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Ireland and Brexit: A Roundtable

EDITORS' NOTE: *On June 23, 2016, voters in the United Kingdom stunned the world by voting to leave the European Union, which it had joined in 1973. Governments, businesses, and individuals worldwide are still grappling with the question of what the long- and short-term consequences of the unprecedented decision may prove to be. Ireland, given its geographical proximity (the only nation to share a land border with the UK), and its extensive trade relationship with the United Kingdom—not to mention a centuries-long history of complex Anglo-Irish relations—almost certainly will feel the results of the Brexit vote more than any other member state.*

Recognizing the uncertainty and volatility of the Brexit fallout, New Hibernia Review *nonetheless felt it important to convene a discussion on this event—if only to provide a snapshot of early responses to the historic decision, the ramifications of which are still unfolding. Below, a panel of three political scientists and two historians offer their impressions, comments, and speculations in what Brexit may mean for Ireland. The panel conducted their conversation by e-mail in autumn of this year.*

NEW HIBERNIA REVIEW: *Let's start with a very general question, perhaps one that those of you resident abroad might be better suited to answer. What is the general attitude toward the European Union in Ireland? Obviously, something (or many things) so disconcerted a majority in Britain that they voted to leave the EU. But one hears nothing at all about "Irexit" sentiment. What's different in Ireland?*

MARY C. MURPHY: In the UK and elsewhere, opposition to the EU is filtered through strong Euroskeptic movements and political parties. In Ireland, the Eurosceptic movement is relatively weak, and tends to be confined to smaller parties and some Independent TDs. Three of the four largest parties are pro-EU—Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and the Labour Party. Sinn Féin is far more critical of the EU, and has traditionally campaigned against EU treaty revisions in the Republic. In 2016, however, the party campaigned in Northern Ireland for the UK to remain in the EU.

It is also important to note that, despite strong levels of support for the EU, the Irish electorate have on occasion voiced concerns about aspects of the European integration process. Twice, the Irish have rejected proposed treaty revisions (the Treaty of Nice in 2001 and the Treaty of Lisbon in 2008), only to overturn those decisions during a second referendum once specific guarantees were received.

Attitudes to the European Union in the Republic have historically been positive, and Irish satisfaction levels tend to be higher than the EU average. The latest Eurobarometer poll reveals that 58 percent of Irish respondents have a positive image of the EU, the highest satisfaction rate for any EU member state.[1] The same report shows that the Irish are also the most optimistic about the future of the EU. A full 77 percent of Irish respondents, compared with an EU average of 50 percent, are hopeful about the EU's future. It is worth noting, however, that this survey was conducted in May 2016 prior to the UK referendum and in advance of the EU's Apple tax ruling against Ireland.

For the most part, Ireland's largely positive relationship with the EU can be explained by the fact that Ireland has traditionally fared well as a member. The single European market provides Ireland with secure access to the largest trading bloc in the world. Levels of inward investment have been positively impacted by membership of the EU bloc. Irish trade has diversified since accession to the EU in 1973, to the point where dependence on the UK market has lessened, although the UK-Ireland trading relationship remains highly important. Ireland also benefited directly from EU structural fund support, which has been instrumental in improving Irish infrastructure and also competitiveness. The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has also helped to modernize the Irish agri-food sector and effectively underpins Ireland's agri industry. Other features of the EU which have been positive for Ireland include a progressive environmental policy, gender equality legislation, the Erasmus+ program (which allows young people to study in other European higher education institutions, and vice versa), and support for research funding through Horizon 2020.

In terms of Ireland's relationship with the UK, this has evolved during the period of EU membership and some suggest it has been positively impacted by joint UK and Irish membership of the EU. Today, the relationship is defined by friendship. There are close political links between the two member states, and each state has been a strong ally for the other in the EU context.

Recent developments—including Brexit, but also the EU's Apple tax ruling—present challenges for Ireland's relationship with the EU. However, the option of an Irish exit from the EU, does not currently enjoy any credibility as a serious

1. *Standard Eurobarometer 85*, July 2016, 16.

response to these developments. A recent debate in Dáil Éireann demonstrated that support for Ireland to leave the EU was all but nonexistent. A very small minority of Independent TDs supported an Irish departure from the EU. All of the main parties, however, regretted the UK's decision to leave, and voiced their commitment to Ireland remaining in the EU.[2]

Ireland's current situation is certainly precarious and Brexit poses some serious risks for the Irish state and its economic well-being. The Irish government is likely to agitate for some special recognition for Ireland in terms of the arrangements reached between the UK and EU during the exit negotiations. This approach, rather than a wholesale exit from the EU, is judged to be in Ireland's better interests. The loss of an important trading partner and EU ally is regrettable, but not to the point where it has seriously advanced the possibility of Ireland following the UK out of the EU bloc. The EU is an important backdrop against which the Irish state has developed and matured. EU membership has brought not just material benefits, but political benefits, too; there is no appetite in Ireland to undermine or jeopardize what has, on the whole, been a positive and beneficial relationship.

Perhaps the more likely scenario for Ireland is one where the Irish government may support the achievement of Irish unity by consent—a situation which would (presumably) allow Northern Ireland to remain in the EU as part of a united Ireland. This move would safeguard some economic interests on the island, particularly in relation to free movement across the border. It would also respond directly to the 56 percent of the NI electorate who voted to support the UK remaining in the EU. The idea of Irish unity in the context of Brexit has already been voiced by the taoiseach.[3]

Ireland and the UK share many interests and common concerns, but it is clear that both states differ substantially on the question of EU membership. The UK's departure from the EU is unlikely to predicate a similar Irish exit.

GILLIAN O'BRIEN: I'm entirely in agreement with Mary Murphy's comments—although I do think Irish confidence in the EU has been shaken over the last number of years. There are certainly those prepared to offer anti-EU sound bites if asked, but there is not any groundswell of opinion actively in favor of Ireland following Britain out of the EU.

It's hard to make direct comparisons between Ireland's relationship with the EU and Britain's relationship with the EU. Ireland has always been an enthusi-

2. See Statements on the UK Referendum on EU Membership, Dáil Debate, 27 June 2016, http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2016062700018?opendocument).

3. "Irish unity must be considered in Brexit talks, says Enda Kenny," *Irish Times*, 9 September 2016.

astic member, whereas Britain has never been fully engaged with the EU. This certainly has some roots in the history of both countries. There has long been a feeling that Britain has never really thrown off the idea that it is a global power (and in some respects, it is). Britain to some extent still regards itself as superior to many of the other member states—the shadow of the British Empire is a very long one.

TIMOTHY WHITE: I don't disagree at all, but it's also worth remembering that in some ways, Irish support for the European project initially was counter-intuitive. The Irish were among the most nationalistic groups when they joined the European Union. They reported a low level of European identity; in this way, they were initially similar to the British.

However, the Irish have been extremely supportive of the EU for practical reasons. Initially, they benefited from structural funds that helped build Irish infrastructure. The Irish also believed that the Common Agricultural Policy was also extremely beneficial to Irish farmers. This was more important in the early 1970s, when agriculture was a much larger part of the Irish economy than it is today. By the early 1980s, the Irish had come to believe that relations with others in Western Europe had improved (this was in marked contrast to the British and especially the Northern Irish, who did not believe that their relations with others had improved in the post-World War II period). Irish interest in the EU remained relatively low in the initial decades of membership as the Irish focused more on local and national elections and politics. Thus, by the late 1980s the Irish had the most positive view of the CAP of any member state's population, and the Irish had a net positive feeling toward the European Community. However, this enthusiasm ranked seventh among the twelve member states (again, a marked contrast with the UK, where there was a net negative feeling toward the European Community in the late 1980s).

O'BRIEN: I also think that in Ireland, people very often regard themselves as Irish Europeans. This is certainly not the case in much of Britain, as evidenced by the Brexit vote, but also anecdotally. In Ireland, the freedom of movement within the Union has been largely beneficial, and perceived as beneficial to the country—and in a country where emigration has historically been a feature for many, this mobility has often been regarded as a positive. In Britain—largely fueled by the media—the open borders has been seen as a negative.

At a very basic level, the visibility of EU-funded projects in Ireland has been important in terms of public perception of the Union. Wherever there has been EU funding there have been enormous billboards proclaiming this—so the direct value of the EU to Ireland is highly visible. In Britain, this funding was also provided, but it was never heralded. Huge motorway projects were undertaken

(amongst many other things) but no one ever knew that substantial amounts of the funding for those roads came from Europe. National and local government, commentators, media were all reluctant (for often contradictory reasons) to emphasize the positives that come with EU membership—something successive Irish governments have been very active in promoting.

In conversation with a friend the other day we were discussing Ireland's relationship with the EU and she made the analogy that the Irish were like a rescue dog—grateful, but with discipline issues and a little wild streak! In many ways that sums it up.

TIMOTHY MCMAHON: My thoughts on this question are fairly general, but, as a historian I cannot help but note that, in many respects, the aforementioned positive feelings toward the EU echo ideas expressed by early twentieth-century nationalists. I'm thinking of people like W. P. Ryan, the socialist and nationalist, who saw the language revival in Ireland as similar to movements occurring on the continent and as Ireland reawakening to a more European sensibility than it had under the Union. Of course, that concept shouldn't be overblown, but linking up with the EU institutionalized that connection that had been cemented through familial trade networks and also through Catholicism—even when all of Ireland was tied to Britain under the crown, or via the Union. Indeed, if part of the nationalist project in the twentieth century was to overcome the epithet that the Irish were provincial, then having that alternative reference point of Europe—as distinct from Britain—mattered a great deal.

It might also be important to think about another of the important external referents, i.e., the US. In the light of the Apple decision this may sound anachronistic, but in addition to the low corporate tax rate, one of the allures for American investors has been that they will have access to the EU through Ireland. That hasn't been lost on the Irish, at all.

WHITE: On occasion, Irish support for further integration in Europe has, in fact, been somewhat hesitant—as the need to have two referenda on two EU treaties indicates. Still, while there has been some fluctuation over the decades in terms of levels of support for the EU in Ireland, the Irish have supported their membership and participation in the EU primarily for the economic benefit it has brought the nation, first in agriculture and more recently, by providing a mechanism to attract foreign investment for those seeking to produce and sell in the EU. It is doubtful that Ireland's pharmaceutical and chemical sector, as well as the IT sector, would have developed the way it has without Irish membership in the EU. Most Irish citizens recognize and appreciate the economic opportunities that have come with EU membership.

NEW HIBERNIA REVIEW: *What did the vote in the different kingdoms and regions tell us about perceptions of the relationship between Britain, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland and the wider European community?*

NEAL G. JESSE: This question reminds me of a map in Chris Clark's 2012 book about the origins of the Great War, *The Sleepwalkers*. The map depicts Europe as it existed in 1914. Across the British Isles stretches a single, bold, fully capitalized word: BRITAIN. There are no lines across the islands delineating Scotland or Wales, no mention of Ireland as a subject nation, there is no complexity or diversity; there is only the singular, all-encompassing Britain. And there it is, that single word representing a United Kingdom. And that word is placed thusly against that of France, the Russian Empire, the Austria-Hungarian Empire, and Prussia, among others. The map portrays a simple fact: the foundation for the single moniker of "Britain" is power derived by a centrally governed state. It also establishes Britain as something not quite European—a kingdom close to Europe, but somehow different than Europe. And so I would like to offer my observations on one part of the larger question about perceptions: has the Brexit vote changed external perceptions of Britain, and if it did, how might it change those perceptions?

At the start of the twentieth century, British power was not unrivaled, but no one would doubt its existence. After all, the sun never set on the British Empire. And to the rest of Europe, this is how they understood the British: as a united kingdom and empire. With exceptions such as the failed Jacobite rising of 1745 during the War of Austrian Succession, foreign powers—in this instance, France—rarely attempted to pit a minority nation against the unified government of Great Britain. By 1914, a European observer would certainly not be chastised for considering Britain to be monolithic, cyclopean, and of one mind in the projection of its power. That the reality was much more complex was not lost on other European powers. The Roger Casement affair with imperial Germany and the attempted running of guns to the Irish rebels is a clear example of a foreign government exploiting national tensions within Britain.

Still, the idea of a singular Britain would continue after both world wars. Without doing too much injustice to the details of history, one can observe that British power, economic and military—and not the power of the individual nations—was the lure of Britain to the European Economic Communities. That Britain might have any internal differences was only of passing consideration to European actors such as de Gaulle. Acceptance or rejection of the British application turned on issues of power: Would British trade diminish French postwar economic gains? Would British inclusion in a European community bring in American influence? Who would control Europe's destiny, a Franco-German *rapproachment*, or the British? And the reasons to include Britain were as obvi-

ous: a stronger—and for this you should read more powerful—trade bloc, a stronger diplomatic bloc, and a stronger European bloc.

The postwar world enshrined the dominance of the nation-state as the primary actor in international relations in many ways: trade agreements, international diplomacy, security alliances, etc. The history of the Cold War is the containment of nationalist demands within the Western states and their consolidation into the status quo of left-right "catch-all" political parties dominating legislatures. And again, the wider European community could see the ever-smoldering independence movement in Scotland or the internal, sectarian strife in Northern Ireland. But those were "British" problems for the British state to solve. Parallels between these British problems and that of other European states could certainly be drawn straight and true, for instance the terrorism of the ETA and the IRA, so again the diversity within Britain was always apparent. But to answer the motivating question about perceptions, perceiving Britain as multi-national did not benefit European or non-European actors as much as perceiving Britain as singular. British foreign policy behaved as if the kingdom was truly united—so why wouldn't all external actors find utility in perceiving Britain that way?

With the end of the Cold War, nationalist aspirations rose all around the globe. Now, there was space for nationalist demands to be made, and in some instances to be heard. Scholarship on this fact is so plentiful that we do not need to litigate it here. Of course, Britain was not immune to this global trend. Independence demands rose in Scotland and settlement of differences in Northern Ireland gained more urgency. In many ways the Good Friday Agreement, as well as devolution to Scotland and Wales, reinforced the notion of a single Britain. Nationalist demands were dealt with in a contemporary and well-respected manner that preserved the apparent solidarity of the British state. Britain still negotiated agreements as a single, sovereign nation with power at the heart of the bargaining (the St. Malo Declaration of 1998 is a prime example). Thus, the external perception of the centralized British government being dominant over the nations seemed to be reinforced in the 1990s and early 2000s.

WHITE: If I might just jump in, I am not sure I entirely agree with the notion that nationalist aspirations rose around the world after the Cold War. From the American perspective, the ideological and geopolitical rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union so dominated world politics that Americans tended to ignore or minimize the reality of ethno-national conflicts. We should be careful not to confuse British power in the twentieth century with domestic tranquility in the United Kingdom. Nicholas Mansergh's *The Unresolved Question* (1991) highlighted the fundamental instability of the 1921 treaty and apparent settlement. More recently, Feargal Cochrane makes a similar argument in

The Reluctant Peace. My point is that despite the global strength of the UK (especially in the first half of the twentieth century) the internal logic of the multinational state was less stable and secure.

JESSE: Thanks, Tim—your point is well taken.

So, are perceptions of the centralized British government different now? I am certain that someone more knowledgeable of the survey results can go over the differences in how the individual nations voted for "Leave" or "Remain" in great detail and ascertain the perceptions of the Scots, Welsh, Irish, etc. What seems of interest to me is whether there is utility for external actors to perceive Britain in a different way, given the Brexit results. That the heart of the British kingdom—and by this, I mean the English—voted "Leave" may have surprised observers, but it does point to a continued perception of English dominance over the British state. To the degree that it is the British state's interest, as perceived by the English, to leave the EU, Brexit does not unearth any need for a new perception of Britain by external actors. After all, had not Thatcher demanded opt-outs when it was supported by the British electorate? The perception of Britain as a reluctant European is neither new nor inaccurate. Yet, Brexit confirms that the reluctance is now more severe than it had been in the past. That might be the fulcrum on which perceptions will change over time.

For now, the Brexit vote has revealed how sharp the distinctions really are between the Scots and the Northern Irish Catholic community versus the English and Northern Irish Protestant community over whether the United Kingdom is 1) a singular state and 2) a European state. The former is being challenged in a way that could fundamentally alter British power. The single-state solutions of the 1990s have not produced greater unity. Rather, for good or for ill, they have allowed nationalist demands to build. The Scottish representation in the Scottish parliament and in the commons has never been this great. (Well, maybe "never" is the wrong word, as an independent Scottish parliament once existed.) And a Catholic-Irish community in Northern Ireland that had slowly grown accustomed since 1998 to the notion that its future would be as a part of the United Kingdom seems now to once again be entertaining a refutation of that notion. To a European observer, the centripetal forces that kept the Kingdom united are now weaker than the centrifugal forces rendering it asunder. Cameron's desperate gamble on a referendum as a means to appease divisions within the Conservative Party was just the opening shot in the war. The rise of UKIP and the Brexit vote are the first skirmishes, giving evidence not to a new reality, but to the strength of the forces of diversity over the forces of unity.

And what of British power? Is not the British state still powerful? Surely, the answer is yes, but something is now different on the European map of today versus Clark's map of 1914. Europe is not just a few empires but rather a mosaic

of nation-states and nationalities. The last hundred years has seen the fragmentation of Europe increase as the rigidity of that single, bold, capitalized word BRITAIN remained.

WHITE: I certainly agree that the British experience with empire and the commonwealth resulted in a focus far beyond Europe, while the continental states were more focused on rebuilding after the war. The British eventually joined the European project, but long after the core states of the European Community had begun the process of integration. There were large numbers of Euroskeptics, especially in the Conservative Party in the 1970s and 1980s, but the Brexit vote gained support from many beyond the old Euroskeptics. The vote vividly demonstrated diverging attitudes toward European institutions among the different groups in the UK. Scotland's vote strongly in favor of remaining in the EU was in stark contrast to the vote in England. The vote in favor of remaining in the EU among voters in Northern Ireland also highlighted differences between this region and England.

MURPHY: Thanks to Neal and Tim for their insights, and in particular, for putting the question in historical context. It's always useful to be reminded and to reflect on how British power and perceptions of it have evolved and changed over time.

If I may, I might just further reflect on contemporary Britain, bearing in mind that it is a state which has changed substantially over time. The changes have touched every facet of British life and have encapsulated political, economic, constitutional, social, demographic, and cultural change. This process of adjustment has been challenging for a state, and its people, which prided itself on its dominant place in the world order. The referendum on EU membership provided a space for Britain to reflect on the progression (or is it regression?) of the British state. There is only a very limited tradition of referendum use in Britain, so this moment provided an opportunity for the English public, in particular, to vocalize their objections to what they view as one of the reasons for British decline—namely, the EU.

It is the English regions where we find the highest levels of political disenchantment. It is these parts of the UK which have suffered disproportionately as a consequence of the demise of Britain, its empire, economy (specifically its industrial sector), and its political dominance. Early research has demonstrated that concerns about immigration and the long-term decline in manufacturing and other sectors played an important role in deciding the referendum outcome. Political forces, including UKIP, were ready and willing to amplify and channel the voices of those who have been worst affected by globalization and inward migration—and much of this cohort was located in the English regions. These

voters linked their disillusionment to the EU, blaming it for negative economic and social changes. Their faith in Britain was solid. Many voters were confident that if Britain were to "take back control," the circumstances of English voters would be improved. This harks back to an earlier period when British confidence was high, the economy was strong, and the British place in the world was more assured.

In contrast, Scotland, London, and Northern Ireland, voted "Remain." Voters here were motivated by other factors, and politics it seems played a greater role in determining the outcome. Scotland is less encumbered by memories of a bygone era. Scotland's devolved institutions have lent some dynamism and vibrancy to Scottish politics and have allowed Scottish identity to be expressed in political form. Secure in their own identity, Scottish voters are focused on what is best for Scotland, and the EU is viewed as being the context within which Scottish economic interests can be best achieved.

Northern Ireland is slightly different. The two communities there have different political aspirations and constitutional preferences, and this is partly reflected in the referendum vote. Nationalists overwhelmingly supported "Remain," while Unionists were more reticent. One third of Unionists, it is estimated, voted "Remain." The vote, however, reflects nationalist support for the EU, and their preference to remain in the EU alongside the Republic of Ireland. For Unionists, the practical challenges associated with leaving the EU were apparent, but for a majority, loyalty to Britain trumped concerns about the impact of Brexit.

If we view Britain through the Brexit lens, it gives us an up-to-date and accurate picture of how Britain views itself. And the picture it reveals is a fragmented one. The differences between the various territories are stark, and increasingly so. The idea of "Britain,"as per traditional perceptions of the British Empire, is not shared across the UK. Perceptions about the EU are vastly different across the various territories. Maybe Britain is shrinking . . . and becoming synonymous with England, and England alone.

The failure of the UK central government to frame a narrative during this episode which is more inclusive and genuinely representative of Britain as a whole has been in evidence during the referendum period. Other parts of Britain, those outside England, did not feature in the national debate. The debate in Northern Ireland had a different tone, content, and focus to that in England/Britain. Northern Ireland interests during the exit process appear to be only minimally important to England/Britain.

The referendum debate, outcome and exit process suggest that differences between territories have become more pronounced and that relationships across the UK have been fractured. As the UK "takes back control," the cohesion of the *United* Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland may, in fact, be lost.

O'BRIEN: My take on this is perhaps a little different. It seems to me that, to a large extent, the vote (both generally and regionally) doesn't necessarily reflect Britain's or the various regions' relationship with Europe. Living in Liverpool, I saw the vote as much more insular than that.

On the ground, I saw very little intellectualization or reflection on Britain's relationship with Europe, either historic, current, or future. In my own region, Liverpool bucked the trend among most Northern post-industrial towns and cities voting for Brexit, but Liverpool as a former international seaport has a long tradition of multi-culturalism and radical politics (not that I think voting "Remain" was a radical step at all). Some other urban centers across the Northwest (including Manchester, Leeds, York, and Newcastle) also voted "Remain" but huge swathes of the region voted "Leave." And in many cases the vote was very tight—in Leeds, it was 49.7 percent to "Leave" and 50.3 percent to "Remain."

The issue of immigration was key. Regionally, some of the highest votes to leave were in places in eastern England. It's simplistic to say that areas where the "Remain" vote was highest were areas not facing issues relating to immigration, or were areas positively associated with multi-culturalism. But it is true that "Remain" vote dominated in places like Scotland, Northern Ireland, and London. With the exception of Northern Ireland, the only other area with a direct border with the EU is Gibraltar, which voted overwhelmingly in favor of "Remain" (96 percent, if I recall correctly).

Regionally, the contrast between the Europe referendum in 1975 and that of 2016 is quite interesting. In 1975 the vote to stay in Europe was 67 percent in favor, but Scotland was one of the areas which was unenthusiastic about the Common Market (something reversed in the recent referendum). I agree with Mary Murphy's point that the Scottish vote reflects a security in their own identity. The simple fact is they are less attached to the notion of the faded glory of Empire that is to be found in parts of England.

In terms of the rhetoric being used here, and not just in relation to Brexit, there seems a growing sense of there being a very clear division between England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland (and possibly taking London as a separate entity too). This isn't new and the devolution of parliaments, the increasing power of the London Mayor and the growth in strength of the SNP are certainly factors. But broad brushstrokes discussing Britain's attitude to anything at the moment seems foolhardy. The fact that neither "Leave" nor "Remain" seemed to have any real regional campaign strategy seemed odd to me, though I think it's safe to say that neither side had a coherent campaign strategy, regional or otherwise. What we are seeing now is an extremely fractured Britain with divisions along regional lines but also a myriad of other fault lines appearing. Those fault lines have not been created by the discussions relating to Brexit, but have certainly been brought to the fore by them.

JESSE: One way to perceive the Brexit vote is to notice that it signals that Britain is more European than it realizes. Britain, the last empire—if not in name or global reach but as still an empire in its European geography remaining from the map of 1914—is not immune to the forces of fragmentation that have reshaped Europe. British power, like that of the Austria-Hungarian Empire or Ottoman Empire, must eventually give way to the realities of any united kingdom (lower case intentional): that minority nationalities will one day seek to exit the union. Britain has been last, but it is not atypical. And that could be the most enduring change in perception: Britain may finally be more European than it truly thinks that it is . . . or at least, parts of Britain are.

There is, of course, much more complexity to the issue of external perceptions Scottish overtures to the EU were met with equal parts welcome and displeasure, as not all European states are ready to embrace the perception of a multi-national Britain. The Spanish reaction to the Scottish desire to separate membership in the EU fully illustrates the reluctance by some centralized multi-national states to accept any new reality in the United Kingdom. But it seems reasonable to assert that the possibility of a new way of perceiving Britain is indeed possible.

NEW HIBERNIA REVIEW: *What are the implications for the Brexit vote for British-Irish relations? What are the biggest unanswered questions that the governments—particularly the Irish government—will have to sort through once the British invoke Article 50? Specifically, how will it affect the largest land border between a Brexit-Britain and an EU country?*

MCMAHON: One of the most dismaying elements of the Brexit campaign and the subsequent statements about what it means for Irish-British relations is the seeming lack of recognition by the "Leave" campaigners and now, the sitting government, that there is a border with a sovereign state—but one that has been subject to extreme pressures and international agreements already. Just to be clear, the Belfast Agreement was not merely signed by the governments of the two states: it was ratified in separate concurrent referenda by people in the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland. It established island-wide institutions and did a great deal to transform border relations. Transforming those relations, however, does not mean that the border has been eliminated, even if cooperation north and south has improved. And in a context in which both states, that is, the United Kingdom and the Republic, are EU members, those institutions have made great sense, but they were and are the result of covenants between the two states.

All of that is mere preface to where we are now, yet the signals from the new prime minister and her cabinet have been both contradictory and tone-deaf to

the history of British-Irish relations. That she would refer to her party as the Conservative and Unionist Party as she did shortly after taking office is but one example. Even if she meant it to underscore her commitment to retaining Scotland within the UK (as seems likely), the resonance of that title in an Irish context is immense, hearkening back to the early twentieth century when Conservative leaders aided and abetted the arming of Ulster Unionists in contravention to constitutional practice. It also is entirely possible that part of the prime minister's thinking was to assure the leadership of the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland that there would not be any push to see a referendum on Irish unification in the near future; although the people of Northern Ireland voted to remain within the EU, the DUP had campaigned for "Leave," and that base likely needs reassurance.

More jarring was the statement by the secretary of state for exiting the European Union, David Davis, on Sky News in July, when he acknowledged that "one of our really challenging issues . . . will be the internal border we have with southern Ireland." He may, of course, have been making an off-hand comment—but the point to remember is that in affairs of state, *no* comment is off-hand. "Southern Ireland" was the name originally slated for the twenty-six counties in the New Government of Ireland Act of 1920, the law that created Northern Ireland but that never took effect in the twenty-six counties because the ongoing independence struggle led instead to the creation of the Irish Free State, with greater sovereignty than that envisioned by the devolutionist 1920 Act. Let alone the subsequent developments in the relations between that state and its successor republic and the United Kingdom. To use the phrase "southern Ireland" along with the phrase "internal border" suggests that Mr. Davis did not recognize a century's worth of changes in British-Irish relations that, quite frankly, are significant at this moment of determining the way forward with the border.

A final thought. The Conservative Party conference in September and the statements made immediately afterward suggest that the Irish state will need to be especially firm when negotiating as an EU state and as a sovereign state over maintaining existing covenants. In particular, I am thinking about the PM's comments about taking a firm stand for sovereignty, about Home Secretary Amber Rudd's statement that Britain may require companies to publish the proportion of foreign staff in order to shame them into hiring more Britons, and about reports that the UK government will not accept advice from non-British scholars on questions related to the EU. These are disturbing, xenophobic signals, which could prove counterproductive to both Ireland and the United Kingdom. To realize how counterproductive such stances are, we should ask, "What role should Irish-born or American-born scholars of Britain and Ireland play in discussions about border relations?" Those who are working at

British universities, even when they have expertise for which they were hired by those universities, would have no official voice in shaping what is to come. That is simply bad policy, but it is entirely consistent with the messaging we've heard since July.

WHITE: Based on comments made by different British officials since the referendum, it increasingly seems we are likely to see a "hard" exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union. This would mean that many of the elementary forms of cooperation that the EU created may disappear.

Practically speaking, this would put the Irish government in a fundamentally different negotiating position from other members of the EU. The Irish government has consistently stated its interest in continuing the cooperation that has emerged as part of the European project and in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement. Some are interpreting a hard exit from the EU as a real challenge to the North-South cooperation created by this treaty. While it is easy to focus on the physical border which may become less open and porous for both those living in the North and the Republic, the physical border is less important than the pattern of cooperative relations that have increasingly assisted an often begrudging peace process in Northern Ireland. If leaders from all political parties seek to maintain the heretofore achieved cooperation, then Brexit will prove to be no more problematic than decommissioning or police reform was in the peace process.

If, however, leaders choose to grandstand a narrow, parochial advantage for "their" side in the conflict based on Brexit, then the challenge of implementing the UK's exit will clearly threaten the peace process. Despite the potential short-term advantage parties might gain from such a strategy, the long-term benefits of continuing the peace process weigh heavily on all the parties. There is a great incentive and sense of responsibility that restrain parties from using Brexit for their narrow political advantage.

The Irish government and nationalist and republican parties in Northern Ireland have an incentive to reach out to the Unionists, especially the Democratic Unionist Party, who supported leaving the EU. It must be made clear that their desire to leave the EU does not in any way minimize the commitment of the UK government and the parties in Northern Ireland to all of the elements agreed upon in the Good Friday Agreement. Those who live near the border who are represented by politicians in the Northern Ireland Assembly and Dáil Éireann will pressure their leaders to facilitate the beneficial relationship that has developed because of the peace process. While the EU funds targeted to the North are likely to end, hopefully they will continue to enhance economic and community development in the border counties in the Republic. Practically speaking, it is likely that the Irish and British governments will negotiate a bilateral agreement

to make the border as open as possible. This is in the interest of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

O'BRIEN: What's interesting is that as each day passes and the British government's plans for Brexit ebb and flow, I vacillate between thinking the hard Brexit that is being predicted will be a disaster for Ireland, North and South, and thinking that the government appears so divided and rudderless that it will be impossible for them to actually see Brexit through in any fashion (though I suspect that's just wishful thinking on my part).

It does appear that the British government is making it up as it goes along. Amber Rudd's announcement that employers would have to publish lists of their foreign staff was withdrawn before I had time to order my shamrock pin with a halo of EU stars around it, but it is that sort of statement (among others) that makes me think that there is, in fact, no plan, and that the government is busy flying kites to gauge reaction.

In all sorts of ways, the hard Brexit that's now being discussed will be bad for Ireland. The issue of the border is one thing; despite reassurances that it won't be a "hard" border it's difficult to see how that will be organized. The reappearance of a hard border would be a regressive step economically, politically, and psychologically. The financial repercussions for Northern Ireland with either a hard or soft Brexit will be significant given the amount of EU money that has been pumped into Northern Ireland since the Good Friday Agreement (and even before, but particularly since 1998).

If Britain does withdraw from the single market—which is now looking increasingly likely—this will be problematic for Ireland. It's hard to see how goods being transported across the EU, through Britain, and on to Ireland won't be subjected to price increases given the additional time it will take freight to get through additional controls. It's difficult to see how free movement of goods and people between Britain and Ireland would be maintained. There is the possibility of a bilateral arrangement being made but as John Fitzgerald pointed out recently in the *Irish Times*, historically bilateral arrangements between Britain and Ireland have been not been particularly beneficial to Ireland.[4] If such a bilateral arrangement is to be negotiated it is (as Fitzgerald points out) probably better that the negotiations would be carried out by the EU on behalf of Ireland.

It may be that some financial services will relocate from London to Dublin. But it seems to me while this might be courted and applauded by the Irish government this would be only one small positive among many large negatives.

4. John FitzGerald, "Negotiating table with UK reversed by Brexit," *Irish Times*, 12 August 2016.

JESSE: Will Irish-British relations post-Brexit be a case of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose?* Maybe—but likely not. While it is true that Irish entry into the EEC was in tandem with the third British application in 1973, their path inside the European Union has differed since that time. With only some overstatement and oversimplification, Britain has remained the reluctant European and Ireland the enthusiastic European. In a post-Brexit Europe, the two will be on opposite sides of an imaginary (or at least let's hope it's imaginary) fence running across the northeast of the Irish isle. The most tangible part of the new divide will be the existence of EU laws and regulations on one side of it, and the absence of them on the other. This will create disturbances in many areas of the Irish-British relationship that have consequences for Ireland and fundamentally continue Ireland on the path of slowly distancing itself from the UK.

The first and perhaps most obvious implication is for trade between the two countries and its impact on the overall Irish economy. Irish trade with Britain is over £30 billion, and while trade between the two countries has been diminishing, the decline of the pound versus the euro certainly will hurt Irish exports to the United Kingdom. Further, as the British economy slides into a likely post-Brexit recession, demand for Irish goods may suffer, adding further stress to the Irish economy. As around 40 percent of Irish food exports are to the United Kingdom, any loss of demand will hit Irish farmers hard. Leading economists throughout Europe anticipate both short-term and long-term consequences for the Irish economy. As the gigantic British passenger liner sinks, it drags down the small Irish fishing boats near it. Thus, while the Irish government certainly would like the British to maintain their inclusion in the single market, such an inclusion is not necessarily positive for all sectors of the Irish economy. The Irish government will have to find ways to accommodate the winners and losers of trading with a post-Brexit Britain.

One aspect of trade that is perhaps under-recognized is that Northern Irish businesses are much more dependent on trade to the Republic than the other way around. Northern Irish firms would consequently want to maintain an open access to consumers to the South. Would this economic incentive create more demands in the North for the single market to be maintained? Possibly. We could easily anticipate that any formal or informal barriers to trade between the UK and Ireland would be opposed on both sides of the border, but likely more so to the North. Would the position of Northern Irish businesses be at odds with the demands of "Leave" voters? Most likely.

For obvious reasons, the existence, and maintenance, of an open border between the North and the South dominates the discussion about Ireland and Brexit. Yet, there are other subtle connections including, for example, the freedom of travel between the two countries. A common travel area exists, but

can such a luxury be taken for granted in the near future? If a greater set of controls present themselves on the North-South border, we could imagine the added inconvenience to the 23,000 or so who cross the border every day. But more than this, wouldn't the United Kingdom want to control this border so that migration from non-EU or EU nations doesn't get into the UK via the "backdoor" of Northern Ireland? The Brexit vote was to some degree an anti-migration vote, so demands to "control" that border certainly will be made. And what of the roughly 100,000 British passport holders in Ireland and the 400,000 plus Irish citizens in the United Kingdom? Reciprocal rights would have to be negotiated.

MURPHY: In terms of how Brexit will affect the land border between Ireland and the UK, here again we are unsure. We first need to know where that border might be. There are various options and possibilities (I refer in particular to the work of Cathal McCall at Queens, who has looked at how the UK might be "re-bordered" after Brexit). One option may be to maintain a soft border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, with a harder border being drawn around the rest of the UK. This would mean free movement across the North-South Irish border, but then a necessity to show travel documents, etc., when moving from the island of Ireland to the rest of Britain. Of course, this would likely offend Unionists in the North, as it would, to some extent, cut Northern Ireland off from the rest of the UK. Alternatively, Ireland might ally itself more closely to the UK after Brexit and allow the drawing of a hard border around the entire of the isles of Ireland and Britain. However, this option would cut Ireland off from the rest of the EU and may even problematize long-term Irish membership of the EU. The other—less dramatic—option is to instate a (conventional) hard border between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. No one of these options will appeal to all. There are no ready or easy answers here.

JESSE: There are other, less obvious, connections between the Republic and Northern Ireland. As just one example, in 2007 the all-island electricity market was established. Once the UK exits the EU, the electricity market in Northern Ireland potentially becomes part of the larger Great Britain market, not the single European market. Thus, prices will be generated by the British market and Irish energy costs will be tied to that market more than to the wider European markets. Of course, there is also the potential, albeit small, for tariffs to be imposed. Given this implication, the Irish government may need to seek continental sources of energy to avoid too much dependence on British markets. And what laws and regulations may need to be rewritten without the overarching EU legal structure facilitating cooperation between the two nations on matters such as electricity? How many small legal details must be addressed? And at what cost

in pounds and euros? In this sense, the biggest unanswered question may be how best, and at least cost, to deal with all the small questions that will emerge from having Ireland in the EU and Britain out of it.

MURPHY: It truly is extraordinarily challenging to consider *future* consequences and implications. This is particularly difficult given that there is no precedent for an EU member state to leave the EU; indeed, the provision for a member state to leave has only existed since the Lisbon Treaty was agreed in 2007.

The absence of a template has meant that a considerable amount of confusion has marked the period immediately after the Brexit vote. There is some disarray within the UK about the departure process, its timing, and what the UK can hope to achieve during the various negotiations. As for other member states, and the EU, there is a lack of clarity there, too, and there are different perspectives about how to engage with the EU following the decision to leave. Some may wish to deal harshly with the UK in an attempt to dissuade any other member state from following the UK out of the EU. Others may wish to protect relations with the UK in order not to destabilize the EU, or valuable bilateral economic relationships.

During the referendum campaign, the strength and depth of British-Irish relations was on show as the Irish government supported the UK government's "Remain" position. It also seems likely that Ireland will try to continue to support the UK during future negotiations with the EU. However, there is something of a dilemma here for Ireland. As Neal and Gillian have pointed out, avoiding a hard Brexit is manifestly in Ireland's interests. In Northern Ireland, there is a similar cross-party consensus that a hard Brexit would be negative for the region. But across the rest of the UK, the situation is less clear. Theresa May appears to be swaying toward a harder form of Brexit, prioritizing border controls rather than access to the single market. This poses problems for Ireland, which favors continued UK membership of the single market.

The question of how Ireland can support a UK position at variance with Irish interests poses an intriguing problem for the Irish state. It certainly may challenge British-Irish relations, but in my view, it is unlikely to fundamentally undermine those relations. Having worked together closely and successfully on the Belfast Agreement and subsequent Northern Ireland negotiations, the British and Irish have become adept at achieving compromise and consensus. These skills will again be necessary in the weeks, months, and years ahead. There is an important difference, however, in that the Brexit context is very different from the bilateral and multi-party context which shaped earlier contact between the two states. Navigating this uncharted territory may prove to be one of the biggest tests facing British-Irish relations in the contemporary period. But I would be quietly confident that the relationship will withstand that test.

NEW HIBERNIA REVIEW: *In the twentieth century, we became accustomed to thinking of nation-states as givens. Already the Belfast Agreement had posed a challenge to this, but Brexit takes that a step further. How might political actors reconcile states and multi-state entities with nations in this new context?*

O'BRIEN: Nation-states are not new, but they have been the accepted norm, particularly in Europe since the nineteenth century. However, at the moment it seems that both the state, defined by political borders, and the rather more amorphous nation, is far from secure. The fracturing of Britain began pre-Brexit, but the fissures have become much more obvious since June 23. Britain was (indeed is) composed of, as Benedict Anderson had it, "imagined communities." It may be that the nation is nothing more precise than Thomas Davis's assertion of it as a "spiritual essence." There was never an agreed version of the nation and until recently, beyond some academics, there has been little appetite to dissect what it means to be British.

Gillray's John Bull of the eighteenth century was a rotund, beef-eating plain speaker who was suspicious of anything foreign. He was the archetypal Englishman. The Victorians sanitized the John Bull so beloved of cartoonists and satirists of the eighteenth century and recast him in a top hat and tailcoat with a union flag on his waistcoat. The beer drinking and the love of food remained but the Victorian version is a much more respectable figure. Indeed by the First World War, John Bull appeared on recruiting posters. Frank Cottrell Boyce, the writer who helped create the opening ceremony for the London Olympics in 2012 recently reflected that it "painted a portrait of a progressive, inclusive, innovative, funny nation stuffing an astonishing heritage into its backpack as it strode into a brilliant future."[5] And that's exactly what it did. There was pageantry and pride and hard work and humor all wrapped up in the values of community and diversity. It showed a Britain to be proud of.

That Britain of 2012 seems a lifetime ago now. Now the nationalism of Brexit seems exclusive, inward-looking, divisive and jingoistic. It's fractured. There seems to be multiple versions of the nation (or indeed nations). In part, the shift is a feature of globalization which has, to some extent, diluted national identities. For over five hundred years since Guttenberg's first press the dominant form of information transfer has been through the printed page. In 1990 the first website went live and began a change in how we see the world. There is no longer an established truth, no longer any simplified version of nationhood or nationality. The ease with which we can get information from around the world, the ubiquity of e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and any number of other instant forms of communication means that people are now creating their

5. Frank Cottrell Boyce, "What's the Point of Culture in Brexit Britain?," *Guardian*, 15 July 2016.

own communities, in some respects their own nations. This in part explains why so many people were so shocked by the Brexit result: they genuinely hadn't seen it coming. Nothing in their news feed or on their Facebook page indicated that "Leave" could win. Facebook (and other sites) filter the suggested posts based on what our search history has indicated we want to see. Despite our access to more and more information we have become in many ways more insular. Our digital world is carefully curated and in that world we can now create our own 'imagined communities' and invent our own traditions.

In another sense, globalization has created new issues that politicians have to grapple with. There were valid reasons for voting "Leave." It wasn't just a knee-jerk reaction inspired by the rhetoric of far-right parties. There are communities in Britain who have seen their jobs go overseas, while at the same time there has been considerable immigration. Assimilation has not always worked and in reality multiculturalism is a feature of the metropolitan, middle-class while areas of Britain (and particularly in England) do genuinely have problems when assimilation fails.

How politicians deal with this in the context of Brexit remains to be seen.

WHITE: The question begins with the assertion that we take sovereignty and the state as a given, and see recent developments as challenging the inherited status quo. Yet, recent International Relations research has challenged that all states were fully sovereign in 1648, at the time of the Peace of Westphalia. Sovereignty has always been a bit of an abstraction that ignored some of the messy realities of national and international politics.

In the Irish context, was the British state really sovereign over all of Ireland after 1648? Even if we assume sovereignty was achieved in the European context, how well did it explain the colonial territories that Europe incorporated in the nineteenth century? Realist scholars have historically assumed sovereignty, but it has always been at best an imperfect way to understand the dynamic of internal politics within territories. Most leaders have spent as much time worrying about their power in the domestic context as they have in pursuing it in the context of other states.

Historically the great challenge to sovereignty may have been the internal social and ethnic divisions within a society that a leader sought to govern, but more recently the world has created new opportunities (as well as new challenges). The benefits of freedom across borders in terms of travel, trade, finance, and ideas is well understood and accepted. The process of economic integration, often called globalization, has integrated the world in ways unimaginable in earlier centuries. This has led to useful trade agreements and boundless cultural exchange. However, many have become worried in recent years that those with skills appreciated by world markets are benefiting from

this new global exchange, while those whose skills are not as valued by world markets seem to fall behind and are left out of the new high tech and advanced consumer economy.

Many who felt this resentment came from families who had relatively high wages in earlier eras of manufacturing that were now being left behind in this age of outsourcing and automation. As manufacturing is increasingly been outsourced to developing economies, a large part of the population in Europe and North America is struggling to find its way in the new high-tech economy. There have been many studies highlighting how the gap between those who succeed in this new economy and those who don't is far wider than the earlier era of industrial production in the West. Both the Brexit vote and the Trump victory highlight those who Trump identified in his victory speech as "the forgotten." The critical question for the future is who will control the state—those who feel marginalized by recent trends, or those who have benefited? What would be most healthy is if policies could be put in place that successfully integrate those who feel left behind. The challenge may seem significant at present, but compared to the process of moving a peasant population into the industrial world this is a much easier task. The unprecedented wealth of modern economies provides great opportunity to invest in those who have been left behind. Politicians on both sides of the Atlantic need to speak to both the beneficiaries of the new economy and those who have been left behind. Sacrifices and change will be required from both. Sovereignty, and especially nationalism, provides the state a great reservoir of human capacity to work toward a collective good.

This need not be seen as hostile to cooperation outside of the state. In fact, the structural funds that have historically been spent by the European Union are a great example of the kind of investment in poorer regions and states that undermines resentment and creates appreciation for a political order built on principles such as equality, justice, and generosity. It is too easy and simple to depict the process of European integration as one of leading to the demise of the state and letting unelected EU bureaucrats make policy for states. The coordination that has come with European policy-making has been an important part of the reason for so many improvements in Europe. But this part of the story is rarely stressed or explained by politicians or the media.

The state is likely to survive as the principle means by which we organize politics, but the benefits which have come with organizations like the EU will continue to incentivize state leaders to promote cooperation across state borders even if the benefits of such cooperation are not equally shared in their own society.

MURPHY: This is perhaps the most challenging question of all. Tim White's response is illuminating and in my view, it delivers a robust overview of how

the concept of sovereignty has never been as pure as Realists might believe or suggest.

Ireland's sovereignty has long been challenged by its open economy and heavy reliance on trade with the rest of the world. Membership of the EU also involves a sharing (or ceding) of sovereignty which undermines the autonomy of the state. This sharing (or loss) of sovereignty/autonomy was deemed to be in the better interests of the state and its people because it promised to deliver economic growth and political stability for Ireland and the wider European continent.

From an Irish perspective, the impact of the Belfast Agreement on national sovereignty has been more subtle. It facilitates some executive North-South decision making on the island of Ireland, but it does not overtly threaten the integrity of the British state. Although designed primarily to respond to the conflict, the Agreement was achieved against a broader European trend toward regionalization. Indeed, the process of devolving powers to the Northern Ireland sub-national unit happened in tandem with the asymmetrical devolution of powers to both Scotland and Wales. This process of devolving powers involved shifting some legislative powers from Westminster to new administrations in Edinburgh, Belfast, and Cardiff. Arguably, this contributed to the unleashing of forces—particularly in Scotland, which later pushed for an (unsuccessful) independence referendum. Today, given the Brexit referendum outcome, the rationale for a second independence referendum has been further enlivened. It is still too early to say whether such a referendum will happen, and whether it might be successful. The terms of the UK exit and the nature of the post-Brexit relationship with the EU will have a strong bearing on whether or not Scottish independence eventually materializes. In the event that Scotland leaves the UK, the British state would clearly be undermined. However, it is important to bear in mind that the Scottish independence movement actually aspires to a Scottish state in the traditional sense. The concept of the nation state is, therefore, resilient. What is more contested is where the territorial borders of the existing British state lies.

JESSE: The prominence of the state as the primary actor in the international system has been put into question by many competing forces over the past few decades, not the least of which are globalization and regionalization. Debates rage on what globalization is: When did globalization start? Or does globalization even exist? One by-product of these inquiries has been a renewed interest in the nation. My mind drifts to Azar Gat's recent work in *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2013), in which he attempts to establish the long historical foundations of the nation. As he states, and I agree, nations existed before states and may very well exist after states are

gone. By even contemplating the great length of time that nations have existed versus the quite contemporary and shorter period by which the modern state has existed (and as Tim so skillfully addressed in his reply as to whether states truly have as much sovereignty as normally assumed), Gat challenges the Realist assumption of the primacy of the state—both theoretically and practically.

Now, I am not saying that the modern nation-state is going to evaporate any time soon; far from it. But what Brexit and related events have shown us is that people still matter, and the nation is the political representation of a "people" or "ethnie' (to use Gat's terminology). The interests of the state, whether economic integration or state security, cannot any longer be presumed to override the interests and demands of the people or nation. Realist theory a la Gilpin (economic) or Mearsheimer (security) forces one to think that the state's interests are always of the utmost concern. Yet, Realist theory cannot predict an English nation rejecting the economic gains of remaining in the EU. And as I (and others, such as Karen Devine) have pointed out elsewhere, it cannot predict an Irish nation remaining neutral during the Second World War or the Cold War when the Irish state could have easily maximized its security by joining the collective security alliances available at the time.

So at a theoretical understanding, recent events expose the continued misnomer of defining international relations as interstate relations. In some way, the question asks what is the outcome of "bringing the nation back in." Gat would have us believe that it has always been there but we as a group of scholars have been looking the other way!

At a more practical level, regionalization and the renewed emphasis on regional national interests versus that of state interests, and thus the interests of a people or ethnie, creates a space opened by globalization by which political actors can seek autonomy from multi-state bodies (e.g., Brexit), semi-autonomy from a centralized state (e.g., devolution to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland or autonomous communities in Spain), or the representation or inclusion of national/community interests (e.g., in policy-making and governance as in the Good Friday Agreement) under a state through direct national appeals. Nations have always made appeals for sovereignty. That part is not new. What is new is that the global environment has challenged states to such a degree that there is more room for national forces to maneuver.

MURPHY: We might say that the Brexit debate revealed a belief among voters that a return to traditional governance arrangements, where the national government dominates, is a better route to prosperity and security, and one which protects against the negative forces of globalization. There is a certain irony, therefore, in the fact that those who voted for Brexit were focused on "taking back control" or reclaiming national sovereignty—when the impact of that vote may prove to be

the territorial disintegration of that older nation-state order. Such a move may be accompanied not just by alterations to the shape of the traditional British state, but also by a decline in its economic fortunes and a lowering of its place within the global world order.

In Ireland, the suggestion that Brexit provides a strong rationale for Irish unification has been disputed by all but Sinn Féin. There is no strong and irrefutable appetite for Irish unity right now. Of course, this may change, and again, the terms of the UK exit from the EU will be significant here. Should the exit from the EU prove detrimental to Northern Ireland interests, support for Irish unification may evolve. In the event of a united Ireland becoming a reality, however, the end result will be a (nation-)state, as per the traditional formula, but with new territorial borders. The same attachment to a model of governance based on traditional nation-state structures is apparent here too.

For all its flaws and failings, the nation-state remains a unit of political organization which commands widespread support. The UK has opted to return to that traditional version of British rule—although in doing so, it may in fact undermine the borders of the British state and challenge its place in the global order. Perhaps the lesson is, *Be careful what you wish for . . .*

JESSE: The impact of renewed national appeals and space for nationalist movements on the Irish nation and Irish nationalism is not easy to ascertain. While one may jump to the conclusion that unification of the Irish population in Northern Ireland with the Republic would be a natural or logical (are either of these words even correct, when used to describe an aggregation of individuals?) response, the reality is much more complicated and subtle. Nations may not be as monolithic or cyclopean as presumed . . . and nations divided by state borders might have quite different interests precisely because of the different states. Do Germans in Austria have the same national interests as Germans in Germany or the Czech Republic or Italy? Clearly not. While Sinn Féin makes the assumption that the interests of the Irish nation North and South are similar, this is not likely to be accurate. The Irish in the Republic have to consider their Irish state interest as well as their national interest—Sinn Féin does not, as it discounts the British state's interest as being opposed to the Irish nation's interest (I am generalizing to make the point more clear).

The impact on the Irish nation's relationship with the multi-state European Union is even murkier. As Mary Murphy, points out, the EU has long recognized regional nations and their separate interests from the state in which they exist, while at the same time not encouraging regionalization. That the Irish in the North and South benefit from EU membership is without serious objection. That Irish in the North might be more marginalized in a post-Brexit United Kingdom seems like a reasonable conclusion, too.

MCMAHON: Part of the problem with answering such questions is that we are confronting different definitions of nations, states, and nation-states. Another part is that it is incredibly difficult to predict anything when so many variables—including the type of Brexit that will occur—remain uncertain.

Unlike Neal Jesse, however, I am not persuaded by scholars, such as Gat or Anthony Smith, who see nations as old (if not primordial) entities. To be sure, the word "nation" or some variant on it has been in use for a very long time, but it did not imply all of the people of a particular group or territory in the same way that it did from the late-1700s. More in keeping with Benedict Anderson, and Miroslav Hroch, and with Gillian O'Brien in this conversation, I see myself as a modernist; that is, as someone who sees nations as modern creations. That said, Hroch has argued persuasively—and Smith has moved to this position in some of his more recent ruminations on the emergence of nations from ethnies—that those modern creations do not emerge out of whole cloth, but were built on remnants, cultural legacies, traditions, etc. (Smith still wouldn't go as far as Eric Hobsbawm and talk about invented traditions playing a role in this, though I see considerable value in such concepts helping us to understand expressions of national identity incorporating the old and the new.)

I would go a step further and adapt Tim White's important earlier comment on state sovereignty as an uncertain phenomenon and apply it to nations. In spite of the rhetoric of those who see nations as fixed, they are continually being redefined. And one factor involved in defining them in the modern period was the state, which White correctly points out was itself in development. Few observations confirm this multivalent conundrum more than the statement by the Piedmontese parliamentarian Massimo d'Azeglio, who wrote in his memoirs after the creation of the Kingdom of Italy, "We have made Italy. Now we must make Italians."

The question here, however, asks us to consider a twentieth-century perception, that is, that decision-makers and members of most publics in the West viewed the concept of the nation-state as a given. I am not saying that it was or should have been; indeed, the preceding discussion has highlighted numerous ways in which the reality in states gave the lie to the notion that nation-states were normative. That said, the forces that O'Brien mentioned earlier culminated in the Wilsonian moment at the end of the First World War when Great Power leaders drew up state boundaries to assuage the claims of "national" spokespersons to statehood. We know, of course, that their efforts were flawed, at times explosively so. Still, while most people can well appreciate that the borders of independent states in Africa and Asia were often drawn artificially by European imperialists, incorporating numerous ethnic or national groups in a single state, it often takes recognition of minority nations within states by

supranational entities like the EU to call our attention to the same phenomenon in Europe.

That's precisely why the Irish-British nexus is interesting on multiple levels. The border drawn at the time of the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 undercut a single-state solution by arguing that there were two nations on the island, one of which formed the majority in Northern Ireland and one an even larger majority in Southern Ireland (reconstituted later as the Irish Free State and eventually the Republic of Ireland). For many self-described Irish nationalists, the two-nations idea was and remains anathema, but for Unionists, it became an article of faith that they were British. The Belfast Agreement in 1998 offered the prospect that people could claim membership/citizenship in both the British and Irish states. In essence, such a prospect cut the "state leg" out from under the supposed nation-state stance that had hardened over nearly eight decades. It also came at a time when the United Kingdom was opening itself up to limited Scottish and Welsh devolution, a constitutional change that had roots in Labour's willingness to appease elements of its electoral base and in their growing recognition that these two elements of the complex British entity had justifiable claims to nationhood, just not as fully independent nation-states. In the long run, as Mary Murphy points out, that modest change provided space and institutions that enabled the advocates of Scottish independence to develop their case more fully.

Interestingly, their calls—potentially aided yet again by the Brexit vote—could call for further examination of the two-nations in Northern Ireland, since the Britishness of the North has frequently been refracted through ties to Scotland. The reality, of course, is that the United Kingdom has always been a multinational state. If the Brexit deal ultimately leads the Scots to call for a full break from that entity, I wonder how and whether the Britishness of the North would reconstitute itself.

JESSE: We have to ask, what can we assume with any high degree of confidence about nation and state relations for the Irish? Could the Northern Irish make appeals to the EU through the larger Irish nation? Would the government of the Republic want to help such appeals? Would the Southern Irish people desire to make appeals on behalf of their northern brethren? Or does that border drawn by states become like a new Berlin Wall and the Irish nation really becomes two separate nations of Irish people? And would the EU even care about the Northern Irish left behind by Brexit? Or more precisely, what member states/political actors/nations of the EU might care, and which might not? In other words, to whom might the Northern Irish appeal in the EU? Would a renewed nationalist movement in Northern Ireland return to more direct demands for autonomy/independence aimed at the British government? Would they return to violence

as a means to an end? And to what end if the Irish to the south do not want unification? Is the end goal a South Sudan carved out of Northern Ireland for the Irish population there, much like Scotland wants to carve itself out of a post-Brexit UK? Could the end be the creation of more states?

The crystal ball that I am looking into only shows me indecipherable swirls.

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