

Dear Prime Minister and Taoiseach,

I wish to offer you a proposal that you may find common interest in adopting by way of resolving the Irish border issue within the EU Brexit talks.

It deals with the trenchant opposition of the DUP to placing the border in the Irish Sea, and it provides a solid and prosperous basis for the future economies of all parties – east and west of the Irish Sea, as well as north and south of the existing border.

It requires that you both invest substantially but it promises high returns - not only a Brexit resolution but an Irish Question resolution too, thereby delivering even more substantial returns to Britain and to Ireland.

Proposal

- a) That the UK government incentivises those ‘crown jewels’ companies planning to move across the English Channel in order to maintain their access to the Single Market/Customs Union, to transfer their operations to NI instead. That the Irish government be free to incentivise other GB companies not considered to be ‘crown jewels’ to transfer to Ireland.
- b) That, because this investment will transform the economy of NI so it becomes big enough to regenerate by itself, both Governments (and the EU) jointly make a pre-condition of their financial support for this initiative that Northern Ireland becomes a separate member of the EU and adopts Intradependence as its new constitution.
- c) That both Governments continue to guarantee the economy of Northern Ireland in line with the Barnett Formula and Intradependence, but proportional to those NI citizens self-designating as Ulster British and Ulster Irish – as per the policy known as Consumer Choice Democracy.
- d) That both Governments agree to two amendments of the GFA so that i) any border poll includes a third option – a United Northern Ireland – alongside either United Kingdom or United Ireland, and ii) a 55% of the vote is required for any change to the constitution.
- e) That where a mandate is being sought for a United Ireland within Northern Ireland, a vote be held on the same day within Ireland to establish the level of support for a United Ireland within Ireland and only where the outcome is more than 55% both north and south of the border could a united Ireland be agreed.

Rationale

- a) A 2% transfer would double the size of the NI economy and give it the critical mass necessary to make it capable of economic regeneration. Let this be prioritised so Unionists are persuaded that this is a pill they can swallow. The scale of economic regeneration will bring hitherto unimagined prosperity and transform the mindset of the people north and south of the border so that peace will be a natural outcome.

Such a policy would considerably soften the effects of Brexit on the UK and Irish economies. Avoids cliff edge for companies involved. Key staff transfers will face no language barriers. Schooling and other social services will be familiar to the families of those transferring. Ireland, north and south, is well known for a high quality of education.

- b) Intradependence and Consumer Choice Democracy together not only neutralise conflict between Nationalist and Unionist and take away the threat of one side dominating the other but create a solid basis for the removal of fear and the growth of trust between our divided communities. Therefore, their implementation will underpin the confidence with which this investment can be made. This growing confidence will secure additional inward investment in Ireland, north and south, enable both economies to prosper, and ensure a handsome return to both Governments on the investments made.
- c) The continued support of both Governments and the choice that NI citizens can make between them in paying their taxes and receiving their benefits will allow all citizens to express their cultural allegiances and build a sense of a wider family of nations and yet let us focus on our common interests. Ireland will be seen to be actively supporting the NI economy and paying its way – hitherto considered a pipedream by many.
- d) The present GFA proposal of a 50% plus 1 border poll decision is a one way ticket that has the effect of putting a gun to every Unionist's head and dramatically increasing tensions in NI and beyond. It could never lead to anything other than a disunited Ireland which will be self-defeating. Plus, it makes any effort by Nationalists to create trust and win over Unionists nigh on futile. If we are ever to enjoy unity as a people we must first learn to live and work together in harmony and prosperity. Only then will we persuade our neighbours in GB and Ireland that they too can trust us and work with us. That is why we need this chance to build prosperity together and why this proposal will work for us all.
- e) To create greater peace of mind for doubting Unionists in a situation where NI leaves the UK in order to achieve economic self-sufficiency - and prosperity beyond what it could otherwise achieve - those Unionists will need the additional reassurance that a disunited Ireland cannot be imposed upon them. While Intradependence itself will prevent that from happening – just as it will rule out direct rule from Westminster – Unionists will want to feel as far from that cliff edge as possible.

So how will this persuade the DUP to play ball? By bringing 50-100,000 pro-union voters from GB and shoring up their vote; by enabling them to champion themselves as saviours of the NI economy; by heading off a united Ireland; by saving them from having to jump ship with Arlene Foster, and by explaining that doubling the size of the NI economy will more than compensate for tariffs.

The UK is facing a bill of c£40bn to leave the EU. The transfer of the 'crown jewels' to NI – including 50-100,000 key workers – may add c£1-2bn more (on the basis of £20k per worker). But it would be worth another £40bn to not only resolve the Irish border, secure a clean Brexit, safeguard the jewels of the UK economy and create a back door for the GB economy into the EU, but also to make English-speaking Ireland the first destination for EU investment from North America and China. And, if the EU does go belly-up, we will still be neighbours with a mutual sense of family. Let this vision secure our future.

Yours sincerely

Garvin Crawford
Enc. Consumer Choice Democracy, The Brexit Opportunity