

USIP DISCUSSION PAPER 24-001

# **Incorporating Citizen Preferences into the Design of Effective Peace Settlements**

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UNITED STATES  
INSTITUTE OF PEACE  
Making Peace Possible

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## SUMMARY

This discussion paper describes the use of conjoint survey experiments to identify citizen preferences with respect to a possible peace agreement in Cyprus and a border agreement in Northern Ireland. The recommendations offered in the conclusion emphasize the flexibility of the method and its transferability to other conflict settings. Results also suggest ways of reinvigorating stalled peace negotiations (Cyprus) or improving past deals (Good Friday Agreement/Brexit-Northern Ireland), and can help contending groups and mediators identify potential zones of agreement by revealing areas where contending groups' preferences overlap or differ and where possible trade-offs exist that could lead to greater consensus. Conjoint experiment results can be presented in the form of visual opinion maps and incorporated into interactive software applications. Such applications allow policymakers and the public to examine the elements of peace settlement packages to assess their degree of support by different communities and to evaluate communities' readiness for peace settlements. Conjoint survey analysis thus serves as a powerful tool for identifying citizen preferences in discrete postconflict situations.

# INTRODUCTION

Establishing the extent of public support for the terms of a negotiated political settlement in a society that has experienced violent political conflict is a key element of a peacebuilding project. Recent political history, from governance and constitutional decisions in the post-Soviet space to Eastern Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa contexts, is littered with the ruins of peace processes that fell apart because agreements reached among political elites, who usually play a dominant role in constructing such accords, failed to gain sufficient support at the grassroots level.

Despite ample research on the design of peace settlements and their results, little work has focused on the role of public opinion or citizen preferences in this process.<sup>1</sup> Peace settlements are multi-issue, multiparty agreements that broadly address the governance of divided territories after prolonged conflict. Such settlements typically have multiple dimensions, such as power-sharing provisions, human rights protections, the location and management of internal (federal) or external borders, and, often, international guarantees and support for property compensation or reconstruction. It is difficult to capture citizens' opinions on these interconnected matters, and because of the inherent complexity of a bargaining process that involves multiple interrelated areas simultaneously, peace agreements are most often described as the product of elite compromise rather than of grassroots engagement in the process or of public consultation.

The views of ordinary citizens are rarely integrated and sometimes misinterpreted in the process of mediation. In part, this lacuna can be attributed to poor measurement of citizen preferences with respect to complex multidimensional peace and governance arrangements as assessed by conventional survey instruments. The result is limited guidance for mediators and negotiators from answers to standard survey questions. Standard questions focus either on identifying support for discrete policy issues that are elements of the peace settlement (e.g., the location of borders) or on

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<sup>1</sup> For exceptions, please see Gearóid Ó. Tuathail, John O'Loughlin, and Dino Djipa, "Bosnia-Herzegovina Ten Years after Dayton: Constitutional Change and Public Opinion," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 47, no. 1 (2006): 61–75; Daniel Bar-Tal, Eran Halperin, and Neta Oren, "Socio-Psychological Barriers to Peace Making: The Case of the Israeli Jewish Society," *Social Issues and Policy Review* 4, no. 1 (2010): 63–109; and Juan Fernando Tellez, "Peace Agreement Design and Public Support for Peace: Evidence from Colombia," *Journal of Peace Research* 56, no. 6 (2019): 827–44.

identifying the level of support for the peace settlement as a whole. For example, in the Northern Ireland peace process, respondents could be asked, “Do you support the Good Friday Agreement?” and “Do you support the setting up of a Northern Ireland Assembly?” or “Do you support the removal of the Republic of Ireland’s constitutional claim to Northern Ireland?”<sup>2</sup> What these survey questions cannot do is provide policymakers with information on what compromises or trade-offs the public might support or the degree of citizens’ readiness for a comprehensive settlement. For instance, standard survey questions might ask whether citizens would support a power-sharing cabinet as part of a postconflict settlement. Such survey questions can also ask whether respondents support or oppose these specific provisions and how strongly, but the questions cannot provide information about the *relative importance* of a power-sharing cabinet compared to other arrangements. Similarly, within the concept of a power-sharing cabinet, traditional surveys cannot provide much evidence about preferences concerning different types of power-sharing systems. Furthermore, when traditional surveys ask whether citizens support a peace settlement, these surveys do not elicit respondents’ views that would allow policymakers to understand which aspects of the proposed peace settlement attract or repel support. In the absence of public support for a peace agreement, traditional surveys also cannot identify a path forward toward a proposal that might garner greater public acceptance.

To address these problems and develop a way to provide more nuanced information about public preferences, this discussion paper examines the use of conjoint survey experiments in the postconflict context in Cyprus and in the post-Brexit border situation in Northern Ireland. Use of this method yields answers to several important questions about citizen preferences and public support for peace settlements.

- Which peace settlements attract the support of citizens in postconflict societies, and why?
- Which dimensions of peace settlements are most important to citizens’ support?

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<sup>2</sup> B. C. Hayes and I. McAllister, “Who Voted for Peace? Public Support for the 1998 Northern Ireland Agreement,” *Irish Political Studies* 16, no. 1 (2001): 73–93.

- Which particular configuration of arrangements within these dimensions are most important to citizens?
- What type of compromises might citizens support to secure peace?
- Is the moment ripe for a peace initiative? If so, how do different demographic groups compare in their readiness for a peace settlement?

The rest of this paper describes more fully what is involved in conjoint experiment analysis and illustrates its benefits through application to the cases of Cyprus and Northern Ireland.

## WHAT IS CONJOINT ANALYSIS?

Conjoint analysis is a type of survey experiment that, in a postconflict setting, allows policymakers to identify the features of a potential peace agreement that matter the most to citizens. It also enables investigators to identify the configuration of settlement provisions that would be most acceptable to different groups.

Conjoint experiment analysis has been described as a way to “obtain reliable measures of multi-dimensional preferences and estimate causal effects of multiple attributes on hypothetical choices or evaluations.”<sup>3</sup> It allows social scientists to understand how people decide between options that differ in distinct ways across various attributes. The method was first used in psychological and market research settings to understand how survey respondents choose between objects that have multiple attributes, such as the color, size, and style of two different garments, and the relative importance of these attributes to the respondents’ choices; however, because of its wide applicability and versatility, conjoint analysis has been developed and applied to a range of questions of interest to social scientists and international relations experts, including peace and conflict scholars.<sup>4</sup> Scholars have

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<sup>3</sup> Kirk Bansak, Jens Hainmueller, Daniel J. Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto, “Conjoint Survey Experiments,” in *Cambridge Handbook of Advances in Experimental Political Science*, ed. James N. Druckman and Donald P. Green (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Jens Hainmueller, Daniel J. Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto, “Causal Inference in Conjoint Analysis: Understanding Multidimensional Choices via Stated Preference Experiments,” *Political Analysis* 2, no. 1 (2014): 1–30.

specifically looked into preferences about the attributes of political candidates, the attributes of potential immigrants, and choices between welfare policies, peace settlements, and borders, among other complex issues.<sup>5</sup> In conjoint survey experiments, respondents are asked to rank hypothetical choices (e.g., among political candidates possessing multiple attributes, such as different genders, races, education levels, and policy positions). The objective is to estimate the influence of each attribute, such as the gender or occupation of political candidates, on respondents' choices or ratings.<sup>6</sup> Because these different attributes are ranked (or valued) differently, and randomly, across respondents, strong causal inferences can be drawn from the results.

For example, in one study we conducted, respondents in Northern Ireland were presented with a table that compared two post-Brexit governance arrangements and were asked to choose between them. Respondents were then shown four more pairs of agreements and asked to choose between each pair in succession. Figure 1 illustrates the concept with a pair of peace settlements shown—vis-à-vis each other—to respondents in the study.

Each dimension of each choice is fixed for both options under consideration (e.g., the dimension of method of protecting human rights or the location of the customs border), but the values attached to them (providing specific human rights protections or border locations) were randomly selected by respondents from a fixed menu of options. An example of the values attached to each dimension in this conjoint analysis is shown in table 1.

When conjoint experiments are embedded in public opinion surveys of the relevant populations, researchers are able to estimate the importance of each value in the package (that respondents selected between) in driving respondents' choices. The findings can be used to simulate the degree of support for specific peace settlement packages and to assess the level of support across different communities for these packages. Community-level preferences—such as how important different dimensions of a peace agreement are to contending groups such as nationalists and unionists in

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Dawn Langan Teele, Joshua Kalla, and Frances Rosenbluth, “The Ties That Double Bind: Social Roles and Women’s Underrepresentation in Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 112, no. 3 (2018): 525–41; and Edward Morgan-Jones, Laura Sudulich, Feargal Cochrane, and Neophytos Loizides, “Citizen Preferences about Border Arrangements in Divided Societies: Evidence from a Conjoint Experiment in Northern Ireland,” *Research & Politics* 7, no. 3 (2020): 2053168020929927.

<sup>6</sup> Hainmueller et al., “Causal Inference in Conjoint Analysis.”

**Figure 1.** Sample Pair of Peace Settlements Shown to Respondents in Northern Ireland Study

Question 2

Please carefully review the options detailed below, then please answer the questions.

Which of these choices do you prefer?

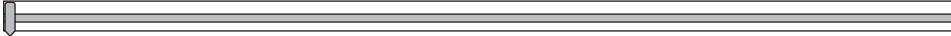
	Choice 1	Choice 2
<b>Human rights in Northern Ireland</b>	should be protected by a special newly established international tribunal	should be protected exclusively by UK courts
<b>The Northern Ireland Executive must be formed</b>	with the support of at least a quarter of assembly members from each community designation	by a majority of members in the assembly regardless of their designation
<b>The location of customs border</b>	should be at the land border between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland	should be in the Irish sea between the Island of Ireland and the rest of the UK
<b>To pass laws in the Assembly requires</b>	parallel majorities of both the Unionist and Nationalist designation assembly members	must be formed by a majority of members in the assembly regardless of their designation
<b>Public spending after Brexit</b>	should be increased by 5 percent to compensate for the financial impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland	should be increased by 10 percent to compensate for the financial impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland

- Click to write Choice 1
- Click to write Choice 2


Thinking of these two choices and on a scale from 0 to 10 (where 10 means the highest likelihood), how likely are you to vote for this choice in a referendum on the institutional settlement in Northern Ireland?

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Choice 1



Choice 2



Northern Ireland or to the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities on Cyprus—are particularly important for studies of postconflict societies.

In addition to using conjoint survey experiment analysis to ascertain citizens’ preferences, it is also possible to use the approach to address a range of other questions. Surveys embedding conjoint questions can be used to assess the views of the leadership of different groups and other relevant stakeholders in addition to the public, enabling researchers to assess the overall readiness of all sectors of society for a peace settlement. Conjoint experiments also have the potential to explore how



**Table 1.** The Northern Ireland Peace Agreement: Dimensions and Values

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Values</b>
<b>Human rights in Northern Ireland</b>	Should be protected exclusively by UK courts
	Should be protected exclusively by European and other international courts
	Should be protected by a special, newly established international tribunal
	Should be protected by UK, European, and international courts
<b>Northern Ireland executive</b>	Must be based on all parties' proportion of seats in the assembly
	Must be formed by the largest unionist and nationalist parties
	Must be formed with the support of at least a quarter of assembly members from each community designation
	Must be formed by a majority of members in the assembly, regardless of their designation
<b>Passing laws in the assembly</b>	Requires parallel majorities of unionist and nationalist assembly members
	Requires a majority, with at least at least a quarter of assembly members from each community designation
	Requires a majority of members of the assembly, regardless of community designation
<b>Public spending after Brexit</b>	Should increase or decrease with public spending in rest of the UK
	Should be increased by 5% to compensate for the financial impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland
	Should be increased by 10% to compensate for the financial impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland
<b>Location of customs border</b>	Should be at the land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
	Should be in the Irish Sea between the island of Ireland and the rest of the UK

the dimensions of the peace settlement shape preferences across other demographics and identities. For instance, conjoint surveys allow identification of differences in preferences between men and women or among individuals who identify with particular political parties. The incorporation of gender dimensions in peace processes aiming for wider social and gender inclusion could provide an additional tool for the implementation of the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution

1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. This can be used to probe public preferences on women's participation in formal peace processes and help disclose the direct impact of inclusion on public support for the peace process in general. Additionally, conjoint analysis allows researchers to assess which peace provisions matter the most to vulnerable groups in postconflict societies, such as displaced persons, the relatives of missing persons, and victims of torture. Finally, conjoint survey analysis can provide granular information on how policy options might be shaped or connected within a peace settlement—the sort of information that is invaluable to mediators and negotiators tasked with developing such agreements.

We have developed an interactive online tool, the Settlement Scenario Toolkit, to enable policymakers, practitioners, and the public to visualize the results of the survey.<sup>7</sup> Although survey results in this format are currently available only for the main communities in Northern Ireland and Cyprus, the interactive toolkit permits users to explore how replacing different values along different dimensions shifts support for a mutually agreed-on settlement.

In addition to the advantages of conjoint analysis in providing more detailed information about citizen preferences, the approach is adaptable and flexible. Questions relevant to different stages of the peace process can be developed to address such issues as the establishment of negotiations, governance arrangements, and agreement implementation. A variety of modes can be used, including in-person surveys or online questionnaires, and written or symbolic characters can be used, according to the literacy level of the respondents. The questions can be set up for individuals to complete themselves, or data can be collected with the use of trained enumerators. The approach can therefore be used in a wide range of postconflict settings of interest to practitioners, in both developed and developing countries, and among populations with different degrees of literacy and access to the internet. The use of conjoint survey experiments thus adds value by enabling policymakers in the peacebuilding process to acquire more detailed information about citizen and elite groups' preferences across a wide array of contexts and environments.

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<sup>7</sup> For the Settlement Scenario Toolkit, see <http://kentucytool.ucy.ac.cy/home>.

# APPLICATION TO THE CYPRUS PEACE AGREEMENT

Cyprus has often been held up in the policy-related and academic literatures as an important case, with lessons about failure in negotiating and implementing power-sharing settlements.<sup>8</sup> It is likely, however, that important areas of potential agreement that would have made a solution possible were missed, especially in 2017, when the United Nations halted the negotiations process it was spearheading. A conjoint survey conducted at the time might have expanded the space for negotiations by revealing the trade-offs each side was willing to make to bring the negotiations to an acceptable conclusion, but before we discuss the value of this approach, we outline the history of the conflict and the issues that are the subject of negotiations.

## History of the Cyprus Conflict

The Cyprus conflict dates back to the colonial era. During the nineteenth century, Britain acquired control over Cyprus from the Ottoman Empire, and though the status of the island as part of the British Empire shifted, it was the prospects for decolonization that emerged out of the disruptions of World Wars I and II that shaped the present conflict. During the postwar period, new nationalist movements formed that sought an end to British rule and changes to the island's status. Leaders of the Greek Cypriot community pressed for union of the whole island with Greece, whereas the Turkish Cypriot leaders held out for partition of the island. Between 1955 and 1959, the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters, a Greek Cypriot paramilitary organization known by the acronym EOKA, fought against British rule while Turkish Cypriots sided with the colonial authorities, leading to a spiral of intercommunal reprisals. To try to resolve these disputes, the British brokered the London-Zurich agreements of 1959–60 on drafting a new constitution. The arrangements included

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<sup>8</sup> Ahmet Sözen and Kudret Özersay, "The Annan Plan: State Succession or Continuity," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 1 (2007): 125–41; Christalla Yakinthou, *Political Settlements in Divided Societies: Consociationalism and Cyprus* (London: Springer, 2009); Neophytos Loizides, *Designing Peace: Cyprus and Institutional Innovations in Divided Societies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); John McGarry, "Centripetalism, Consociationalism and Cyprus: The 'Adoptability' Question," *Political Studies* 65, no. 2 (2017): 512–29.

significant constitutional and security guarantees for the Turkish Cypriot community. Greek Cypriots were to elect the president of the republic and Turkish Cypriots were to elect the vice president. The United Kingdom and the two “motherlands,” Greece and Turkey, gained the right to intervene in Cyprus through unilateral action if there was a need to reestablish a balanced state of affairs.<sup>9</sup>

In 1963, fighting broke out between the two communities, ending Turkish Cypriot participation in the Cyprus government, and in 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus in response to a coup five days earlier by the Greek junta. The Republic of Cyprus lost control of about 37 percent of its territory, including a number of large villages with homogeneous Greek Cypriot populations, the town of Morphou, and the suburb of Varosha in Famagusta, previously the most economically vibrant urban area in Cyprus but subsequently a fenced-off, abandoned “ghost town.” Since 1974, Greek Cypriots have pointed to their displacement (which affected about a third of their population), missing persons, and suffering following the invasion, emphasizing the illegality of the Turkish army’s control of areas in the north. Meanwhile, although Turkish Cypriots gained a disproportional amount of territory in 1974, they found themselves trapped in a legal jurisdiction not recognized by any state other than Turkey, facing political and economic isolation.

## **Prior Peace Proposals**

For many years, peace talks have tried to resolve issues of control and representation, and many options have been presented and modified, including details of the governing, territorial, and security arrangements. There is thus a rich set of negotiations and alternatives not only for Cypriot citizens to consider but also to inform negotiations elsewhere.

A consociational democracy at the federal level, an arrangement in which the two communities share power, has been at the base of every solution proposed since 1974. The high-level agreements of 1977 and 1979 specifically set out the agreed-on parameters for UN mediation and a prospective negotiated settlement that would incorporate two federal units and a shared administration of the central government. The agreement on a bizonal and bicommunal federation pointed to a general

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen George Xydis, *Cyprus: Reluctant Republic*, vol. 11 (The Hague: Mouton, 1973); Zaim Necatigil, *The Cyprus Question and the Turkish Position in International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

convergence on sharing power, although the details and substance of a future settlement remained to be determined. UN mediation also called for compromises.

Contrary to the wishes of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot hard-liners, the United Nations attempted to reestablish Cyprus as a unified state, with significant territorial readjustments in favor of the Greek Cypriot side to enable the maximum number of returnees among the post-1974 victims of ethnic cleansing. Contrary to the wishes of Greek Cypriot hard-liners, UN mediations adopted ethnic federal structures recognizing significant autonomy for the future Turkish Cypriot constituent state and political equality within the central government. The UN proposals aimed at establishing a form of power sharing and designated community rights, thereby preventing the Greek Cypriot majority from outvoting Turkish Cypriots on issues of vital political concern, through either a consensual parliamentary system stipulated in the provisions of a 2002–04 UN plan or an integrative presidential cross-voting arrangement agreed on by Cypriot leaders.

Under the proposed 2002–04 UN plan (the Annan Plan, or Cyprus reunification plan), Greek and Turkish Cypriots would have retained autonomy over most of their affairs under a decentralized federal system. Turkish Cypriots would have agreed to major territorial readjustments (Varosha, Morphou, and 50 villages in the Green Line) in areas occupied by the Turkish military in 1974 in exchange for power sharing and federal status within a reunited Cyprus. In the twin 2004 referendums on the Annan Plan, Greek Cypriots voted in the south and Turkish Cypriots voted simultaneously in the north.<sup>10</sup> Although the plan initially had the support of the two main Greek Cypriot political parties, representing two-thirds of the electorate, it was rejected by a landslide 76 percent of Greek Cypriots, while 65 percent of Turkish Cypriots approved it.

Despite this failure, gaining public endorsement has been at the center of all peace initiatives, and since 2014 it has been a mandatory step in any future peace process. The pro-unification camps on both sides have won elections, leading to a number of new proposals to be considered in the negotiations. The latest UN peace talks, held at Crans-Montana, Valais, Switzerland, during the summer of 2017, engaged both sides with some of these alternatives.

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<sup>10</sup> Sözen and Özersay, “The Annan Plan,” 2007.

Proposed by UN secretary-general António Guterres and widely known as the Guterres package, the new six-point UN proposals paved the way for new ideas for a comprehensive settlement. The core concept introduced by Guterres was that of an implementation monitoring mechanism, which would go beyond security and replace the guarantee system proposed in the Annan Plan. While the United Nations attempted to abolish Greek and Turkish unilateral guarantees for intervention, significant disagreements remained as to the timing and conditions for the complete withdrawal of Turkish troops. Though discussions at Crans-Montana failed to progress two years later, in 2019, the two sides reconfirmed their commitment to the six-point Guterres framework and the principle of political equality as defined by UN Security Council Resolution 716 (1991).<sup>11</sup> Missing throughout these negotiations has been the question of public endorsement of a potential framework and its alternative iterations.

The November 25, 2019, statement implied a conditional endorsement of the framework by the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders. While options such as a centralized state, maintaining the status quo, or a two-state solution are rejected by at least one of the two communities in public opinion surveys, several polls, including one cited by the UN Security Council in July 2020, have demonstrated support for cooperation and federalism from both Greek and Turkish Cypriots.<sup>12</sup>

## **Public Opinion Conjoint Survey Results**

The key puzzle addressed in this application of conjoint survey analysis is whether the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot publics share the same understanding as the pro-unification political elites

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<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, “The Greek Cypriot leader and the Turkish Cypriot leader affirmed their commitment to the Joint Declaration of 11 February 2014, the prior convergences, and the six point framework I presented on 30 June 2017, with a view to achieve a strategic agreement paving the way forward for a comprehensive settlement” ([www.uncyprustalks.org/secretary-generals-statement-on-cyprus-25-november-2019/](http://www.uncyprustalks.org/secretary-generals-statement-on-cyprus-25-november-2019/)). In the Turkish Cypriot view, effective participation implies some form of veto over decisions of at least the executive in a reunited Cyprus, such as that afforded by the Annan Plan formula, according to which all executive decisions would need the support of at least one Turkish Cypriot minister. Progress in the negotiations is likely to rest on the Greek Cypriot side accepting this provision and on the Turkish Cypriot side not seeking to radically expand veto rights beyond the executive to all united institutions.

<sup>12</sup> See also Charis Psaltis, Neophytos Loizides, Alicia LaPierre, and Djordje Stefanovic, “Transitional Justice and Acceptance of Cohabitation in Cyprus,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42, no. 11 (2019): 1850–69; and Charis Psaltis, Huseyin Cakal, Neophytos Loizides, and Işık Kuşçu Bonnenfant, “Internally Displaced Persons and the Cyprus Peace Process,” *International Political Science Review* 41, no. 1 (2020): 138–54.

of what a federal settlement would entail and the concessions this option would require in the context of a comprehensive peace settlement. Public opinion is critical in mediations involving aspiring federations or consociations in general but is even more important to Cyprus because of a 2014 agreement by the two sides stipulating that a “united Cyprus federation shall result from the settlement following the settlement’s approval by separate simultaneous referenda.”<sup>13</sup>

Earlier attempts to negotiate a settlement on the island have failed, most notably the 2004 Annan Plan, which received Turkish Cypriot support in a referendum but did not find support in the Greek Cypriot community. Since then, some of the key political actors have either opposed or offered lukewarm support for the federal option, stating their readiness to accept it only with the “right content” and with minimal concessions made to the other side. Conventional wisdom might suggest that while there is still a rhetorical commitment to a federal Cyprus, the interpretations of the two sides are very different and perhaps unresolvable. In contravention of such conventional wisdom, however, the results of the conjoint experiment, described below, demonstrate a convergence in sub-packages of the Guterres framework, including detailed arrangements on major issues (e.g., territory, security, properties, and power sharing) that could be supported simultaneously by both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot public opinion. The results also demonstrate how individual elements of a compromise agreement can affect the likelihood that a specific compromise will be selected.

As noted by a UN official commenting on a briefing of the conjoint experiment results in Cyprus, the logic of the survey fits the current format of the peace talks well. Compromises, especially those that citizens support, could become a focal point in intergroup negotiations.<sup>14</sup> Through the long history of the Cyprus peace talks, a variety of options have been presented and modified, including details of the governing, territorial, and security arrangements. There is thus a rich set of credible alternatives to the existing peace settlement that citizens might consider. These alternatives are being actively debated in the Cyprus peace talks, which facilitates testing citizen support for various trade-offs and compromises in a reunited Cyprus.

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<sup>13</sup> Anastasiades-Eroglu Joint Declaration, February 11, 2014, [www.foreignaffairs.gr/pdf-files/Joint-Declaration.pdf](http://www.foreignaffairs.gr/pdf-files/Joint-Declaration.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Authors’ briefing of the UN team, New York and Nicosia, June 30, 2020.

### *Survey Conduct and Content*

In the Greek Cypriot community, the University Center for Field Studies of the University of Cyprus gathered a representative sample of 817 Greek Cypriots. In the Turkish Cypriot community, LIPA Consultants Ltd. followed the same methodology and collected a representative sample of 804 Turkish Cypriots. The two survey teams had previously worked together on a number of projects connected to the Cyprus issue. Respondents were presented with five pairs of hypothetical peace agreement packages and asked to choose one. Each peace agreement package had five dimensions, covering the form of the federal executive, territorial readjustments, compensation for users and owners of properties, the implementation monitoring mechanism, and the composition of the Supreme Court. The order of the dimensions was randomized by computer for each respondent, as were the values.

Each of these five dimensions had between four and five values representing alternative solutions. Overall, respondents saw five pairs of package settlements on separate screens and were asked to choose between the two options in each pair, for a total of ten potential agreements evaluated by each individual.<sup>15</sup> The exact values of these dimensions were randomly allocated by the program from a fixed selection of possible options. For example, each pair of choices a respondent saw would contain a dimension designated “territory,” with the different ways of allocating territory randomly assigned to the peace settlement pairs. Table 2 provides an overview of all the dimensions and values that Greek Cypriot respondents were exposed to. The values were preselected based on responses from focus groups, earlier available surveys, and discussions with stakeholders, including the United Nations.<sup>16</sup>

### **Analysis of Results: Divergences and Points of Overlap**

Analysis of the survey results permits identification of the importance of the various elements of the different peace proposals to the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities.

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<sup>15</sup> The full survey is available on request.

<sup>16</sup> Turkish-language names were used for the Turkish Cypriot survey, and Greek-language names for the Greek Cypriot survey.



**Table 2.** Cyprus Peace Deal: Dimensions and Values

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Values</b>
The federal executive must be formed by	All parties in proportion to their seats in the assembly
	Greek Cypriot (GC) and Turkish Cypriot (TC) copresidents elected through cross voting
	GC president and TC vice president elected through cross voting
	Support of at least a quarter of MPs from each community
	A majority in the assembly or voters regardless of ethnicity
On territory, to return 50 villages, as in the Annan Plan, and Varosha	But Morphou to stay in TC administration
	Plus Morphou
	Plus Morphou, Rizokarpaso, and Yialousa
	Plus old part of Morphou, Rizokarpaso, and Yialousa
	But Morphou and North Karpasia to become federal areas
Most TC users will keep current properties. Users negatively affected will get	€50,000 (on average), depending on a fair UN expert estimate of loss
	€150,000 (on average), depending on a fair UN expert estimate of loss
	€200,000 (on average), depending on a fair UN expert estimate of loss
	€300,000 (on average), depending on a fair UN expert estimate of loss
	€300,000 (on average), plus guaranteed housing anywhere on Cyprus
The implementation monitoring mechanism will be led by	UN with the three former guarantors, Greece, Turkey, and the UK
	UN with a third party, such as NATO
	UN with EU countries, such as Ireland, France, and Germany
	UN with third countries, such as Japan, Australia, and Canada
The Supreme Court, which will deal with deadlocks and guarantee human rights, will be appointed	With an equal number of GCs and TCs and a rotating chair
	With an equal number of GCs and TCs, and a minority of judges appointed by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)
	With a majority of judges appointed by the ECHR
	By a special international UN tribunal headquartered in Cyprus

**Figure 2.** Respondents' Support for Peace Package by Community in Cyprus

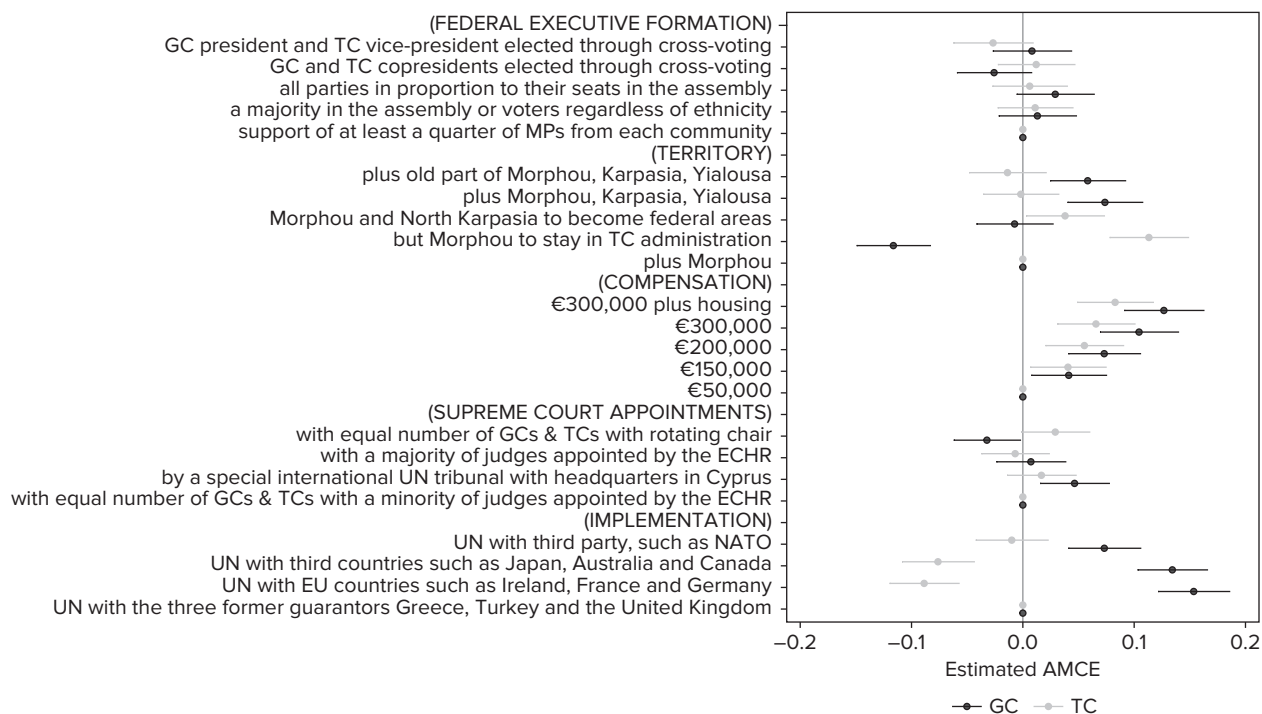


Figure 2 shows how preferences regarding possible peace settlement arrangements diverge or converge across communities. Of interest now are the comparative results for Greek Cypriots (817 individuals) and Turkish Cypriots (804 individuals). In figure 2, estimates of how likely specific values of each dimension of the peace settlement are to have shaped the probability that respondents in each community would have selected a peace settlement with this dimension embedded in it, compared with a baseline value (here selected to be a value closer to the Annan Plan, the unsuccessful 2004 peace initiative), are shown. Overall, as might be expected, a strong divergence over peace settlement arrangements was noted between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. But the analysis also identified points of overlap that are currently underplayed and that might mitigate areas of disagreement once policy trade-offs are considered.

### ***Power Sharing in the Federal Executive***

The first dimension presented in figure 2 is power sharing in the federal executive. A comparison of the different options with the baseline category, namely, a federal executive elected with the support

of at least a quarter of members of parliament (MPs) from each community, shows that the Greek Cypriots are more likely than the Turkish Cypriots to support election of the federal executive by a simple majority of MPs, while the Turkish Cypriots are indifferent between these options and the baseline category. The small circles in figure 2 locate an estimate of the degree of support for the peace settlement element, with the bars indicating the 95 percent confidence interval for these estimates. The proximity of both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot responses to the baseline choice suggests we cannot be confident that this value would have a statistically significant effect on the likelihood that the different groups would select a peace settlement option with this dimension embedded in it.

### ***Implementation Mechanism, Territorial Readjustments, and Supreme Court Formation***

Figure 2 provides clear evidence that implementation mechanism and territorial readjustment are strongly defined by community identification. On these two dimensions, the preferences of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots diverge, as would be expected. Turkish Cypriots are opposed to an arrangement that excludes Turkey, but, interestingly, UN and NATO monitoring are equally desirable for Turkish Cypriots as alternatives to monitoring by the existing guarantor powers. For Greek Cypriots, a combination of three countries that does not include Greece, Turkey, or the United Kingdom seems appealing. They also see UN and NATO monitoring as a significant improvement over the existing guarantor states situation.

With respect to territorial readjustments, the return of Morphou emerges as one of the most divisive elements between the two communities; however, the prospect of both Morphou and North Karpasia becoming federal areas could elicit additional support for a peace settlement from Turkish Cypriots without reducing the support of Greek Cypriots, compared to the situation in which Morphou is returned to the Greek Cypriots. Of note, an agreement that returns Rizokarpaso and Yialousa to the Greek Cypriots draws support from Greek Cypriots without further reducing support from Turkish Cypriots. The two communities seem to agree that the more compensation available to property owners and users the better, and there do not seem to be large divisions over the issue of power sharing, with both communities being indifferent between choices on a number of options.

With respect to the composition of the Supreme Court, the preferences of the Greek Cypriots are not so different from those of the Turkish Cypriots, with the provision for a special UN tribunal in Cyprus gaining support in both communities compared to the proposition included in the 2004 Annan Plan, which called for an equal number of judges drawn from the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, with a minority of judges to be appointed by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

To sum up, the implementation mechanism, territorial issues, and compensation emerge as equally important to both communities. The first two dimensions show up in the survey results as issues of divergence, and the last one as an issue of convergence. Greek Cypriots are 11 percent less likely to support an arrangement if Morphou is not returned to their constituent state compared to the situation in which it is returned. The return of Morphou is a provision included in all peace plan proposals so far. This result is mirrored in the Turkish Cypriot community, as about 11 percent are more likely to support such an arrangement if Morphou remains on their side post-settlement compared to a situation in which it is not. Similarly, replacement of the existing guarantee system with the United Nations and European Union (EU) countries (Ireland, France, and Germany) increases support for an agreement by 15 percent in the Greek Cypriot community but decreases support by 8 percent in the Turkish Cypriot community.

In both communities, €300,000 (on average) plus guaranteed housing anywhere on Cyprus for property users and owners adds 12 percent support for a peace settlement among Greek Cypriots and 8 percent among Turkish Cypriots compared to the reference category of €50,000. This convergence could be leveraged in a peace agreement seeking compromises on more conflictual issues.

## **Simulations of Alternative Peace Packages**

The survey findings support a picture of relative agreement across the two communities on certain dimensions. Despite the expected cross-community divergence on key issues such as territory and security, there appears to be scope for bicomunal convergences that could lead to a solution. In other words, a political space exists across a range of issues where common ground could mitigate the lack of agreement in other key areas. To identify what solutions would secure support—overall

and by community—we simulated different combinations of proposed settlements based on the available repertoire of proposals presented to the two sides.

Table 3 compares the current Guterres package and a proposed New Deal 1 and New Deal 2 with each other and with the Annan Plan, which was the reference baseline used for valuations in the survey. The goal was to assess the support these alternative arrangements would receive from each community and overall.

The headline finding—that potential trade-offs are available that could mitigate areas of disagreement—is both striking and encouraging in terms of the future possibility of a negotiated political settlement in Cyprus. The discovery of potential trade-offs is particularly noteworthy for the design of a peace settlement since overall support for a settlement increases from 39 percent to 59 percent as a result of win-win amendments in the simulated peace package, including increased compensation for affected users or owners of disputed properties.

### ***Method***

Table 3 shows the results for simulations of a range of potential arrangements that might be considered politically realistic. To produce the simulations, we used the results of the conjoint survey experiment, which showed the support that the different peace settlement dimensions have in these communities. We then used these results to calculate possible levels of support for different combinations of peace settlements. It is also possible, using the Settlement Scenario Toolkit, to reconstruct alternative packages with different trade-offs by choosing different values for the dimensions listed.<sup>17</sup> The conjoint toolkit builds on already-collected data and allows users to construct different scenarios to see how changing different issues would affect the views of each of the two communities on Cyprus. For example, one could change the nature of security mechanisms while holding all else constant to see how that change would affect public opinion in the two communities. This capability gives toolkit users a feel for the practical consequences and the level of popular support if the individual components of a peace settlement are varied.

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<sup>17</sup> For the Settlement Scenario Toolkit, see <http://kentuckytool.ucy.ac.cy/home>.

**Table 3.** Simulations of Support for Different Peace Packages

	<b>Annan Plan (reference)</b>	<b>Guterres package</b>	<b>New Deal 1</b>	<b>New Deal 2</b>
<b>Federal executive formation</b>	At least a quarter of MPs to come from each community	GC and TC to be copresidents and elected through cross voting	All parties to be represented in proportion to their seats in the assembly	All parties to be represented in proportion to their seats in the assembly
<b>Territory</b>	Plus Morphou	Plus Morphou	Morphou and North Karpasia to become federal areas	Plus old part of Morphou, Rizokarpaso, and Yialousa
<b>Compensation</b>	€50,000 (on average), depending on a fair UN expert estimate of loss	€150,000 (on average), depending on a fair UN expert estimate of loss	€300,000 (on average), plus guaranteed housing anywhere on Cyprus	€300,000 (on average), plus guaranteed housing anywhere on Cyprus
<b>Implementation</b>	By the UN with the three former guarantors, Greece, Turkey, and the UK	By the UN with EU countries, such as Ireland, France, and Germany	By the UN with third countries, such as Japan, Australia, and Canada	By the UN with a third party, such as NATO
<b>Supreme Court appointments</b>	An equal number of GCs and TCs, with a minority of judges appointed by the ECHR	An equal number of GCs and TCs, with a rotating chair	Handled by a special international UN tribunal headquartered on Cyprus	An equal number of GCs and TCs, with a rotating chair
<b>Overall support</b>	39% (36–42%)	45% (43–49%)	59% (55–62%)	56% (53–60%)
<b>Greek Cypriots</b>	33% (28–37%)	47% (42%–51%)	65% (61–70%)	58% (53–63%)
<b>Turkish Cypriots</b>	46% (41–50%)	45% (40–50%)	>53% (48–57%)	55% (51–60%)

Note: Parentheses enclose estimates of support that lie within the 95 percent confidence interval.

### *Simulation 1—Annan Plan*

Simulation 1 explores the likelihood of support for an Annan Plan scenario and yields slightly better results than when the plan was rejected in 2004. This is partly explained by some of the Annan voters changing their views and now supporting a renewed settlement process. In such a case, the territorial readjustments would be similar to those proposed in 2004 (including a return of Morphou for Greek Cypriots, but not North Karpasia), with Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom maintaining their security guarantor status. As shown in table 3, the Annan Plan is the least preferred option overall (garnering only 39 percent support) and by community (Greek Cypriots, 33 percent; Turkish Cypriots, 46 percent). Though low support for this option among Greek Cypriots is to be expected, a predicted support level of merely 46 percent among Turkish Cypriots suggests that, even today, an Annan Plan outcome would not satisfy the majority of that community either.

### *Simulation 2—Guterres Package*

Simulation 2 explores the evolution of UN mediations in the Guterres package. At the UN-reconvened Crans-Montana conference on Cyprus in June 2017, Secretary-General António Guterres proposed that the existing Treaty of Guarantee was “unsustainable” and introduced a key innovation, an implementation monitoring mechanism, to replace the treaty; however, this innovation was not discussed in the necessary depth that would allow us to include it as part of an alternative peace arrangement in this study. The increased compensation levels listed in table 3 reflect the contributions to the Guterres package of experts and the dedicated technical committee advocating improvements for dispossessed owners and current property users. The specific arrangement stipulated in the survey was supported by 45 percent of all respondents, but most of the progress was made on the Greek Cypriot side: the framework received more Greek Cypriot support, at 47 percent, but kept Turkish Cypriot support at a similar level as in the Annan scenario, 45 percent. (It bears noting that the former Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci, who supported this package in the run-up to the presidential election in October 2020, received 48 percent of the Turkish Cypriot vote.) Both solutions would therefore pose a challenge to the peace process as their legitimacy in the two communities is below the 50 percent threshold required for approval of any settlement proposal.

### *Simulation 3—New Deal 1*

Simulation 3 (New Deal 1) provides generous compensation to affected property owners and users. Surprisingly, an idea on the territorial readjustments that was discussed briefly when the Guterres package was first introduced, and had earlier been proposed by the leaders of both communities, found its way into New Deal 1. Specifically, the peace talks took up the possibility of assigning federal areas that would include Morphou and parts of Karpasia, therefore maximizing the number of returnees but also minimizing the number of current residents to be relocated. This package is the most integrative, suggesting the two communities have a positive image of each other, and is also the most international in its orientation, with security guarantees to be provided by major countries outside the European Union and with the United Nations establishing a seat in Cyprus to support the peace process locally and regionally. Under this scenario, 65 percent of Greek Cypriots and 53 percent of Turkish Cypriots—a majority in each case—would be satisfied because security and arbitration would be internationalized. Such proposals have been discussed publicly but so far have not been included in a peace package, and public opinion about their effectiveness has not been assessed.

### *Simulation 4—New Deal 2*

Simulation 4 revises the scenario of high compensation with the addition of NATO as a guarantor. Turkish Cypriots (and Turkey in particular) are more likely to accept this scenario, Greek Cypriots less so. A NATO type of arrangement is likely to be rejected by at least one major political party in the Greek Cypriot community, which opposes NATO for ideological reasons; however, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the war in Gaza might alter Greek Cypriots’ view in favor of a more robust NATO-led mechanism under UN auspices. Under New Deal 2, areas in Morphou and Karpasia would be divided to minimize population movements and maximize the return of internally displaced persons while parties could transition to a Northern Ireland style of power sharing that was publicly proposed by a key expert on the UN team advising the negotiations.<sup>18</sup> This proposal (tabbed as liberal consociational) received very little attention among players in Cyprus, even though the

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<sup>18</sup> McGarry, “Centripetalism, Consociationalism and Cyprus.”



survey saw some marginal gains in its adoptability and could be more attractive to right-wing parties currently leading the negotiations in the Turkish Cypriot community.<sup>19</sup> In our theoretical scenario, we demonstrated how important power-sharing institutions are relative to other dimensions of a future settlement. Here and in our related survey in Northern Ireland, we find that other considerations complicate support for power sharing, suggesting different motivations among elites versus the wider public. The New Deal 2 scenario slightly boosts support among Turkish Cypriots to 55 percent but also maintains support among Greek Cypriots at 58 percent while overall support is at 56 percent. There is no doubt that citizens on both sides would welcome increased compensation; currently there is no clarity in the UN mediations as to the compensation formula for those affected individuals. Amendments related to the ones proposed in the conjoint survey analysis could move the lower confidence intervals of all the estimates safely above the 50 percent bar both for each community and overall, thus securing a politically winning formula.

These simulations show there is scope for designing consociational and federal arrangements in Cyprus that would secure societal agreement and attract the overall support of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Crucially, the simulations underscore the value of the peace settlement design since overall support for a settlement increases about 20 percent as a result of win-win amendments.

The Cyprus survey experiment suggests the fluidity of responses on public opinion surveys with respect to peace settlement provisions. Even seemingly minor adjustments in the provisions could positively transform public support from a minority position into a majority on both sides of the divide. At the same time, the findings suggest a clear pathway for UN mediation and for a role for external parties, especially in the implementation mechanism. In 2017, the UN secretary-general interrupted the United Nations' own initiative on Cyprus despite the close positions of the two sides on several issues. Our findings suggest this was the wrong decision at the time.

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<sup>19</sup> Allison McCulloch, *Power-Sharing and Political Stability in Deeply Divided Societies* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014); and John McGarry and Neophytos Loizides, "Power-Sharing in a Re-United Cyprus: Centripetal Coalitions vs. Proportional Sequential Coalitions," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 13, no. 4 (2015): 847–72.

# **APPLICATION TO NORTHERN IRELAND BORDER AFTER THE BREXIT REFERENDUM**

The border issues in Northern Ireland following the 2016 Brexit referendum offered another opportunity to conduct a conjoint survey analysis. Northern Ireland represents an ideal case to examine opinions in a divided society; the border is central to the politics of the peace process and has been a salient aspect of the politics of Northern Ireland since the early 1900s.<sup>20</sup>

## **History of the Northern Ireland Border Dispute**

The partition of Ireland in 1921 split the island into two political units: the Irish Free State, which chose self-government, and Northern Ireland, which remained part of the United Kingdom. The border issues and the key matter of public consent to border arrangements are woven into Northern Ireland's political history going right back to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 and the partition of the island. The treaty represented difficult compromises for all parties, and a boundary commission was established to determine the final shape of the border. The commission was essentially a political device to increase Irish nationalist support for the terms of the treaty, as it was inferred that the commission would be guided by local consent and that some border counties then on the UK side of the border might be moved into the Free State. The boundary commission did not report its findings until 1925, when it merely rubber-stamped the existing border arrangements, increasing Irish nationalist discontent and fueling a lasting suspicion and discontent about being annexed on the wrong side of an artificially drawn border. For Irish nationalists, then, the border is not merely a territorial or a technical issue but is woven into Irish nationalist historical and political iconography, which portrays the border arrangements established in 1921 and confirmed in 1925 as a matter of British diplomatic maleficence and the Irish nationalists' own subjugation. On the one hand, the Irish nationalists who wanted a united Ireland became a minority in a UK region dominated by unionists. The unionists, on the other hand, were committed to remaining part of the United

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<sup>20</sup> Kieran J. Rankin, "Deducing Rationales and Political Tactics in the Partitioning of Ireland, 1912–1925," *Political Geography* 26, no. 8 (2007): 909–33.

Kingdom and feared becoming a minority if Ireland were to reunite. Thus the imposition of the border was central to defining the political identities of both communities.<sup>21</sup>

The location of the border and arrangements for controlling it were contested for the rest of the twentieth century, driving the violent conflict that emerged in the 1960s. The border became increasingly visible and militarized as political conflict intensified during the 1970s and 1980s. The infrastructure around the border became increasingly elaborate during this period as well; it functioned to demarcate both the separate political and legal territories on the island, and the more existential ethnonational identities of unionists and nationalists.

After the signing of the Belfast (or Good Friday) Agreement in 1998, the importance of the border in the politics of the region was reduced. The agreement greatly lowered the level of violent conflict and established power-sharing provisions, bringing stability. In addition, the demilitarization process that followed saw the redeployment of British military engagement and surveillance at the border as well as the dismantling of border infrastructure and the increasingly free flow of goods and people. Since then, the border has become invisible, and this has facilitated commerce and increased contact between people on both parts of the island, with cross-border trade accounting for 61 percent of the total volume of exchanges between Northern Ireland and the European Union. A further effect of EU integration has been to increase the security of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland, as nationalists perceive their rights to be more firmly protected under EU law and their free movement across the border guaranteed.<sup>22</sup>

## **Effect of the Brexit Referendum**

The UK vote to leave the European Union in 2016 sharply increased the importance of the border and reawakened concerns about the stability of the peace agreement.<sup>23</sup> This concern was

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<sup>21</sup> John Coakley, “Resolving International Border Disputes: The Irish Experience,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 52, no. 3 (2017): 377–98.

<sup>22</sup> Adrian Guelke, “Britain after Brexit: The Risk to Northern Ireland,” *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017): 42–52.

<sup>23</sup> David Phinnemore and Katy Hayward, “UK Withdrawal (‘Brexit’) and the Good Friday Agreement,” European Parliament Report (Brussels Policy Department for Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs, 2017), [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596826/IPOL\\_STU\(2017\)596826\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596826/IPOL_STU(2017)596826_EN.pdf); Guelke, “Britain after Brexit.”

compounded by three further conditions that placed extra pressure on the border settlement. First, during the Brexit referendum campaign, the main unionist and nationalist parties took opposing positions. The largest unionist party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), campaigned for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union while Sinn Fein, the largest nationalist party, wanted it to remain.<sup>24</sup> Second, the United Kingdom's 2017 Westminster general election resulted in a Theresa May-led conservative minority administration supported by the DUP through a formal confidence and supply agreement negotiated between the two parties. This meant the UK government was dependent on one of the region's parties to sustain itself in office while trying to present itself as a nonpartisan presence in the tense ethnonational relations between unionists and nationalists in Northern Ireland. Third, the United Kingdom's withdrawing from the European Union's single market and customs union hardened the character of the Irish border and strengthened its practical implications for the movement of people and goods between one side of it, the Republic of Ireland, which would remain within the European Union, and the other side, Northern Ireland, which would leave. Suddenly, the Irish border evolved from being a bilateral territorial demarcator between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic into a more complex phenomenon. At the end of the scheduled transition period, at 11 p.m. on December 31, 2020, the Irish border also simultaneously became the frontier of the European Union with a nonmember state, the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland has therefore become a potential territorial weak spot as it is the only part of the United Kingdom that shares a land border with the European Union and its 27 member states.

Much of the Brexit negotiations from 2016 to 2019 focused on the implications of a land border in Ireland and how to avoid a hard border while protecting the integrity of the EU single market. There was concern that a hard border could result in the need for extensive border checks to ascertain that goods and people moving from one jurisdiction to the other met the relevant regulations.<sup>25</sup> This possibility, in conjunction with the UK government's need to negotiate an orderly withdrawal agreement with the European Union, dramatically increased the political significance of the border.

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<sup>24</sup> Gerard McCann and Paul Hainsworth, "Brexit and Northern Ireland: The 2016 Referendum on the United Kingdom's Membership of the European Union," *Irish Political Studies* 32, no. 2 (2017): 327–42.

<sup>25</sup> Katy Hayward, Maurice Campbell, and Rob Murphy, "The Irish Border as a Customs Frontier after Brexit," Policy Brief, Centre for European Policy Studies, July 11, 2017, [www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/irish-border-customs-frontier-after-brexit/](http://www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/irish-border-customs-frontier-after-brexit/).

From December 2017 to January 2020, the UK Parliament was deadlocked and unable to approve the withdrawal agreement that Theresa May's government had negotiated with the European Union. At the time of data collection in May and June 2018, no withdrawal agreement outlining the status of Northern Ireland had been ratified by Parliament. Only after the Westminster general election of December 2019, when Boris Johnson's conservative government secured a substantial majority, was a renegotiated withdrawal agreement bill ratified by Parliament, in January 2020.<sup>26</sup> While this bill replaced the focus on a land border on the island of Ireland with the Northern Ireland Protocol, which emphasized the sea border between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, it did not remove the fear of a hard border reemerging, until a final arrangement was reached in late 2020.

Despite the salience of the border issues to the politics of Northern Ireland and the Brexit negotiations, little attention has been paid to the preferences of residents of the region, with the exception of the work of Garry and colleagues.<sup>27</sup> In particular, no one has gauged citizen preferences surrounding the trade-offs inherent in possible changes to border institutions. More open borders might reduce the economic transaction costs of crossing borders but raise security concerns. Borders that were harder to cross might provide more practical and symbolic support of security and identity concerns but entail higher transaction costs. This is exactly the kind of trade-off Northern Ireland has confronted in the post-Brexit referendum era. Our findings helped inform policymakers on a number of issues during the talks and correctly demonstrated (as in the case of Cyprus) the solvability of the Northern Ireland conundrum. Specifically, we looked at the following issues: To what extent should the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic or that between Northern Ireland and Great Britain be regulated? Should Northern Ireland maintain close contact with the Republic of Ireland and the European Union at the risk of increasing legal distance from the rest of the United Kingdom?

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<sup>26</sup> Even then, some confusion remained about the precise implications for the border infrastructure of Northern Ireland. See J. Curtis, "Brexit and the Northern Ireland Border," House of Commons Library, January 14, 2020, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/brexit/policy/brexit-and-the-northernireland-border/>.

<sup>27</sup> John Garry, Kevin McNicholl, Brendan O'Leary, and James Pow, "Northern Ireland and the UK's Exit from the EU: What Do People Think?" Economic and Social Research Council, May 2018, [www.qub.ac.uk/sites/brexitni/BrexitandtheBorder/Report/Filetoupload,820734,en.pdf](http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/brexitni/BrexitandtheBorder/Report/Filetoupload,820734,en.pdf).

Complicating the border question has been the high anticipated cost of Brexit to Northern Ireland's economy. Unlike in the Cyprus negotiations, mediators insisted on a deal right up to the last minute, fearing that a deep recession would follow a no-deal Brexit. In Northern Ireland alone, the UK government estimated that 8–12 percent of Northern Ireland's GDP could be lost, depending on the precise outcome of the Brexit negotiations.<sup>28</sup> Would the availability and amount of compensation for those losses shape views on an acceptable border arrangement?

## Public Opinion Conjoint Survey Results

To support negotiations on these issues, we explored public opinion in the region in a survey instrument administered to Northern Irish citizens in May and June 2018.

The survey was administered to a sample of 759 respondents (aged 18 or older)<sup>29</sup> drawn from the Qualtrics Northern Irish Online Panel and representing both unionist and nationalist communities, along with citizens who did not identify with either group.<sup>30</sup> Respondents were presented with pairs of hypothetical border agreements and asked to choose one. Each agreement had five dimensions, mirroring the key dimensions of the future border arrangements to be agreed on: the location of the border patrol stations, the characteristics of border checks, how border crossings should be monitored, what entity had financial responsibility for maintaining the border infrastructure, and the amount of compensation for losses consequent to changes in the border arrangements.

Each dimension had between two and five possible values, reflecting different solutions. The order of dimensions was randomly selected by computer for each respondent, as were the values. Table 4 lists the dimensions and corresponding values, and figure 3 shows an example of paired

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<sup>28</sup> Kirsty Hughes and Katy Hayward, "Brexit, Northern Ireland and Scotland: Comparing Political Dynamics and Prospects in the Two 'Remain' Areas," Scottish Centre on European Relations, 2018, <https://pure.qub.ac.uk/en/publications/brexitnorthern-ireland-and-scotland-comparing-political-dynamics>.

<sup>29</sup> The response rate for the web sample was 0.264, calculated according to American Association for Public Opinion Research guidelines. After pilot testing the survey experiment on 80 subjects, we established a minimum cut-off point of four minutes. Any entry produced in less than four minutes was excluded from the sample, and recruitment was continued until all entries were above the cut-off point.

<sup>30</sup> The analysis presented here was limited to unionists (331) and nationalists (242), for a total of 573 individuals. Estimates for nonidentifiers, who either indicated that they identified with neither community (146) or preferred not to say (40), can be found in E. Morgan-Jones, Laura Sudulich, Feargal Cochrane, and Neophytos Loizides, "What Are Northern Irish Citizens' Preferences about Post-Brexit Border Arrangements?," a paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, Boston, August 30–September 2, 2018.

**Table 4.** Northern Ireland Border Survey: Dimensions and Values

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Values</b>
Location of border stations	At ports of exit from the island of Ireland
	At ports of entry to England, Wales, and Scotland
	At the land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
Characteristics of border checks	Border officers to physically examine all goods and customs paperwork crossing the border
	Predeparture electronic customs registration of all goods crossing the border, combined with remote electronic monitoring of vehicles crossing the border and random physical checks of goods at depots away from the border
	Random physical checks of goods at depots away from the border
	Predeparture electronic customs registration of all goods crossing the border, combined with remote electronic monitoring of vehicles crossing the border
	No checks on goods crossing the border
Control of border crossings	Separate control and operation of border crossings by Republic of Ireland and UK governments, with both sides working on their own
	Shared control and operation of border crossings by Republic of Ireland and UK governments, including mixed UK/Republic of Ireland teams on both sides of the border working together
Entity responsible for costs of maintaining border infrastructure	Mainly UK government
	Businesses and individuals using the border
	Mainly government of Republic of Ireland
	Shared by governments of UK and Republic of Ireland
Compensation for changes to border arrangements	None
	Public spending in Northern Ireland increased by 5%
	Public spending in Northern Ireland increased by 10%

**Figure 3. Sample Pairs of Border Agreements**

Question 1

Please carefully review the options detailed below, then please answer the questions.

Which of these choices do you prefer?

	<b>Choice 1</b>	<b>Choice 2</b>
<b>Responsible for costs of maintaining border infrastructure</b>	Mainly UK government	Mainly government of Irish Republic
<b>Control of border crossings</b>	Separate control and operation of border crossings by RoI and UK governments with both sides working on their own	Separate control and operation of border crossings by RoI and UK governments with both sides working on their own
<b>Characteristics of physical border checks</b>	Random physical checks of goods at depots away from border	Pre departure electronic customs registration of all goods crossing border combined with remote electronic monitoring of vehicles crossing border
<b>Location of border stations</b>	At ports of entry to England, Wales, and Scotland	At ports of entry to England, Wales and Scotland
<b>Compensation for changes to border arrangements</b>	None	Public spending in Northern Ireland increased 10%

- Prefer Choice 1
- Prefer Choice 2

choices. Overall, respondents saw four pairs of border settlements on separate screens and were asked to choose between the two options provided for each pair, for a total of eight potential agreements to be evaluated by each respondent.<sup>31</sup>

### **Analysis of Results: Divergences and Points of Overlap**

Comparative results for unionists (331 individuals) and nationalists (242 individuals) are presented in figure 4.

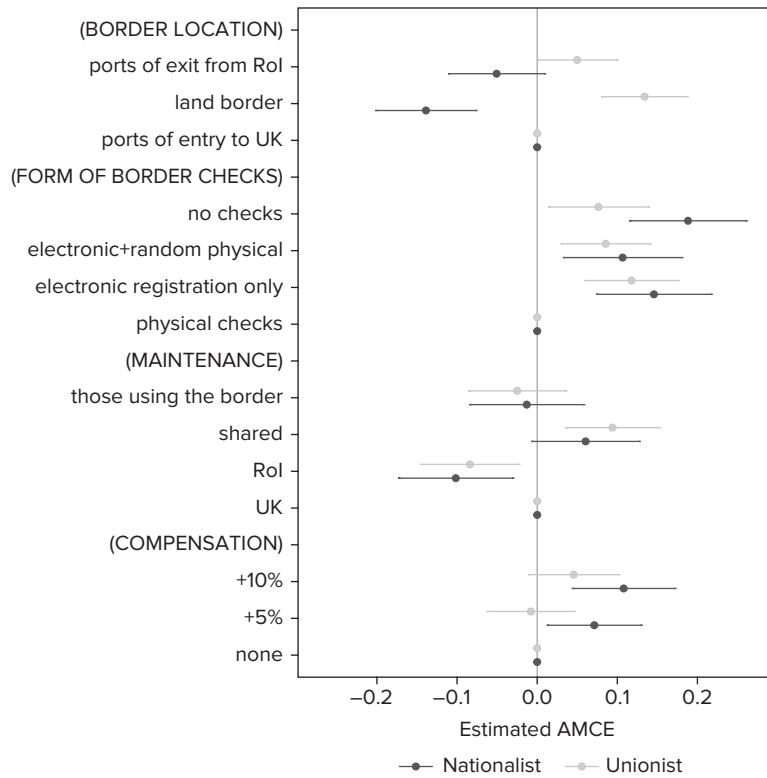
#### ***Border Location***

As in figure 2, which maps the results of the Cyprus survey, figure 4 maps respondent preferences by providing estimates of how likely a respondent is to choose a peace settlement with a particular

<sup>31</sup> The full questionnaire is available on request.



**Figure 4.** Effect of Border Arrangements on Northern Irish Respondents by Community



attribute embedded within it compared to a baseline category. In figure 4 the baseline categories are indicated by a simple dot with confidence interval lines. Figure 4 shows that with respect to the border dimension, unionists are much more likely to support a land border than checks at ports of entry to the United Kingdom, whereas nationalists are less likely to support this option. Figure 4 presents evidence that preferences about the location of the border are strongly defined by community identification. Across this particular dimension, the preferences of nationalist and unionists are divergent. Nationalists were strongly opposed to a land border but indifferent to where a potential east-west border would be. Unionists strongly preferred a land border between the northern and southern parts of the island of Ireland (north-south border) over an east-west border that would separate Northern Ireland from Great Britain. Preferences about whether the border should be at ports of entry to the United Kingdom or at ports of exit from the Republic of Ireland were insignificantly different from each other.

### ***Border Checks, Border Control, and Responsibility for Border Infrastructure Maintenance***

With respect to border checks, both communities ranked physical checks lowest, suggesting a strong preference for nonintrusive and time-saving forms of control. Nationalists preferred no checks over any physical or digital form of border control. Unionists were slightly more open to some form of checks but generally favored the least intrusive option, digital registration.

The two communities preferred shared over separate control of the border. On the matter of what entity should pay for the maintenance of the border infrastructure, the preferences of unionists were aligned with those of nationalists, and both were insignificantly different from the baseline category. As for compensation, nationalists thought that an increase in public spending was preferable to no compensation whatsoever while unionists preferred compensation only on the order of a 10 percent increase in public spending.

In sum, the border location emerges as equally important to both communities and as the main source of divergence. Unionists were 15 percent more likely to support an arrangement with a land border while nationalists were 15 percent more likely to reject such a scenario. However, nationalists displayed an even stronger likelihood of supporting an agreement with no checks (20 percent) compared to an arrangement that included physical checks. This dimension was highly salient to unionists as well: compared to physical checks, provisions for electronic registration only increased support (at 12 percent) for an agreement containing such a feature.

### **Simulations of Alternative Border Arrangements**

As in the Cyprus study, the picture that emerges from the Northern Ireland conjoint survey shows relative agreement across the two communities on multiple dimensions, which suggests there is scope for bilateral support for a solution. To identify what solutions would secure support, we simulated different combinations of border arrangements and estimated the support each would receive by community and overall. Table 5 presents the results of simulations of a range of potential arrangements that might be considered politically realistic. The goal was to assess the support each alternative arrangement would receive from each community and overall.

**Table 5.** Summary of Support for Border Arrangements: Four Simulations

	1	2	3	4
<b>Dimension Evaluated</b>	<b>No deal</b>	<b>North-south, with mild checks</b>	<b>East-west, with mild checks</b>	<b>East-west, with intrusive checks and compensation</b>
Border location	Land border	Land border	Entry	Entry
Form of border checks	Physical	Electronic only	Electronic only	Electronic plus random physical checks
Control of border	Separate	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Maintenance	UK	Shared	Shared	Shared
Compensation	None	None	None	10%
Overall support	42% (37–46%)	53% (49–58%)	54% (50–59%)	65% (60–69%)
Unionists	51% (44–58%)	65% (58–72%)	50% (43–57%)	64% (57–70%)
Nationalists	28% (21–36%)	40% (32–48%)	55% (46–63%)	67% (59–74%)

Note: Parentheses enclose estimates of support that lie within the 95 percent confidence interval.

### *Simulation 1—No Deal*

Simulation 1 explored the likelihood of support for a “no-deal” scenario in the event that a withdrawal agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom could not be reached by January 31, 2020. When the survey was conducted (before the introduction of the Northern Ireland Protocol and the withdrawal agreement), a no-deal outcome would have resulted in a north-south border with the most intrusive form of checks (physical), separate control of border operations, and the United Kingdom responsible for maintaining the border. This was the least preferred option overall (receiving only 42 percent support) and by community (unionists, 51 percent; nationalists, 28 percent). While a low level of popularity among nationalists was to be expected, a predicted support of merely 51 percent among unionists suggests that a no-deal outcome would not have satisfied the majority of the unionist community either.

### ***Simulation 2—North-South Border, Electronic Checks, Shared Control***

Simulation 2 explored the north-south border with less intrusive checks (electronic only), shared control and maintenance of the border, and no compensation. This choice was supported by 53 percent of all citizens, but there was a dramatic community split: this option received more unionist support (65 percent) but persuaded less than half the nationalists (40 percent). Both simulations 1 and 2 would therefore have posed challenges to the peace process because their legitimacy among nationalists would have been weak.

### ***Simulation 3—East-West Border, Electronic Checks, Shared Control***

Simulation 3 was an east-west border scenario with checks performed at the ports of entry to the mainland United Kingdom. In this simulation, checks were electronic only, control and maintenance of the border were shared, and there was no compensation. Under this scenario, nationalists would have been more satisfied than unionists, as there would have been no barriers between the north and south of the island of Ireland, but the confidence intervals around the estimates of both communities fell below the 50 percent bar, indicating that such a solution may not have fully satisfied either community.

### ***Simulation 4—East-West Border, Electronic Checks, Plus Compensation***

Simulation 4 revised the previous scenario with the addition of compensation (10 percent increase in public spending). This boosted the support for this type of arrangement, with a steep increase (12 percent) when compared to simulation 3 in the likelihood of nationalists supporting it. Unionists also welcomed an increase in public spending and would have been 14 percent more likely to support this arrangement if the increment was part of the package. The overall support for this scenario is 64 percent, which indicates that including an increased public spending provision was beneficial to the likelihood of reaching a shared solution. The provision of a combination of electronic and random physical checks (preferred by unionists), together with an increase in public spending in the region, moved the lower confidence intervals of all the estimates safely above the 50 percent bar for each community as well as overall.

These simulations show that scope exists to design border options that could secure societal agreement and attract the overall support of unionists, nationalists, and nonaligned groups. Crucially, it seems clear that a no-deal arrangement would have been very unpopular with the whole of the Northern Irish public and would have been likely to undermine the legitimacy of the border.

These findings demonstrate how trade-offs between specific dimensions of complex policy issues can mitigate levels of disagreement and increase the potential space for political accommodation between groups that are otherwise divided when issues are defined in isolation from other options. This scenario continues to be relevant today in terms of how the trade border in the Irish Sea is to be operationalized under the terms of the Windsor Framework and the associated withdrawal agreement.

### **Northern Ireland's Post-Brexit Status**

On December 24, 2020, the United Kingdom reached an agreement with the European Union on the basis for a future trading relationship, and the free trade agreement (FTA) was quickly signed into law by all sides before the Brexit transition period ended on December 31. The threat of a no-deal Brexit was avoided, which in turn meant that the previous year's withdrawal agreement and the Northern Ireland Protocol were accepted by the United Kingdom, and there would be no land border imposed on the island of Ireland. The Northern Ireland Protocol and its latest iteration, the Windsor Framework, effectively shifts the UK border with the European Union from the island of Ireland into the Irish Sea and places an internal trade border within the United Kingdom itself, between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.<sup>32</sup> As a result, Northern Ireland will be treated differently from the rest of the United Kingdom in a number of important respects. Under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, people living in Northern Ireland have the right to Irish and British citizenships. (They can be British, they can be Irish, or they can be both British and Irish.) Those who exercise their right to be Irish will retain their EU citizenship, define themselves as EU nationals at airports, and retain their right to freedom of movement within the European Union; they may travel, live, and work within EU countries without a visa for unlimited periods. Those who travel on British

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<sup>32</sup> The Windsor Framework provided an update of the Northern Ireland Protocol, refining the terms of its operation and was formally adopted by the EU and UK on March 24, 2023. It went into effect on October 1, 2023.

passports will not have these rights. Northern Ireland students also qualify for the European Union's Erasmus student exchange program because the Irish government provides funding for the universities in Northern Ireland that enables them to do so, while students in Great Britain are not eligible and will have to make do with the United Kingdom's new and as yet untested replacement, the Turing Scheme. It is in the area of trade, however, that Northern Ireland's special Brexit status will be most visible. Effectively, the Windsor Framework aligns Northern Ireland with the rest of the European Union for certain types of food and other aspects of trade. In simple terms, this means when food enters Northern Ireland from Great Britain, it is as though it were entering the European Union itself; hence the lack of a need for a border within Ireland. Under this system, a green-lane and red-lane system has been introduced for goods, with the green lane being used for the vast majority of goods coming from Great Britain into Northern Ireland that will not go on to the Irish Republic. For goods that will travel from Great Britain to Northern Ireland and then on to the Irish Republic (and therefore enter the EU single market), the red lane will be used. This will entail full customs documentation and some physical checks.

At the time of publication, it is still early for the full impact of the bespoke arrangements provided by the Windsor Framework to be assessed. However, despite the provision of "grace periods" to allow traders to get used to the new systems and the paperwork required, certain effects are already evident: there have been claims of delays, food shortages in supermarkets, and rotting food as the just-in-time supply chains for some fruit and other perishable goods have experienced problems transiting from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. The DUP has claimed that these problems are widespread and serious, while other entities, including the UK government, have suggested they are only temporary issues as the new systems become fully operational and supermarkets get used to the new rules.

The point here is that the practical and immediate experiences of Brexit after the signing of the FTA and in the context of the new Irish Sea border have presented unexpected outcomes for all sides—nationalists, unionists, and the rest of society—on the island of Ireland and within Great Britain. The fear of an existential unknown has been replaced by uncertainty as to exactly how the Northern Ireland Protocol/Windsor Framework and the withdrawal agreement would work and how

the problems with it would be mitigated or resolved. Transport delays, food shortages, higher prices for goods, and even the inconvenience of having to get additional paperwork from a veterinarian for pets to travel between Great Britain and Northern Ireland may now alter citizen attitudes toward other values relating to border arrangements, much like the trade-offs identified in our earlier survey. More positively, the Windsor Framework provides the potential for Northern Ireland to benefit uniquely from access to the UK internal market as well as the EU single market, which, once trading relationships bed in, could provide the region with strategic advantages over other areas in both the Irish Republic and Great Britain. If these advantages can provide a much-needed boost to the economy of Northern Ireland, some citizens who are currently critical of the trade border in the Irish sea and the Windsor Framework may be more willing to trade off their political opposition for the economic opportunities identified.

Thus the popularity of the joint management of the Irish Sea border may depend on the severity of the red tape and customs checks associated with the Windsor Framework and the goods sent through the red lane from Great Britain to Northern Ireland or the higher prices that may be experienced in Northern Ireland. Trade-offs on these issues, we believe, are fluid and contextual, depending on what is gained or lost in return. This is as true now, with the implementation of the Windsor Framework, as it was when we undertook our original conjoint survey. It is important for politicians and other key stakeholders to understand this contextuality in the expression of citizen preferences going forward, not least because under the terms of the Windsor Framework, the so-called Stormont Brake potentially allows the Northern Ireland Assembly to object to new EU rules, providing (at least in theory) a degree of local democratic control that was not provided for under the terms of the previous Northern Ireland Protocol. This brake would be activated if 30 assembly members from at least two parties sign a petition of concern, but as yet the mechanism remains untested. It would not unilaterally disapply EU rules in Northern Ireland, but it would require the UK Parliament to consider the request. However, the European Court of Justice would be the final arbiter of any such requests, so the strategy's efficacy in practice remains unclear.

As yet, the practical outworkings of the Windsor Framework remain unclear, and the nature of the trade border in the Irish Sea and the extent to which it helps or hinders economic prosperity in

Northern Ireland remains to be seen. Inevitably, trade-offs will be made by all parties, and there will be benefits in some areas for some constituencies and challenges in other areas. Our findings (particularly if they are replicated after the Windsor Framework comes fully into effect) could demonstrate the pathways by which arrangements in Northern Ireland could be negotiated and finalized in a way that mitigates the impact of Brexit from a public opinion perspective.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is difficult to identify citizen preferences about peace agreements and different aspects of a peace process in deeply divided societies by means of traditional survey methods. Traditional survey approaches can even cause negotiators to miscalculate the degree—or lack—of support for a peace settlement. It is possible that such a miscalculation occurred in Northern Ireland and Cyprus in the past, leading to deadlocks in peace talks, particularly in Cyprus in 2017.

A conjoint survey design, by contrast, can directly address citizens' policy preferences and combinations of policy preferences in terms of trade-offs that people are prepared to consider, in this way more closely modeling a real-world situation. In practice, it is unusual to negotiate just one issue disconnected from others. What really matters is less what different communities accept or reject as policy regarding specific issues than how these preferences regarding individual policy choices combine in terms of the trade-offs that people are prepared to consider. In other words, it is the overall package incorporating various trade-offs that matters, not just the specific issues.

Future research adapting the conjoint tools to understanding preferences in other conflict resolution settings requires additional contextual knowledge that builds not only on existing scholarship but also on novel uses of primary sources to extract the most relevant dimensions and values through, for instance, the use of focus groups, social media, parliamentary debates, elite interviews, and, in some cases, surveys and conjoint experiments with members of the political elite specifically.

Since the administration and analysis of our conjoint surveys, several developments might have altered the views of the public. As a result, there is a need for replication studies before any renewed round of mediations takes place, as is likely in Cyprus and Northern Ireland. Though our



findings are consistent both with the shape of the final Brexit agreement that was negotiated as it related to the border issue in the island of Ireland and also with the 2022 elections in Northern Ireland, repeated surveys and, more important, gathering longitudinal data on the evolution of preferences could offer additional opportunities to study the impact of exogenous shocks and conflict-inducing events. Through the development of online panels (currently available through partners in Northern Ireland and in progress in Cyprus), stakeholders could receive timely updates on peace talks and evaluate the rising or declining relevance of issues tested in the conjoint survey, and substitute values and dimensions as needed. To this point, conjoint survey analysis could also contribute to the broader conflict resolution literature by offering a “measure for ripeness,” currently a useful but largely hypothetical concept, as well as a monitoring tool for capturing diachronic changes of relevance to the various dimensions of peace settlements.

### **Applicability of the Conjoint Survey Methodology**

The conjoint survey method can be applied in numerous settings, affording better sampling of civil society’s opinions and the discovery of zones of agreement on which conflicting parties might converge. These findings should aid policymakers and negotiators in designing peace agreements more acceptable to all parties.

#### ***Better Sampling of Representative Populations and Views***

The literature on conjoint survey designs suggests this method may be better suited to surveying less educated populations than alternatives. This is because a conjoint survey provides respondents with a more realistic decision environment that enables participants to make decisions more easily than single-item survey questions, and because the techniques are easily adaptable to a variety of response situations. Moreover, because the choices in a conjoint survey study are presented jointly, respondents are able to identify the situation or condition that is most relevant for their decision.<sup>33</sup> Thus, conjoint survey studies could support inclusive peace processes widely across the developing

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<sup>33</sup> Jens Hainmueller and Dominik Hangartner, “Who Gets a Swiss Passport? A Natural Experiment in Immigrant Discrimination,” *American Political Science Review* (2013): 159–87.

world, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security; focus on wider questions of inclusivity; and help uncover the direct impact of inclusion on public support for peace settlements.

### ***Influence on Negotiations***

Although negotiation theorists have long advocated trade-offs in integrative forms of negotiations, whereby each side wins on issues of more importance in exchange for concessions on matters of less importance, few studies have investigated where this is possible in intractable conflicts and whether zones of possible agreement might actually exist.<sup>34</sup> The cases of Cyprus and Northern Ireland show that beneath top-tier disagreements across ethnonational lines there sit many second- and third-tier issues that unite people—or at least divide them less.

With our first conjoint survey analyses, in Cyprus and Northern Ireland, we identified a number of key elements relevant to the work of civil society, the negotiators, and third-party mediators who facilitated the negotiations. The results of the Northern Ireland survey have largely been reflected in the Brexit agreement, while the Cyprus conjoint survey analysis confirmed the negotiability of the Guterres package and solvability of the Cyprus problem around current UN parameters. All signs point to the direction of either neutral non-EU countries (Canada, Australia, Japan) or NATO assuming a more central role in a comprehensive peace settlement while a second point of convergence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots suggests broadening the process and providing clarity to owners and users as to compensation if they choose or deny access to a property under the set, UN-mediated criteria. The value of affected properties in Cyprus could be in the tens of billions, and therefore it should be no surprise that our findings suggest proper compensation is critical to securing majority support in both communities. A key ambition of the next round of talks should be the closer engagement of property owners and users themselves in the decision-making process aiming for personalized options for restitution ahead of a future referendum.

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<sup>34</sup> Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981); Howard Raiffa, *The Art and Science of Negotiation* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982).

Factoring into the process of political negotiation the sort of public opinion considerations elicited in conjoint surveys could be of great potential benefit for all sides worried about whether they can promote compromises with both their support base and that of their opponents. As suggested by the multiple cases of protracted mediations that ultimately failed, much is missed in the white heat of the negotiation process that could potentially increase the political space available for compromise.

### ***Applicability to Other Societies Seeking a Negotiated End to Conflict***

The cases of Cyprus and Northern Ireland are not unique in terms of harboring areas of potential agreement that would make a peace package more acceptable to both sides. The conjoint survey methodology is scalable and relevant to other deeply divided societies that are navigating their way out of violent conflict through political negotiations, particularly where elections and referenda are to be addressed, implicitly or explicitly, during the mediation process. For instance, following the war in Gaza and perhaps, eventually, in a new peace initiative in the Middle East, conjoint analysis could be used in the context of best accommodating the preferences of the Israeli and Palestinian publics. It could ask citizens to consider and evaluate the trade-offs among such dimensions as the viability of different state structures (confederation vs. a two-state solution), the status of East Jerusalem, the position of settlers, the right of return, the role of the courts, and peace settlement implementation solutions.

As we write this, it seems likely that a peace settlement in Ukraine would also need to be approved by a referendum following the precedents of Northern Ireland and Cyprus. Conjoint surveys could help negotiators better understand how citizens think about the trade-offs that might be involved with respect to territory, compensation for displaced persons, EU accession for Ukraine, and various security arrangements.

Overall, the conjoint survey experiment is a profoundly useful tool that can be applied in many contexts while remaining sensitive to the specific history, priorities, and political challenges in each case.