

# The security threat for Northern Ireland

In the views of six political leaders



# Abstract

This thesis examines in what way Brexit is constructed as a security threat with regards to the Irish border. If the UK were to leave the EU a border would have to be installed, but installing a border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland would violate the Good Friday Agreement. Brexit has resulted in a prolonged process because the politicians cannot agree on a withdrawal agreement, which has created an uncertain situation with the threats to the security growing by every day. The method used to answer this was a qualitative content analysis, which created a coding table. The coding table helped assess the level of security threat Theresa May, Arlene Foster, Mary Lou McDonald, Enda Kenny/Leo Varadkar, and Donald Tusk viewed in the military, economic and political sector. The study concludes that the different political leaders highlight different concerns and on different levels, but that all of them view the Irish border the source of the biggest security threat.

*Keywords:* Brexit, Northern Ireland, security, EU, Irish border, Theresa May, Arlene Foster, Mary Lou McDonald, Enda Kenny, Leo Varadkar, Donald Tusk, Good Friday Agreement

*Word count:* 11 633

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# 1 Introduction

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016 the United Kingdom (UK) voted through the referendum to leave the European Union (EU). This referendum has led to a long debate about how and when the UK should leave the EU, also known as Brexit. However, Brexit is more complicated than that. It affects the Republic of Ireland in a negative way, because of their relationship with Northern Ireland after the thirty year long armed conflict, the Troubles. The Troubles reached its culmination in 1998 when a peace agreement was signed, the Good Friday Agreement. The peace agreement is a treaty that is meant to manage and restore the relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and between the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The fact that both states were a part of the EU was a big reason as to why the peace agreement was signed, since it increased openness and provided a better chance for cooperation amongst the whole Irish island. Moreover, the EU's Single Market meant that a border and custom checks between them were no longer necessary, since it instituted free movement of people, goods, services and capital amongst all its members in 1993 (Doyle & Connolly 2017: 139; Kirby 2019). It would therefore be problematic if Northern Ireland would leave the EU.

One of the biggest questions that have arisen from Brexit for Northern Ireland has been the issue of an UK/EU border. Is a land border on the island of Ireland preferred, or is it a water border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK? The matter of the border poses a lot of questions regarding the threat for the security on Northern Ireland. A border on the island of Ireland would both be very expensive and difficult to control, especially since the total length of the border would be 499 kilometres (World Atlas 2019). Moreover, it could result in an armed conflict on Ireland again. Having a border as a barrier can be complicated or as Vladimir Kolossov explains it 'not only inefficient but objectively harmful to society and the economy' (Kolossov 2005: 623).

The situation around the border on Northern Ireland has become more tense throughout 2019. As a result, paramilitary groups are expanding again, with a new Irish Republic Army (IRA) establishing themselves via car bombings and shootings (de la Reguera 2019). The situation escalated further on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2019 when a young journalist, Lyra McKee, was accidentally shot to death whilst covering the riots in Londonderry/Derry (BBC News 2019). The prospect of Brexit has resulted in physical violence, but it has led to security threats in other forms too. It poses a threat to the economy and to the medical supply as well (EMA 2019). The Irish border was barely mentioned in the Brexit referendum debate or in the campaigns. The leave campaigns focused on immigration and

potential economic benefits, with great new trade deals and that they would save millions, which could fund their National Health Service (NHS) instead (Kirby 2019). The absence of attention to the Irish border has resulted in a problem they have yet to resolve.

The reinstatement of a border and the backstop face a lot of questions, which have to be solved in order to proceed with Brexit. There are a couple of options for the Irish border. The option that both the UK and the EU want to avoid is a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. If such a border would be installed it would mean isolation for the nationalists in Northern Ireland. Another option is to put the border in the Irish Sea and keep Northern Ireland in the EU's Customs Union, but that would betray the unionists in Northern Ireland. Both of these options would violate the Good Friday Agreement, which everyone wants to protect. A third option is for the UK to stay in the EU's Customs Union, but that option is not acceptable for the Brexiters in the British Parliament, since they want control of their own border. The UK would have to install a border somewhere if they were to leave the EU. The problem is that they cannot agree on an option, which has resulted in a deadlock. There is however a fourth option, a reunification of the island of Ireland. This option would mostly favour the Irish nationalists. The reunification would entail Northern Ireland leaving the UK and re-joining the Republic of Ireland, therefore would Northern Ireland no longer be a part of Brexit, and the Good Friday Agreement would be kept (Campbell 2019; Vox, 2018). Brexit is therefore a relevant subject to get a better knowledge of in order to understand what different security threats the Irish border presents.

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to an understanding of how Brexit affects Northern Ireland regarding military, economic and political security by examining statements from Theresa May, Arlene Foster, Mary Lou McDonald, Enda Kenny/Leo Varadkar, and Donald Tusk and see on what scale they view the security threat in order to understand where the biggest threat lays. The research question will therefore be:

*In what way is Brexit constructed as a security threat in relation to the Irish border?*

## 2 Theory

The following section contains a brief summary of previous research on Brexit with regard to the island of Ireland, the theoretical framework and the research contribution.

### 2.1 Previous research

Even if the subject Brexit is a relatively new phenomenon plenty of research, articles and books have already been produced. One book that highlights the different parts and aspects of Brexit is “The Law and Politics of Brexit” edited by Federico Fabbrini. The book consists of the background of Brexit, the implications of Brexit on a political and legal basis for the UK and the EU, and how the EU will proceed after Brexit. Moreover, it covers how it affects the different regions of the UK. Additionally, a lot of the research done about Brexit and Northern Ireland has been about what might happen and how a Brexit could affect Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland with regard to their history. It especially focuses on the issues with a border and the backstop, with the peace process being a focal part (Guelke 2017; Doyle & Connelly 2017). The previous research is a mix of explanatory, prescriptive, and predictive research. An example of predictive study is Cliona Kelly’s article “Consumer reform in Ireland and the UK: Regulatory divergence before, after and without Brexit” (2018). This thesis will not be predictive, therefore have this kind of articles only been a source of background information rather than inspiration.

### 2.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is based on Barry Buzan’s book “People, States & Fear”, and on Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde’s book “Security: A New Framework for Analysis”, which stems from “People, States & Fear”. Both books write about five different security sectors: the military, economic, environmental, societal, and political sector. The research will use “People, States & Fear” as the central book. The reason for this is that it focuses on security, whereas the other book focuses on securitisation. To eliminate confusion, for this study has the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of “People, States & Fear” been used, and is therefore from a later year than “Security: A New Framework for Analysis”. For the purpose of this paper a sector is viewed as “the international system through a

lens that highlights one particular aspect of the relationship and interaction among all its constituent units” (Buzan et al. 1998: 27). This means that the different sectors can have different or the same security actors and/or referent objects. The sectors can overlap on some things, but they can oppose each other on other points. This studies framework will only include the military, economic, and political sector. The environmental sector is excluded from this study because it is about the relationship between human activity and the planetary biosphere (Buzan et al. 1998: 5). This is not a reason for why the security on Northern Ireland is threatened. The societal sector is the relationship of collective identity (Buzan et al. 1998: 5), which could be an interesting aspect to this study. The reason for its exclusion is based on the limited scope of the research. It would otherwise be an interesting aspect to look at, since a potential Brexit can have social implications for Ireland.

A state can have vulnerabilities and face threats, either a combination of both, only one of them, or neither of them. This depends on their socio-political cohesion and their power. A consequence of being a strong state and a strong power is that it is relatively invulnerable to all kinds of threats. The opposite applies if the state is weak in both aspects and has difficulties dealing with the threats. Being only a weak power means a higher risk for political threats, and being a weak state means a higher chance of military threats. Furthermore, the threats that a strong state and power tends to face is major challenges or threats that is difficult to stop, for example nuclear war or climate change (Buzan 2016: 85-88). The UK is a strong state and power, but because of Brexit it face threats for the security on Northern Ireland. Brexit is a major challenge and is difficult to solve, because of the different views and opinions. Security is a broad term and it includes different kinds of security and on different levels: individual, national, and international. In broad terms security means “survival in the face of existential threats” (Buzan et al. 1998: 27; Buzan 2016: 23). An existential threat can be very different and is not the same across the different security sectors. Therefore security will be defined within the different sectors with help from the referent objects and the security actors.

### 2.2.1 Military sector

In practice, the military security is about a government’s ability to maintain itself against internal and external military threats. Moreover, it is about the use of military power to defend the state or government against non-military threats to their existence, for example migrants or rival ideologies (Buzan et al. 1998: 50). A military threat is a traditional threat to the national security, and it usually threatens all parts of the state (Buzan 2016: 89). The military sector has a few referent objects, with the state being the most prominent one, another potential referent object for the military sector is religion (Buzan et al. 1998: 49, 53). Furthermore, the military sector is full of actors that influence the dynamics of the sector without being either the referent object or the securitising actor (Buzan et



al. 1998: 56). A military threat that results in actions can cause a lot of problems to several levels of society. It does not only affect the state's protective functions, it can do damage through the layers of social and individual interest, which can cause severe damage. However, a military threat can favour some parts of the society depending on where the threat comes from, since it can benefit their cause (Buzan 2016: 89). Additionally, a military threat can vary in its severity and its danger, since it can vary in its target from being minor and specific to being general and abstract (Buzan 2016: 90).

### 2.2.2 Economic sector

The economic security is the most difficult sector to define, especially since it is coloured by different ideologies, which forms different views on the economy (Buzan 2016: 93). The economic security centres around instability and inequality. A key factor in the economic security is to be able to create a stable condition where actors can compete mercilessly (Buzan 2016: 93; Buzan et al. 1998: 97-98). The referent object ranges from individuals through classes and states, to the more abstract and complex system of the global market itself (Buzan et al. 1998: 97, 100). Furthermore, the referent object and security actors for the economic sector can be found on all levels in the society, but the most common and important referent objects are states and the Liberal International Economic Order (LIEO). Firms are the most efficient security actors, although states and Intergovernmental Organisations (IGO) are also prominent security actors (Buzan et al 1998: 100, 103). The fact that there are a lot of actors and not just the state creates complications, since it is not easy to identify them, especially in a market economy where there are a lot of independent actors that play a big and vital role for the economy. This means that the state's role is not as clear or easily defined as in the military and political sector (Buzan 2016: 93). Even if it is difficult to handle the economic security, it is a vital role for countries stability and for its security, since a bad economy can contribute to becoming a failed state and affect the growth of a country. Lastly if something gets constituted as an existential security threat within the economic sector it is dependent on the referent object (Buzan et al 1998: 103-104).

### 2.2.3 Political sector

The political sector is about administrative stability of social order(s), with its core made up of threats to a state's sovereignty. Sovereignty and the refusal to acknowledge any other political authority higher than themselves are the two principles for a state (Buzan 2016: 90, 107; Buzan et al. 1998: 141). The political sector has two directions; one includes the equivalent non-military threats to political units other than states, the other focus on political security in defence system-level referents. In a sense, all security is political, which makes this sector very broad (Buzan et al. 1998: 141). The most common political threats are

towards states, especially their national identity, organising ideology and institutions that express them (Buzan 2016: 90). The threats to the political security are typically made into external pillars of stability, recognition, or internal pillars of stability, legitimacy (Buzan et al. 1998: 145). Within the political sector territorial states are the main referent object, but quasi-superstates, like the EU, and transnational movements such as world religions, like the Catholic Church, can also be the referent object. If states are the referent object then governments are the security actors (Buzan et al. 1998: 145-146).

The political sector is mainly made up of sovereign states. Different issues of threats and vulnerability can be approached on the basis that a state consists of three elements: idea, physical base, and institution. Threats that are made to the physical base mostly concern the military, economic and environmental sector. This means that idea and institution concerns the political sector. A state is mainly held together by nationalism and political ideology, therefore if those are threatened it can threaten the political order's stability. The political institutions are built on the ideas. A questioning of the governmental structure, to the territorial integrity of the state, or to the states existents are all potential threats within the political sector. As mentioned before, the main threats in the political sector is about legitimacy or denial of recognition (Buzan 2016: 58-59; Buzan et al. 1998: 150).

## 2.3 The research contribution

The fact that Brexit is affecting the relationships on the island of Ireland is an established truth. The previous research on Brexit has been about predicting the outcome of Brexit, therefore this paper will focus on how Brexit is constructed as a security threat by leading politicians in the UK, the Republic of Ireland and the EU. This gap is what this paper aims to fill with the help of Buzan's theory, since this theory has previously been applied on Brexit but not in this context. This thesis will use Buzan's theory to construct a coding table to analyse the different levels of security threats that the different leaders see and highlight in their statements, see *3.4.1 Coding Table*.

It would be interesting to examine how nationality and ideology affects their opinion on the situation. However, for that to be possible this paper would need another theory and a different method. It is therefore excluded from this paper because of its limited scope. It is a chance for further research on the subject, and to get an even better understanding of Brexit.

## 3 Method

In this section the different methodological choices is presented and explained. The focal part is the research design, the choice of the political leaders, the material and the operationalizing of the sectors and how the research question will be answered.

### 3.1 Research design

To be able to answer the research question the design will be a qualitative descriptive case study with a qualitative content analysis of political leaders statements about the security threats Brexit poses for the island of Ireland. The purpose is to analyse on what level different political leaders view different security threats. Because of the restraints and the limited scope for this study a selection of how many political leaders and how many occasions of statements that would be examined was necessary. Due to an election in the Republic of Ireland in 2017, which falls into the studies time period, there had to be two leaders from the Republic of Ireland, since it is the perspective of the Irish Prime Minister that is sought after.

### 3.2 Choice of political leaders

The selection of the political leaders is based on their different ideologies, roles, and nationalities, in order to get a broad perspective on the situation. The first political leader is Theresa May, who is the current Prime Minister of the UK, succeeding David Cameron who chose to resign after the Brexit vote was finalised. May is the leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party (also known as the Tories). The Tories ideologies are conservatism, economic liberalism and British unionism (Lord Norton of Louth & Webb 2019). On the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2016 May stated, whilst campaigning to become the next Tory leader, that “Brexit means Brexit” (The Associated Press 2019).

The second leader is Arlene Foster, who is the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). DUP works closely with the Tories in the British Parliament, and is a British unionist party that wants England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to stay a sovereign state under the UK. It is the largest political party in Northern Ireland. Apart from being British unionists they have an ideology of conservatism

and Euroscepticism. Their voters are mainly from the protestant community in Northern Ireland, as well as the politicians in DUP (My DUP 2019; Arthur & Cowell-Meyers 2019). DUP was the only major party that opposed the Good Friday Agreement (Kelly 2019).

The leader of Sinn Féin, Mary Lou McDonald is the third leader in this study. Sinn Féin is the second largest political party in Northern Ireland, and is an Irish nationalist party. They were in favour of the Good Friday Agreement, and strive for a reunited Ireland. They advocate for a democratic socialist ideology, but they are mostly nationalists and Irish republicanism. They are a party with mainly catholic voters and represent the catholic community in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Cowell-Meyers & Arthur 2019).

The fourth leader is the Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland (also known as Taoiseach). However, because of an election in 2017 two people will be used in this study, Enda Kenny and Leo Varadkar. They are both a part of Fine Gael, which means they have similar opinions. The party is pro-Europeanism, liberal conservatism, and Christian democracy (Marsh 2019).

The fifth and final leader is the current president of the European Council and the leader of the European People's Party (EPP), Donald Tusk (Wallenfeldt 2019). The EPP is the party group that Fine Gael is a member of and formerly the Tories, before Cameron chose to leave that party group in 2009 (Politico 2009). Tusks ideologies are pro-Europeanism, Christian democracy and liberalism (Wallenfeldt 2019).

### 3.3 Selection of material

The different statements that will be analysed are their official statements on Brexit. The statements from Foster and McDonald will therefore be collected from their respective political party websites. The statements from May and Kenny/Varadkar will be collected from their respective official government websites for the Prime Minister. Lastly, the statements from Tusk will be collected from the European Councils official website. In order to find the correct and relevant statements, the search has first been narrowed down to only include the statements of the chosen political leader to be certain that there is not any statements from other people commentating on what the six political leaders have said. A filter has thereafter been applied with the word 'Brexit'.

In order to get a broader perspective on the situation and to see if their views on the security threat have changed overtime the statements will come from a 3-year time period. The statements will be collected over a timeline elapsing from the referendum vote on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016 to the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2019. During this time period a lot of statements have been about Brexit. In order to choose the

relevant statements, they will be strategically selected from important dates and occasions in the development of Brexit.

The first selected occasion is their first statements about Brexit after the result of the referendum vote. The time period will vary a bit between the statements, but the important part is that it is the first statement after the results in order to know their starting opinion. The second occasion is after the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2017, when Theresa May invoked Article 50 in the Lisbon Treaty. This meant that Brexit was a fact and that the UK now had two years to negotiate a deal to leave the EU. The third occasion is around the time after the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2017, when the first UK-EU-exit negotiations began. The fourth statement is from when the official withdrawal agreement was published, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2018. The fifth date is the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2019, when the British Parliament voted for the Brexit deal and rejected it. The sixth occasion is from the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2019, when the UK was supposed to leave the EU (Aljazeera 2019). The last occasion is after the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2019 when journalist Lyra McKee was fatally shot in the riots in Derry, Northern Ireland.

### 3.4 Qualitative content analysis and operationalization

The method used for this thesis is a qualitative content analysis, which is useful when the purpose is to examine the content and see how much something is mentioned in a broad number of texts (Boréus & Kohl 2018: 49). The content analyse method use a coding table to analyse the broad material, which this thesis will use to be able to draw conclusions about how the different leaders view has changed over time. Historically this method has been used to analyse quantitative research, but during the 20<sup>th</sup> century it has began to be used for qualitative research as well (Boréus & Kohl 2018: 49). The qualitative content analyse method aims to categorise and break down parts of a text to answer the research question. The purpose of the method is to be able to analyse a broad sample of texts in the same way, to be consistent in order to view the different aspects in a similar way to avoid biases. The purpose is to systematically describe the content of the speeches and statements by categorising it with a coding table (Boréus & Kohl 2018: 50). This method is suited to find patterns in a broad selection of text (Boréus & Kohl 2018: 51-52, 55).

In order to use this method and analyse the severity of the security threat according to the chosen political leaders the three different sectors will be operationalized separately. The level of the threat will be done on a scale from 1 to 4 in the coding table, where 1 is the lowest and 4 is the highest on the scale.

### *Military sector*

If nothing about the military sector is mentioned in the statement the security level will be marked a 1. When there is a comment or discussion about different political ideologies that refers to a military threat or if migration or religion is a reason for instability it will be marked a 2. It will be marked a 3 if there is a mention of violence and they have a solution on how to deal with it. Lastly, a 4 is when they do not have a solution on how to calm down or solve a military threat, but knows that something needs to be done.

### *Economic sector*

When nothing about the economic sector is mentioned it will be marked as a 1. When there is a comment or discussion about inequality or instability, which could be a bad or unstable economic development it will be marked as a 2. If they state they are worry that companies could become bankrupt or a state could become a failed state because of bankruptcy it is marked as a 3. A 4 on the economic scale is if a state would become a failed state or a company would become bankrupt as an outcome of Brexit.

### *Political sector*

Within the political sector a 1 mean that nothing about the political aspect is mentioned. The security threat level will be marked a 2 if there is a comment or discussion about the political aspect, such as a threat to the stability or the legitimacy of the state. If there is a threat to the territorial integrity of the state or the governmental structure according to the political leaders it is marked as a 3. Lastly, if they highlight a threat to the states existence it will be marked as a 4.

### 3.4.1 Coding table

	<b>Military sector</b>	<b>Economic sector</b>	<b>Political sector</b>
<b>1</b>	Not mentioned in statement	Not mentioned in statement	Not mentioned in statement
<b>2</b>	Comment/discussion about political ideology diversity or migration or religion reason for instability	Comment/discussion about inequality or instability	Comment/discussion about stability or legitimacy
<b>3</b>	Violence with a solution	A worry of bankruptcy or failed state	Threat to governmental structure or to the state's territorial integrity
<b>4</b>	Violence and no solution to stop it	Failed state or bankruptcy	Threat to state existence

*Table 1: Coding table*

Table 1 shows a summary on the operationalization of the sectors. The four different levels for the different sectors will not be compared with each other, since it is different kinds of threats. They will however be equal each other in the sense that a 3 in the military sector is as bad as a 3 in the economic sector. As they are different kinds of threats they need different kinds of solutions. This means that in the end the different leaders statements will be compared with each other within the different sectors. All statements by the political leaders will result in an average, one for each sector. These averages will lead to a more comparative discussion and it will be useful to be able to draw conclusions and see how much the leaders differ in their view on the security threats.

## 4 Empirics

In this section the study's empirical evidence is presented. Before the coding of the political statements, the history on the island of Ireland shortly will be presented and a summary on the referendum vote will be explained in order to get a better understanding of the situation.

### 4.1 Historical background

The situation on the island of Ireland may be tense now, but it is not comparable to how it was during the Troubles. The conflict between the north and south started when Northern Ireland joined the UK and separated itself from the rest of the island. As a consequence, Northern Ireland consists of those in favour of the UK, the unionists, and the ones that want reunification, the nationalists. The unionists mostly consisted of Protestants and the majority on the time they were in power of the government and controlled the police force in Northern Ireland. The nationalists were mainly Catholics, that felt discriminated in the 1960's and decided to make a peaceful push for greater civil rights. However, the peaceful push turned violent with riots in several cities in 1969. This led to paramilitary groups forming on both sides of the conflict, with the IRA (nationalists) wanting to reunite Ireland and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) fighting for the unionists. This meant the start of the Troubles, with the Irish border being its actual and symbolic battleground. The border was fortified with checkpoints, watchtower, armed officers, and became a target for the IRA during their attempts of crossing the border to find safe haven in the Republic of Ireland (Kirby 2019).

The vote to leave the EU on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016 was an advisory referendum with an overall turnout of 72,2% in the UK. The result for the whole country was 51,9% for leaving and 48,1% for remaining. Northern Ireland as a region had a turnout of 62,7% with 55,8% voting to remain (The Electoral Commission 1, 2019). Even if it was an advisory referendum it had a good turnout for a British election compared to their UK Parliament vote in 2015 that had a turnout of 66,4% and their EU Parliament vote in 2014, which had a turnout of 36,1%. The EU referendum vote had the best British turnout since 1992 when they had a turnout of 77,7% for the British Parliament election (The Electoral Commission 2, 2019). This shows the importance of a membership in the EU and that it was a decision that a lot of people wanted to express their standing in. Within Northern Ireland the majority of the parties campaigned to remain. Sinn Féin, the second largest party in Northern Ireland and Irish nationalists, the Social Democratic and



Labour Party (SDLP), Irish nationalists, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), unionists, and the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI), moderate pro-unionists, all campaigned to remain in the EU. The only major party that campaigned to leave was DUP, the largest Northern Irish party and unionists. The majority of the party members voted with how their parties campaigned, except for the UUP members who instead voted 60:40 to leave the EU. This along with how the parties campaigned showed a divide amongst the political parties in Northern Ireland (Doyle & Connolly 2017: 139).

## 4.2 Coding the political statements

The coding of the statements will be done in chronological order, and the statements will be divided by political leader. In section 4.3 *Summarising tables*, three overviewing tables of the coding are presented.

### *Theresa May (the Conservative and Unionist Party)*

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2016, Theresa May became the new Prime Minister of the UK, and she made her first statement on 10 Downing Street on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July. In the speech she talked about Cameron and his time in office and about what politics she will pursue. She talked about the injustices that exist in the UK and how to fight against them. She finished the speech by talking about how leaving the EU will create a new positive role for them in the world, and that it will make the UK a country that works for everyone and not only for the privileged few (May 2016). In her first statement there is no mention about Brexit being a bad thing, rather a good thing that she wants to see happen to make the UK stronger. All the threats will therefore be marked as a 1.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2017, May sent a letter to Tusk declaring that they will be invoking Article 50 in the Lisbon Treaty. Later that day she held a speech in the House of Common, and started by saying it was an act of following the democratic will of the British people. May wanted the negotiations to lead to a deep and special partnership between the UK and the EU. She wanted to secure the best trade deals, both with the EU and with countries outside of the EU. Furthermore, she sought to continue working together with the EU in areas such as crime, terrorism and foreign affairs. She pointed out that even if the UK is leaving the EU they are not leaving Europe and will make sure that the EU can protect itself from future security threats. May was clear with the fact that there would be no return of a border on the island of Ireland, and that the UK will be in control of their immigration. Moreover, May understood that Brexit has consequences, consequences that means that the UK loses influence over the rules that affect the European economy, which means that British companies that make trades with the EU will have to follow rules they no longer have impact on (May 1, 2017). May highlighted potential military and economic threats, which puts the

security threat on a level 2. The political threat remains on a 1, since there is no highlighted threat in this sector. In the end of June 2017 after the European Council, she highlighted three parts relevant to this thesis, the security, the economy, and the citizen's rights. Regarding the security, she underlined the work to defeat terrorism and how it should be done. Regarding the economy, she highlighted that the UK will be forging trade deals with both old and new allies, but that it will not undermine the EU's trade agenda. Lastly, on citizen's rights, she reassured the EU citizens living in the UK that they will not have to leave, and she wanted the UK citizens living in the EU to have the same reassurance. Secondly, she stated that they will preserve the British and Irish citizens the freedom they currently enjoy (May 2, 2017). Because of the highlighted concern about fighting against terrorism the military threat remains on a 2. The economic threat remains on a 2, because there is no guarantee that the UK will get the desired trade deals. The political threat is raised to a 2, since there is no a guarantee for the British people living in the EU yet.

In November 2018 May went through the details of the withdrawal agreement and pointed out that the issue of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland has been a key part in the negotiations. The suggested deal had no clear solution for the border question. It only had a backstop and a reassurance that no hard border would be installed on the island of Ireland again. Furthermore, the suggested agreement would end free movement, and gives the UK control over their border, laws and money. It delivers a free trade area for goods with zero tariffs. This deal was, according to May, the best possible deal for the UK if they were to leave the EU (May 2018). The unsure situation with the border results in that the treat for Northern Ireland still remains and a violent conflict between the north and south of Ireland could still happen, this meant that the military threat remains on a 2. The economic threat remains on a 2, because the deal only assures one free trade agreement. The political threat also remains on a 2, because the worry that the deal will not be accepted.

In January 2019 when the withdrawal agreement was voted down in the House of Common, May expressed that it tells them nothing about what the Parliament supports. She therefore gave them the opportunity to write motions on how they thought the UK should pursue the matter. Secondly, if the government still had the Parliaments support she would summon a chosen selection, amongst them the DUP and her party colleagues, to meetings. These meetings would be for them to give negotiable ideas that could be explored with the EU. She pointed out that she intends to leave with a deal and to not run down the clock until the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2019. Moreover, she pressed on the fact that the longer the issue is unsolved the more uncertainty and bitterness will be expressed (May 1, 2019). Because of the standstill the threats remain on the same level as before statement. After the initial Brexit date had passed and the withdrawal agreement was still not accepted, May continued to push on the fact that leaving with a deal is the best solution. They therefore would need a short extension on Article 50. To break the logjam, May offered to have a meeting with the Opposition to try to agree on a plan (May 2,

2019). With her statement and the request for an even longer Brexit process the political threat goes to a 3, whereas the military and economic remains on the same as before, a 2. When McKee was killed May did a joint statement with Varadkar. In the statement they urged the people of the Irish island to stop the violence and support the peace process. They addressed the fact that the people of Northern Ireland wants more action from the political leaders and not just words. Therefore have they called for meetings between the main political parties in Northern Ireland, and the British and Irish government (May 3, 2019). With their plea to stop the fighting and them taking action to answer the people's concerns the military threat is now at a 3. The political remains on a 3, because of the distrust in the political leaders. The economic threat goes to a 1, because of it not being elaborate on in this statement.

*Arlene Foster (the Democratic Unionist Party)*

Foster's first public statement about Brexit came on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2016 when May took office. She expressed that they were ready to work on her side for both the UK's and Northern Ireland's best interests. Foster was happy that May indicated that she would follow the referendum outcome and pursue Brexit (Foster 1, 2016). She did not express any concerns or worries and was just pleased to start the Brexit process, therefore the threats will be on level 1 in all categories. Later in 2016, in October, Foster made a statement on the fact that an exit process would start. A statement that will be used instead of when May invoked Article 50 on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2017, since she did not make a statement then. In the statement she welcomed the announcement and expressed that it is in the UK's best interest to leave the EU. Moreover, she pointed out that it is important to secure the best deal possible for Northern Ireland and that it needs to be done with all political parties, despite of their different opinions on Brexit (Foster 2, 2016). The only challenge with Brexit that Foster saw was working together with the other parties. This means that the political threat becomes a weak 2, whereas the other two sectors remains on a 1.

In mid 2017, when the UK-EU negotiations started, Foster did not make a specific statement regarding Brexit. It was rather a statement about their success in the General Election and the DUP having conversations with the Tories and the Unionist Party. These discussions led to a financial support for Northern Ireland, for them to boost their economy and invest in new infrastructure. The investment would make it possible for them, as a nation, to move forward and tackle the up and coming challenges (Foster 2017). With the economic support to Northern Ireland, the economic threat could be marked as a 0, since this is something that would increase the economic stability. However, since the scale starts on 1 it will be marked a 1. Neither a military nor a political threat is visible in the eyes of the DUP leader yet resulting in a 1 for those two sectors as well.

In 2018 Foster changed her opinion from being overly pleased with Brexit and instead expressed disappointment by calling the withdrawal agreement

“fundamentally flawed”. She pointed out that the suggested agreement would undermine the British economy and Northern Ireland would become a hostage for the EU with the backstop. Furthermore, it would be unacceptable for a hard border on the island of Ireland (Foster 2018). The security threat, which was almost absent before, has now become a 2 in the military and economic sector and a 3 in the political sector.

Foster’s first statement of 2019 expressed that rejecting the withdrawal agreement was the best option for the UK. Her party, DUP, would from that point forward work with the government in order to achieve a better deal. The only thing she wanted was a sensible deal that worked for both the UK and Northern Ireland. However, she did not give any examples as to what this new deal should be or include. She pointed out that the DUP would give the government space, in order for them to come up with a solution, at the same time she directed criticism towards the political parties that in her opinion tried to use the situation to boost their own political ambitions (Foster, 1, 2019). The threats will decrease with one level for all three categories. Resulting in the military and economic threat now becoming a 1, because it was not mentioned. The political threat decreases to a 2, since the agreement was rejected and she has a positive view on securing a better deal, but until a new deal is secured the situation is remains uncertain. After the scheduled Brexit date, the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2019, and one day before the crash-out date, 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2019, Foster once again spoke about wanting a sensible deal that works for all of the UK. That they could not accept a deal that would undermine both the UK’s economy and their integrity. However, prolonging the process would be undemocratic and wrong towards the British citizen. She thought May’s approach of continuing to put forward the same withdrawal agreement for a vote was a weak tactic and a tactic that could have trapped the UK into a bad deal, which would hurt future British generations (Foster 2, 2019). The economic threat has now increased again and is now at a 3, since the prolonged process puts great pressure on their economy. The political threat is raised to a 3 as well, whilst the military sector is now a 2, because of the worry of a hard border. A week later Foster made a statement on the death of McKee and expressed condemnation of the violence and gave her condolences to the family. She said the “murder was an attack on all the people of this community, an attack on the peace and democratic processes” (Foster 3, 2019). She continued with saying that it was an act that tried to destroy a 21-year old peace progress and that the UK is united in rejecting the people responsible for it, that the people behind the violence have no support and should disband immediately (Foster 3, 2019). With the attack the military sector has resulted in a 4, since the new IRA is a big threat to the peace process and she does not express a concrete solution on how to defeat them. The political threat becomes a 3, since the IRA is also political and because of how Foster spoke about them and their need to disband. The economic threat is set at a 1, because of its absence in the statement.

*Mary Lou McDonald (Sinn Féin)*

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2016 McDonald did a statement about Brexit at Dáil Éireann, the Irish Assembly. She especially pressed on the fact that the Northern Irish vote must be respected and that it would be undemocratic to not follow the result for the referendum vote in Northern Ireland (McDonald 2016). She did not mention anything related to the military sector, nor the economic sector, which results in a 1. The political sector becomes a 2, because not following the result of a democratic vote may pose political threat.

For the first selected statement of 2017, she directed criticism towards Kenny for not securing a veto for Northern Ireland in the Brexit negotiations. This is because a veto could have helped secure a Northern Irish membership in the EU, since a EU frontier on the island of Ireland would be damaging (McDonald 1, 2017). This statement results in a 3 on the political scale, a 2 on the military scale. The economic sector becomes a 1 because there is no mention about it. In her second statement of 2017 the critic was directed to Varadkar, who had recently taken over office from Kenny. She pushed him to keep his promise about arguing for Northern Ireland to remain in the Single Market and the Customs Union. She expressed in the statement that a hard border on Ireland would be disastrous for their economy, which means that the economic threat is at level 3. The military threat remains on level 2, because of the talk about the border even if McDonald mostly refers to the economic aspect of a border. The political threat is on level 2, because of her concern about Varadkar's diplomatic skills that could put the North of Ireland at risk (McDonald 2, 2017).

In McDonald's statement from November 2018, she mostly pushed on the fact that the withdrawal agreement should respect the vote of the people of Northern Ireland. She said, "there is no such thing as a good Brexit" (McDonald 2018). She addressed that they had to secure a deal that protects their civil rights, their agreements, their economic interests, and that they need to avoid a hard border. She finished her speech with the fact that Sinn Féin would continue to work and protect their people's interest and economy with both the British and Irish governments, as well as the EU (McDonald 2018). The security threat level has been raised to a 3 on the political scale, and the economic and the military becomes a 2.

2019 started with the House of Common rejecting the presented withdrawal agreement, and McDonald saying that the Irish Government must secure a referendum on Irish Unity if the current situation would lead to a Brexit without a deal. She kept pushing on the same notes as in previous statements that the Irish rights and interest must be protected throughout Brexit, and that a hard border cannot return to the island of Ireland. She once again highlighted that any agreement that is made must protect the people of Northern Ireland, their economy and their peace process (McDonald 1, 2019). The statement results in a 3 in all sectors. Two months later on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2019, McDonald spoke

about the political circus that was happening at Westminster, the British Parliament, with the third rejection of the withdrawal agreement, which meant that there would be minimum safeguards for the whole of Ireland. She said, “our economy, the rights of citizens and our hard won agreements cannot be collateral damage to Westminster” (McDonald 2 2019). She followed up her statement with the fact that Sinn Féin will present their case for the EU and that they must continue to act in the interest of all of Ireland (McDonald 2, 2019). The security threat remains on a 3 in all sectors. Lastly, McDonald, like Foster, condemned the killing of McKee and expressed her condolences to the family. She urged the people who knew anything to come forward, and that this was an attack against the Good Friday Agreement (McDonald 3, 2019). With this attack and her statement the military threat has been raised to a 4. The economic threat becomes a 1, because it was not mentioned. The political threat will be marked a 2, since this was a political attack by the new IRA who meant to express their dissatisfaction of the current situation, but unfortunately McKee was fatally shot.

*Enda Kenny and Leo Varadkar (Fine Gael)*

When the referendum results was a fact in June 2016, Cameron assured Kenny that the UK and Republic of Ireland would continue their bilateral engagement and that there would not be a new hard border on Ireland. The outcome of the vote was not what the people of the Republic of Ireland wanted, but it was a result they knew was possible. Kenny presented a list of what needed to be done and the key aspects for them in a possible negotiation and how to secure those points (Kenny 2016). Because it is a statement about how to prepare for a potential Brexit, the threat level becomes a 1 in all sectors.

After May invoked Article 50 on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2017, Kenny pointed out a few of their priorities, amongst them was to minimise the impact on their trade and economy, protecting the peace process in Northern Ireland, continuing the Common Travel Area (CTA) with the UK, and maintaining an open border. He talked about the preparations they had done in order to protect their economy. Kenny was pleased with the draft guidelines for the Brexit negotiations, which included protection of the Good Friday Agreement and the intention to maintain bilateral arrangements between them and the UK. He finished the statement by saying that they were prepared for the challenges that were ahead of them (Kenny 2017). This puts all threats at a 1, because this is all preventive work towards something that could become problematic. Later in mid 2017, Varadkar took over office and in his statement after the European Council meeting in June, he went through the meetings discussion points. Regarding Brexit he talked about the prioritising of the first negotiation phase, which were citizen rights, protecting the Good Friday Agreement, avoiding a hard border, and maintaining the CTA (Varadkar 2017). After this statement the security threats remains on level 1 in all sectors, since he trusts the process and that Ireland will be protected throughout.

For the selected statement by Varadkar in November 2018, he spoke at Dáil Éireann. In the speech he asked the assembly to support the presented draft for the withdrawal agreement. In his opinion the agreement would protect the Good Friday Agreement, and it would ensure no hard border. Even if he was pleased with the presented draft, he expressed that he regretted the UK's decision to leave the EU. The agreement would maintain the CTA, and it would not have a big impact on their trades, jobs or economy. Moreover, the presented withdrawal agreement guaranteed that the EU's Customs Code would apply in Northern Ireland (Varadkar 2018). With Varadkar being overall pleased with the presented withdrawal agreement and what it represented, the threats remains on level 1.

After being pleased with how the Brexit process developed and not highlighting any threats, 2019 started with disappointment after the House of Common rejected the proposed withdrawal agreement. The Fine Gale would therefore work with their European partners in order to accomplish an agreement with the UK. He expressed his concerns over a no-deal scenario, since it would not protect the peace, nor would it be positive for the economy or the jobs (Varadkar 1, 2019). The threats are now at a 2 in all sectors. After the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2019, with Westminster still unable to agree on an agreement Varadkar expressed that it was up to them to indicate how they would proceed in order to avoid a no-deal Brexit. He pointed out the fact that "Ireland has been preparing intensively for a No Deal scenario" (Varadkar 2, 2019). He welcomed Tusk's decision to call an European Council meeting, and thought that the UK should get an extension if they fundamentally reconsider its Brexit approach (Varadkar 2, 2019). However, Varadkar did not express in what way a no-deal scenario would be a disaster, this results in the military and economic sectors being marked as a 1, whereas the political sector remains on a 2. Regarding the fatal shooting in Derry, Varadkar expressed his condolences and condemned the action. That it was an attack on a 21-year old agreement, an act of fear, hate and cowardice. Furthermore, he expressed that there is no place for political violence on the island of Ireland (Varadkar 3, 2019). This results in a 2 in the military sector, a 1 in the economic sector, and a 3 in the political sector.

#### *Donald Tusk (President of European Council)*

When May announced that she was going to pursue leaving the EU, she invited Tusk to London for a meeting in September 2016. It was an informal meeting with the intention of discussing and assessing the political consequences Brexit would have for the EU. Tusk pointed out that there would be no further discussions about the matter unless a formal notification about the UK leaving was presented (Tusk 2016). This results in all sectors getting a 1, because it is either not mentioned or with regards to the political sector they are having a preventive meeting about something that might not happen.

In March 2017 when the letter about invoking Article 50 from May was handed to Tusk, he expressed that this was not a happy day in Brussels or in London.

However, according to Tusk, this made the remaining 27 member states more united and more determined than before. He continued with stating that the future negotiations were for damage control and that there would be no winner. He made it clear that the EU's goal was "to minimise the cost for the EU citizens, businesses and Member States" (Tusk 1, 2017). He stressed that nothing had changed, nor would anything change until the UK leaves the EU (Tusk 1, 2017). It is clear that Tusk does not want the UK to leave the EU, but that he respects their decision and will work with the council to make the withdrawal as smooth as possible. So far Tusk has not highlighted any concerns or threats to the EU, which means all sectors remain on a 1. Later that year at the European Council meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> June the meeting did not assign much time for Brexit. They discussed two things, the relocation of the two UK-based EU agencies, which they reached an agreement on. The result was a confirmation of the EU27's unity. The second thing was a discussion on protecting the citizen rights of all EU and UK citizens after Brexit. However, Tusk's first impression of the UK's offer was that it did not reach his expectations and that it could worsen the situation for the citizens (Tusk 2, 2017). Because of this the political sector is now at a 2 and the other two remain at a 1.

The first things that Tusk commented on when the withdrawal agreement was published and after May's statement from the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2018, was that he did not share her opinion and enthusiasm about Brexit. He was of the opinion that it would be a lose-lose situation, and that the negotiations only purpose was damage control. Regarding the agreement Tusk commemorated the EU's head negotiator for Brexit, Michel Barnier, and his team, for their work on securing the interests and principles of the EU27 and the EU as a whole. The next step for the EU27 would now be to give their assessments of the agreement (Tusk 2018). Because everything with Brexit was under control according to Tusk and he was pleased with Barnier's work, the threats remain on the same level as before. The reason for the political sector remaining on a 2 is that it is a lose-lose situation and because of the not knowing what the comments from the EU27 would be on the proposed agreement.

At the start of 2019, after the British Parliament voted down the withdrawal agreement, Tusk saw preventing a no-deal scenario as the most important task for the EU. He was clear that the EU27 would not give a new offer and that they were not open for re-negotiations. The most important issue was the border and the guarantee to honour the peace process, because the peace needs to be protected they insisted on the backstop. To prepare for a potential fiasco Tusk met with the Taoiseach and spoke about their strategies in case of a no-deal (Tusk 1, 2019). This statement puts the military and political threat at a 2 and economic at a 1. After the UK could not agree on the withdrawal agreement and with the scheduled Brexit date passing, the European Council decided to grant the UK with a flexible extension until the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2019. Tusk pointed out that this extension meant that they could either accept the withdrawal agreement before time and thereby terminate the extension or they could reconsider Brexit and revoke Article



50. It is clear that it is up to the UK, but that they should not waste their time (Tusk 2, 2019). Tusk did not highlight any threats, as a result all sectors are marked with a 1. Lastly, Tusk did not make any statement about the riots and the shooting in Derry, which results in a 1 on the scale in all sectors.

### 4.3 Summarising tables

This part shows the three sectors coding tables with an average score of all leaders security threat level.

Military Sector:

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	Avg
<b>May</b>	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	<b>2</b>
<b>Foster</b>	1	1	1	2	1	2	4	<b>1,7</b>
<b>McDonald</b>	1	2	2	2	3	3	4	<b>2,4</b>
<b>Kenny/Varadkar</b>	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	<b>1,3</b>
<b>Tusk</b>	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	<b>1,1</b>

Table 2: Level of military threats

Economic Sector:

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	Avg
<b>May</b>	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	<b>1,9</b>
<b>Foster</b>	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	<b>1,4</b>
<b>McDonald</b>	1	1	3	2	3	3	1	<b>2</b>
<b>Kenny/Varadkar</b>	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	<b>1,3</b>
<b>Tusk</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	<b>1</b>

Table 3: Level of economic threats

Political Sector:

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	Avg
<b>May</b>	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	<b>2</b>
<b>Foster</b>	1	2	1	3	2	3	3	<b>2,1</b>
<b>McDonald</b>	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	<b>2,6</b>
<b>Kenny/ Varadkar</b>	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	<b>1,4</b>
<b>Tusk</b>	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	<b>1,4</b>

Table 4: Level of political threats

## 5 Analysis

In this section are the analysis and the conclusions that can be drawn from the researched material presented.

All political leaders construct Brexit as a security threat although on different levels, with some leaders highlighting a bigger threat than others. It has been constructed as a military, economic and political threat with the instalment of a hard border being the main reason. Two of the key points in the Brexit negotiations have been protecting the Good Friday Agreement and the matter of the border. These points of contention have been two reasons for why the withdrawal agreement was not accepted. The rejection of the withdrawal agreement is a major contributing factor for the heightened security threat, both because of the prolonged process and because of the diminishing support for Brexit. Furthermore, even if the effects Brexit could have on Northern Ireland were not highlighted during the referendum campaigns, it has been one of the biggest reasons for the emphasised threats. The protection of the peace process on the island of Ireland has been a point that all parts agree on, but how it should be handled the opinions differ, which has resulted in the different levels of concern.

The first notable aspect regarding *Table 2, 3, & 4* is that the political leaders geographical location to the physical problem is visible in the level of the threats. Not only do they differ in their average score, but also in their approach to Brexit. Both Tusk and Kenny/Varadkar do not see any military or economic threat until 2019, when the House of Common rejected the withdrawal agreement. Tusk did not even highlight any concern for an economic threat in either of his statements. The reason behind this can be found in his belief in the EU's stability and that even if the UK would leave the EU, they would still have a strong economy. One reason for this can be that the UK was never a part of the Economic and Monetary Union of the European Union (EMU). Another thing as to why Tusk never highlights a threat over level 2 is because he was pleased with the EU-team working with the negotiations and thought that the presented withdrawal agreement was good. Another reason is that the negotiation process has lead to a stronger and united EU27. Furthermore, Tusk has always been very clear about not supporting Brexit and he would prefer the UK to stay, but instead of seeing the negatives he tried to make the UK leaving the EU as pain free as possible. He has consistently throughout his statements ended them with a message to the UK, either by saying that he missed them, or that it was up to them what happens. By doing this he put everything on the UK and that they need to be the one securing their own future, and that they decide their own fate and can at any point revoke Article 50. The same applies for Kenny/Varadkar, who has a strong trust in the

EU27 and that they would make decisions that would favour the Republic of Ireland foremost, which it subsequently does. Throughout the negotiations it has been clear that the EU is protective of its member states, which can be seen via Tusk and Kenny/Varadkar standpoint on the situation and their lack of highlighted threats. The fact that the EU was working preventively results in their low scores, since it meant that they were prepared for any future threats Brexit could cause.

The second notable aspect is that the economic threat is the least highlighted threat. This can be based on numerous factors. It can be based on the fact that it is the most difficult security sector to define or on the fact that for it to be an economic crisis an economy almost needs to collapse. The Brexit process has had a clear impact on the British economy with the Sterling pound dropping in value against the US dollar and the Euro (Quartz 2019). However, it has not yet resulted in the British economy's collapse. Another reason can be because the UK still remains in the EU, therefore the trade agreements and the Custom Union still applies. The two people who highlights the economic security the most was May and McDonald, but with two very different opinions about Brexit, one wanting to leave and the other wanting to remain in the EU. McDonald highlights that Brexit would be disastrous for Northern Ireland's economy and that the deal needs to secure their economic interest. Compared to May, who highlights how Brexit would affect the British economy, in a more concrete manner. May's and McDonald's view on the economic threat is very different compared to Foster's. Foster started highlighting a threat to the economy when the withdrawal agreement was presented, with accepting the agreement being the biggest threat. According to Foster the only reason the agreement was bad was because it would undermine the British economy. Furthermore, the trade agreements have been the biggest issue in the economic sector. The economic threats are therefore the easiest problem to solve, since the global economy is bigger than the EU, even if it makes the trades more difficult for them they will not become excluded from the market if they decide to leave the EU. They would only need to create new bilateral arrangement with other countries. The biggest threat to the economy is the trade between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Leaving the EU would be a big threat to Northern Ireland's economy as a border would mean being cut off from their second biggest trading partner, the Republic of Ireland, with the UK being their biggest trading partner (NISRA 2019). This is one of the reasons why McDonald's economic sector results in the highest average score. Another reason is that Northern Ireland is the smallest economy in the UK and would be affected the most if they were to lose trading partners. It is therefore interesting that Foster does not highlight the economic threat at the same level as McDonald.

A third observation is that the military threat has been raised over the course of Brexit. From being a non-existing threat to being a 4 on both Foster and McDonalds coding tables in April 2019. This can be a consequence of a couple of reasons, with one being the riots that happened in Northern Ireland. The response by the two of them shows the process Northern Ireland has made during the past

21-years. Moreover, the developing of a new IRA should be a bigger concern for Varadkar, who only regards on a level 2. This could be based on a couple of reasons, one being that he views them as a bigger threat than what he expresses. A second reason could be where the riots happened. A third reason can be that he has more confidence in the Brexit negotiations and the withdrawal agreement than Foster and McDonald and sees it as a solution to stop the violence. Another interesting observation regarding the military sector is that from June 2017, May's military threat stayed at a level 2, but for different reasons. In the beginning the most highlighted military threat was terrorism and migration, an aspect that no other political leader highlights in regards to Brexit. Later the military threat became linked to the situation on Northern Ireland. The reason as to why May raised the migration question can be related to the fact that the migration wave was one of the reasons behind the referendum vote.

The political sector has raised the most concerns about the security. This has different explanations, but it mostly depends on that the states stability and legitimacy has been questioned. Another aspect it that most of them are pushing on the democratic factor, that it would be undemocratic to not follow the referendum result. This has been done in both directions with McDonald pushing on the fact that it would be undemocratic to not follow the referendum result from Northern Ireland, who voted to remain. And Foster saying it would be undemocratic to not leave the EU. A third reason is that instituting a hard border on the island of Ireland would be a threat to the state's territorial integrity, especially when it is the last thing they want to happen on the Irish island. A fourth reason is that leaving the EU would mean dishonouring the Good Friday Agreement and with it break a political agreement, which would result in an insecure situation for the whole of Ireland. Moreover, the Brexit process has led to distrusting May, which is a political threat, because if the person in office lacks trust from both the public and the Parliament it can create an unstable political situation. May's statement "Brexit means Brexit" was both what won her the position as the Prime Minister of the UK and what later made her lose the position. Her failure to present an accepted withdrawal agreement has led to the raised threats in all sectors and has been the focal part in everyone's worry for what will happen in Northern Ireland.

One surprising result is Kenny/Varadkar's low average score. Their highest level of security threat is in the political sector after the riots in Derry. Otherwise the level has been a 1 or a 2, with an average score of 1,3 in the military and economic sector and a 1,4 in the political sector. This is interesting since the threat of a hard border should be as alarming to the Irish Prime Minister as it is to the party leaders in Northern Ireland. This could depend on their full support from the EU, and because they believe that the presented withdrawal agreement was good and should have been accepted. The no-deal scenario is the most alarming for the Republic of Ireland, and it shows with the raising of the threat levels. Another reason for the low security threat may be the fact that they have done a lot of preventive work, so they have tried to solve the problem before they occurred.

In conclusion, the different leaders view the security threat from different points of views. This has a lot of different reasons, but it is clear that all of them view Brexit as a security threat in relation to the Irish border. It is clear that the exiting process needs to reach an end as soon as possible, since the threats are increasing the longer it prolongs. Moreover, it is clear that Tusk is the one who has the least concern for Brexit, which is understandable based on his position as the leader of the European Council. It is also clear that McDonald has the biggest concern, which is understandable based on her position as the opposition and fighting for Northern Ireland to remain in the EU. Lastly, May's failure to present an accepted withdrawal agreement has led to the high level of security threat, and a threat that will remain until an agreement is reach or the Brexit process is terminated. The question now stands, will the UK leave the EU or will May's three years in office have resulted in a political circus with a heighten military, economic and political security threat that the political leader do not have solution for?

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