11 The Border

"Resting momentarily on a wall of the bridge, I ponder on the confluence of channels as the River Cor flowing below marks the border. A short distance to the north where Armagh meets Monaghan, it will merge with another river and then, further along, between Tynan and Caledon, with yet another. Both those rivers are called the Blackwater, one rising on Sliabh Baegh on the southern side of the Clougher Valley and flowing through Monaghan's Tydavnet, Monaghan and Donagh parishes, the other rising on Murley Mountain and flowing through the Clougher Valley and marking the boundary between Tyrone and Monaghan. Two rivers with the same name is surely a prime example of the duplication brought about from partition of the island." Darach MacDonald, 2018

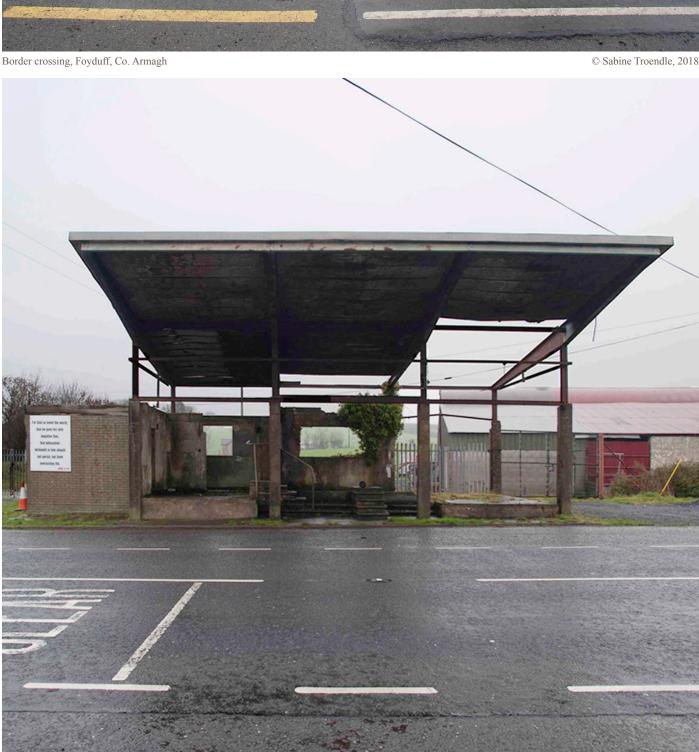


Ulster, out of the nine. Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal with their many Catholic inhabitants were pushed back to the south. No boundary commission was going to change anything and the initial temporary border based on 13th Century county boundaries making its way with remarkable disregard through fields, farms, homes and villages, still runs its arbitrary course today.

cent Protestant minority in the south declined to a mere 5 per cent over the years and the north's one third Catholic minority was dealt with solid unionist supremacist politics which denied them as good as everything except breathing.

To consolidate unionist control, the north made do with only six counties of

Partition was a divisive action and produced divided understanding.



Former customs post, Foyduff, Co. Armagh © Sabine Troendle, 2018 According to Fintan O'Toole, there are 208 official border crossings (and an infinite number of unofficial ones) on the 310 miles border from Carlingford Lough to Lough Foyle in Derry - compared to around 137 on the entire Eastern flank of the European Union, from the Baltic all the way down to Turkey. Most of the time the border is invisible, in a river, a field, squiggling through forests and small country roads. It just goes all over the place and only the changing of speed from miles to kilometres, the yellow road marks and the remarkable frequent appearance of the 'town' Amach give away that you've crossed into the other jurisdiction. (One can hardly blame Jacob Rees-Mogg for not visiting the border during Brexit negotiations, because "doing so wouldn't offer any insight beyond what one can get by studying it. Going and wandering across a few roads isn't going to tell me anything about that further.") But the border is not only a series of mostly invisible crossings. It's a witness of disrupted identity and lasting trauma. It divided functional communities and alienated people with identical beliefs, attitudes and traditions. Whereas people were going to the closest town unhindered, now they had to get off the bus at customs, walk over the border and board another bus, that town was now in a foreign country. Many a thriving small town has gone to sleep losing their natural footfall to different currencies and custom rules - and the Troubles which turned the Irish border into a militarised frontier of checkpoints and the border towns into fortified army camps.

Crossmaglen, Co. Armagh © Sabine Troendle, 2019 60 #SupportLiamCampbell Border crossing, Carlingford, Co Louth © Sabine Troendle, 2021 The heavy army presence at the border during the Troubles, their watchtowers, helicopters and very sophisticated surveillance technology could not stop the IRA from crossing the border at any given time (just as it didn't stop any security personnel by that matter). It's as porous as a Swiss cheese and simply unpolice-

able. And yet with Brexit and the uncertainty over the outcome of the protocol negotiations the threat of a hard border on the island of Ireland creeps back into the political arena and the hearts and minds of the people on this island.

"Anyone who thinks these buildings won't become targets, just as they were during the lifetime of their original use, is living in Brexit la la land. Placing police back into a security role in border areas as protectors of customs posts is a propaganda dream for those who would like to see a return to conflict in Northern Ireland. A hard border is a lottery win for the dissidents who have been using Brexit as a

"If you have border installations, people will shoot at them — that's a certainty. The people who shoot at them will not represent a majority, but how many people does it take to organise and carry out an ambush? Maybe four or five people. And once these installations are shot at, they will have to then be

And in the words of life-long political activist Eamonn McCann –

The Chief Constable Simon Byrne scratches his head over the potential of having to police the border and waits for answers from London. The SCOTTISH POLICING FEDERATION has expressed concerns for the safety of officers sent to Northern Ireland. They have been reassured that they would be well looked after. Some sales of disused border police stations have been halted by the PSNI in case they need to turn them into fortified customs posts. The crime reporter

Allison Morris, was pointing out that -

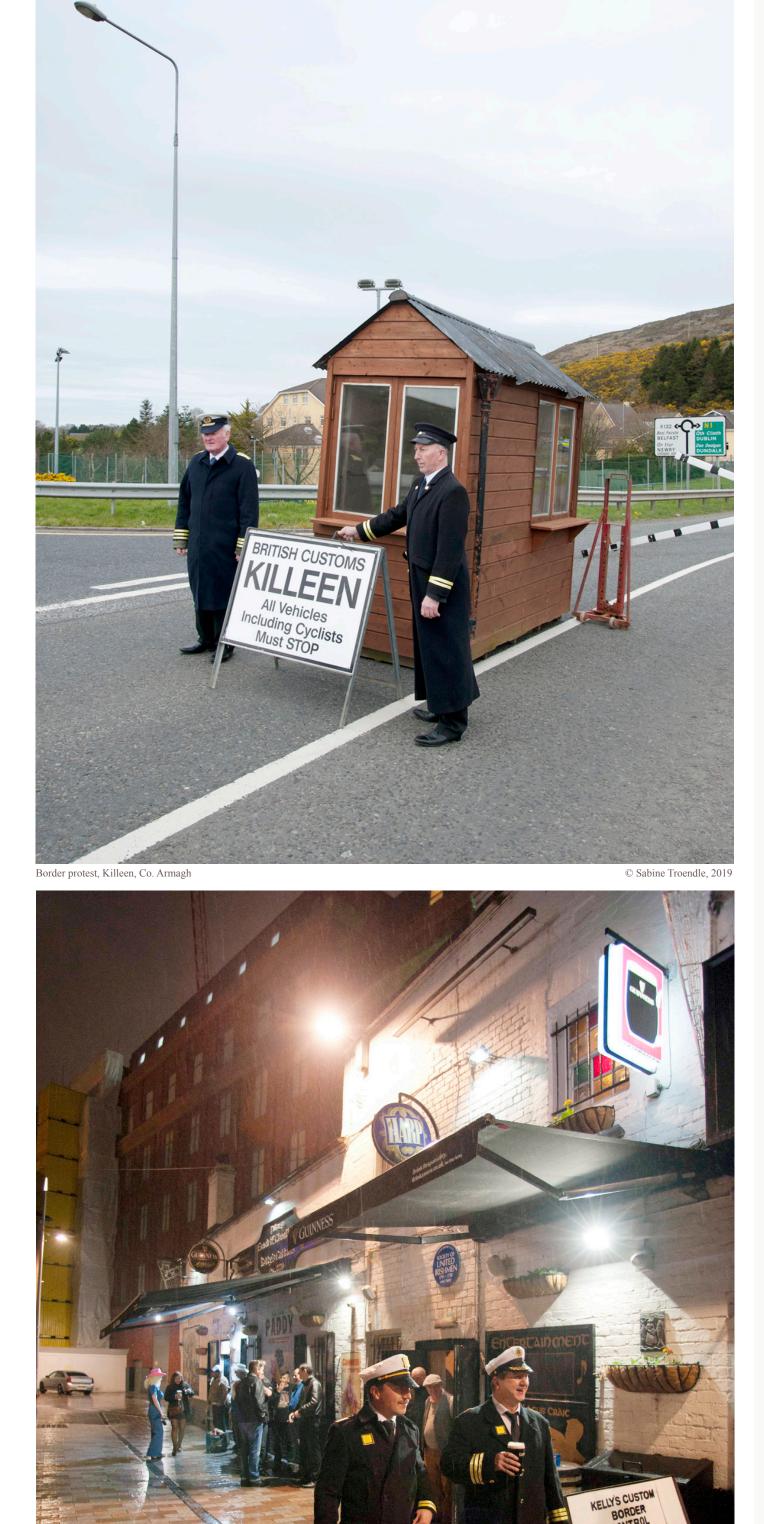
recruiting sergeant."

Border protest, Killeen, Co. Armagh



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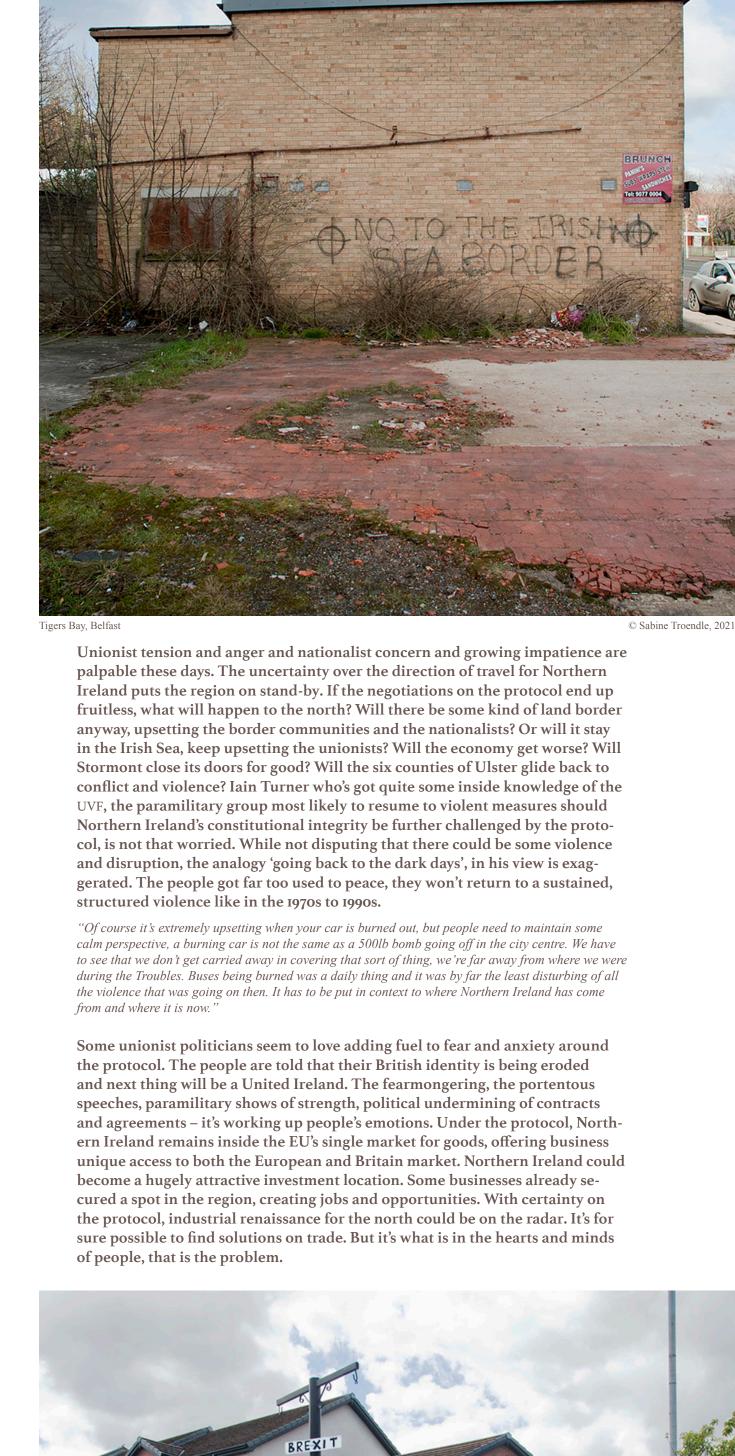


KELLYS CUSTOMS

To prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland, EU regulatory checks on certain goods from Britain are now being made at Northern Irish ports such as Larne, creating a border between Britain and Northern Ireland. It doesn't take a genius to see anger rising in loyalist/unionist communities who believe that in this case, they are treated differently from the rest of the United Kingdom which makes them somehow less British than the British on the actual island of Britain. The protocol is cutting them off their mother land and pushes them towards a United Ireland. They won't admit it, but the very thing that should have steadied the position of Northern Ireland within the Union - Brexit - is now turning against them, making a border poll and a possible reunification with the south more probable than any IRA campaign throughout the 100-year-

Border protest, Kelly's Cellar, Belfast





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Leftovers of car, Tigers Bay, Belfast



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