

## **Public Consultation on the Draft National Risk Assessment 2018**

Overall, the draft National Risk Assessment 2018 successfully and comprehensively identifies the correct strategic risks facing Ireland.

The brief contribution below relates to those risks that should be prioritised; steps that might potentially be taken over the coming decades to mitigate their worst effects have also been outlined in passing.

### **2.1 Departure of the UK from the EU**

The UK's decision to leave the EU is a momentous event. It not only presents unprecedented political, economic, social and diplomatic challenges for this nation, but potentially marks a turning point in Irish destinies on par with Kinsale in 1601.

Like it or not, the energies of the Irish state and nation will henceforth be on building political and social ties, diversifying trade links, and establishing diplomatic and, eventually, military alliances within the framework of a multilingual, multipolar European Union that is itself integrating into the rising Eurasian trade networks. Even if English continues as the lingua franca of international trade, the Irish nation will become more comfortable operating within a linguistically, culturally and socially diverse and complex environment.

This visible divergence of Ireland from 'British norms' will increase the perception of this nation as 'other'; this will not always be a comfortable reality for our friends in Britain, many of whom are not always accustomed to taking Ireland's national interests seriously. In the coming decades, then, Ireland will have to balance efforts to reassure British societal and security concerns, while still pursuing an independent foreign policy agenda, up to and including full participation in European defence and security arrangements that may not align with UK grand strategy.

Finally, the immediate risk associated with Brexit cannot be understated. The repeated failures of London to deal with the reality of departing what is fundamentally a regulatory union (rather than a more straightforward internal market) means that no preparation has been made domestically in Britain for the realities of exiting the EU single market and customs union. Given that the UK has failed to install the port infrastructure required by third countries trading with the EU, [the likelihood now is that in 2019 there will be disruptions to the movement of food and other consignments out of the island of Britain, alongside other severe transport and transit disruptions.](#)

Not only will this entail suffering at an individual and community level, it also means that we cannot be assured of the United Kingdom's political or societal stability - or even constitutional integrity - in the coming years. This is particularly so if the departure is highly disordered, and results in severe economic and social upheaval, and a permanent decline in GDP of the order of 10%.

## 2.2 Instability in Northern Ireland

The results of the referendum on the UK's membership showed that a majority in Northern Ireland and Scotland voted to remain within the EU.

The DUP's hour as king-maker in Westminster will pass within the course of the next nine months; until then, it is important that Ireland continue to champion the interests of all people, all communities in the North, reassuring unionist and Protestant communities that we are defending their interests as friends and neighbours, without conceding the rights of nationalist and Catholic communities to pursue full linguistic, cultural and social equality within the six counties, via the existing institutions of Northern Ireland.

The upheaval that may arise in the wake of a disorderly Brexit will heighten tensions on all sides. In such a scenario, London will likely be preoccupied by issues of central importance to the British state; historically Irish affairs have been peripheral to these calculations. Regardless of whether this pattern holds, Northern Ireland's stability and prosperity is key to Ireland's long-term well-being, independence, and success. Dublin must stand ready to calm nerves, and offer partnership to everyone in the North as a path to shared success.

The inability of the UK to present a credible alternative to the backstop proposed by Brussels suggests that the eventual outcome will be a sea border – as observed recently by EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier, on pragmatic grounds, [it will be easier to manage a limited number of ports in Britain, than a land border in Ireland](#).

The only question is whether this will be accepted by London in advance of severe disruption, or in its wake.

Ultimately, the divergence of Northern Irish society from the main current of British social, economic and political life will continue and, as a result of Brexit, quicken. [Recent polling](#) suggests that a confluence of demographic change and contextual upheaval might yet lead to a socio-political earthquake in the North, possibly within the next 24 to 36 months.

It would therefore be prudent for the State to start now to discreetly consider how the experience and expertise garnered from initiatives such as the [Civic Dialogue](#) or [Citizen's Assembly](#) might be used in the near future to prepare for the integration of Northern Ireland into this jurisdiction.

Finally, attempts to set unreasonable preconditions for the passing of any future border poll on reunification should also be firmly rejected; the emphasis should instead be on guaranteeing the rights of unionist communities to be treated as equal citizens of any future unitary state.

## 2.3 Future direction and stability of the EU

## **2.4 Changing distribution of global influence and move away from a rules-based system**

### **3.2 Changes to international trading environment**

All three of these factors are being driven by two historic – indeed epochal – shifts in the international environment.

The first relates to the United States' position at the heart of the world's economy. The US is the behemoth in global economics; due to a combination of societal and geographic factors, no other territory on earth has the same capacity to generate wealth, capital, and value. Unlike Europe, it can do so with little to no intervention by the machinery of state.

Since the end of the Second World War, Western Europe has managed to grow its economy by getting five decades access to the American economy on a preferential basis in exchange for acquiescing to the US's foreign policy agenda. This was essentially the world that Bretton Woods created.

It was a world that allowed European countries to under-invest in their own military. A world of minimal military spending, and a large, guaranteed export market, that made it possible for European countries to redirect their wealth and resources towards humane and innovative social and educational supports for their citizens.

[That world is ending.](#)

It's not a good deal for the Americans, and the shift in global trade dynamics is not going to end. If it wasn't the Trump administration, it would be another White House administration. A possible notable consequence of this will be the withdrawal of the American role guaranteeing the existence of open sea lanes, due to the inordinate burden of maintaining a blue-water navy to fulfil this role.

To safeguard their overseas interests and ensure the safe movement of goods, the coming decade may see lesser naval powers like the UK, France and Japan resume their traditional roles as regional naval powers, with all the potential for regional rivalry that that entails. It will be absolutely essential to integrate any resurgent French naval power into wider EU structures.

At the same time, initiatives such as *One Belt, One Road*, and wider cooperation between China, Iran and Russia indicate an epoch-defining shift is occurring in eastern and central Eurasia. It would seem to suggest that the global order is gradually shifting back to the [status quo ante](#) before the rise of the European powers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with the scale of economic and manufacturing activity in eastern Eurasia dwarfing that of the rest of the world.

In this context, the recent announcement by Government of [Global Ireland 2025](#) is very welcome. Ireland must focus its energies on establishing itself as a gateway between the entire Atlantic region (encompassing not just our traditional partners in North America, but Iberia, the Caribbean, Brazil, Argentina, and West Africa), and a slowly cohering European and broader Eurasian market.

However, Ireland should also give consideration to the difficulties that may arise for this state if the US and UK, either together or separately, revert to a traditional '[balance of power](#)' strategy to destabilize European integration and unity, and to frustrate the creation of a shared Eurasian field of economic activity, innovation and growth.

## **2.5 Terrorist incidents and armed conflicts**

Ireland's military has an honourable tradition of peace-keeping service to the UN, and it's one I take great pride in. But the Irish establishment has never accorded Ireland's independent capacity for deterrence the importance it demands. Our armed forces are under-resourced, and the use made of these limited resources is sometimes questionable. We rely wholly on the kindness of external powers to preserve our security.

With a gradual or sudden withdrawal of the American assurance of open sea lanes now on the cards, a breakdown in international peace and security is a possibility, however remote. The EU, either collectively or at a member state level, will have to adjust its policy on defence spending and joint overseas action to meet this new reality. Ireland, too, will have to shift its position.

Although a maritime nation, we will always lack sufficient wealth, resources and time to build and maintain a deep-water naval force. As a democratic nation with a traditional distaste for conscription, we will continue to rely on a small, professional military force made up of volunteers.

Given these limitations, the Irish state must start now to consider what specialised role our military could play in any future European defence framework, the specialised skills it could bring to bear as part of any mission, and the strategic weight this could in turn lend to the creation of a credible deterrence capacity by the state to any future threat to our security and freedom.

As well as maintaining our traditional expertise in peace-keeping missions, then, consideration should be given to complementing this with Defence Forces specialisation in three other areas: amphibious special operations; unconventional warfare; cyber intelligence and cyberwarfare.

In light of the UK's decision to leave the EU, priority should be given to developing stronger defence ties with other EU states.

Participation in the EU Nordic Battle Group has deepened relations between the militaries of Ireland and Sweden. Thanks to its [Amphibious Corp](#), Sweden is a recognised leader in amphibious warfare and operations. Ireland should seek to partner with Sweden in building Irish expertise and capacity in this field.

With regard to unconventional or irregular warfare, the [Fianóglagh](#) (or Army Rangers) already enjoy established relationships with a number of American and European specialist elite units. These should be maintained and expanded.

Finally, the last 10 years have seen Estonia [establish itself as a global heavyweight](#) in cybersecurity-related knowledge, and the country has signed agreements on developing training and cooperation in this area with Austria, Luxembourg and NATO. Ireland needs to come to a similar agreement with Estonia, and explore ways our two small nations can take the initiative in dealing with threats to national and European cybersecurity.

As a further benefit, this will also provide a wider expertise and pool of knowledge for Ireland to draw upon when it comes to addressing the negative impacts of disruptive technology.

#### **4.4 Social cohesion and political stability**

#### **4.5 Migration and integration**

This contributor agrees that international populism can be regarded as rooted in great divides, such as those based on age, geography and wealth. Migration also presents a potential challenge in relation to social cohesion, and the continued successful integration of second and third generation immigrants in Ireland will be essential to future security and prosperity.

But it is also my view that this is one of those areas where a weakness can be turned to advantage.

The compactness of our island geography and our modest population level means Ireland suffers from an almost complete lack of strategic depth, as traditionally conceived. The distance from any point of invasion to the Irish heartland – not to mention to all of our cities – is not great.

In the past, this vulnerability was mitigated by the fragmented political order of the country. Because Gaelic Ireland lacked a national monarch on the English and French model, the English state had to repeatedly expend blood and treasure in conquering and reconquering different regions. Despite this political fragmentation, however, early medieval Ireland was almost unique in possessing a largely unified legal order, and a standardised form of a language unique to itself, and comprehensible not only throughout the island, but across the western isles and into Scotland.

In the present day, almost the opposite holds true. Ireland is largely independent, and the regions of the country have been integrated into a single unitary political economy.

But our native language is very weak, and still recovering from centuries of state-mandated Anglicisation over many centuries. This has had many socio-economic and socio-political consequences, some positive – [some not so positive](#).

But one unexpected positive benefit of our history is that there is little to no foundation (or appetite) for a ‘blood and soil’ conception of Irish nationality. Thanks to the catastrophic centuries of colonisation, dispossession and diasporic dispersal, the prospect of a hard-right, radicalised ‘ethnic Gaelic’ conception of Irish nationality successfully arising is close to zero.

The State must turn the weakness of the Irish language into a strength. This moment presents us with an unprecedented opportunity. We have the opportunity to treat the revival programme not just as ‘a good in itself’, but as a tool for Government to use in [establishing intercultural integration as a founding principle of the Irish nation’s conception of itself](#).

Just as Government makes no apology for presenting our English-speaking workforce as an advantage in itself – regardless of how many acclaimed literary writers we are also blessed with – it should also make no apology for approaching the revival of Irish as another tool that might be used to deliver broader policy objectives.

By promoting the deliberate and systematic revival of Irish as a means for delivering the intercultural integration of Irish society with its newest citizens, we solve three problems.

First, we enrich and diversify the range of [experiences, backgrounds and viewpoints](#) that can be encountered, learned from and drawn upon when conducting one’s life and affairs through Irish, and in this way raise the cultural and societal prestige of the language.

Second, we [inoculate Irish society](#) against the siren call of nativist, racist and sectarian conceptions of Irishness when we successfully revive the Irish language through the shared endeavour and joint commitment of both naturalized and natural-born citizens.

Third, we go some way to mitigating our lack of geographic strategic depth by cultivating cultural strategic depth: ensuring the continuity and autonomy of our national community by being both radically rooted in our own distinctive linguistic and cultural tradition, yet remaining radically open to diversity and difference. This will be a crucial advantage in the years to come, with demographic forecasts projecting an ageing population, and the [consequent impacts on society this brings](#).

This action will complement the increasing profile of the language, especially at a time when the derogation for Irish at an EU level is [ending](#), and the number of Gaelscoileanna throughout the island is growing – [though still nowhere near as much as it should be](#)