

Submitted as feedback to the Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland Interim Report following an event organised by the American University of Public Affairs, Washington, 3 February 2021

Alan and Brendan,

Thank you both so very much!! I thought it was a very interesting session and that your report does everyone impacted an enormous service. I have a dozen questions prompted by the report although not necessarily about the report itself as you've done such a thorough job. I suppose one important consideration that it is very difficult to game out b/c Unionists don't want to play the game, is what would it mean to be a Unionist in a united Ireland (note the use in different spaces and by different groups of the phrases "united Ireland," "new Ireland," "shared Ireland," "agreed Ireland")? Brendan was beginning to get at this at the end of the session today. They could keep their British citizenship (at least their generation could) but beyond that, what is their identity worth? Remove the ultimate issue of sovereignty if we assume independence is not practical and the Brits will not be back, take away the question of economic/material interest in the union, what would their community be about?

In the US when we don't know what to make of ambiguous aspects of our constitution, we can turn to the Federalist Papers for hints on what the Framers intended. I don't suppose it would make sense to attempt to get inside the minds of the people who wrote those parts of the GFA on the matters they didn't address b/c they largely weren't thinking through the limitations of what they said on the very issues you've identified. Do you ever feel like you want to grab those people up and yell at them for the mess they made?

I wonder were federalism proposed for the UK or the remnants when Scotland leaves, what it would mean for NI. Is it your sense that it would grant any more power to the regional insts? I could see it addressing the West Lothian problem and thus, helping England but what would be the advantages for NI? Would access to the EU via a united Ireland trump the appeal of any such restructuring?

I wonder too if the report might include more discussion of how the citizen assemblies have worked in recent years. What work did they do? How did they function? What is the assessment of how they contributed?

I'd love to know what kind of academic work you think is lacking here?

I might suggest you renumber the options in Table 9 to be consistent with the way you talk about the models elsewhere and perhaps reorder the symbols in the legend to read as a range of performance from well to poor. Impact unknown would stand outside that scheme.

I hope this is helpful. You've both been very lovely to work with.

Thank you again and best wishes,

Kimberly

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