



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

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Brexit must not undermine peace process, says Hillary Clinton on Dublin visit;

The former US secretary of state and presidential candidate was at Trinity College to receive an honorary degree.

Hillary Clinton has said Brexit should not be allowed to undermine the Northern Ireland peace process.

The former US secretary of state and presidential candidate was at Trinity College Dublin to receive an honorary degree.

She said the 1998 Good Friday Agreement which largely ended violence in Northern Ireland set an example for the rest of the world of what was possible when citizens came together to demand peace and worked to preserve it.

Brexit should not be allowed to undermine the peace that people voted, fought and even died for, Hillary Clinton

She added: "As the Brexit debate rages on, I continue to believe in the value of the European Union, and of a Europe that is whole, free and at peace.

"No matter the outcome of these discussions, Brexit should not be allowed to undermine the peace that people voted, fought and even died for."

The impact of Britain's withdrawal from the bloc next year on the Northern Ireland peace process which ended three decades of bloody violence is disputed.

The future of the Irish border is one of the most vexed outstanding issues facing negotiators in Brussels.

A variety of North/South co-operation mechanisms were established as part of the Good Friday Agreement.

Mrs Clinton first visited Northern Ireland in 1995 at a crucial time for the peace process.

She accompanied Bill Clinton ▼ as he became the first serving US president to visit Northern Ireland and they were greeted by huge crowds of well-wishers.

They switched on the Christmas lights in Belfast during a hugely symbolic visit.

On Thursday Mrs Clinton met Taoiseach Leo Varadkar ▼ at Government Buildings in Dublin to discuss gender equality.

The informal discussion came on the same day European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker ▼ and the EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier ▼ also held talks with Mr Varadkar.

Source: Belfast Telegraph

28 June 2018

'This is something no nation state has ever done';
Communities on the Border between Derry and Donegal feel deeply
uneasy about the future

Killea is a fairly typical Border village. A short drive from Derry, it's a commuter spot for Northern Ireland's second city, causing a recent increase in population.

The village's most distinguishable characteristic though, is that its streets and houses stretch across two separate sovereign states: the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic. The multi-jurisdictional reality of life in the village has been a non-issue for locals since the late 1990s when the Border fully opened. Brexit, however, has created unease about the future.

Michael Doherty is a timber merchant based in Killea. A small river which flows around his business marks where the Border lies.

"We straddle the Border, so we work North and South, covering Donegal, Derry, Tyrone, Belfast, Dublin. Wherever we can get work, we take it," he said.

"We also import an awful lot of timber from the North, from England and from the South of Ireland. We work throughout the country, both selling and buying.

"We don't actually see a Border, except on paper for VAT returns and things like that, but not for day-to-day work.

"Our lorries would cross the Border five, 10 times every day. Even to go to the shop we would cross the Border."

Mr Doherty is concerned that a more physical manifestation of the Border will impact upon his drivers' delivery speeds, amongst other things.

"Our customer base, who are North and South as well, they will have to go through a Border checkpoint to get in or out. A lot of people won't want to do that. They'll just find it's easier to go somewhere else. I'm hugely concerned about that."

'It's impossible' For most people living close to it, the Border has represented something that exists politically

but is virtually invisible in everyday life since the Good Friday agreement.

Ruairí O'Kane is from Derry but lives in the Donegal village of Muff.

Working in the North in public relations, but living in the Republic, there are days when he repeatedly crosses the Border.

The former SDLP press officer says people in the region have legitimate fears about the impact that Brexit could have on the Border.

"On a purely practical level, driving in and out of Donegal and Derry yesterday, for example, I think I did that drive, over and across what would have been the Border six or seven times unhindered.

"What happens in the future? Am I going to have to stop every time I nip in and out of Derry just during my day-to-day life?"

Denis Bradley's life is reflective of an existence which chimes with many Border dwellers. Born in Bunrana in Co Donegal, but schooled in Derry city, much of his family remains in the county of his birth while he resides and works on the other side of the Border. Formerly a figure of influence in the peace process, he was later a vice-chair of the policing board and then joint-figurehead of a taskforce devising plans to deal with the legacy of the Troubles.

Mr Bradley says he is "as near convinced as a human can be that it's impossible to put a hard border in place".

"I don't know if people outside of that fully understand that there is kind of a change in the mentality and the expectation of people... When the army and the police went and the Border opened up, which was nearly 20 years ago, there was a deep, deep freedom in that.

"I don't know how you put border checks back. I just don't think that the people would accept it.

"This is probably extreme but I'm going to say it anyway: it's like trying to put apartheid back into South Africa."

"I might be wrong, but the people I talk to along the Border, like the farmers and shopkeepers, they wonder; are these people crazy, are these people mad, are these people out of their mind, do they realise what they're at?"

Police

Maintaining a hard border, he said, would require the unrealistic prospect of either the police or the army managing it.

"I think it's very interesting that the PSNI have been quietly, but very determinedly saying, 'we can't do this, we can't police this situation, this is beyond our capabilities'.

"So are we going to call the army back in again? I don't think that's going to happen, I just don't think that it's possible and if it's not doable, then you have to come up with some other solution."

Mr Bradley doesn't subscribe to the view that Brexit will cause a surge in political violence as he detects little public appetite for a return to conflict. He also believes that people, particularly the nationalist community, don't comprehend the rationale of the arch-Brexiteers inside the British government.

"There is a bit of shock at the DUP," he said. "The nationalist population was already very angry with them, but they are kind of shocked by them now... Are the DUP insensitive beyond belief or are they so scared?"

As a figure intimately familiar with the politics of the peace process, he feels the Brexit climate will increase discussion of Irish reunification and the permanent ending of partition.

"The debate has now got to be in the broad discussion around what unity looks like. One hundred years ago nationalism had to adapt to living within the British system and I think Brexit means now, somewhere down the road, unionism is going to have to begin to adapt to Irish unity.

"Thankfully they're not going to be forced to do it, but that they are going to have to come to some growing realisation that nationalism is now so far out and is so dominant.

"It might be five, 10, 20, or 30 years because people are very relaxed about it, they're not pressing for it, they're not saying it has to happen tomorrow, but they can see the beginning of that change."

UK break up Gregory Campbell was brought up in the Waterside in Derry. The prominent DUP politician has been the m

ember of parliament for East Londonderry since 2001.

Mr Campbell's party has long opposed UK membership of the European Union. Now the Westminster arithmetic has left British prime minister Theresa May reliant on DUP support.

He champions what he sees as the positives of Brexit for Northern Ireland whilst attempting to dispel what he describes as unsubstantiated fear-mongering by ardent remainers. He does, however, understand why there is some apprehension.

"Part of the reason for that are the disgraceful and unwarranted comments that some people have made. Tony Blair and John Major, who came to the peace bridge in Londonderry on the week of the referendum, quite disgracefully, said a vote to leave could create violence in Northern Ireland."

He insists there will not be a hard border: "There are not going to be large infrastructures and there are not going to be cameras and customs posts. All of that is not going to happen.

"The best reassurance will be in the next two or three years when people see that that is the case, that is what actually happens and life can continue."

Mr Campbell feels that Mr Bradley's assertion that Brexit will ultimately lead to the break up of the UK is misguided.

"I heard the same propositions being made at the Scottish [independence] referendum and Scotland is now more in favour of remaining within the UK than it was two or three years ago at the time of that referendum."

The Irish Government has said it is working to diminish the impact of any Brexit settlement on the island of Ireland. But, Campbell added: "If they had been confined solely to ensuring the benefits of business within the Republic, they would have been entirely understandable, but they seem to have allowed themselves to have been used as some sort of greater pawn."

"Both the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste have engaged in some very, very unfortunate and regrettable comments and statements. Hopefully we can all learn from these things and hopefully they can learn as well."

He conceded the UK should be further along with trying to sort out the Border.

"Unfortunately some of the discussions have been quite difficult," he said. "The EU has dug its feet in, in terms of proposals, but you expect this. This is something, remember, that no nation state has ever done before."

"We are in uncharted territory... We will get there in the end, be it another year, 18 months or thereabouts. In five years' time people will wonder: what was all the fuss about?"

"I think Brexit will open up opportunities, not just for the northwest, but the whole of Northern Ireland, particularly with the close proximity to the EU."

"There will be business opportunities now for people who want to expand into the UK, into the EU and beyond the EU. The expanding markets outside the EU are exactly that, they are expanding, whereas the EU as a percentage share of world trade is contracting."

"We just need to ensure that businesses here are prepared to take advantage of that. It can be a win-win, and hopefully it will be."

Source: The Irish Times