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**THE IRISH BORDER AND NORTH-SOUTH
COOPERATION: AN OVERVIEW**

John Coakley and Liam O'Dowd

WORKING PAPER 1

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ABSTRACT

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The partition of Ireland in 1921-22 had many obvious intended consequences, but also not a few unintended ones. This paper begins by reviewing potential approaches to the analysis of the border and challenging some of the myths whose influence has been so pervasive. It continues by examining in outline the changing character of the Irish border since its creation: its creation, up to its physical appearance in 1921; its consolidation in the five decades that followed; and its steady transformation from about 1972 onwards. The paper concludes by suggesting an agenda for research in this area—one which is at once of great academic significance, but of even more vital public policy importance.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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THE IRISH BORDER AND NORTH-SOUTH COOPERATION: AN OVERVIEW

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Irish border has generated intense and emotional debate over many decades, with claims that it represents a violation of the integrity of the "historical national territory" and counterclaims that it forms a necessary bulwark to protect the identity of one of the communities on the island of Ireland. Academic research will never succeed in sidelining this debate, or in settling the arguments; but this is not to say that the resources of the academic community should hesitate to tackle the question of the border. Neither is this to argue the case for participation in an essentially political debate on the merits of partition; rather, our starting point rests on a belief that there is an unanswerable case for analysing the consequences of partition—intended, or otherwise—and for setting this analysis in a broad, comparative, interdisciplinary context that yet has historical depth.

The purpose of the present paper is to undertake a preliminary mapping of the kinds of issues raised by the existence of the Irish border. This is not of merely academic interest: analysis of the conditions which facilitate and inhibit cross-border co-operation responds to important societal needs, especially if it is accompanied by an exploration of the options for promoting positive north-south contact and co-operation for the mutual benefit of the peoples of the island. Such analysis is, indeed, necessary with a view to informing future policy initiatives, both governmental and non-governmental, that are designed to promote sustainable cross-border partnerships. This requires us to examine the interface between co-operation across the state border and across internal communal borders within Northern Ireland, and to assess the impact of the border as barrier, bridge and source of material costs, benefits and symbolic identity for the peoples on the island.

This paper, prepared at a preliminary stage in the work of a larger research project, seeks to provide an overview of the issues by addressing a range of questions in turn: the appropriate modes of analysis of the Irish border and its consequences, the kinds of myths with which the border has been associated, the historical evolution of the border, and the set of major research questions to which it gives rise.[1]

2. APPROACHES TO ANALYSIS

In this paper, we may begin by noting three broad sets of complementary perspectives that are relevant to the topic being analysed: interdisciplinary, historical and comparative. The interdisciplinary perspective may be developed in two ways: first by drawing on an international interdisciplinary literature on the changing nature of state borders and cross-border co-operation and, second, by examining the political, economic, social and cultural dimensions of the Irish border.[2] The historical approach has the capacity to identify at the outset three phases in the development of the Irish border: its formation (1880-1920), its consolidation (1921-72) and its reconfiguration since 1972.[3] Our main focus is on the factors shaping cross-border cooperation since 1972: the Northern Ireland conflict, EEC/EU membership, the growth of an Anglo-Irish inter-governmental partnership, and the peace process leading to the signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998 and its aftermath. However, the structure, content and prospects of co-operation continue to be influenced in significant ways by the creation of the border in 1920, by its subsequent consolidation, and by the way in which this has been experienced and remembered by the peoples on the island.

Historical and interdisciplinary approaches need to be informed throughout by a comparative perspective, raising the question of which comparative context might be most appropriate for understanding the Irish border and what systematic comparisons with other borders might be most usefully pursued. The comparative perspective may also be mapped onto to the three historical phases of the Irish border's development, and the context may vary across the phases. For example, the creation of the border may be understood as an early example of imperial disintegration in Europe in the twentieth century—an outcome of the clash between imperialist and nationalist principles of border creation. The second period, which saw the consolidation of the Irish border, was marked by the proliferation of national states, global economic crisis, national protectionism, war, and continued imperial decline. Not only were state borders increasing in number; they were becoming more economically, politically and culturally significant, while their precise delineation became more problematical. In the third period, the comparative context changes again with the rise of ethnonational tensions within states, globalisation, the emergence of the EU and the disintegration of the USSR (see Coakley, 2003). In this phase, the Irish border can be understood against the background of revived ethnonational tensions elsewhere, as an internal border of the European Community, and as a site for the promotion of cross-border cooperation, peace and reconciliation. In a more formal sense, state borders may be seen as bridges, barriers, resources and symbols of identity for the whole population of the two parts of Ireland and, more directly, for borderland residents for whom the state border is a prominent part of their everyday lives (O'Dowd, 2002). Each dimension of the bor-

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[1] The project, entitled *Mapping frontiers, plotting pathways: routes to north-south cooperation in a divided island*, is funded by the Special EU Programmes Body through the Higher Education Authority over the period 2004-06.

[2] For recent examples of this literature see Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson, 2003a, 2003b; Wilson and Donnan, 1998; Anderson, 1996.

[3] These phases may be modified or revised in the course of further research. Here we advance a provisional framework to orient the research and draw together its various strands.

der can be further sub-divided into its economic, political, social and cultural aspects and can be further illuminated by comparison with other state borders in Europe and beyond.

The comparative literature demonstrates that political borders, whether casually drawn on a map by remote policy makers or reflecting existing "facts on the ground", tend to acquire a life of their own. They divide friends and relatives as well as enemies and rivals (while also, of course, possibly providing a basis for new transfrontier industries, literally or metaphorically). Depending on the extent to which they impede cross-border transactions, they may have a profound impact on politics, culture, society and economy, creating opportunities for some, while undermining life circumstances of others. Borders are always created to solve a "problem" (though this may be a spurious one); and their success may be gauged by measuring the extent to which they "solve" this problem without creating too many negative consequences

Placing the Irish border within a comparative framework does not deny its unique dimensions; but it does remind us that secession and partition generally have been a fruitful source of border creation for the last hundred years. A comparative and historical perspective on the Irish border allows us to avoid reading history backwards as if the contemporary border was somehow inscribed in the distant past—an inevitable outcome of an allegedly unchanging and unending struggle between purely indigenous forces represented by nationalist and unionist Ireland.

Both comparative and historical analyses therefore enable us to take into account broader "conditioning factors" which have critically shaped the creation and evolution of the Irish border. These factors include imperial disintegration throughout the twentieth century, the two world wars, the growth in the scale and capacity of national states and more recently European integration and globalisation in its various manifestations. Too much analysis of the Irish border sees these conditioning factors as external, and focuses exclusively on the internal factors such as the balance of forces on the island, and the discernible aims and motives of the most vocal political protagonists. In practice, mere geographical conceptions of external and internal factors fail to do justice to the extent to which the island of Ireland has domesticated wider patterns of border change such as globalisation in its many forms.

Finally, borders are typically the creation of political elites and their origins are seldom rooted in popular democracy or plebiscite. However, political and military elites are not the sole arbiters of the development of borders. Borders are also the product of a wider population that forges co-operative or antagonistic economic, social or cultural relationships across the border line, and of ways in which borders are used as mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion. On a day-to-day basis, the composition and practices of border communities play a part in shaping borders—they too "make" the border although not always in a manner of their own choosing. Regardless of their political attitude to the border, they may use the border pragmatically as a resource—either through the growth of a "black" or criminal economy or in legally benefiting from easy access to two different jurisdictions with different taxation, welfare and employment regimes. In addition, dissenting groups committed to military

attacks on the border may use it as a means of escape or of circumventing the authorities on either side.

An interdisciplinary approach will thus allow us to investigate anthropologically and sociologically how the Irish border has been constructed from the bottom up. As state borders become established and institutionalised they express a complex set of relationships which embrace political elites and non-elites alike, and which have economic and cultural as well as narrowly political dimensions. Borders are coterminous with territory, and are deeply connected to social power in its various dimensions—political, military, economic and cultural. They imply acquisition, coercion, exclusion or expulsion, inclusion, protection or security, and collective identity, all of which embody deeply rooted emotions.[4] Both territory and borders involve complex constellations of emotions, which find their sharpest expressions among the threatened, the displaced, the marginalized and the excluded. The emotional dimension to the Irish border needs to be factored in to any analysis of cross-border co-operation. Emotions contribute to myths which inhibit both the analysis of the Irish border and the prospects for co-operation across it.

3. CHALLENGING BORDER "MYTHS"

For much of its history the Irish border has been peculiarly resistant to dispassionate analysis. The emotions it generated and the almost sacred place it assumed in the contending ideologies of Irish nationalism and unionism gave it a master symbol status. For its Ulster unionist proponents, it represented their fixed desire, and successful struggle, to remain within the United Kingdom. To question or evaluate it was to aid those who sought to undermine it as the settled will of a democratic majority within Northern Ireland. For Northern nationalists, on the other hand, it was a product of coercion, an imposed artificial divide that flouted the democratic will of the majority on the island of Ireland. For much of its history, nationalists have veered between formally ignoring it and predicting its inevitable demise. Attitudes to "the border", therefore, became the overarching issue on which all Northern Ireland elections were fought.

While the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921) was at the root of the major political cleavage in Southern politics, the border as such played a largely unifying, rather than divisive, role. Not only did it help constitute an overwhelmingly Catholic and culturally homogenous state; all political parties were united in opposition to it in principle, although pro- and anti-Treatyites varied in the degree of priority that they accorded to the partition issue over time. Accordingly, principled opposition to the border formed a part of an underlying political consensus in the South, which remained committed to Irish unity. Moreover, limited capacity to challenge partition ensured that eliminat-

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[4] In Mabel Berezin's (2003) discussion of territory, which also applies to state borders, she acknowledges the importance of emotions and makes useful distinctions between territory and space and between the formal and historical characteristics of territory and borders. See also recent conference of the Centre for International Borders Research on "Borders and emotions" held at Queen's University Belfast on 29 May 2004.

ing the border remained merely an article of political faith while inhibiting both policy formation on partition and careful empirical analysis of the evolution of the border and its consequences.[5]

The removal of the disruptive "Irish question" from British parliamentary politics also discouraged official British political and academic interest in Ireland. The "Irish question" was now ideologically reconstructed as a matter for Irish people rather than for the British public or British politics. The Westminster Parliament observed a self-denying principle between 1923 and 1968 with respect to discussing the internal affairs of Northern Ireland—the latter were purely a matter for the Northern Ireland administration until the eruption of the civil rights protests forced an end to this practice.

The "new majorities" created by partition on either side of the border were unwilling or unable, for different reasons, to develop *formal* cross-border co-operation. The two significant minorities disadvantaged by the border also lacked the institutional resources to monitor and evaluate its developing effects. Southern unionists who had played a leading part in the ideological campaign against Home Rule between 1880 and 1920 were now cut adrift from their supporters in Britain and the North and found themselves isolated in a state informed by the very ideologies that they had so bitterly opposed. Unionists in Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan who had opposed the partition of Ulster (as opposed to that of Ireland) now felt impelled to support their fellow unionists in the North even if "exclusion" served to weaken their own position. Northern nationalists, the largest group coerced into acceptance of the border were left deeply divided between border nationalists and those in the Belfast region, and between those who favoured acquiescence with the northern authorities and those who advocated boycotting the new Belfast administration. The success of the Ulster Unionist Party in monopolising political, administrative, and policing powers further marginalised northern nationalists (Phoenix, 1994). Spasmodic and ineffective IRA campaigns against the Northern Ireland administration reflected a tradition of republican rejection of partition, but their main political effect was probably to cement the unionist political bloc within Northern Ireland.

The characterisation of the Irish border as outlined above and the myths associated with it hint at the balance of power and coercion that helped consolidate the border between 1920 and the mid 1960s, but it leaves unexplored the detailed, and often unanticipated, consequences of establishing the border for its protagonists and opponents alike. In fact, few of those on either side of the struggle between unionist and nationalist Ireland favoured partition as a first choice. When some form of partition came to be seen as inevitable, the critically important question of where the border line was going to be drawn remained heavily contested between those who favoured county option, or, variously, a nine-, six-, or four-county Ulster. Fewer still

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of the protagonists of the 1912-25 period envisaged the full consequences of the border that eventually emerged, either in terms of its durability or its status as a fully fledged international border. Borders are not fixed entities even when their location remains unchanged. They evolve, take on new functions and meanings and lose others. To help capture the nature and extent of border change, it is helpful to identify some key phases in the development of the Irish border.

4. THE EVOLUTION OF THE IRISH BORDER

A crude and somewhat tentative template for the systematic study of the Irish border might identify three distinctive, if partially overlapping, phases in its evolution. Each phase may be usefully informed by comparative and interdisciplinary analysis:

1. Creation or formation (1880-1920)
2. Consolidation—1921-72
3. Reconfiguration—1972-2004.

4.1 Border creation (1880-1920/21)

The first phase in the creation or formation of the Irish border was characterised by a conflict between imperialism and nationalism, each involving different forms and rationales of border creation. Clearly this conflict had a broader international dimension, while being simultaneously integral to the Irish case. Of course, both imperialists and nationalists draw on a great variety of older and often contradictory justifications as well as *post-hoc* rationalisations for particular state boundaries including appeals to divine providence, to the authority of religion and to markers in the physical world (such as mountains, rivers and seas).[6] Over the last two centuries, however, two overarching criteria of border delineation have struggled for dominance. One might be termed imperial, predicated on the notion that territorial aggrandizement is a necessary requirement of state policy (Caplow, 1998). The other criterion is nationalist, i.e., it is predicated on matching nations to territorial units or homelands and institutionalising national identity in a national state. While border creation itself is scarcely a democratic phenomenon, the principle of national determination has been generally, if not universally, associated with the process of democratisation.

The gradual disintegration of the British Empire and the subsequent nationalisation of politics in the British and Irish states have obscured the extent to which both home rule and partition were imperial solutions to imperial problems—a fact made clear in the detailed histories of the home rule crisis and the events leading to partition (Gallagher, 1957; Laffan, 1983; O'Callaghan, 1999; Phoenix, 1994). In a recent comprehensive examination of the Boundary Commission, Margaret O'Callaghan (1999: 32) confirms that contemporary documents show clearly that the division of

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[5] There were few studies of partition between 1920 and 1970. Exceptions included the polemical, if empirically reliable, anti-partitionist account by Frank Gallagher (1957); a justification of partition by the Dutch cultural geographer, M.W. Heslinga (1962); and a study of the finances of partition by economist Labhrás Ó Nualláin (1952).

[6] See Buchanan and Moore (2003), who explore the ethics of boundary making in the great religious traditions of the world and identify five types of boundary creation or alteration: conquest, settlement, sale or purchase, inheritance and secession.

Ireland was a chapter in British imperial history after the Versailles settlement, and part of an emerging Commonwealth history. She urges the restoration of partition to its broader international context in the face of subsequent attempts to see it in terms internal to the island of Ireland, or to Northern Ireland.

The wider context, therefore, is crucial to understanding the creation of the Irish border. Irish partition represents an early twentieth-century example of imperial fragmentation and nation-state building. It is unusual in that it involved dividing one of the victorious states in first world war. Elsewhere, the treaties of Versailles, Trianon and Saint Germain set new borders throughout central and southern Europe in the wake of the defeat of Germany, the collapse of Czarist Russia, and the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. Many of these borders were to be reshaped again in the second world war while the collapse of the USSR initiated a third wave of border reconstruction at the end of the twentieth century. Many of the national borders established contemporaneously with the Irish border such as Yugoslavia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Lebanon, the mandate territory of Palestine, Iraq and Kuwait were to be bloodily challenged in the closing decades of the twentieth century (see Anderson and O'Dowd, 2005).

The range of methods used to fix, impose or change state borders were various in the absence of agreed criteria for border delimitation. Military conquest, local balances of power and coercion between contending groups, occasional local plebiscites, the arbitrations of victorious war-time allies or, in the case of nationalists, democratic claims to the right of self-determination, were all advanced singly, or in combination, as means of border formation. Since the mid-nineteenth century, imperialists, especially those presiding over the expansion and regulation of the British Empire, created borders all over the globe informed by the twin motivations of territorial aggrandizement and a sense of "civilising mission".[7] Appeals to national self-determination and popular sovereignty also lacked systematic criteria for matching people with bordered territorial entities. Where there was a direct conflict between imperialist and nationalist positions as in Ireland, the capacity of local groups to mobilise political resources to control territory became crucial.

The Irish border was the outcome of a complex struggle over Home Rule rather than the initial project of any of the key protagonists. The *status quo* of the Union and limited home rule for the whole island were both compatible with imperial solutions to the Irish problem in that both retained the island within the Empire. In fact, until the 1916 rising, perhaps the majority of Irish nationalists envisaged home rule within the Empire and urged that Ireland be accorded equal status with Britain at its core. Unionists feared however that home rule, as operated by a Catholic majority,

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[7] Perhaps the *primus inter pares* of these imperialists was Lord Curzon, one-time Viceroy of India, who delivered his famous Romanes lecture on Frontiers to the University of Oxford in 1907. Curzon's imperial gaze ranged from North America, to Africa and Asia. He extolled the character-building nature of frontiers for Britons and took as given the Empire's right to create borders and spread civilisation. He later was Foreign Secretary in the coalition government which confirmed Irish partition in 1920 although his involvement was minimal. The point here is **that** the imposition of borders and partitions was deemed to be a natural part of imperial statecraft and involved many imperial politicians intimately involved in the Irish situation.

was only a stepping stone to ever greater autonomy within or independence from the UK and the Empire. Clearly, radical nationalists and republicans did pursue an anti-imperialist line, especially after 1916. The deadlock between the broad unionist and nationalist positions was eventually arbitrated by the imperial parliament in the aftermath of the first world war. The settlement remained open to contradictory interpretations and hopes—for many Irish nationalists it was a stepping stone to unity and greater independence, for many imperialists and unionists, it retained the island of Ireland within the British sphere of influence and ensured the creation of a political unit in Northern Ireland aimed at maintaining and strengthening the links between the two islands.

In the event, the Irish settlement involved a political partition as defined recently by O'Leary (2001: 2)—"an externally proposed and imposed *fresh* border cut through at least one community's national homeland, creating at least two separate political units under different sovereigns or authorities". In Ireland, partition under the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, preceded the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921, which marked the secession of most of the island from the UK. As O'Leary (2001: 2) argues partitions and secessions are distinct, but as the Irish case demonstrates, they can occur in the one conjuncture.

4.2 Border consolidation (1920-1972)

The exact delimitation of the border, however, was at least as important as the overall issue of partition, and it was crucial to its subsequent consolidation and longevity (the Irish border is now among the older state borders in Europe). The exact geographical border was determined by the balance of forces on the ground and the insistence of unionists and their allies in Britain on retaining the largest possible area within the UK that had the best long-term chances of survival, in that it had a clear and stable majority in favour of the Union. Lustick's specification of the importance of border de-limitation is highly apposite in the Irish case:

> (State) boundaries specify who and what are potential participants or objects of the political game and who are and what are not. Different borders have different demographic implications and different political myths associated with them. The territorial shape of a state thus helps determine what interests are legitimate, what resources are mobilizable, what questions are open for debate, what ideological formulas will be relevant, what cleavages could become significant and what political allies might be available (Lustick, 1993: 40).

The new minorities created—northern nationalists and southern unionists—now found themselves relatively powerless in the political game; their political myths were marginalised, their mobilisable resources limited, and their stated political interests deemed illegitimate.

In the event two highly asymmetrical political units were created in Ireland, with different powers, economies, and rationales, and with opposing official views of history and religious affiliations. One was committed to the building both of a distinct state and a distinct nation; the other was committed to the *status quo* of Union and Empire. With the failure of the Boundary Commission, the dominant parties in each ju-

risdiction sought to consolidate their respective territories at the expense of a shared all-island space. In effect, they "closed" the border, gradually accentuating its role as a barrier and symbol of the antagonistic identities of unionists and nationalists or republicans alike. The Irish jurisdictions were to develop in a back-to-back fashion—the North as a part of a still powerful British state and empire, and the South as a relatively poor, peripheral country committed to a separatist path. Within Northern Ireland itself, the boundaries between Protestant and Catholic communities now served as proxies for the border between North and South.

What emerged was a prolonged cold war between the unionist administration in the North and successive administrations in the South. Each side was committed to self-fulfilling prophecies about the intentions and behaviour of the other. For unionists, Southern state and nation-building (in particular, the nationalist tenor of the 1937 constitution and Irish neutrality during the second world war) was seen as inevitably enhancing the border as barrier, while providing a permanent incitement to minority disaffection within Northern Ireland. For southern administrations, unionist insistence on monopolising power in Northern Ireland was rooted in British support. Southern governments, therefore, sought in vain to persuade British governments to modify or end partition. A dialogue of the deaf ensued between Ulster unionists and Southern nationalists, a dialogue generally routed through a largely apathetic British government in any case.

In September 1948, when news broke that the government in Dublin proposed to abandon its remaining links with the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland prime minister Lord Brookeborough made a revealing note in his diary: "I issued a statement and said this was merely what we already knew and what our leaders had foreseen for many years. This had created a yawning gulf between North and South which was unbridgeable".[8] In a retrospect from 1971, one of Brookeborough's successors as prime minister of Northern Ireland, Major James Chichester Clark re-iterated his predecessor's broad viewpoint:

> The Border envisaged by the 1920 Act was no major international frontier—no "Emerald Curtain" within these islands. It was others, and not *our* predecessors, who piled brick upon brick along that wall so that by the end of day we could scarcely see or comprehend each other (author's emphasis; quoted in McIvor, 1971: 41).

While Chichester Clark was perhaps somewhat disingenuous in discounting the role of Ulster unionists in consolidating partition, he did acknowledge that the border had become a greater barrier than envisaged by its advocates in 1920. They could scarcely have predicted the depth of the political chasm that opened up between the two jurisdictions between 1920 and 1965. The researcher will hunt in vain in cabinet papers in Dublin and Belfast for evidence of significant cross-border links at a political or even at an administrative level.[9] In the period of consolidation, we find

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[8] Brookeborough diary, 7 September 1948, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, D/3004/D/39.

[9] See, for example, Taoiseach's department (S-series) files in the Irish National Archives and the CAB series in PRONI; see Arthur, 2000 on the political background; Kennedy, 2001, for an overview of administrative

the survival of many civil society organisations from the pre-partition period, but no corresponding public sector links. The thoroughgoing nature of the partition of Ireland has been well documented, and the image of committed non-cooperation between Dublin and Belfast survives the careful analysis of Kennedy (2000), who considers the nature of collaborative North-South enterprises in areas where cooperation could hardly be avoided. The coexistence of this political and administrative aloofness with rhetorical support for the concept of the island as a geographical unit is especially striking.

4.3 Border reconfiguration (1972-)

The second world war and the contrasting socio-economic fortunes of both Irish jurisdictions in the 1950s deepened the gulf between North and South. However, as the gulf reached its widest point, a number of factors were combining to alter the context of cross-border relationships. At the political level, the abject failure of the IRA's campaign between 1956 and 1962 pointed to the lack of appeal of traditional separatist republicanism. The retirement of both de Valera and Brookeborough from active party politics opened the way for more pragmatic modernisers such as Lemass and O'Neill. The prospect of EEC membership and greater free trade between Ireland and Britain meant that the protectionist economic policies in the South had outlived their usefulness. In the North, the rapid decline of the traditional shipbuilding, engineering and linen industries in the middle of the twentieth century created pressures for the restructuring of the economy. In the South, the main problems were mass emigration, rural decline, unemployment and underemployment. The promotion of foreign direct investment emerged as a common plank in the policies of Northern and Southern governments to combat their respective socio-economic problems. The Lemass-O'Neill contacts in 1965-66 initially promised a peaceful and more co-operative transition to a new era of cross-border co-operation.

The Unionist government's attempt to devise a more active developmental policy and links with the South was to have far-reaching repercussions. In the early 1960s, the Ulster Unionist Party was threatened in Belfast by the rise of the Northern Ireland Labour Party mobilising around the mass redundancies of the period 1960-63 in working class Protestant communities. Meantime, the northern Nationalists were now coming into increasing contact with the Northern Ireland state over issues such as employment, housing, and growth centre and educational policy. The exclusionary nature of the Unionist administration became more visible, and opportunities seemed to be opening up for political campaigns to publicise and highlight discrimination. Meanwhile the Ulster Unionist Party itself was coming under pressure from unionists opposed both to concessions to nationalists and to new links with the South. In the event, the Lemass-O'Neill initiatives proved to be a false dawn—conflict and instability in Northern Ireland were to radically change the context of cross-border co-operation for the next three decades. With the suspension of Stormont in 1972, the British government gradually accepted the Irish government as a

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cooperation in the first five decades of partition; and Tannam, 1999, for a review of more recent developments.

partner (albeit with junior status) in attempts to reconfigure the partition settlement of of 1920. The agreements reached in December 1973, November 1985 and April 1998 are the obvious high points of formalised inter-jurisdictional co-operation, with the last of these the most far-reaching, given the administrative architecture that it generated. Over the last two decades these agreements and the accelerating pace of European integration has promoted a climate of enhanced cross-border co-operation funded by EU, inter-governmental and philanthropic agencies. Under the Good Friday Agreement, the cross-border strand of co-operation is part of a more comprehensive attempt to build co-operation across sectarian borders within Northern Ireland and between Ireland and Britain.

At the root of the Northern Ireland problem are mutually contradictory claims to exclusive forms of territorial sovereignty. The strengthening of the Irish border as a barrier between 1920 and the 1960s underlined the intractability of the competing claims. The growing significance of the Irish border in this period was in line with the growing importance of national states generally, both in terms of its functional growth and its emergence as the dominant form of political organization. In Europe, growing state intervention in the economy, mobilisation for war, the development of state socialism and the welfare state all combined to enhance the significance of national states and of the differences between them. Since the early 1970s, however, economic, political and cultural globalisation, and the steady growth of transnational governance, represented in its most advanced form by the EU, have undermined notions of exclusive sovereignty. Shared sovereignty, co-decision making, joint citizenship and enhanced cross-border co-operation between governments and civil society organisations have become more common within the EU. These trends have served to counter the border strengthening effects of the Northern Ireland conflict and to relativise absolutist claims over sovereignty. At the same time, intergovernmental co-operation between the British and Irish governments and the EU sponsorship of cross-border economic co-operation and of the Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation have helped to re-configure the border and relationships across it.

But this shift from political and administrative estrangement in the 50 years after partition to new patterns of co-operation since 1972 has not been unproblematic, predictably enough. It has co-existed with growing spatial segregation of both communities within Northern Ireland and a deepening of internal sectarian borders—the product of 30 years of violent conflict. At various times, different British and Irish approaches with respect to the conflict and the EU have inhibited or pre-empted cross-border co-operation. Different economic, social and cultural policies and priorities, as well as mismatched institutional competencies and cultures, have served to limit cross-border ties. They have also influenced the prospects for cooperation between firms and civil society organisations on either side of the border.

The third "re-configuration" phase identified above—characterised by the exploration of new and emerging pathways to cross-border co-operation since 1972 and especially since the Belfast Agreement in 1998—deserves special attention (see Ruane and Todd, 1999; Wilford, 2001). To address this task adequately, however, it is necessary to assess the legacy of the two previous phases of border creation and

border consolidation. The structures and myths generated by this legacy continue to shape the prospects for contemporary cross-border co-operation. In adopting an interdisciplinary comparative and historical perspective we hope to provide new perspectives of the past and present of the Irish border on which might be built a more constructive complex of cross-border relationships. These perspectives will also be informed by the developing theory of state borders and by locating the Irish situation in a range of comparative contexts. A fully comprehensive approach to these topics is beyond the scope of any one research project. What is proposed here is no more than one possible research strategy for approaching these questions. We have listed below a series of research questions which flow from this approach. These are not exhaustive and will be subject to change, elaboration and greater specification as the project proceeds.

5. TOWARDS A RESEARCH STRATEGY

Any research strategy on the Irish border must be sensitive to the historical and comparative context, thus revisiting the prehistory of partition between 1880 and 1920 in Britain and Ireland and the broader tension between imperial and nationalist strategies of border creation. The research project will seek to inquire into the factors which led to the emergence of partition as a possibility from 1880 onwards, and to its formal realisation and its precise territorial designation in 1920. It will seek to identify the differing perceptions of the "problem" to which partition was meant to be solution, and the nature of that solution and its consequences, anticipated and unanticipated, for those most directly affected. Some of these questions will address the uniqueness or specificity of the Irish situation; others will seek to illuminate the Irish case by reference to a variety of comparative contexts in which borders have been drawn, re-drawn and modified over time. We may group the challenges to researchers under four headings: the comparative dimension, the historical-developmental one, the arena of contemporary sociopolitical life (interpreting this phrase in its broadest sense), and the domain of public policy.

5.1 The comparative dimension

One set of comparative questions relates to the methods by which political (state) borders are created by means of war, conquest, coercion, population displacement, treaty negotiations, dynastic inheritance or plebiscitary democracy—thus allowing us to evaluate the particular mix of factors which shaped the emergence of the Irish border. More specifically, we will ask what lessons can be drawn, for the Irish case, from the post-imperial, national borders created contemporaneously with it. A number of comparative frames will be considered here; they relate to various types of partition, such as those the following:

1. Partition imposed by imperial powers, either through arbitrary force or through the proceduralism of boundary commissions (examples might include Kashmir, Israel-Palestine, Sri Lanka and India; see also McGarry, 2001)

2. Partition mainly deriving from competing ethno-nationalist claims to territory

3. Partition arising from geo-political or ideological conflict such as the partition of Germany, Korea or Vietnam or the partition of Taiwan from China.

The proliferating borders of twentieth century Europe provide many potentially interesting comparisons with the Irish case, both in terms of border creation and subsequent consequences of these borders. These include the pivotal cases of the shifting boundaries of Germany with Denmark, Belgium, France, the Czech Republic, Poland and Austria, and the contraction of Hungary. There are several examples here of frontier communities with strong historical and cultural (or linguistic) ties across borders in South Schleswig, the German cantons of Belgium, and Alsace-Lorraine and the various Hungarian communities located outside Hungary but contiguous to its borders. But these are only some of the many examples of cases where new (or even old) political frontiers cut through existing communities traditionally linked by socio-economic, cultural or ethnic ties. In some cases, ethnonational issues are to the fore: the inclusion of South Tyrol in Italy rather than Austria, for example, or of the Åland Islands in Finland rather than Sweden. In others, the question of transfrontier ethnonational relations is overshadowed by the relationship with the centre (as in the case of the Basques, for example, where the issue is not so much the international border separating north from south as the relationships with Madrid and Paris on either side of this); and there are yet other types.

The revitalisation of ethnonational movements in the last three decades of the twentieth century provides another context for illuminating the Irish case. Turning to one of the EU's newer members, Cyprus, takes us closer to a fruitful basis of comparison. Post-1974 Cyprus has been divided by a "green line" (in reality, a broad, UN-controlled band) that separates the (Greek Cypriot) Republic of Cyprus from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. To the extent that it appeared as a mechanism for separating two ethnic communities, it resembles the Irish border; but there are two major differences. First, had it been superimposed on the ethnic map of pre-1974 Cyprus, it would have made no sense; its effectiveness as an ethnic dividing line was realised only through massive population displacement of Greeks from the north of the island and of Turks from the south. The scale of displacement in Cyprus (as in India/Pakistan, Palestine/Israel and in the making of German borders) puts the relatively limited population displacement brought about by the partition of Ireland into perspective.

The set of questions suggested by any effort to locate the Irish border within a broader comparative context is very extensive indeed, and it would be pointless to try to list all of them. For present purposes, we may content ourselves with those which are directly relevant to the present study, and two of these stand out. In each case, it is important to ask the question as a comparative one, and to locate Ireland in the category of responses.

- First, to what extent has the border come into existence as part of an overt effort to draw a line between ethnic groups that are in conflict, rather than as part of a wider exercise in the revision of state frontiers? To the extent that delineation of an inter-communal frontier is its aim, how successful is it in this, or to what extent have political, economic, physical geographical or other considerations modified

this? To the extent that the delineation is less than perfect, how serious is the problem of "misplaced" populations who find themselves on the "wrong" side of the border? Are there unanticipated ancillary problems, or have new problems been created?

- Second, what mechanisms have been resorted to with a view to overcoming those aspects of partition that are perceived by at least some groups as negative? If no such mechanisms exist, does this create problems for frontier populations? If they do exist, do they conform to any predictable types?

The emergence of the EU as a sponsor of cross-border regionalism and cross-border co-operation will provide a major comparative context for the "reconfiguration" phase of the Irish border after 1972. Here the distinction between the EU as promoter of *inter-national* (i.e., inter-state or inter-governmental) co-operation and as its role as sponsor of transnational co-operative networks may be examined in the Irish context.

5.2 The developmental dimension

While there is little doubt that cross-border co-operation and networks have increased in intensity over the last two decades, the overall picture is somewhat incoherent and fragmented. It also needs to be placed in a historical context. There is, then, a strong case for undertaking a qualitative and quantitative overview of the evolving impact of the border in both isolating and joining the two parts of the island, and, indeed, in sustaining the salience of the "British dimension".

The third "reconfiguration" period poses in sharpest form the interaction between broader patterns of border change and specific events in Ireland. In the case of the former, global economic restructuring, the growth of foreign direct investment, free trade, the development of the European Community, and the growth in transnational mass communications were reconfiguring national borders in Europe and elsewhere. This process coincided, and interacted with, the challenge to internal communal borders within Northern Ireland in the 1960s, their re-constitution and consolidation through decades of violent conflict thereafter, and the emergence of new cross-border Anglo-Irish framework designed to manage and eventually resolve the conflict.

The "Irish dimension" was placed firmly on the political agenda of the Irish and British governments in 1972 against a backdrop of shared membership of a European Union which was significantly re-configuring the borders of its member states. New cross-border links at a political level achieved their most concrete expression in 1985 and, in particular, in 1998; but they also took administrative shape separately from these developments, notably in the form of cooperation encouraged by the EU (see Tannam, 1999). In addition, there appears to have been a proliferation of civil society-type contacts between the two jurisdictions in recent decades. This perspective may be disaggregated into a number of questions.

- First, how are we to measure the "success" of the border in meeting the objectives of those who designed it? There is an abundance of evidence from the period of the Irish Boundary Commission (1925). How serious a minority problem did the border bequeath to the two sides? Here we also raise but do not propose to tackle further a fascinating ancillary question: why did the minority on the northern side of the border turn out in the long run to be so much more troublesome to the state in which it found itself than the southern minority?

- Second, what has been the political, governmental and administrative significance of the border? How has this changed since 1972? In what ways have political and public sector organisations responded to the realities of partition, and to its changed character in recent decades?

It would be worth examining the extent to which "misplaced" and "displaced" persons have been real issues—persons finding themselves in an ethnically uncongenial environment, and persons fleeing from such an environment, respectively. In other words, we need to consider the extent to which the border today, and in its present form, constitutes an instrument of benign separation, an obstacle to rational cooperation, or an unnecessary and arbitrary inconvenience.

5.3 The sociopolitical dimension

State borders may be understood as institutions which both create and resolve problems. The problems that the new Irish border was designed to resolve have already been discussed; but what problems has it actually resolved? What new problems has it created? These areas might be considered at a number of levels; in each case it would be important both to map the current position and to assess its consequences. In each case, too, it would be essential to take account not only of all-island relationships, but to see these in the broader context of the archipelago, and also of the EU.

- Politics: to what extent have political organisations such as parties gone their separate ways on the two sides of the border? What have been the implications of the border for cooperation at executive or ministerial level, and at local level (through county, district and other statutory councils)?

- Public administration: what has been the effect of the border on island-wide planning in major policy domains such as (1) healthcare and its administration, (2) social welfare, (3) education (considering such issues as the old Magee-TCD link), (4) security and (5) policies on economic development, including agriculture?

- Communications (an area that overlaps with public administration): how has the border affected the development of the island's road, rail, air and sea communications systems? What has been its impact at the level of the communication of ideas (newspapers, radio, television, postal and telecommunications systems)?

- Economy: how have patterns of trade and industrial development been affected by the border? How have the social partners (including business and employers' organisations, trade unions and farmers organisations) responded?

- Society and culture: how have voluntary and other social organisations adapted to partition and to its reconfiguration over time? To what extent has the border facilitated or impeded further developments in these areas? How have the churches and other religious organisations adapted?

- Sports: how have so many sporting organisations managed to survive partition as island-wide bodies? What determines the circumstances where organisation is framed by the two existing jurisdictions, as in the case of soccer?

Here a planned series of in-depth case studies, indicative rather than representative, will probe different forms of cross-border co-operation, for example between public sector bodies, firms, local authorities, voluntary groups, and mixed projects involving different types of organisations. These case studies could focus on four key themes: the meaning of "partnership", the question of sustainability, the relationship between informal and formal cross-border co-operation, and the implications for mutual understanding and inter-communal reconciliation.

5.4 The public policy dimension

Although efforts to mitigate the negative effects of the border have deep roots, we will concentrate on initiatives since 1972, and in particular since 1998. Our object is to explore the practical impact of initiatives that have been designed to overcome the negative effects of the border and to contribute to improved life conditions for people on both sides of it. These may be seen as falling under a number of headings.

- The first comprises voluntary or other non-state initiatives designed to promote cross-border contact. These include on the one hand modestly organised bodies such as the British-Irish Association and the Irish Association, and on the other relatively well-endowed bodies with ambitious programmes such as Co-Operation Ireland.

- The second is the set of public sector initiatives that have been characteristic of the post-1972 period, but that date in particular from the 1980s. There is thus a case for a mapping study of the extensive but highly fragmented programmes and projects aimed at promoting cross-border co-operation since the mid-1980s. This could include the programmes funded by the International Fund for Ireland, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, a range of charitable foundations and the INTERREG and PEACE Programmes sponsored by the EU. The purpose here is mainly descriptive rather than evaluative. A database will be generated which will code projects by funding body, amount of grants, location, organisations involved, substantive area (such as business, education, mutual understanding, health, recreation, culture/arts). This will be a unique data resource that will provide a picture of "grassroots" contacts, especially those concentrated in the border region of

Northern Ireland and the Irish border counties. It will provide a major resource for further research and a badly needed audit for policy makers of the range of funded cross-border activity since the mid-1980s.

- Third, the impact of the EU has been so considerable that, though related to the second point above, it merits separate mention. This includes the INTERREG programme, the Peace and Reconciliation Programme (PEACE, .including the Common Chapter) and other EU programmes.

- Fourth, it is important to consider the set of formal implementation bodies established after 1998 and the work of the North/South Ministerial Council secretariat in Armagh in shaping their development. This could include study of the following bodies, whose role could be analysed in a preliminary way (a definitive analysis would be premature, but an initial scoping of their work and prospects might be undertaken).

  □ *The Special EU Programmes Body* (focusing on the process of cross-border consultation rather than the outputs in terms of programmes, which have been discussed under point three above)

  □ *Inter-Trade Ireland* and its role in promoting island-wide business cooperation and trade

  □ *Tourism Ireland*, which, though not technically one of the six implementation bodies, has acquired de facto status as one of these, and has represented a revolutionary development in Irish tourism marketing

  □ *Waterways Ireland*, with its impact on the physical landscape and promotion of leisure travel on the island

  □ *The language body*, and in particular the new, island-wide role of the Irish language agency and innovative work of the Ulster Scots agency

  □ *The Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission*, which represents a repackaging of earlier forms of cooperation, and bears the marks of this

  □ *Safe Food*, and its growing island-wide identity.

- Fifth, we need to examine other forms of institutionalised public sector cooperation. Some of this takes place within the context of the Good Friday agreement; much of it does not, and has developed separately, as in the areas of education and energy. The fascinating question arises as to whether the Good Friday agreement might not have the unintended consequence of restricting the scope for cooperation (in such areas as transport), while cooperation can progress further outside its terms (as in the case of the development of an all-Ireland energy market).

6. CONCLUSION

We present this text as a preliminary attempt to plot the most important issues raised by the border in contemporary Ireland. We have attempted this in three ways. First, we have signalled the interdisciplinary, comparative and historical approaches which should inform the approach to analysis as well as the contribution that these can make to the demythologising of the border. Second, we have outlined a three-phase developmental overview of the border and cross-border relationships. This is a preliminary and provisional statement which needs to be elaborated and modified as research proceeds. Finally, we have outlined a research strategy and a related series of research questions. The latter are currently over-ambitious in scope and extent and need to be discussed, fine tuned and revised. We anticipate that the direction and shape of such revision will be conditioned by ongoing research currently being conducted into the secondary literature; as this proceeds, we will be able to identify more clearly those gaps—often glaring, commonly unnoticed, but always requiring to be addressed—which exist in research in this vitally important area.

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