





further development without cutting the British link. Or is it to be described in terms of traditional sovereignty still favoured by the Conservatives and the unionist parties that has served them so ill since 2016? Unionists will have to make a choice. It has vital consequences for the referendum questions. Parties may propose, but can they veto? Who would convene a decision, write the options papers and sign them off? Surely not the Electoral Commission alone?

The political outlook

*I believe it is ill-fated to have a far-left ideology envisaged. Just look at Brexit, who could have predicted that five years ago? When Scotland goes independent, we are looking at the end of the UK. I also think we need to consider the strong possibility that English taxpayers will get fed up subsidising us and end the support from Sluggie O'Toole).*

If euphoria is a guide, it would be hard to imagine a bigger catalyst for unity than Brexit.

manifesto. All parties deplore the outworking of Brexit for different reasons, and all are committed to making it work better. The centre ground is the most likely beneficiary of a blame game against the DUP over Brexit. All minor parties hold the DUP and Sinn Fein jointly responsible for the delays and indecision that still plague the functioning of the Executive.

The DUP will have to regroup after their disastrous miscalculations over the backstop, followed by Boris Johnson's "betrayal". Former leader Peter Robinson's warning against border poll denial has so far not been heeded. Reading from an old script their leader Arlene Foster hopes the Assembly will vote itself out of the EU single markets in 4 years time. Yet she sees the single market for goods as a "gateway of opportunity." Why then close it?

In 2024 despite a terrible start, few expect the Assembly to terminate the "border in the Irish sea" by the stipulated simple majority. It is at least possible to imagine that the Protocol will create the best of both worlds through the machinery of the joint and specialised committees. All parties involved, governments and the EU as well as local parties, have every incentive to make it work.

To form the pan nationalist front north and south required to mount an effective unification campaign, all other nationalist parties would have to abandon their opposition to Sinn Fein as a less than democratic party still influenced by a surviving IRA. That opposition currently marks the divide of Irish politics. And yet if the present Fianna Fail / Fine Gael coalition fails, the obvious alternative would be a FF/ Sinn Fein or even SF/ FF coalition after the next Dail election due early in 2016. To maintain credibility, Sinn Fein in government north and south must stipulate early referendums as a condition of forming a successor government. Thus the justification for predicting referendums by the end of the decade. They would be Sinn Fein's referendums.

Attitudes in GB to Northern Ireland in the Union

*It is for the people of Ireland alone to decide without external impediment, to exercise their right of self-determination in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement*

It would be a signal achievement to discover the degree of commitment at Westminster to the Union as a whole, (Scotland in particular) and the outlier Northern Ireland. It is hardly news to assert that this Union has always been vulnerable. Until GB devolution in 1999, Northern Ireland was an appendix of the British unitary state. WG member Brendan O'Leary has invited readers of the interim report to offer their thoughts on what "without external impediment" means, giving a broad hint that it in his opinion, the phrase imposes strict neutrality on Westminster in any unification campaign. How long would that campaign

last? Up to three years? No such constraint would apply to the Republic's referendum apparently. "External impediment" more obviously confirms the absence of a Westminster veto on

Conclusion