooperation post-Brexit, as expressed by Prime Minister Boris Johnson (Belfast Telegraph, 13 August 2020), has not been matched by more weighty UK proposals for developing the British-Irish relationship. In effect, Brexit's attempt to recapture British sovereignty jars with a bilateral relationship which challenges the fundamentals of that same sovereignty model.

APPENDIX N: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence Source 1: Kearney, Jarlath, Peter Shirlow, and Etain Tannam. 'Partition to Partnership to Brexit: Strategically Reinvigorating the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement'. *The RUSI Journal* 167, no. 3 (27 October 2022): 14–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2022.2124078.

The Deterioration of Britian and Ireland Relations (Bi-Laterally and As Ireland Being an Extension of the EU) During Brexit and Its Aftermath, Undermined the Good Friday Agreement Which Impacted the Stability of Peace Continued…

The 1998 Agreement was based on a 'three strands' strategy developed by John Hume in the 1970s which emphasised the British-Irish relationship.3 The Agreement's content was a bargain struck by all the main parties, with Hume and David Trimble, then leader of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), jointly winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999. At the Agreement's core is the ethical aim of reconciliation based on mutual respects and rights.4 The Agreement did not envisage a race towards continuous battle lines over sovereignty, but instead prioritised reconciliation as a fundamental and immediate necessity (thereby prefixing any possible future debates about Irish unification, if supported by a majority of the electorates respectively north and south).

The first page of the Agreement lays out the aim of reconciliation in six paragraphs. Paragraph two states: 'we firmly dedicate ourselves to the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust'.5 Paragraph five states: 'we will endeavour to strive in every practical way towards

reconciliation and rapprochement'.6 The Agreement recognises that resolving Northern Ireland's conflict requires dealing with the 'totality of relationships' across the three strands.7 The British-Irish relationship was seen as crucial because both governments, by acting as de facto guarantors for their respective communities (the British government for unionists and the Irish government for nationalists), would lessen insecurity and thereby enable cooperation and mutual compromise.8 British Irish intergovernmentalism implies that, acting in good faith, both governments together manage the joined-up framework that provides balanced outcomes and parity between Northern Ireland's traditional identities.

Institutionalised Ireland UK cooperation became an important cornerstone of the peace process and the 1998 Agreement, as evidenced by how the overarching British-Irish Agreement – as an international intergovernmental treaty – formally wrapped around the 1998 peace agreement. The approach encapsulated the need to enshrine institutionally and legally the 'totality of relations'.12 Under the Agreement, the three strands are interdependent and interlocking: It is accepted that all of the institutional and constitutional arrangements - an Assembly in Northern Ireland, a North/South Ministerial Council, implementation bodies, a British-Irish Council and a British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and any amendments to British Acts of Parliament and the Constitution of Ireland – are interlocking and interdependent and that in particular the functioning of the Assembly and the North/South Council are so closely interrelated that the success of each depends on that of the other.

On the legacy issue and the Protocol, the UK government announced a new approach unilaterally. In 2021, the UK government announced its own plans to revise existing policy for dealing with the

legacy of past conflict (already agreed bilaterally and across political parties). The legacy issue is highly emotive in Northern Ireland for all communities but especially for families who lost loved ones or who were injured during the conflict. It has also become divisive, with some unionists claiming it unfairly punishes the security forces but omits paramilitary actors, particularly the IRA. After several efforts at reaching a resolution on legacy issues, both governments and a majority of Northern Ireland's political parties eventually concluded a framework of arrangements in the Stormont House Agreement in 2014.48 However, there was further and ongoing delay over UK implementation of related policy, resources and legislation. The UK government then revised its policy in 2021 without the endorsement of the Irish government, by introducing a new approach that was prompted, in part, by significant Westminster lobbies against the trial of a number of individual former British Army personnel for their alleged role(s) in historic events, such as Bloody Sunday.49 The UK government's unilateralism has negatively impacted the Agreement's necessary emphasis on treaty-based bilateral cooperation and trust, in this instance relating to the deeply sensitive area of conflict legacy. All the parties in Northern Ireland, as well as the Irish government and the UK Labour party, have opposed the decision and complained about the absence of consultation. Despite that, the UK government proceeded with fast-tracking the enabling Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill through its second reading in parliament in July 2022.

Evidence Source 2: Kelly, Conor J., and Etain Tannam. 'The UK Government's Northern Ireland Policy after Brexit: A Retreat to Unilateralism and Muscular Unionism'. *Journal of European Public Policy* 30, no. 11 (2 November 2023): 2275–2302. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2023.2210186.

A core impact of the Brexit referendum result was a sharp decline in BritishIrish cooperation. Since the referendum, the absolutist definition of sovereignty adopted by the Conservative government (Keating, 2022), has contradicted the 1998 Agreement's multi-level and shared approach. The unilateralism of the UK government from 2016 to 2022 directly contravened Strand Three as a pillar of the British–Irish partnership which protects the 1998 Agreement. It also created a reciprocal (lasting at least until 2020) adversarial response from the Irish government. The Dublin government under Leo Varadkar was clearly appalled at the reversal of bilateralism and at the British bargaining approach to UK-EU negotiations (O'Brennan, 2019, p. 167; Tannam, 2017). Thus, a cycle of adversarial relations occurred, similar to the early Troubles and a core pillar of the peace process was undermined.

UK withdrawal from the EU undermined the functional logic underpinning the 1998 Agreement. The Single Market and peace itself facilitated the removal of security and customs checks on the Irish land border. The open land border was of immense symbolic and practical importance to nationalists and to many business people. Practically it enabled increased crossborder travel and trade, although currency differences, small market size, and economic differences also affected cross-border cooperation

Thus, Alan Whysall, a former senior official in the 1998 Agreement's negotiations has emphasised that for the future stability of Northern Ireland, the British government must foster compromise and widespread consultation. He has argued it is advisable that it works in partnership with the Irish government: 'In the past, the role of developing ideas, fostering debate, and promoting and brokering compromise has been taken by a close partnership of the British and Irish governments' (Whysall, 2022, p. 6). A key method of avoiding crises in Northern Ireland is to return to a long-term partnership approach to policy. The 1980s onward demonstrates that institutionalised British–Irish cooperation helps policy learning, whereby appropriate lessons are 'drawn about the specific type of failures involved in past, present, and future policies and policy proposals' (Howlett, 2012, p. 50).

In future, partnership with the Irish government in creating policy in Northern Ireland and using the Agreement's bilateral institutions fully will be required to prevent more crises like the Irish border or Protocol disputes. Particularly if there is a referendum on unification, but also to deal with the many aspects of Brexit that will continue to affect practical life on the island.

The resentment felt by the majority of political unionists about the UK (and Irish) government's perceived role in negotiating new trading arrangements is unlikely to dissipate soon. Brexit, in signifying and causing a UK policy shift to unilateralism and traditional sovereignty, has had a significant impact on its policy to Northern Ireland and on political stability there. The divisions within unionism have deepened partially because of the Brexit turmoil, but also in response to the growth of Sinn Féin (now the largest party in the Assembly) and the rise of the cross-community Alliance Party, who were both equally incensed by the Brexit process.

APPENDIX O: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

The Internal and External Instability and Fragmentation of Unionism/Unionist's Settlement Post Brexit, With Wide Reaching Effects on The Stability of The Northern Ireland Peace.

Evidence Source 1: Kelly, Conor J., and Etain Tannam. 'The Future of Northern Ireland: The Role of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement Institutions'. *The Political Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2023): 85–94. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13172.

Since the 2016 Brexit referendum a series of crises has gripped Northern Ireland's politics. This has had a destabilising effect across society, which has arguably been felt most acutely by political unionism.

A SERIES OF crises in recent years have destabilised Northern Irish politics. Brexit is of course the core source of instability. Since late 2019, unionism has been particularly affected, as the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol was negotiated and took effect. The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (B/GFA) although 'a 'remarkable' achievement has been 'tarnished in execution' and not fully brought about the reconciliation and stability it set out to achieve.1 Though cultural and political grievances between communities in these islands subsided in its aftermath, it has been regarded by many unionists as not adequately serving their aims. Since the peace process, a culture war began to emerge between unionists who felt their Britishness was not being respected and republicans who felt unionists were reluctant to embrace parity of esteem.

Brexit greatly exacerbated underlying unionist tensions and insecurity by precipitating calls for a 'border poll' on Irish unification, principally by Sinn Féin, but also from a host of civic organisations and moderate nationalist leaders.4 Though nationalism remains divided on the timing of when a poll should be held, the conversation on a hypothetical united Ireland lingers omnipresent over contemporary debate and is seen to contribute to a destabilisation of unionism.

The culmination of the meandering Brexit withdrawal negotiations was the Ireland/ Northern Ireland Protocol, which essentially leaves Northern Ireland in the EU's customs union and aspects of its single market as the rest of the United Kingdom departs.7 Crucially, goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain are subject to customs declaration checks and EU standards apply. However, many unionist political and civic leaders argue that it undermines Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the UK.8 Some unionist politicians (including two former First Ministers and other prominent politicians) applied for judicial review of the Protocol, which they alleged conflicts with the Act of Union 1800, as it breaks the intra-UK customs union, and the B/GFA, because it undermines the principle of consent.

The position of the DUP and UUP has been that the British government should trigger Article 16 suspending the Protocol in the short term, and eventually replace it entirely, or fundamentally reform how it operates. This opposition is both practical, with respect to removing barriers to trade, and ideological, with respect to the strength of the Union.

Thus, Brexit and the Protocol have both caused and compounded a sense of crisis within unionism. The UK government's confrontational stance about implementing the Protocol provides some

respite for unionists, but only reassures fears in the short term and on a single issue. Arguably, the more fundamental causes of anxiety can be traced back much further, as unionism emerged from the peace process deeply divided on whether to support the Agreement's accommodations. Since that time, a narrative has taken hold in some quarters that the Agreement's provisions went too far and constituted a sell-out to nationalism, and the republican movement in particular.

Culture wars around the Irish language and perceptions that British identity was being eroded highlighted an absence of reconciliation in some quarters. Republican celebration of IRA violence has added to this anger. Perceptions that UK security forces were being unfairly brought to trial further exacerbated this, though there is deep concern in nationalism that the opposite is true. The perception of unionism as the losers of the political process has re-emerged against a backdrop of failing to maintain its majority status at the 2017 and 2019 Assembly and Westminster elections. The growing ambivalence (and at times hostility) towards the Agreement is worrying, given it was negotiated as a delicate balance offering permanent protections for both communities' identities, as well as incentives for both to sign the Agreement.

The central dilemma that political will is necessary in the first place to develop the B/GFA institutions is difficult to resolve. However, this article has shown that the intergovernmental logic points to the need for a formal schedule of meetings, so that in times of crisis communication continues and the habit of cooperation endures. It also demonstrated that this logic was forgotten as the years passed after the Agreement's signing. It is not that the Agreement was misconceived, but that it was never properly implemented. Brexit shows that its robust implementation is now more important than ever. The crises which have gripped Northern Ireland are being most acutely

felt by political unionists, who feel the Agreement has been used to advance nationalists' interests at their expense since 1998. The deep grievances over the Protocol and the manner in which it was negotiated are the latest and most prominent manifestation of this sentiment.

The desire for functioning institutions should be separated from the unification debate. While the Agreement's regular use can be viewed as a desirable (or necessary) precursor to unification, it is equally true the Agreement provides a framework for stability within the current constitutional arrangement. Linking the Agreement to a unification agenda only lessens the chance of its creative development and unionist engagement.

Evidence Source 2: Archick, Kristin. ‘NORTHERN IRELAND’S 2022 ASSEMBLY ELECTION: OUTCOME AND IMPLICATIONS∗’, n.d.

The 2022 election occurred amid heightened tensions in Northern Ireland, due in part to divisions over Brexit—the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union (EU) in 2020. The DUP and other unionists are unhappy with the postBrexit trade and customs arrangements for Northern Ireland (set out in a protocol to the UK-EU withdrawal agreement designed to maintain an open border on the island of Ireland and help preserve the peace process). The DUP views the protocol as dividing Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK and threatening the UK’s constitutional integrity. The post-Brexit rules also have resulted in some trade disruptions between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. Although Sinn Fein centered its election campaign on everyday concerns, such as the rising cost of living and health care, party officials maintain that “Brexit changes everything” and have called for a referendum on Irish unification (a border poll).

For the first time in Northern Ireland’s history, Sinn Fein won the largest number of seats in the 90- member Assembly, surpassing the DUP. Decreased support for the DUP appears to be driven by dissatisfaction with the party’s leadership on Brexit and internal party divisions. The smaller, crosscommunity Alliance Party made significant gains, attributed to voter frustration with Northern Ireland’s identity politics and frequent instability in the powersharing institutions.

Sinn Fein’s leader in Northern Ireland and presumptive First Minister, Michelle O’Neill, has emphasized making government work for all people in Northern Ireland. DUP party leader Sir

Jeffrey Donaldson has not confirmed if the DUP will fill the Deputy First Minister post alongside a Sinn Fein First Minister and may face pressure against doing so, both from within the DUP and from other unionists. A lengthy delay in establishing a new devolved government appears likely.

The DUP asserts it will not form a new power-sharing government until its concerns about the Northern Ireland protocol are resolved, but UK-EU negotiations to mitigate implementation problems with the protocol remain deadlocked. The DUP has urged the UK government to overrule parts of the protocol, which would further increase UK- EU and UK-Ireland tensions.

APPENDIX P: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence Source 1: Diamond, Patrick, and Barry Colfer. 'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?' *The Political Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2023): 104–14. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13197.

The Internal and External Instability and Fragmentation of Unionism/Unionist's Settlement Post Brexit, With Wide Reaching Effects on The Stability of The Northern Ireland Peace Continued…

The historic achievement of the B/GFA was that, for unionists, it normalised the position of NI within the UK; for nationalists, the Agreement essentially took the border out of the island of Ireland.

The impact of UK withdrawal from the EU on Irish unity? Without question, the 'hard' Brexit pursued by recent UK governments has served to bolster pro-Irish unity opinion in NI. The 2016 referendum has undermined the political cohesion of the Union across Great Britain (GB), not least in Scotland.

The administration of Boris Johnson pursued a model of Brexit centred on maximising regulatory divergence from the EU to enhance parliamentary sovereignty and strengthen the UK economy's competitiveness. Given the disruption to trade and the economy created by Brexit, the devolved governments disagreed with the direction of travel, but largely felt ignored. The consequence has

been deteriorating inter-governmental relationships within the UK which imposes further strains on the Union. As such, the debate about Irish unification has acquired renewed momentum since the referendum. The NI Protocol (NIP) negotiated by the EU authorities and the UK government (annexed to the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) which defines the terms of trade between the EU and UK post-Brexit), avoids the imposition of a hard border on the island of Ireland, but has merely amplified and deepened political instability in NI. In brokering a solution, both the UK government and the EU negotiators were prepared to acknowledge NI's unique status. The provisions of the NIP ensure that NI effectively retains full access to the EU single market for goods, preventing the reinstallation of a border with customs infrastructure on the Irish border. As such, NI must comply with current and future regulatory changes in the single market. Compliance is overseen by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) alongside the European Commission. While NI's unique position may create economic opportunities, and the NIP provides temporary resolution of the border issue, many unionists remain vehemently opposed, as the arrangement weakens NI's economic and regulatory ties to the UK.

This hostility was fuelled by opposition to the introduction of a 'border in the Irish sea' that creates further barriers between GB and NI than existed prior to Brexit and the introduction of the TCA/NIP.

Meanwhile, the UK government tabled legislation in the summer of 2022 that sought to overturn parts of the NIP, asserting that the NIP undermined the B/GFA by sowing discord within the unionist community. It was striking that the UK government was pursuing changes to the NIP unilaterally rather than within the terms of the TCA's dispute resolution mechanism.

Given that the Brexit settlement is far from resolved and political instability is pervasive, the question of NI's constitutional future remains wide open. According to influential commentators, a border poll followed by Irish unification is now significantly more likely than it was before the 2016 referendum.

Political unionism, in contrast, has been in turmoil. Disagreement over the NIP led the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to remove its leader, Arlene Foster, in April 2021, while her hardline successor, Edwin Poots, resigned after only twenty-one days, to be replaced by Jeffrey Donaldson. Foster remarked that the imposition of a border in the Irish Sea was a 'blood red line' that was non-negotiable for unionists, representing an existential threat to their territorial and national identity. As such, Brexit has further undermined the pluralistic dimension of the B/GFA, inflicting a major shock on the institutions and processes underpinning NI's politics and on Irish-UK relations in general. That instability defines the context in which the conduct of a border poll would unfold.

Evidence Source 2: Newson, Nicola. 'Union of the United Kingdom: Under Stress?' *House of Lords Library*, 16 June 2022. https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/union-of-the-united-kingdom-under-stress/.

Unionists argue that the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland is undermining the union by effectively placing a trade barrier in the Irish Sea between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. The leaders of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) and the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) affirmed their opposition to the protocol in a joint declaration in September 2021. The declaration called for the protocol to "be rejected and replaced by arrangements which fully respect Northern Ireland's position as a constituent and integral part of the United Kingdom". An explanatory note published alongside the declaration set out the unionists' case against the protocol, arguing that it "severely undermined" the East/West strand of the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement and resulted in "Great Britain designated as a 'third country'" for the purposes of trade and importing goods into Northern Ireland, "with a regulatory border partitioning the United Kingdom, and subjecting Northern Ireland to European Union laws and jurisdiction". The note said that "going forward, any agreement which fails to ensure a proportionate and equitable solution which respects the sovereignty of the United Kingdom and restores our unfettered place within the [UK] internal market, cannot command the support of the unionist community".

Objections to the protocol have prompted a legal challenge against the UK government. A group of unionist politicians brought judicial review proceedings over the protocol in 2021. The group consisted of Jim Allister (leader of the TUV), Ben Habib (former Brexit Party MEP for London),

Baroness Hoey (non-affiliated), Steve Aiken (former leader of the UUP), Arlene Foster (former leader of the DUP) and Lord Trimble (now Conservative, former leader of the UUP). Part of their case was that elements of the protocol and the legislation that implemented it in domestic law (EUWA 2018, as amended) conflicted with article VI of the Acts of Union 1800. Article VI provides that the subjects of Great Britain and Ireland shall be "on the same footing" in respect of trade and that the equal footing shall be preserved in any future treaty "with any foreign power". They also argued that "the fundamental change under the protocol in giving away legal power to the European Union is a change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland" and that such a change could only occur lawfully if it had been accepted in advance with a referendum held in accordance with section 1(1) and schedule 1 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The DUP's response to the protocol has also impacted the functioning of the devolved administration in Northern Ireland in recent months. On 3 February 2022, Paul Givan of the DUP resigned as first minister of the Northern Ireland executive, citing the impact of the protocol on the "delicate balance created by the Belfast and St Andrew's Agreements". Under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, if the first minister resigns, the deputy first minister also ceases to hold office. Therefore, Mr Givan's resignation meant that Michelle O'Neill of Sinn Féin ceased to be deputy first minister. The Northern Ireland executive was no longer able to meet as it is chaired jointly by the first and deputy first ministers. Other executive ministers stayed in post, but they could not make decisions on contentious or cross-cutting issues. The move ultimately resulted in the Northern Ireland executive being unable to function fully in the run-up to the scheduled assembly elections in May 2022.

Explaining this stance to the assembly on 13 May 2022, Paul Givan stated that the "Irish Sea border has fundamentally undermined the Belfast Agreement [and] has changed our relationship with the United Kingdom". He said that his party had "received a mandate in the assembly election to remove the Irish Sea border" and that would need to be respected. Writing in a newspaper article, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, leader of the DUP, described it as "unfortunate" that he had "had to cease operating the political institutions before Dublin and Brussels fully recognise[d] the lack of cross-community support for the protocol". He stated that "if the protocol is not resolved, then Northern Ireland will be without a devolved government".

The UK government's position has been for some time that the protocol needs to be amended. It set out its case for reaching a "new balance" in a command paper published in July 2021. It argued the protocol was not delivering on some of its core objectives, "notably the explicit commitment to protect Northern Ireland's place in the UK internal market and to avoid disruption to everyday lives". The government maintained in the command paper that it was "clear that the circumstances exist to justify using article 16". This is a provision in the protocol that allows either side to take "appropriate safeguard measures" if the application of the protocol leads to "serious economic, societal or environmental difficulties that are liable to persist, or to diversion of trade". In the command paper, the government pointed to "significant disruption to longstanding trade flows between Great Britain and Northern Ireland"; "exacerbated […] perceptions of separation and threat to identity within the unionist community", societal and economic impacts of the protocol on consumers and businesses; and political and community instability

Evidence Source 3: Hayward, K, 'Beyond Unionism versus Nationalism: The Rise of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland', *The Political Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (April 2020): 461–66, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12857.

Like his predecessor, he (Boris Johnson) too failed to get the DUP's support for this deal, but his snap election in December 2019 returned him such a large majority that the DUP's concerns were all but extraneous to the Government's mandate to 'get Brexit done'.36 The consequence of this was that all parties in Northern Ireland – pro-Remain and pro-Leave, nationalist, unionist and non-aligned – were now united in their sense that the fortunes of the region were collateral in the outworking of the other priorities of the UK and EU. But this had the effect of exacerbating divisions over the coming year.

The First Minister and DUP leader went on to outline the context for the motion that consent for the Bill be withheld, including the concerns for the status of the devolved legislature: We recognise that the United Kingdom Government is determined to press ahead with the withdrawal agreement Bill irrespective of whether we give our consent but, in our view, this will have a significant impact on our devolution settlement. We will be making it clear that, with the restoration of the Executive and the commitment of all parties to work together, the Government must recognise our devolution settlement and should not normally legislate in the devolved space without consent.

Meanwhile, unionist MPs and MLAs called on the government to activate Article 16 of the Protocol, i.e. safeguard measures.44 The sense that the Protocol was a live issue of concern for unionists in particular steadily grew. Following reports of threats through graffiti and social media, some border post staff were briefly withdrawn from work but were reinstated a week later. Even though the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) stated there was 'no evidence of credible threats', the episode did show the UK and EU how quickly tensions can rise in Northern Ireland and the sensitivity needed to handle the Protocol as a political concern.

Posters appeared in loyalist areas threatening violence if the sea border is not removed and papers reported widely on simmering frustration among loyalist communities and risk of violence. The Loyalist Communities Council wrote to the Prime Minister to inform him that they had withdrawn their support of the Belfast Good Friday Agreement. Simmering tensions and frustration came to a head from the beginning of April 2021. There were unauthorised loyalist parades, some of which resulted in confrontation with the police, and some protests against the Protocol resulted in violent disturbances. The violence spread, and intensified as loyalist youths assaulted a press photographer and petrol bombed a bus in West Belfast. Police were assaulted with bottles, bricks, fireworks, and petrol bombs. By the end of the week, more than 88 officers had been injured. No doubt reflecting the sense of unrest in unionism, late Spring of 2021 featured an overhaul in the leadership of the two main unionist parties. Arlene Foster was ousted unceremoniously as DUP leader and First Minister by an internal coup apparently coordinated by the Minister for Agriculture, Edwin Poots, who was elected party leader on 14 May 2021. Mr Poots outlined his vision for the removal of the Protocol through maximising the unionist vote at

the next Assembly elections and boycotting any aspect of the Protocol's implementation. However, his elevation was short-lived. His installation of Paul Givan as First Minister in an arrangement that saw him do a deal with the British Government rather than his party led to his rapid departure. He was replaced without a contest by Jeffrey Donaldson MP who came into power reaffirming his opposition to the Protocol and indicating his willingness to move the party out of participation in North/South institutions in protest at it. Such threats escalated over the course of the summer, resulting in a claim in September that the DUP would withdraw from power-sharing altogether if the Protocol was not renegotiated. In this way, core elements of the Belfast Good Friday Agreement settlement came to be increasingly connected to the fortunes of the Protocol or – more particularly – to the outcome of UK-EU talks over its implementation.

Even more fundamentally to many unionists, the Protocol is seen to shake the foundations of the UK itself. A judicial review on whether the Protocol breached the Act of Union of 1800 was taken by a coalition of unionists and pro-Brexit former MPs and MEPS. The judge ruled that, whilst the Protocol does conflict with the Act of Union, it does not breach it because the sovereign UK Parliament enacted the EU Withdrawal (Agreement) Act (2020), thus superseding parts of the Act of Union.45 This only confirmed the fears and suspicions of unionists – namely that the Protocol undermines Northern Ireland's place in the union, and that the UK Parliament and Government are acting to exacerbate this division.

Evidence Source 4: Eileen Connolly and John Doyle, ‘Brexit and the Northern Ireland Peace Process’, in *The Law & Politics of Brexit.*

The Brexit negotiations gave Unionists the opportunity to reassert the primacy of the link with the UK, and from this perspective their preference was for a land border on the island. As a result, they view the Protocol both as a defeat and a threat that Northern Ireland will inevitably slide towards a united Ireland, with political integration following economic integration.

APPENDIX Q: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Through A Lack of Understanding of The Sensitivities Around Northern Ireland and The Use of These Special Circumstances as A Political Negotiation Point During the Brexit Saga, The Stability of The Northern Ireland Peace Faced, Uniquely Significant Trials.

Evidence Source 1: Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Changing International and Domestic Perspectives of Sovereignty over Northern Ireland'. *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2019): 217–33. https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2019.30.13.

While the referendum campaign in Northern Ireland was dominated by discussion on the economic implications for a fragile post-conflict economy, the loss of the open land border on the island and the impact on the peace process; in the rest of the UK the Irish border was hardly discussed during the referendum campaign, nor did it feature in the initial post-referendum statements of the UK government.

A major speech by Prime Minister Theresa May in January 2017 referred to the relationship between the UK and Ireland but only as a commitment to 'the maintenance of the Common Travel Area with the Republic'.23 The UK government made it clear that they wished to leave both the EU single market and the customs union, and ruled out free movement of labour with the EU. The UK's Article 50 letter of March 2017, which triggered the twoyear negotiation period, underlined

the conflicting aims of the UK government. The letter stated that the UK wanted to 'avoid a return to a hard border' on the island of Ireland and to ensure that the peace process was not jeopardised.24 The prime minister also strongly stated that a hard border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK was 'unacceptable'.25 Even at this early stage in negotiations this position was contradictory as it was clear that in the event of Brexit a hard border would be required either between the north and south of Ireland, or in the event of Northern Ireland being given a special status, between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

Given the contradictions in the UK government's position, the nature of the border on the island of Ireland become the major issue which prevented an agreement between the UK and the EU that was acceptable to both sides. It was clear from the start of the process that unless there were special provisions for Northern Ireland, if the UK left both the customs union and single market, this would inevitably result in a closed border on the island of Ireland.

In the Brexit discussions the solution that received the most attention involved either the whole of the UK remaining in the single market (for a limited time period) or Northern Ireland only remaining in the single market, with a de facto customs and regulatory border on the Irish Sea, between Northern Ireland and Britain. The 'Irish Sea' solution proposed a unique economic status for Northern Ireland in relation to the EU which was different to the rest of the UK, but which would not alter the current position where the territory is part of the UK sovereign state. Given the very small scale of the private sector in Northern Ireland and the importance of the peace process, an agreement to leave the land border open and keep regulatory checks to the sea and air crossings of the Irish Sea was acceptable to both the EU Commission and EU member states

and it would also not be subject to a WTO challenge.28 The idea of an Irish Sea border was acceptable to the nationalist parties in Northern Ireland, and the Irish government. However, this solution was vehemently opposed by the Democratic Unionist Party and hard-line supporters of Brexit in the British Conservative Party, as they believed it would create a symbolic barrier between Northern Ireland and the rest of Britain and consequently weaken British sovereignty.

The Irish government had from September 2016 lobbied intensely on the negative impact that a post-Brexit hard border would have on Ireland and on the Northern Ireland 'peace process'.29 The Irish government and Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland feared that the declared UK position would lead to a closed border and the weakening of the cross-border institutions that facilitated economic and social integration. The Irish government also feared that the combination of the disruption to the slowly emerging post-conflict, all-island economic integration30 and the loss of EU subsidies31 would have a significant impact on the economy of Northern Ireland which might have serious consequences for political stability. It was also feared that if custom posts and security installations were built on the border, they would be used by groups who have opposed the peace process, as a strong mobilisation tool, seeking to collapse the peace process in its entirety. For Irish nationalists, a hard border would symbolise the collapse of the peace process and would be seen to mark an end to a process of gradual reform and integration. For unionists it would strengthen demands to abandon the reform process embedded in the Good Friday Agreement and in particular its North-South dimension. The EU's initial response reflected the case made by the Irish government, when on 29 April 2017 the European Council agreed that the EU's article 50 negotiation guidelines would include the Irish border question as one of three key issues to be addressed in the initial phase of negotiations.

These guidelines defined the phased nature of the EU's approach to the negotiations, with a requirement to finalise the Withdrawal Agreement before any discussion on the future EU-UK relationship. This meant that there had to be substantial progress on the arrangement to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland before the negotiations could move to the framework of future EU-UK relations.33 The EU also expressed concerns about the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland: its negotiation directives published on 22 May 2017 explicitly stated that nothing in the final agreement with the UK should 'undermine the objectives and commitments set out in the Good Friday Agreement' and that negotiations should 'in particular aim to avoid the creation of a hard border on the island of Ireland', while respecting the Union's legal order.34 The position of the Irish government was also strengthened by the formal decision of the European Council that in the event of a future vote in favour of Irish unity, Northern Ireland would be deemed to be automatically within the EU, without the need for a Treaty agreement or a vote of other members.35 The UK government was surprised at these decisions and was even more surprised that both the EU negotiation team and the wider EU27 remained united on this issue even when the talks became difficult.

The 'Irish back stop' solution was opposed by hard-line pro-Brexit leaders in the Conservative government as it would prevent the UK from leaving the customs union if it applied to all the UK, and they saw it as an infringement of the UK's sovereignty and territorial integrity if it applied only to Northern Ireland. As a result, the agreement was defeated in the UK parliament on 15 January 2019. Following this parliamentary defeat, the British government adopted a position of refusing to agree to any deal that included a special status for Northern Ireland in the context of

Brexit, leading to a further parliamentary rejection of the withdrawal agreement on 12 March 2019. The support given to the Irish government's position by the other EU member states and the mechanism to avoid a hard border drew intense criticism from pro-Brexit MPs, who made the special 'backstop' arrangement for Northern Ireland, and its implications for the rest of the UK, the focus of their attacks on the prime minister's negotiating position and on the draft agreement. When the UK parliament failed in early 2019 to approve the withdrawal agreement, or any other approach to managing their withdrawal, the EU and the Irish government re-affirmed that an open Irish border was not negotiable, with Michel Barnier saying that the backstop is currently the only solution we have found to maintain the status quo on the island of Ireland...Let me be very clear. We would not discuss anything with the UK until there is an agreement for Ireland and Northern Ireland.38 The EU also insisted that even in the event of 'no deal', the question of Northern Ireland would be reflected in EU terms for any future trade agreement. These views were also reflected in the US, where the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi said in a speech to the Irish parliament that 'if the Brexit deal undermines the Good Friday accords there will be no chance of a US-UK trade agreement' and she repeated this view in August 2019.39 European media, reflecting the turmoil in the UK political system, reported the British debate in increasingly negative terms with words like 'madness', 'crisis' and 'uncertainty' being used in normally sober and conservative newspapers.40 The failed attempt by new British Prime Minister Boris Johnston in autumn 2019 to secure parliamentary support for an agreement that moved back to a Northern Ireland only backstop did little to enhance Britain's image in Europe.

In the debate on the question of the Irish border there was a conflict between a traditional model of UK territorial sovereignty, in which only the UK government had the right to determine the

future relationship of Northern Ireland to the EU and to the Irish state, and that of the EU, which rested on an international treaty (the GFA) between the UK and another EU member state. The EU drew on that treaty to justify its negotiating position with regard to the question of the Irish border. From this position the UK's assertion that its sovereignty would be weakened by the Irish backstop solution was countered by the EU with the argument that Ireland and Irish citizens in Northern Ireland had a right to have the terms of the GFA honoured. It was on this basis that the EU supported the Irish government's perspective. This is a very significant shift in international attitudes to Northern Ireland from the position that existed prior to the GFA. This change was not internalised or understood within the British political establishment, which was unprepared for the EU's attitude and consistently underestimated the EU's resilience on this point.

Evidence Source 2: Connolly, Eileen, and John Doyle. 'Brexit and the Northern Ireland Peace Process'. In *The Law & Politics of Brexit: Volume III: The Framework of New EU-UK Relations*, edited by Federico Fabbrini, 0. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192848468.003.0004.

The deep divisions in Northern Ireland on its constitutional status will remain a source of friction in the EU–UK relationship. While the TCA has set a new framework for EU–UK relations, the politically problematic nature of the Northern Ireland Protocol attached to the WA means that its implementation will go beyond the regulation of trade. Brexit broke the fragile political balance that was put in place by the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, and while the Protocol preserves the integrity of that Agreement, the debate on Brexit and the process of the negotiation of the TCA have both deepened and shifted political cleavages in Northern Ireland. Even if the Protocol can function smoothly and without disputes, the clock cannot be reset, and politically the island of Ireland is a different place in 2021 compared to 2016.

APPENDIX R: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Evidence Source 1: Diamond, Patrick, and Barry Colfer. 'Irish Unification After Brexit: Old and New Political Identities?' *The Political Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2023): 104–14. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13197.

The question of NI's constitutional status bedevilled the entire Brexit negotiations (2016–20). The former Permanent Secretary of the (now defunct) Department for Exiting the EU (DExEU), Philip Rycroft, claimed that former PM, Theresa May, only woke up to the NI border question after her infamous Lancaster House speech where she imposed red lines on the negotiations. Rycroft reflected: 'It took the Prime Minister a long time ... to work out just how fundamental this was for the [UK] Union'.9 Her successor as Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, was determined to deliver Brexit and viewed a border in the Irish Sea as a price worth paying to reclaim national sovereignty. Yet, the Protocol has been plagued by ongoing disputes and tensions. In March 2021, the UK government unilaterally extended the grace period for goods moving between NI and GB, precipitating a hostile reaction from the EU. In spring 2021, the Irish Foreign Minister, Simon Coveney, claimed the EU was 'negotiating with a partner it cannot trust'.

Evidence Source 2: Murphy, Mary C. 'Northern Ireland and Brexit: Where Sovereignty and Stability Collide?' *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 29, no. 3 (3 July 2021): 405–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2021.1891027.

Through A Lack of Understanding of The Sensitivities Around Northern Ireland and The Use of These Special Circumstances as A Political Negotiation Point During the Brexit Saga, The Stability of The Northern Ireland Peace Faced, Uniquely Significant Trials.

As Hayward and Murphy (2018, 282) note: 'the 2016 UK referendum on EU membership highlighted . . . the low priority of Northern Ireland for the UK government's campaign and the British electorate'. There was no serious or significant attention paid to how Brexit might impact on Northern Ireland's tenuous and delicate political situation (see Burke Wood and Gilmartin 2020). There was no sense that the timing, even the very fact of the referendum, might prove challenging for a region in transition from conflict to peace. Glencross (2016, 9–10) observes that a lack of attention by Prime Minister David Cameron to the wider dynamics of the referendum beyond Britain 'illustrates how far this vote was essentially a domestic party political matter'. This obliviousness to Northern Ireland's particular situation was evident across both Remain and Leave campaign groups while few within either the Conservative Party or Labour Party broached the subject during the referendum period. And this was despite the acute concerns expressed by the Irish government1 and nationalists in Northern Ireland about the referendum outcome and its potential implications for Ireland, north and south.

This lack of awareness of Northern Ireland's particular situation resulted in a marked lack of consideration, preparation, or contingency planning for the fallout from the Leave vote for Northern Ireland. More tellingly, it also overtly revealed an evident disconnect between Britain and Northern Ireland: a lack of basic awareness at elite (and public) level as to the potential for the Irish border issue to be problematic. This hinged not just on day-to-day detachment and disconnection of peoples, it also underlined the limited appreciation, and in some cases, the dissatisfaction with the kind of constitutional and political construct the UK had become after 1998.

The rupture which Brexit has occasioned in UK politics has had far-reaching consequences for Northern Ireland including economic upheaval, political instability, and constitutional uncertainty. These developments are taking place within the context of a wider process of dislocation and reconfiguration of the British political order related in substantial part to altered conceptions of British national and parliamentary sovereignty.

Northern Ireland and the Brexit Negotiations

Having been little more than a footnote during the wider UK referendum campaign, issues pertaining to Northern Ireland moved front and centre during the ensuing EU-UK negotiation process (see O'Rourke 2019). The withdrawal negotiations were structured around three key priorities: citizens' rights for EU-27 citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU-27; the settlement of the UK's financial obligations; and ensuring the Northern Ireland peace process is not compromised. Specifically, the Negotiating Directives for Article 50 Negotiations (22 May

2017) resolved that: 'Negotiations should in particular aim to avoid the creation of a hard border on the island of Ireland, while respecting the integrity of the Union legal order' (Paragraph 14).

Given that the Republic of Ireland shared a land border with Northern Ireland and was acutely attuned to the potential pitfalls of Brexit for economic and political stability on the island of Ireland, the Irish government fought hard for issues concerning the island of Ireland to be high on the EU's negotiating agenda. The threats and challenges which Brexit posed for Ireland – north and south were immense (see for example, Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) 2015). Indeed, the Republic of Ireland stood to be more impacted by Brexit than any other EU member state. With a view to protecting Irish interests: 'Ireland's objective from the outset was to transform Irish interests into those of the EU' (Laffan 2018, 571). The Irish government deployed an extensive and sustained programme of meetings and briefings with key figures across the EU institutions and all EU capitals. This exercise aimed to communicate the implications of Brexit for Ireland, and in particular to explain the complexities of the Irish border issue for Ireland and its relationship with the UK.

The EU was receptive to Irish concerns. This was not solely due to the diplomatic persuasiveness of the Irish government, but linked to the EU's prolonged interest in Northern Ireland. The EU had long been supportive of the Northern Ireland peace process. Following the calling of paramilitary cease-fires in 1994, the European Commission (1995) moved quickly to create the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland worth €400 million for the period 1995–1999. The programme aimed to bolster moves towards peace by supporting economic development and peace-building projects (see Racioppi

and O'Sullivan See 2007), and has been continuously renewed since 1995. The programme has also been supplemented by other supporting and networking initiatives in the intervening period (see Hayward and Murphy 2012).

Evidence Source 3: Kelly, Conor J., and Etain Tannam. 'The UK Government's Northern Ireland Policy after Brexit: A Retreat to Unilateralism and Muscular Unionism'. *Journal of European Public Policy* 30, no. 11 (2 November 2023): 2275–2302. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2023.2210186.

The UK's decision to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum has profoundly destabilised the political settlement in Northern Ireland itself (Cochrane, 2020). A majority of voters in Northern Ireland supported Remain (56%). However, one of the most challenging aspects of the referendum debate was the manner in which it further polarised people along existing community divisions. Nationalists voted overwhelmingly to Remain (around 88%), whereas the unionist community voted more narrowly, but decisively, in favour of Leave (around 66%) (Garry, 2016, p. 2). Beyond this, the UK-wide decision to Leave opened highly contentious questions around identity and the Irish border (Gormley-Heenan & Aughey, 2017) which the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement had attempted to make less salient.

By 2008, both governments had become complacent about Northern Ireland (Kelly & Tannam, 2022), but in 2016 the Irish government were well aware of Brexit's threat to stability. The UK government was clearly not. Institutional memory and knowledge of the peace process and the

1998 Agreement was weak in Britain, with some politicians admitting to never having read the Agreement. This in itself reflected an apathy to Northern Ireland, which was not electorally important to the Conservative Party. It is also clear that some members of the Conservative government have not fully supported the Agreement since 1998, including leading Brexiteer Michael Gove (Geoghegan, 2016; Gove, 2000). Such attitudes reflected long-standing traditional unionist beliefs within the Tory party (O'Leary, 2019) and traditional approaches to sovereignty which have comprehensively failed in the past.

APPENDIX PART 4

FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE FOR STRESS 4: THE RISKS FROM THE VULNERABILITIES WITHIN THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT, COUPLED WITH THE SUSTAINED RISE IN POLITICAL CAPITAL FROM 'RADICAL' POLITICAL PARTIES, WHO WILL ALSO FRAME AN UNPREPARED FUTURE BORDER POLL ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND THAT WILL STRESS THE PEACE AGREEMENT.

(CHAPTER 3: EVIDENCE PART 2)

APPENDIX S: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Part 1: THE RISKS FOUND IN VULNERABILITIES WITHIN THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT.

Evidence Source 1: John Nagle, 'Between Conflict and Peace: An Analysis of the Complex Consequences of the Good Friday Agreement', *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 2 (1 April 2018): 395–416, https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx030.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA)1 represented a new framework for peaceful political contestation to replace violent conflict as the key relationship between Irish nationalists and Ulster unionists. The architects of the GFA intended to realise this objective by crafting political institutions adhering to the principle of power–sharing and 'parity of esteem' for both group's identities. Yet the legacy of the Agreement twenty years after signing is profoundly contested. For advocates, there is a direct causal relation between the GFA and sustainable peace in Northern Ireland. In the words of former US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton (2014), 'Northern Ireland stands as an example to the world of how even the staunchest adversaries can overcome differences to work together for the common and greater good'. For more sceptical commentators, the GFA has instead acted to institutionalise sectarian divisions by rewarding the hard–liners of the rival blocs (Taylor, 2006). The Agreement's dynamics, moreover, foment dysfunctional political institutions prone to periodic breakdown and a marked democratic deficit.

By the 1990s the governments sought a framework reflecting conflict's perceived ethnonational moorings. These frameworks broadly followed a consociational power–sharing format: the idea that conflict resolution in divided societies is best achieved through the accommodation of the political élites representing the salient ethnic or ethnonational groups and institutionally anchored by inclusive coalitions and proportionality in public appointments.

The British government hoped devolution would be acceptable to both nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland. To deal with separatist nationalists, devolution would peacefully accommodate their national identities and give them a say in regional politics. For reformist unionists it was a means to gain some regional powers within a reconstructed state, yet simultaneously retaining the jurisdiction of the state. Both sides, therefore, could present devolution as increasing the democratic representation of their respective groups while concurrently strengthening their national aspirations.

The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) provided an exercise in 'constructive ambiguity' (Dixon, 2002), the premise that it could be sold to nationalists and unionists as simultaneously advancing their rival aspirations. Rather than resolve the question of self–determination, the GFA incentivised those who could successfully frame themselves as the best parties to either deliver Irish unity or secure the long–term future of the union. Sinn Féin and the DUP both took unwavering oppositional positions on the constitutional question.

From inception, the GFA found weak unionist support in contrast to the near unanimous level of Irish nationalist backing. This discrepancy underlined the perception that the GFA was more favourable to nationalists than unionists. To an extent the deficit was a product of poor salesmanship by pessimistic unionist elites lacking the conviction to promote the benefits of the GFA to their voters. In a society dominated by zero–sum ethnonationalist politics, the discourse of constructive ambiguity worked to construct a framework in which concessions gained by one group are experienced as a defeat for the other. For Irish nationalists, the GFA was framed in positive and victorious terms. It represented the institutional expression of the 'equality agenda', a positive process of redressing the historical experience of inequality and exclusion of the nationalist population. For unionists, the Agreement was felt as a loss, and the equality agenda – such as the reform of policing – were seen as a nationalist–led creeping barrage to hollow out unionism (McAuley and Tonge, 2010). By 2003, unionist support for the Agreement slowly eroded, a dynamic successfully seized on by the DUP to castigate the UUP as weak defenders of unionism.

The modifications to the Good Friday Agreement specified in St Andrews did little to fundamentally alter the 'constructive ambiguity' at the heart of the peace process. For unionists, the revised Agreement still represented the fortification of the union, while nationalists continued to frame it as a port of call en- route to Irish unification (Wilford, 2010). In a new power–sharing context headed by the DUP and 14 Sinn Féin a reasonable anxiety concerned the long–term feasibility of a partnership of convenience. The narrow ground of moderate Northern Irish politics required for the political elites of unionism and nationalism to engage in interethnic compromise remained straitened. Hopes that the post–St Andrews political dispensation would augur a new future of cooperation through power–sharing appeared Panglossian when Gerry Adams, Sinn

Féin's President, predicted that the restored institutions would be embroiled in 'battle a day' (BBC, 2005).

Evidence Source 2: Paul Dixon, *Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process: In Defence of Politics*, *Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process: In Defence of Politics*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91343-8.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 was 'written so that each protagonist could interpret it as a victory for his tradition' (Rawnsley 2000: 138). For pro-agreement unionists the Agreement strengthened the Union while for republicans it was a step on the road to a united Ireland. Government officials have acknowledged that there have been points when 'ambiguity was the only way to keep the boat afloat' (Daily Telegraph, 8 May 2000). Given the polarisation of republicans and unionists in Northern Ireland and the difficulty of managing support for the Agreement, there needed to be a certain amount of ambiguity to give the various parties and governments the 'wriggle room' to shift the political ground to underpin the support of Trimble or Adams.

The problem remains, however, that little attempt has been made to persuade rather than manipulate important sections of the population to support the peace process (although the boundary between persuasion and manipulation is grey). The political capital of key pro-Agreement politicians and parties has been eroded as the choreography of the process and the use of political skills have been publicly exposed. This exacerbates the political environment of public scepticism and distrust of the political process that was the justification for the use of manipulation

by elites in the first place. The result is that the Agreement is balanced precariously on a still polarised population.

According to key Labour figures who managed the peace process, the 'constructive ambiguity' that enabled the BFA to be agreed undermined trust in the political process and became increasingly problematic. Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland during the negotiations on the BFA argued, '... That the Good Friday Agreement was open to multiple interpretations proved to be both a strength and a weakness – but it was the only way to get an agreement between all the different parties' (Mowlam 2002: 231). Jonathan Powell argues, 'The ambiguity that had been initially constructive became destructive over time'.

The IRA were continuing with paramilitary activities for much of the post-1998 period. By the time Blair had begun to publicly acknowledge, however tangentially, the 'creative ambiguity' of the peace process, in his Belfast Harbour speech October 2002, his credibility and that of pro-Agreement unionism were already badly damaged.

There has been little acknowledgement of Labour's deception across the political spectrum, left and right, unionist and nationalist. Many probably out of a desire to be 'helpful' to the peace process or because it didn't suit their political agenda. Among those sympathetic to Blair, Jonathan Powell, Blair's chief negotiator during the peace process, accepts that the BFA was 'creatively ambiguous' because without it there would not have been a deal.

APPENDIX T: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE FOR EXAMPLE WITHIN FIGURE 18 CRITICAL ANALYSIS.

THE SUSTAINED INCREASE of POLITICAL CAPITAL FOR 'RADICAL' PARTIES WHO LEAD POLITICS IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

Evidence Source 1: John Nagle, 'Between Conflict and Peace: An Analysis of the Complex Consequences of the Good Friday Agreement', *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 2 (1 April 2018): 395–416, https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx030.

Evidence Source 2: Paul Teague, 'Brexit, the Belfast Agreement and Northern Ireland: Imperilling a Fragile Political Bargain', *The Political Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (October 2019): 690–704, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12766.

Evidence source 3: James Tilley, John Garry, and Neil Matthews, 'The Evolution of Party Policy and Cleavage Voting under Power-Sharing in Northern Ireland', *Government and Opposition* 56, no. 2 (April 2021): 226–44, https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2019.20.

Evidence Source 4: Noam Peterburg and Odelia Oshri, 'Front and Centre? Northern Irish Electoral Behaviour in the Age of Brexit', *Irish Political Studies* 39, no. 1 (2024): 79–98.

To ensure inclusivity and moderation, elections for the Northern Ireland assembly utilised the PR–STV electoral system, in which voters are given as many preferences as there are candidates in each constituency and they are allowed to rank in order their preferences. In theory, PR–STV allows comprehensive inclusion by rewarding 'those who engage in accommodative behaviour'.

The power sharing institutions created by Strand 1 of the Agreement closely followed the core principles of consociational democracy. The assumption was that power-sharing institutions, which recognized the legitimacy of both nationalist and unionist political traditions in N. Ireland, would trigger a process of accommodation, leading to the divisions between the two communities becoming less antagonistic.

Inclusion and moderation were further enshrined in the NIA through the use of the d'Hondt mechanism to allocate ministerial positions in the ruling Executive. The d'Hondt algorithm is designed to promote inclusion by apportioning cabinet seats based on the number of seats a party has in the Assembly. This mandatory rather than voluntary coalition of executive power–sharing aims to capture a full spectrum of the political community regardless of whether this includes extremists, moderates and non–ethnic parties.

At the GFA's outset, the ability of the centrist parties to maintain control within their ethnonational blocs was weak. In contrary to the supposedly ameliorative properties of PR–STV, voters for the centre parties – the SDLP and the [UUP] transferred their allegiances to the putative hardliners within each community – Sinn Féin and the DUP.

The ethnic outbidding interpretation of party competition in deeply divided polities predicts that parties adopt ever more extreme policy positions and generate a polarized and unstable party system.

Within each ethnic bloc, party competition takes the form of parties seeking to 'outbid' each other with ever more hard-line policy stances on the dominant ethnic dimension. Voters respond to these platforms. Their choice between parties within their bloc is based on the strength of their ethnic identity; and attitudes towards economic or social policy are largely irrelevant.

Individuals exposed to ethnic violence identify more strongly with their co-ethnics and are more distrustful of others, and as a consequence, view ethnically polarised parties as the most attractive agents of political representation. A connection has been made between enhanced threat perceptions stemming from such exposure and a disinclination towards compromise.

Although most voters agree on the importance of preserving the peace process, they simultaneously desire a strong advocate to safeguard their ethnonational interests.

FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE AS IF APPLIED BY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

Evidence Source 1: John Nagle, 'Between Conflict and Peace: An Analysis of the Complex Consequences of the Good Friday Agreement', *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 2 (1 April 2018): 395–416, https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx030.

The 1998 NIA election resulted in the moderate wings of nationalism (SDLP) and unionism (UUP) being instilled as the largest parties in their respective ethnonational blocs. The leaders of these two parties – David Trimble (UUP) – and Seamus Mallon (SDLP) – were nominated by the NIA to take up the posts of First and Deputy First Minister to lead the Executive. The SDLP and the UUP represented the traditional leaders of nationalism and unionism. Both the UUP and the SDLP advocated peaceful political means to advance opposing constitutional preferences for Northern Ireland. These parties spoke primarily though not exclusively to middle class voters who shunned the violence deployed by paramilitaries. The SDLP and to a lesser extent the UUP were also leading architects and negotiators of the GFA (McEvoy, 2015, pp.70).

For the UK and Irish governments, the future stability of power–sharing and the GFA relied upon a centrist bloc led by the UUP and the SDLP maintaining leadership within their communities. The consensus building approach of these moderates would demonstrate the benefits of the new power–sharing institutions to the wider population, thereby starving the extremists of the popular support required to wreck the Agreement through violence.

At the GFA's outset, the ability of the centrist parties to maintain control within their ethnonational blocs was weak. In contrary to the supposedly ameliorative properties of PR–STV, voters for the centre parties – the SDLP and the DUP transferred their allegiances to the putative hardliners within each community – Sinn Féin and the DUP. In the 2003 NIA election, Sinn Féin – viewed as the political wing of the IRA – overhauled the SDLP as the largest nationalist party and the DUP, which campaigned against the GFA, became the dominant unionist party. Rather than a temporary condition, the so–called 'triumph of the extremes' signified an enduring realignment of nationalist and unionist politics that remains today. While the British and Irish governments initially feared that Sinn Féin and the DUP's dominance would destabilise the GFA, they eventually accepted that these two parties formed the axis around which power–sharing is sustained (Clancy, 2010).

Evidence Source 2: Paul Teague, 'Brexit, the Belfast Agreement and Northern Ireland: Imperilling a Fragile Political Bargain', *The Political Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (October 2019): 690–704, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12766.

The power sharing institutions created by Strand 1 of the Agreement closely followed the core principles of consociational democracy. The assumption was that power-sharing institutions, which recognized the legitimacy of both nationalist and unionist political traditions in N. Ireland, would trigger a process of accommodation, leading to the divisions between the two communities becoming less antagonistic.8 The expectation was that power sharing would make both nationalism and unionism less solipsistic. However, the power sharing institutions in N. Ireland

never really generated this moderating political effect, at least not fully in the formal political arena. Shortly after the creation of the power sharing institutions, electoral support for the moderate wings of nationalism and unionism dipped significantly, resulting in the extreme wings of the two blocs, the DUP and Sinn Fein, acquiring dominance. Consociationalism released a centrifugal rather than a centripetal political dynamic inside N. Ireland.

Yet, the power sharing institutions were able to survive this lurch to the political extremes.

One perceptive view was that power sharing was not 8 compromised by the emerging dominanceence of the DUP and Sinn Fein as each extreme recognized the dangers of non-cooperation and each were sufficiently encompassing to commit their respective blocs to the joint governance of the region.9 The situation that emerged can be usefully characterised as peaceful co-existence breaking out between nationalism and unionism, involving involved each side holding back from aggressively pursuing their own objectives or making excessive demands on the other side. Each bloc started to recognize that while it had enough power to thwart the political ambitions of the other side, it had insufficient power to push through its own agenda. A politics of deterrence emerged between the two blocs, which is essentially about stopping or preventing an action not in your interests.

For sure, both blocs had been moving away from the zone of political compromise, the area in which the politics of deterrence was being practised, but the Brexit vote has accelerated this shift. Both nationalism and unionism are dangerously close once again to the politics of 'compellence', where the impulse is to seek victory over the other side.

Evidence source 3: James Tilley, John Garry, and Neil Matthews, 'The Evolution of Party Policy and Cleavage Voting under Power-Sharing in Northern Ireland', *Government and Opposition* 56, no. 2 (April 2021): 226–44, https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2019.20.

The ethnic outbidding interpretation of party competition in deeply divided polities predicts that parties adopt ever more extreme policy positions and generate a polarized and unstable party system.

Within each ethnic bloc, party competition takes the form of parties seeking to 'outbid' each other with ever more hard-line policy stances on the dominant ethnic dimension. Voters respond to these platforms. Their choice between parties within their bloc is based on the strength of their ethnic identity; and attitudes towards economic or social policy are largely irrelevant.

Many argued in the early days of power-sharing in Northern Ireland that political polarization would increase (Dixon 2002; Oberschall and Palmer 2005; O'Flynn 2003; Taylor 2001, 2006; Wilford 2001). This was partly because consociation was expected to entrench and reinforce existing divisions, but it was also a prediction about future party strategy. Since the two major blocs are institutionalized, the arrangements benefit the party most strongly associated with each ethnic bloc: the most extreme party. Moreover, the extreme parties are incentivized to increase the salience of the ethno-national dimension, forcing other parties to compete on that dimension. This means that voters pay less attention to other policy areas and there is uni-dimensional party competition on the ethno-national cleavage within blocs.

Radical parties expand their support at the expense of moderate parties, while at the same time becoming more like the moderate parties they replace (McGarry and O'Leary 2004; Mitchell et al. 2001).

Evidence Source 4: Noam Peterburg and Odelia Oshri, 'Front and Centre? Northern Irish Electoral Behaviour in the Age of Brexit', *Irish Political Studies* 39, no. 1 (2024): 79–98.

Individuals exposed to ethnic violence identify more strongly with their co-ethnics and are more distrustful of others, and as a consequence, view ethnically polarised parties as the most attractive agents of political representation. A connection has been made between enhanced threat perceptions stemming from such exposure and a disinclination towards compromise.

Although most voters agree on the importance of preserving the peace process, they simultaneously desire a strong advocate to safeguard their ethnonational interests. This was evident, for instance, amongst Unionists, who sought to counter Nationalist overrepresentation in the police and civil service, as well as Republican paramilitaries being granted early release from prison and positions in government.

APPENDIX U: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

Part 1: THE RISKS FOUND IN VULNERABILITIES WITHIN THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT CONTINUED.

Evidence Source 1: Rory Montgomery, 'The Good Friday Agreement and a United Ireland', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2021): 83–110, https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.2021.0012.

(As) The article (discourse) looks at what the Agreement says or implies about a future process of unification. It concludes that, while some essential points are clearly defined, most are mentioned only in passing, or not at all, leaving a great deal unsettled.

How a united Ireland as provided for in the Agreement might eventually need to be established in practice was a far from immediate issue. In 1998 the prospect that a majority might in the foreseeable future favour a united Ireland seemed remote. In the 1997 Westminster election the lead held by unionist parties over nationalist had fallen from 23% in 1983 (54%–31%) to 11% (51%–40%).3 But this was still a very solid advantage, even without taking into account the largely pro-Union views of the Alliance Party, and there was scepticism about the strength of pro-unity feeling among moderate nationalists.

It has been argued by some, most fully and eloquently by Séamus Mallon in his memoirs,16 that 'The only way we can have peace in Ireland as a whole is when a significant number of people in

both Northern communities give their consent to a constitutional settlement, along with the people of the South'.

'I believe it is time to move—both myself and the nationalist community in both jurisdictions—towards a realisation that we have two options: one is to hold a premature Border Poll and, in the event of a narrow vote for unity, face into the risk of another period of instability and violence; the other is to move towards an agreed Ireland in a slow, progressive way, and maybe leave the end product to a future time.'

The counter-arguments have been strongly made, including on a number of occasions by Professor Colin Harvey. He has said that Altering the GFA [Good Friday Agreement] in order to accommodate a new weighted majority rule would be a mistake...While there are genuine concerns about how unionism/loyalism would respond to a vote for constitutional change, and legitimate questions about how that community will be accommodated in a new Ireland, the response of nationalism/republicanism should also be factored into the assessment. Changing the rules at this point would be disastrous...and undermine a faith in the promises of the Agreement that is already being tested to the limit. The worry is that this becomes a new form of 'unionist veto' that, among other things, does not recognise parity of esteem between the different constitutional preferences...

As explained earlier, in this case a majority is a simple majority of those voting. While clear as far as it goes, this provision has rightly been described as 'stark and minimal'.32 Numerous points are left open.

Evidence Source 2: Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

The late Seamus Mallon, formerly deputy leader of the SDLP and the first deputy First Minister under the 1998 Agreement, provoked a debate within Irish nationalism by arguing in his memoirs, written with Andy Pollak, that unification should not be sought on the basis of a narrow 50% + 1 majority. The authors argued that such an outcome 'could lead to a major resumption of violence' (Mallon with Pollak 2019: 152) and that a united Ireland born in such circumstances would be 'unworkable' (165) and 'ungovernable' (172). They advocated a review of the relevant provisions in the 1998 Agreement, potentially leading to a 'parallel consent' provision, with unification requiring 'a majority – or at least 40% support – within the unionist community' (168). They also argued that nationalists should not push for a vote 'until there is wider and deeper acceptance for it among the unionist community' (176), and that the governments 'should not agree to the holding of a Border Poll unless they were absolutely certain it would lead to a peaceful and stable outcome for the island of Ireland'.

In the face of such calls, the last Fine Gael-led government maintained that a unity referendum would be 'disruptive and destructive' and would constitute a deliberate provocation of the unionist community (Halpin 2018). When campaigning for the Fine Gael leadership in 2017, Leo Varadkar said, 'The demand for a border poll is alarming. It is a return to a mindset in which a simple sectarian majority of 50% plus one is enough to cause a change in the constitutional status of the North.' He continued, 'Bouncing Ulster Protestants into a unitary Irish state against their will would be as grievous a wrong as was abandoning a large Catholic minority in the North on

partition' (Corcoran 2017). At the 2019 summer Féile an Phobail debate in Belfast, Varadkar suggested, as Taoiseach, that, were unification ever to happen, there would need to be a new Irish state with a new constitution (Moriarty 2019a). The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney, explicitly said that the aim should be to work with both communities on Brexit and that 'there is enough polarisation between nationalists and unionists without adding calls for Border polls to be pulled into the middle of all that'

A second factor complicating the Secretary of State's decision is that the Act does not specify the franchise for the referendum—it would be set out in the Order calling the poll (see Chapter 12)—and therefore does not define the group within which the likelihood of a majority for Irish unification is to be judged. No Secretary of State has so far indicated any intentions as to the franchise, but it could affect the likely result. In the McCord case, the courts specifically dismissed the suggestion that the Secretary of State was obliged to decide on the franchise ahead of making a decision to call a referendum.

A third complication is that the Act does not set out the question or questions to be asked in the poll: again, the formulation would appear in the Order (see Chapter 13). No indications have so far been given. Potentially, again, the wording of the question may impact on the likely result of the vote.

APPENDIX V: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

PART 2: IMPLEMENTING THE APPLIED/RESULTS FRAMEWORK (EXPLICIT FACTORS 1-3) TO THE RISK OF AN UN/MIS - PLANNED BORDER POLL ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND.

Explicit Political Factors Subsection 1: The Breakdown of Power Sharing Structures and Associated Political Institutional Solutions.

Evidence Source 1: Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

There is also the danger of significant groups of people boycotting referendums. Northern nationalists, led by the SDLP, boycotted the last Border Poll on unity in 1973. What is to stop unionists doing the same in a future such poll?

Evidence Source 2: Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

There has been a previous referendum, or 'border poll', in 1973, asking people in Northern Ireland if they wanted to remain part of the UK, or to be joined with the Republic of Ireland. The nationalist community boycotted the vote. As a result, on a turnout of 58% of the electorate, 99% voted to remain part of the UK. The poll did not succeed in taking the border out of politics or bringing greater stability.

There were concerns in all communities that unionists might not participate in the debate or that their views would not be heard. One unionist said: 'I'd fear as well that any referendum taking place in the near future would get such a hostile react from the Loyalist and Unionist communities, such as a boycott, which would make the whole exercise pointless.'

The possibility of a long transition, though, raises two particular difficulties. The first is the indeterminacy of joint arrangements for governance. What they would mean in concrete terms is unclear. The devolved institutions would presumably go on exercising legislative and executive powers as before.

Meanwhile, the legitimacy of the institutions in the North, which its electors had voted to end in favour of unity, might feel undermined.

Explicit Political Factors Subsection 2: A Reduction in The Visible Effectiveness of The Strand 3 Institutions.

Evidence Source 3: Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Strand Three has three principal components: • the British–Irish Council (BIC), obliged to meet every six months, with representatives of the Irish and British governments, the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey • the British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC), to meet regularly and comprising the UK and Irish governments; it is the successor to the Intergovernmental Conference of the Anglo-

Irish Agreement, and with a remit that includes matters not exclusively devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly • a proposed (but not mandated) British–Irish Parliamentary Assembly, comprising parliamentarians from the same jurisdictions.

The British–Irish Council (BIC) has met regularly as required by the Agreement, but, while a convivial forum for communication, it has been regarded by many as a little lacklustre. The 2020 Programme for Government in Ireland aimed to enhance its role, alongside that of the BIIGC, though it is not clear that the UK government shares this perspective. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the significance of the BIC. Its meetings since the pandemic began have dealt with managing responses to COVID-19 on the island and also with the Common Travel Area between the UK and Ireland.

How the BIIGC has operated, and how it has been viewed by different actors, has varied over time. The 1998 Agreement states: The Conference will bring together the British and Irish Governments to promote bilateral co-operation at all levels on all matters of mutual interest within the competence of both Governments. ... there will be regular and frequent meetings of the Conference concerned with nondevolved Northern Ireland matters, on which the Irish Government may put forward views and proposals. Although the BIIGC met frequently between 2002 and 2006, when the Northern Assembly was not functioning, it did not meet at all from 2007 to 2017. Spurred on in part by the crisis in power-sharing in Northern Ireland, and the growing pressures on British–Irish relations arising from the Brexit process, it met three times in 2018–19, but then it did not meet for two years. It was due to meet again just after publication of this report, in June 2021.

There are different views of the importance of the BIIGC, perhaps reflecting diverging perspectives on the role of formalised British–Irish cooperation in preserving stability in Northern

Ireland. Many unionists prefer that it not meet at all, arguing that it dilutes British sovereignty. Many nationalists prefer that it meet regularly so that the full Agreement is maintained and the governments can act together as its guarantors. Others have seen the BIIGC as relatively unimportant, so long as cooperation takes place somewhere. The Taoiseach and the UK Prime Minister agreed in August 2020 to establish additional structures for the bilateral relationship before the post-Brexit period begins.

Any future referendums would require close cooperation between the two governments, which we examine in Chapter 6. The BIIGC is the forum for such cooperation established by the 1998 Agreement, and would be suitable to manage these matters. It is also emphasised in the current Irish government's Programme for Government. But new bilateral institutions could also fulfil equivalent functions. Any decision on the appropriate forum is a political one to be made by both governments.

The British–Irish Inter-Governmental Conference (BIIGC), under Strand Three of the Agreement, is the appropriate forum for the discussion of any differences between the governments on the interpretation of the Agreement. Its remit includes non-devolved functions (including potential unification referendums) but this does not allow for any arbitration of disputes.

Evidence Source 4: John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 110, no. 439 (2021): 309–14.

The focus now should instead be on making all the three strands of the Good Friday Agreement yield their full potential.

Evidence Source 5: 'The Effectiveness of the Institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - Committees - UK Parliament', 4 December 2023, https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6941/the-effectiveness-of-the-institutions-of-the-belfastgood-friday-agreement/.

As with Strand Two, submitters and witnesses generally took the view that East/West relations under Strand Three had been neglected, and as such the 'totality of relationships' encapsulated by the Agreement had been undermined.

Similarly, the BIC was sometimes cited as representing part of a package deal that allowed unionists agree to Strand Two's North South arrangements, by balancing it with 'East-West' arrangements. It was seen as a talking shop, lacking dynamism. The deeper logic of developing of both the BIIGC and the BIC as ensuring reconciliation across the islands—the totality of relations—was not appreciated.

Dr Tannan contended that politicians and officials in both Ireland and the UK have "Misunderstood the importance of institutionalised relations, believing that it was easier to contact counterparts when required, as issues arose, and that the BIIGC was not necessary.

Strand 3 has never really developed in the way that it should have. There should be much more dynamism there. There was a clear misunderstanding that the BIIGC's role was meant to be on-going from 1998 to frame and manage broad relationships and prevent crises. It seems its deeper significance has not been appreciated.

This was a view reflected by Naomi Long MLA, who commented: "These bodies are potentially very powerful, but I have to say they have often been performative in how they have been delivered."233 Her party had already told us in written evidence that the Strand Three institutions are "often overlooked and lack profile within the Assembly and Executive" and that "the BIC should now have a much wider role in enhancing and managing British-Irish relations and providing a forum for governments across these islands."234 Dr Tannam concluded: "The BIIGC's role is not merely to deal with crises, but to prevent them by framing contentious issues and incentives to cooperate.

"The absence of sustained commitment to maintaining a good working relationship between the two governments has been an important contributory factor to some of the problems that have affected Northern Ireland, even before the Brexit wedge pushed them further apart.

Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP, put it to us that "[p]erhaps the east-west relationship is, of the three sets of relationships covered by the agreement, the one that has been least invested in. We would like to see that addressed."249 Dr Tannam similarly concluded that it is time, "given the challenges ahead, to implement Strand Three robustly."

Explicit Political Factors Subsection 3: The 'Accepted' Consequence of Internal and External Political Fragmentation of The Perceived or Expressed 'Losing' Side.

Evidence Source 6: Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Particularly difficult though unpredictable political consequences might arise if unification were defeated on a split vote: a vote for unification in the North but not the South, or vice versa. This scenario would seriously threaten political stability. If a vote for unification was won in the North, but lost in the South, nationalism would be left orphaned, with the long cherished united Ireland ideal being abandoned by Irish voters in the South.

Some voiced fears of 'ethnic cleansing', loss of British identity, or discrimination in a united Ireland. One unionist said: (I am) extremely fearful for the future if this takes place and scared for my life due to high level of support between Republican political parties and paramilitary groups. [...] I would be fearful that certain cultural groups could only commemorate behind closed doors and secretly as they would be fearful of physical and emotional attacks. I would be forced to live in a state I have no wish to be a part of and feel I would not be welcome in.

Evidence Source 7: Senator Mark Daly, 'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland', *Joint Oireachtas Committee*, 18 July 2019.

Bearing in mind the narrative that many Unionists see, that of a military fighting against terrorist grouping, Nationalism, especially Sinn Fein has done little to counter the narrative that a united Ireland would be foisted upon unionists as a victory of one people over another. In fact Unionists today fear that the actions of those that tried, and often succeeded, in causing them harm would be held up as an example to future generations.

"For those who cling to the binary, and there are many unionists who do, the fear is that their identity is denied

Perhaps the most important aspect of the division in Northern Ireland is the understanding that for some, the conflict is of identity and not politics. The implication of the removal of the flag at City Hall show how important symbols of identity can be to some Unionists and the lengths they will go to defend them. Unionists rightly fear that in a united Ireland the symbols and identity that they hold dear will be removed from them.

In these settings people, sensing a real or perceived loss of identity, culture, future, and control over decisions impacting their own well-being, chose extreme paths. In many cases these have been quickly followed by violence, hate, intolerance, and conflict. In the context of Northen Ireland this is vitally important. As local areas have become more segregated and homogenized over the last 40 years, there is increased likelihood of environments emerging where intolerance is reinforced and increased.

What it makes clear is the "mother of all fears" for the Unionist community is "effectively our home would become a foreign state". Within that overarching fear is the belief that they could not "really be British in a United Ireland" that they would be "assimilation" and they would effectively become "second class", "planter citizens" in a United Ireland. There is also a fear of "Triumphalism" by nationalists and republicans. The pressing need to address these and all the other fears in the unionist community in advance of a referendum is clear.

Evidence Source 8: Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

"You are asking me to give up my country – would you give up your country?"). It would also begin to educate an almost entirely ignorant and 'switched off' Southern public about the risks and costs of unity."

APPENDIX W: FULL SELECTED EVIDENCE OF DISCOURSE

PART 2: IMPLEMENTING THE APPLIED/RESULTS FRAMEWORK (IMPLICIT FACTORS 3-6) TO THE RISK OF AN UN/MIS - PLANNED BORDER POLL ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND.

Implicit Societal Based Political Factors Subsection 4: The Alienation of a Minority Through the Removal of Their Perceived Equality and Consent Rights.

Evidence Source 1: John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 110, no. 439 (2021): 309–14.

John Bruton was Taoiseach, 1994–97

The history of Northern Ireland since 1920 demonstrates the danger of attempting to impose, by a simple majority, a constitutional settlement and an identity on a minority, who feel they have been overruled. Those pressing for an early border poll on Irish unity, which would have to take place in both parts of Ireland, should reflect on this. Such a poll could repeat the error of 1920 and add to divisions, rather than diminish them.

The Downing Street Declaration says that Irish unity should be achieved 'by those who favour it, persuading those who do not, peacefully and without coercion or violence'. I do not think a poll in favour of unity, carried by a small margin, and before a majority of the unionist community have been persuaded of the merits of Irish unity, could truly be said to meet that criterion, agreed

between the governments in the Declaration. It might be legally valid, but it would not be politically wise.

There is little evidence that this type of persuasion is taking place within Northern Ireland between the two communities. In some senses they are more polarised than ever, and are talking past, rather than with, one another. Brexit has accentuated this. For example, if the goal was persuasion, the Sinn Féin advertisements advancing arguments for unity should have been placed in the Belfast Telegraph or the Newsletter, rather than in the New York Times.

What have nationalists said to them so far that would show them how their British heritage and ethos would be respected in a united Ireland? Those who favour a border poll have an obligation to spell out exactly how the British identity, and monarchist ethos, of the unionist population might be given the required 'equal treatment and respect', across the whole island in the wake of Irish unity.

If Irish unity were passed on a 51/49 basis, there would not be much stability afterwards. If the margin was that narrow, it is reasonable to speculate that the result would be rejected 'on grounds of identity' by a significant minority among 49%. This 'significant minority' would actually be a large majority of the people living in important parts of the territory. One must ask if there would be the required 'consent of the governed' to the new arrangements that would exist in those areas. The centrality of this issue of 'consent of the governed' is reinforced by the terms of the Framework Agreement I reached as Taoiseach

Evidence Source 2: Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

Mallon went on to outline the concept of "parallel consent", modelled on a clause in the Good Friday Agreement which required that key decisions of the Northern Ireland Assembly "would require the support of parties representing both traditions" (pp.167-170). He went on to ask whether this could be "extended across into the constitutional space and thus be used to protect unionists if a future Border Poll were to result in a narrow overall majority for a united Ireland, but without the consent of both traditions in the North." I believe parallel consent in an Irish unity Border Poll is unrealisable, since the majority of unionists will never vote for unity. However it does serve to open the debate about whether some kind of super-majority will be needed to ensure that a significant minority of unionists give their consent to unity in order to make that unity workable.

Evidence Source 3: Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Some unionists and respondents identifying as neither stated that their fears could not be addressed in the event of a referendum: they simply opposed such a vote.

Evidence Source 3: Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

It would be highly undesirable—and potentially very damaging—to reach a point where a united Ireland might be voted for without any planning. To avoid that, all of the matters of process that are mentioned in this chapter would themselves need to be decided upon. The rules for the referendums themselves, which we consider in Part 3, would also need to be determined. These are complex matters, involving referendums in two sovereign states, as well as negotiations and other forms of discussion of a wide range of matters among a wide range of actors. Coordination and planning would therefore be essential. Both supporters and opponents of the UK's departure from the EU agree that the lack of preparation ahead of the UK's 2016 referendum was detrimental to both the referendum process and the subsequent developments, undermining confidence in the result and perhaps leading to a suboptimal outcome. Such procedural failings could have damaging consequences if repeated on the question of Irish unification.

First, if referendums did at some point come to pass, our criteria of legitimacy and stability would be best served if people understood the processes around these referendums: misunderstandings or unrealistic expectations in relation to process could lead to contention. Yet many of those we have spoken with, including people with extensive relevant experience, acknowledge that they have yet to think through systematically what this referendum process would involve. As a result, some unrealistic expectations exist regarding how it would unfold. For example, some in Great Britain think very largely of the referendum in Northern Ireland, without the need for parallel processes

in the Republic of Ireland, while those in Ireland sometimes see the process as one simply for the island of Ireland, without recognising the key roles for the UK government at various points. If that is true among seasoned politicians, officials, and commentators, it may be even more true in the wider public. Without a period of reflection on the process, unsettling or unsatisfying outcomes may be expected.

While in principle there would be no need for any changes to be made if the unity proposition was defeated in either jurisdiction, in reality, there could be many political consequences that would need attention. Referendums on this issue would have the potential to polarise political discourse over a period of years. Keeping constructive politics and the Agreement machinery in operation during this period might require much care and attention.

If the vote was narrowly against unification, this might become the focus of politics in the ensuing years, with proponents of unity looking to further referendums after the statutory interval of seven years.

A particularly difficult though unpredictable political consequences might arise if unification were defeated on a split vote: a vote for unification in the North but not the South, or vice versa. This scenario would seriously threaten political stability. If a vote for unification was won in the North, but lost in the South, nationalism would be left orphaned, with the long cherished united Ireland ideal being abandoned by Irish voters in the South. Meanwhile, the legitimacy of the institutions in the North, which its electors had voted to end in favour of unity, might feel undermined. If the vote was lost in the North, but won in the South, Irish governments thereafter might become more

proactive in seeking unity. Sustaining cooperative relationships between the two parts of Ireland, and between the two main traditions, might become harder.

Implicit Societal Based Political Factors Subsection 5: Reinforced Sectarian Divisions - That Prevent Reconciliation and Fuel a Negative Peace.

Evidence Source 4: John Bruton, 'Careful Thought Needed on Border Polls', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 110, no. 439 (2021): 309–14.

There is little evidence that this type of persuasion is taking place within Northern Ireland between the two communities. In some senses they are more polarised than ever, and are talking past, rather than with, one another. Brexit has accentuated this.

Reducing a complex issue, with many nuances and gradations, to an oversimplified Yes/No question is hazardous. The binary choice in itself excludes creativity and compromise. Setting target dates for a referendum, before any details have been worked out, is reckless. As the Brexit experience in 2016 has shown, it can also lead to the oppression of minority viewpoints, lasting division, and unforeseen consequences.

Evidence Source 5: Nicola McEwen and Mary C Murphy, 'Brexit and the Union: Territorial Voice, Exit and Re-Entry Strategies in Scotland and Northern Ireland after EU Exit', *International Political Science Review* 43, no. 3 (2022): 374–89.

The calling of a border poll would undoubtedly be a moment of high political drama that would be potentially destabilising, illicit strong, contested reactions.

Evidence Source 6: Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

When campaigning for the Fine Gael leadership in 2017, Leo Varadkar said, 'The demand for a border poll is alarming. It is a return to a mindset in which a simple sectarian majority of 50% plus one is enough to cause a change in the constitutional status of the North.'
Building on the foundations of the 1998 Agreement, it undertakes 'to achieve a consensus on a shared future'. It does not allude to a referendum, however.

In an interview, the new Taoiseach said 'a border poll is far too divisive at this stage and doesn't deal with the more fundamental issue of how we continue to live and work together'

Fears that minorities would be intimidated during the referendum were raised across all groups, but much more pronounced among unionist respondents and respondents identifying as neither. One in the latter category said: 'I worry that violence and intimidation could rise (from one or both "sides") in the lead-up to a referendum, and that this could affect the vote. Intimidation at voting stations could also present itself.'

Overall, 16% of respondents across all communities were concerned that a referendum would be divisive and polarising. A nationalist said: 'I fear that some parties will use the referendum campaign to stoke fear, division and sectarianism in order to influence the electorate.'

Respondents from each community expressed concerns that divisive political campaigning and fake claims would be used to manipulate public opinion.

A unionist said: 'That a referendum, even if it doesn't result in a UI, will open the Pandoras box of more referenda every 7 years & that this will continue until Sinn Féin in particular create as much division & hatred as possible to make NI unworkable.'

Evidence Source 7: Andy Pollak, 'A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS', *UCL – University College London*, 22 May 2020.

I should make clear from the outset that I am not a fan of binary referendums or border polls to resolve complex, existential, zero-sum questions to do with separatism, national identity or constitutional formation in polarised societies. The deep divisions in the UK caused by the 2016 'in-out' Brexit referendum offer a salutary lesson. "All the wars in the former Yugoslavia started with a referendum" (Oslobodjenje 1999) - although a recent study showed that only one in eight (13%) of referendums on such issues led to wars (Qvortrup, 2014). I suggest that the chances of a Border Poll with a narrow victory for Irish unity leading to renewed conflict in Northern Ireland would be greater than 8-1

Above all, we must avoid this process resulting in a return to violent conflict in Northern Ireland (and Ireland).

Implicit Societal Based Political Factors Subsection 6: A Deviation Away from Peaceful Expressions of Protest and Conflict Resolution - Through Violent Protests, Sectarian and Political Violent Targeting.

Evidence Source 8: Senator Mark Daly, 'Unionist Concerns & Fears of a United Ireland', *Joint Oireachtas Committee*, 18 July 2019.

"There is a lot of young loyalists out there, who missed the war, champing at the bit for military glory"

"What are the implications for the nation of Ireland to have a very significant section of its population NOT having allegiance to the new state – and not wanting to? Does the history of republican violence not warn us against this being even contemplated (to say nothing of tit-for-tat violence and the associated and deepening criminality)?

"I can see us living in a land that will return to violence and murder"

"It's not like you fight a long war and get beaten. The Prods are unbeaten. They don't see why they should accept a democratic decision by the Irish nation when they have always been told that they are alien planters who don't belong here."

"I don't see where the Garda [sic] and the Irish Army have the resources to contain major riots in over 70 towns, plus getting their units wiped out in well-staged killing grounds. They would have to raise a Catholic gendarmerie, like the B Specials, and then you will have civil war, way beyond the Troubles II and more like Bosnia".

Evidence Source 9: Kristin Archick, *Northern Ireland: The Peace Process, Ongoing Challenges, and US Interests* (Congressional Research Service, 2024).

Some concerns exist in Ireland about unification, including the possibility that it could spark renewed loyalist violence in Northern Ireland.

Evidence Source 10: Alan Renwick et al., 'Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland', 2021.

Indeed, fears that violence could break out due to a referendum were actively voiced across all groups, especially among younger respondents, including by 15% of nationalist respondents, 21% of unionists, and 27% of those who identified as neither. One identifying as neither said: 'I feel

anxious when I hear it discussed, because I know it'll cause violence, but I also feel hopeful for a brighter future.'

Nationalists tended to fear loyalist violence. One wrote: 'My fear is that hardline unionism and loyalism would not accept the outcome and react violently.' Unionists and respondents identifying as neither specifically shared fears of republican violence, though some expressed concerns about loyalist violence too. One unionist said: 'We will have to live in fear of the IRA.' Respondents across all communities shared their fears that those on the losing side could fail to accept the results, which, among other things, could lead to violence.

'I worry that violence and intimidation could rise (from one or both "sides") in the lead-up to a referendum, and that this could affect the vote. Intimidation at voting stations could also present itself.'

APPENDIX X: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The research strategy for this thesis is based on a form of critical discourse analysis, which is argumentation and perspectivization of political, historical, and social discourse. Therefore, to analyse the data using this research strategy, three questions will be asked of each data set of discourse (Figures). Moreover, in accordance with Vodak's historical approach research strategy, the questions of the evidence chapters will cover context, logical arguments, and links between discourse and real events. The first question is the Logical Reasoning Question, which asks, *How does this evidence argument relate to the contemporary logically reasoned consensus of the Northern Ireland Peace and its resilience to real-world risk factors?* The second question is the Contextual Topical Question, which asks, *What does the context-dependent political discourse reveal about the problem of the current (topic-specific) resilience of the Northern Ireland peace?* Finally, the third question is the Event event-specific question, which asks *how the discourse references (actor-influenced) events that can be categorised as the problem of specific real-world risks that could threaten peace?* Therefore, this analysis will be critiqued (using these questions) as the penultimate stage of the research strategy within the evidence chapter. Additionally, these questions are included in the critical analysis text to ensure consistency with the methodological framework throughout the comprehensive data set. For this thesis and following the theoretical foundation for this methodological framework, the critical analysis will occur after each Figure, which contains a set of clearly defined discourses. Throughout this analysis of discourse, *italics* are used to denote specific words, and quotations are used to reference the specific analysed figure.