

UK UPDATE

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The UK Update provides up-to-date information on UK-EU, and UK-Ireland relations, bringing together relevant statements and policy positions from key players in Ireland, the UK and the EU.

The Update is part of a wider communications programme covering the work of the IIEA's UK Project Group – including commentaries, speeches, texts and event reports – which are highlighted on the Institute's website. (www.iiea.com)

Introduction

Mid-summer has proved to be a period of significant social and political interest. Ugly racist violence in all parts of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, were met by firm policing under Keir Starmer's leadership with UK prisons giving early release to many offenders to make room for those convicted of violent acts. A long-drawn-out Tory leadership got underway as Rishi Sunak accepted the inevitable result of the party's collapse in the general election, with the result expected in November. An Irish general election, at the latest next March, casts its shadow over many areas of public policy and social reality, not least in respect of housing and immigration. The newly appointed Taoiseach and Prime Minister have already met twice in what is seen to be a serious effort to achieve a 'reset' in Dublin- London relations. Meanwhile, the Ukraine and Gaza crises continue with appalling loss of life, societal upheaval, and threats of famine and disease.

Section One: State of Play

North South Ministerial Council, 13 September 2024 ¹²

The Taoiseach Simon Harris chaired the 28th meeting of the North-South Ministerial Council at Dublin Castle on 13 September 2024, the second Council session since the restoration of the Northern Ireland institutions in February. Mr Harris led a Cabinet delegation which met the Northern Ireland Executive, led by First Minister Michelle O'Neill and Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly.

The North South Ministerial Council was set up under the 1998 Good Friday Agreement with the task of with developing all island and cross-border cooperation and actions. The Council oversees the various North-South

1. <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/1f1d1-joint-communiqué-north-south-ministerial-council-twenty-eighth-plenary-meeting-dublin-castle/>

2. <https://www.rte.ie/news/politics/2024/0913/1469827-north-south-council/>

Implementation Bodies and is responsible for ensuring cooperation in areas of all-island mutual interest. The Council oversees all-island activity across a range of areas such as health, transport, agriculture, and tourism.

The Taoiseach had commented on relations with Northern Ireland in advance of the Dublin Castle session, saying:

I will use this opportunity to emphasise my commitment, as Taoiseach, to strengthening North-South consultation, co-operation and action. In recent months, we have seen milestones reached on a number of North-South and all-island projects, such as the Narrow Water Bridge and the Ulster Canal. There is an opportunity now through political engagement across Government with Northern Ireland Executive counterparts, to identify where further we can more effectively improve day-to-day life and opportunity on this island through practical North-South co-operation.

A comprehensive Joint Communiqué was issued following the Council session. The Council opened by extending its congratulations to the athletes from both jurisdictions who had participated in the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Council had a substantive discussion on Business and Trade related matters, stressing that promotion of economic growth in a sustainable and balanced way is a priority and both administrations are committed to supporting businesses and growing trade and Ministers discussed their plans on how to achieve this.

The Council received a report from its Joint Secretaries on the activity that had taken place across the various Council sectors since the last plenary meeting, noting that Ministers had met across all twelve work sectors. Ministers welcomed the engagement between both administrations on a wide range of policy matters across all areas of cooperation and noted that the Council will be updated on progress at future meetings. The Council welcomed that revisions had been made to work programmes to reflect emerging policy priorities, noting in particular that Ministers had discussed climate change and loss of biodiversity at all meetings. The positive engagement on these shared challenges was welcomed.

The NSMC considered a detailed update on the various New Decade, New Approach commitments with a cross-border dimension.

The items discussed included the A5 Western Transport Corridor scheme; the Narrow Water Bridge project; and phase 2 of the Ulster Canal restoration project, which had been completed and officially opened at an event attended by Ministers from both jurisdictions in June 2024.

The Council welcomed the final report and associated environmental assessments of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review which were published by Minister O'Dowd and Minister Ryan in Dundalk in July 2024. Both jurisdictions will work collaboratively on the implementation of the Review's recommendations.

On the Higher Education in the North West project, it was noted that consultation has commenced regarding the construction of a new teaching and student services building at Ulster University's Magee campus. The Council also noted that two research partnerships have been supported under the Co-Centre Programme and successful recipients of the Shared Island Bioeconomy Demonstration Initiative will be announced in autumn 2024.

The Council agreed that commitments under New Decade, New Approach should remain on the agenda of relevant NSMC sectoral meetings and that further updates will be provided to future NSMC plenary meetings.

Ministers had a wide-ranging discussion on Climate Change and loss of biodiversity. It was noted that these topics had been considered across all the Council sectors and the cooperation already under way across both jurisdictions to address these shared challenges was welcomed. It was agreed that relevant sectors should maintain a focus on

these topics at future meetings. The Council welcomed the focus of the Climate + Biodiversity + Water Quality Co-Centre on science to support fair transitions to Net Zero, reversing biodiversity loss, and restoring water quality for a sustainable economy. Ministers noted that this co-centre supports the co-ordinated science effort in the NI Executive's Lough Neagh Action Plan.

The Council welcomed the important progress being led by the NI Executive in relation to Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene laundries and Workhouses as well as the Government of Ireland's implementation of the Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions. In light of the cross-border nature of these institutions, officials from both Administrations will work closely on common issues.

The Council approved a schedule of future sectoral meetings, a meeting in Institutional format and the next Plenary meeting in spring 2025. Following the meeting, the Taoiseach said that climate change and biodiversity would be on the agenda in all future North South meetings:

It's really important to work together across the island on these issues and we've agreed to keep the topic of climate change on the agenda of all sectoral meetings. We also had an important discussion on Mother and Baby institutions and Magdalene Laundries and workhouses. There is work underway in the North in relation to this, and for our part we remain committed to working closely and cooperating and collaborating in any way we usefully can.

Meanwhile, First Minister Michelle O'Neill emphasised the importance of collaboration on Mother and Baby Homes, noting to the media: "This is one of those crucial areas that we need to cooperate on in terms of sharing records and ensuring there is protection of those records and ensuring that when it comes to redress payments that these do not impact on other incomes people have." The Deputy First Minister, Emma Little-Pengelly said that today's meeting was a very positive engagement. The word of the month seems to be 'reset' and the Republic of Ireland is our closest neighbour, and building good relationships is important. Over the last number of years there have been fractures in the relationships and we want to build those better, North and South, for the benefit of all."

Prime Minister Starmer in Dublin 7 September 2024 ^{3 4 5}

The Taoiseach Simon Harris welcomed the British Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, in Dublin on 7 September 2024. The focus of their meeting was to agree an ambitious reset of the UK-Ireland relationship. They covered the UK's intention to reset its relationship with the EU and also discussed urgent global issues, including the situation in Ukraine and in Gaza.

Speaking in advance of their meeting the Taoiseach had set the scene, commenting that:

This is an important moment of reset in British-Irish relations. I look forward to discussing with Prime Minister Starmer how to ensure that we seize this opportunity to put relations on a better and stronger footing. This will mean working on a joint plan to bring about a step-change in ambition and engagement between our two Governments over the coming period. We will also discuss, as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement, how to ensure that this moment of reset benefits the totality of relations across these islands today and into the future.

3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-taoiseach-harris-of-ireland-7-september-2024>

4. <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/5abc2-joint-statement-by-taoiseach-simon-harris-and-prime-minister-keir-starmer/>

5. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/dublin-irish-chequers-prime-minister-prime-b2581610.html>

Following their joint meeting, the Taoiseach and Prime Minister co-hosted a roundtable discussion at Farmleigh House, with business representatives to hear their assessment of trends and opportunities in the Ireland-UK trade and investment environment

After these meetings the leaders together attended the Ireland-England UEFA Nations League game in the Aviva Stadium.

The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach issued the following joint statement:

Today Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Taoiseach Simon Harris discussed the reset of the partnership between the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The leaders discussed the importance of their responsibilities as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement, and their shared ambition for greater opportunity, economic prosperity and reconciliation across these islands to include and benefit Northern Ireland.

The leaders agreed that to take the UK-Ireland relationship to a new level and to deliver on the promise of that relationship, the first of a new series of annual leader-level UK-Ireland summits would take place in March 2025.

They agreed that the summits, which Ministers on both sides will help prepare between now and March, will take forward cooperation in four key areas, which illustrate the breadth and depth of shared values and interests between the UK and Ireland:

- *Security, Justice and Global Issues: to enhance policy coordination and partnerships in areas where the UK and Ireland have a shared interest such as cyber security and maritime security.*
- *Climate, energy, technology and innovation: to build on existing cooperation and promote further joint initiatives as both sides recognise the imperative to act and opportunities of the green and digital transitions*
- *Growth, trade and investment: to drive economic growth between the UK and Ireland, building on the existing ties and the geographical proximity of these islands, noting that this is already a relationship worth over 120 billion euro a year.*
- *Culture, education and people to people connections: recognising and developing the ties that unite the UK and Ireland, including our Common Travel Area, and the richness of the connections between our peoples and culture, through education, sport and joint cultural projects.*

In the spirit of the strength of the relationship between the UK and Ireland across business, culture, people and beyond, the Prime Minister and Taoiseach noted that today's meeting marked the start of an ambitious programme of work to be taken forward by Ministers and their departments to deliver a renewed and strengthened partnership.

The Prime Minister and Taoiseach look forward to seeing each other again in New York at the UN General Assembly, and at the British-Irish Council in Edinburgh this December.

Downing Street issued a further formal Statement:

The Prime Minister met Taoiseach Simon Harris at Farmleigh House in Dublin this afternoon. The Prime Minister thanked the Taoiseach for his invitation, noting that this was the first visit of a UK Prime Minister to Ireland in five years.

Both leaders shared their personal commitment to an ambitious reset of the UK and Ireland's relationship. They noted the existing ties between our two countries, but agreed they wanted to go even further – in particular on trade and investment to help boost growth and deliver on behalf of the British and Irish people. In that vein, they agreed to host the first UK-Ireland summit in March next year, which will take forward co-operation in key areas of mutual interest such as security, climate, trade and culture. They both strongly condemned recent scenes of violent disorder in England and Ireland and agreed to deepen their collaboration on how we tackle the spread of the online misinformation which fuelled the thuggery.

Sir Keir Starmer had accepted the invitation to visit Dublin in September as the Taoiseach made clear his view that a 'reset' of Anglo-Irish relations was a reality following the meeting of the two leaders at Chequers on 17 July 2024 where they indicated a determination to hold annual summits to "deepen and re-invigorate co-operation" between the two countries.

Referring to his invitation to the new Prime Minister, the Taoiseach told reporters:

I must say I am really pleased that the British Prime Minister has accepted my invitation to have a return visit to Dublin on September 7. We have also agreed to put in place a structure where the British and Irish governments each year would have a summit led by the Prime Minister and myself where we could focus on key issues. From that summit a work programme would flow which we would task various ministers with taking forward with their counterparts. This, I believe, is all really significant and substantive progress.

UK- Germany Relations ⁶

Britain's new Labour Party Government has embarked on a series of bilateral meetings with European governments aimed at achieving good working relations with key neighbours and fellow NATO partners and laying the foundations for a longterm relationship between the UK and its former EU partners.

A Joint Declaration followed a meeting in Berlin on 28 August 2024 between UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Olof Scholz on deepening and enhancing UK-Germany relations:

We are close partners in Europe and internationally as well as long-standing Allies in NATO. Today, given the common challenges our two countries face, we are convinced that the time has come to take our bilateral relations to the next level.

To this end, we are launching work on a bilateral cooperation treaty and will hold government-to-government consultations to sign it by early next year. This treaty will reflect our status as the closest of partners in Europe, with the strongest possible bilateral cooperation on the issues that matter most to our populations. It shall reflect the rich ties between our two countries, peoples and governments across the breadth of our bilateral relationship, in full accordance with Germany's membership of the EU, and the UK's relationship with the EU.

Our joint priorities include foreign policy cooperation in peace and security, growing our economies, industrial transformation, law enforcement cooperation and action to tackle irregular migration, increased people-to-people contacts, youth and education, energy security, climate and nature policy, development policy, transport and infrastructure as well as technology, research and innovation.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-declaration-on-deepening-and-enhancing-uk-germany-relations>

Germany and the UK are determined to defend and promote peace and security in Europe. As leading European Allies in NATO, we will work together with our Allies and partners to ensure that our ability to deter and defend in the Euro-Atlantic area remains credible at all times and against any possible threats or adversaries. We are committed to deterring a more aggressive Russia, sustaining our support to Ukraine and boosting European defence.

Our Foreign Ministries will coordinate work to negotiate the bilateral treaty, in close consultation with the German Federal Chancellery and the Prime Minister's Office/Cabinet Office and the respective ministries. In this context we welcome the work that is already being conducted at pace between by our Defence Ministers on a new agreement on defence to strengthen the links between our defence communities, industries and armed forces, and which act as a key pillar of the forthcoming bilateral cooperation treaty.

Keir Starmer has held the door open for some form of youth mobility exchange with EU countries after talks in Germany with Olaf Scholz, who stressed to the British prime minister his wish for closer such ties.

While Starmer said at a press conference with the German chancellor that the UK did not have plans to join the EU's youth mobility scheme – with No 10 having previously ruled out such a move – speaking to reporters later, he pointedly did not rule out setting up some sort of system for other link-ups, for example student exchanges.

UK EU Relations (Irish Times Editorial 5 August 2024)⁷

The clear intention of the Labour Party Government in London to seek a new positive relationship with European neighbours and allies evoked interested comment and speculation in European capitals.

The *Irish Times*, in a lengthy editorial, commented on the new Labour government's commitment to reset relations with the European Union and on its significant moves towards that in its first month. Labour is seen to want a "structured dialogue" with Brussels on security, energy and trade and hopes to achieve major policy changes "at regional and world levels". While Brussels welcomes this new direction of travel on Brexit after eight years of Tory rule it is sceptical of British designs if they are not matched by commitments.

The *Irish Times* notes that the new government has avoided any ambition to rejoin the EU single market or customs union but that it is willing to move on issues such as product safety and reach a veterinary agreement on food safety, which would ease the trade in goods.

The author also pointed out that these technical areas raise charges of betrayal from pro-Brexit media and hardliners, because they would align the UK with developing EU regulation and jurisdiction, without a voice or a vote in these areas: "Labour's abiding caution on Brexit puts it on the back foot in this sphere."

The editorial concludes that "mutual trust may well start to be repaired as the issues now raised by the Commission are overcome, but in the medium to longer term there is much ground to be made up. Political decisions are needed on where precisely the UK wants to position itself."

Leadership of Northern Ireland Parties^{8 9 10}

A leadership election is to be held for the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) on 5 October 2024 following the resignation of Colum Eastwood on 29 August 2024 to focus on his role in the party's New Ireland Commission

7. <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/editorials/2024/08/05/the-irish-times-view-on-uk-relations-with-the-eu-a-slow-repairing-of-trust/>

8. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn47nkxk2pro>

9. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cpd18ezxel3o>

10. <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/editorials/2024/08/19/the-irish-times-view-on-the-uup-leadership-time-for-a-shift/>

and as MP) for Foyle. The SDLP's other MP, Claire Hanna, is unopposed for the leadership and will be formally ratified in October.

In the Ulster Unionist Party UUP, the former Party Leader, Mike Nesbitt, has emerged as the only candidate to succeed Doug Beattie who resigned citing "irreconcilable differences" with party officers.

Mr Nesbitt previously won a vote in 2012 to become leader but resigned in 2017 after poor Assembly election results. He will therefore become the first person to have twice held the leadership of UUP. He is currently the assembly member (MLA) for Strangford and in June became Stormont Health Minister, a position he is expected to retain if he is ratified as leader.

Doug Beattie stood down unexpectedly speaking of "irreconcilable differences between myself and party officers combined with the inability to influence and shape the party going forward". The party's Deputy Leader, Robbie Butler, supporting the return of Mike Nesbitt to the leadership, commented:

The future of the Ulster Unionist Party, and indeed wider political unionism in Northern Ireland, must always be foremost when considering change and the role that we all will play. A revised and refreshed leadership team of the UUP, led by Mike Nesbitt, is an exciting opportunity to not only embed the vision of a modern, ambitious and vibrant strand of unionism for the people of Northern Ireland but also to strategically modernise party structures with and for our membership. Working together we can revitalise both party and politics, but of greater importance is to ensure that pro-Union, persuadable and the silent non-voters have a home that reflects and embodies their vision for a prosperous future for all.

The *Irish Times* commented on Beattie's departure, saying that it is an "unwelcome challenge" for the party. The author reflected on the party and its dominance in Northern Ireland politics for almost 80 years but noted that it had "has struggled to define its place on the post-Belfast Agreement political landscape."

The *Irish Times* pointed out that in electoral terms Doug Beattie's performance has been patchy, with poor results in both Assembly and local elections. Robin Swann's victory in the UK general election, was more positive providing a return to the House of Commons for the UUP after seven years. However, the editorial notes, it was "squabbling between Beattie and colleagues over who should fill Swann's vacant Assembly seat that caused him to step down."

The *Irish Times* argues that difficulty for the UUP, whoever leads it, is that the party is hemmed on either side by the DUP and Alliance:

The question it faces remains the same as it has been for decades: does it persevere with attempts to regain lost ground from the DUP, or should it more assertively move to the centre?" It concludes that "there is a glaring need for a liberal, secular, unabashedly pro-union party that is not afraid to engage with the constitutional debate.

YouGov Poll on British attitudes to Brexit ¹¹

The UK polling firm YouGov have published the results of a significant survey of British attitudes to Brexit and to future UK-EU relations. This nationwide poll indicates that a majority of UK voters would support the country rejoining the European Union if a fresh in-out poll were held. YouGov makes it clear that their findings reveal a significant move in public opinion some eight years after the June 2016 referendum which – by a 52- 48 margin – opted for the UK to leave the EU after more than forty years membership.

11. <https://menafn.com/1108558285/Poll-shows-majority-of-UK-nationals-would-vote-to-rejoin-EU>

YouGov has reported that its survey involved responses from over 2,000 United Kingdom residents obtained in July, which indicated that 59 percent of participants would vote in favour of rejoining the European Union in a hypothetical new referendum. In contrast, 41 percent of those surveyed would maintain their opposition to such a move.

In addition to the question of actually rejoining the EU, YouGov questioned respondents on their attitudes to moves for closer relations with Brussels short of formally rejoining the union, the single market, and/or the customs union. More than 60 percent of respondents opted for support of such closer ties with only 17 percent expressing a negative view. However, as many as 20 percent were undecided on the issue.

Other YouGov polling significantly shows that 55 percent of UK voters now believe that leaving the European Union was a mistake, compared to 34 percent who continue to support the decision. But it also emerged from poll findings that the question of UK-EU relations has diminished as a political issue. While polling in 2019 saw 63 percent of voters seeing Brexit as a major concern, opinion after the recent general election indicated that no more than 7 percent of voters considered UK-EU relations to be significant.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer in Northern Ireland ^{12 13}

Prime Minister Keir Starmer flew into Northern Ireland on 19 August for urgently scheduled meetings with the PSNI Chief Constable, Jon Boutcher, and senior police officers. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of meeting officers who had been on the front lines during the recent “racist riots” in Belfast and Derry. He also indicated that he would take the opportunity to discuss the highly controversial Casement Park redevelopment.

An extensive *ITV* report indicated that the Prime Minister personally thanked police officers who were injured during recent disorder for their service. He also met representatives from minority ethnic communities who had been targeted in violence in which a number of businesses were destroyed and a mosque attacked. PSNI sources said that at least 20 police officers were injured in a spate of violent incidents in early August in Northern Ireland, after anti-immigration protests.

Chief Constable Jon Boutcher was reported as saying that some of the officers faced surgery and that the “nature of what they faced, even for some of those seasoned officers, has taken them aback” He noted that there had been some “really near misses to very serious injuries”.

The Prime Minister, accompanied by Northern Ireland Secretary Hilary Benn, remarked that it has been “quite an intense few weeks” and referred to “some long days”. With police numbers in Northern Ireland known to be some 1,000 below recommended strength, officers from Police Scotland were deployed in Northern Ireland to support the local force. He later met leaders from a number of organisations which represent the minority ethnic community in Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister was reported at the end of his visit as saying that one of his purposes had been to thank those police officers who had been on the front line and meet communities most affected by the disorder:

My purpose was to say to them thank you for what they have done. We make big asks of the police officers, they step up and they deserve our thanks. I have also had the chance to speak to the PSNI senior leadership, and very importantly, to speak to some of the communities most impacted about the fear, the anxiety that they have about the recent disorder. He stressed that “The disorder is intolerable. It is incapable of justification. It’s clearly racist and it does not represent the modern forward-looking Northern Ireland that I know that this place is. I do think it’s very important to come and say thank you, very important for the Prime Minister to come here to talk to the frontline officers face to face and humbly say thank you for what they and their colleagues have done.

12. <https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2024-08-19/prime-minister-talks-racist-riots-police-resources-and-casement-on-ni-visit>

13. <https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/2024/08/19/keir-starmer-visits-northern-ireland-in-wake-of-recent-riots/>

Starmer Confronts Violent Protests ¹⁴ ¹⁵ ¹⁶

Violence broke out in London, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Rotherham, Nottingham, Belfast, and elsewhere in early August — and spread rapidly to other areas — after the murder of three girls at a children’s dance party in Southport and the spreading of malign rumours of immigrant responsibility.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer condemned what he called “far-right thuggery” in the form of violent demonstrations and said those involved will feel the “full force of the law.” They would regret actions for which there can be no justification. He insisted that people in the country have a right to be safe and yet we had seen “Muslim communities targeted and Nazi salutes in the street.”

The Prime Minister immediately summoned an emergency meeting of ministers, senior officials, and prison chiefs to put into effect a plan to counter the violence by “ramping up” Britain’s criminal justice to arrest and prosecute rioters. “We will have a standing army of specialist officers, public duty officers, so we will have enough officers to deal with this where we need them.” Firm action was taken with hundreds arrested and many brought before the courts and sentenced to prison terms of up to nine years. This response has led to a cessation of violent process.

The Taoiseach Simon Harris spoke with Northern Ireland’s First Minister Michelle O’Neill after violent scenes followed an anti-immigration protest in Belfast. Protesters waving both the union flag, and the Irish tricolour took part in the protest at the front of Belfast City Hall. Simon Harris expressed his disgust at “those flying the Irish tricolour whilst attacking police and spouting racism. This is repugnant to everything the Irish flag represents.”

The UK needs a “moral vision” to move past the rioting that has erupted in towns and cities across the country this week, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby has told the Church Times: “[...] the last thing you want is for this to be instrumentalised by people far away choosing to turn this into a cause of criminality, rioting — not protest, that’s something completely different — of trying to cause a breakdown of unity.”

Section Two: The Evolving Debate

Tory Party Leadership

The 2024 Conservative Party leadership election was announced on 5 July 2024 when then-Prime Minister Rishi Sunak declared his intention to resign as party leader following the party’s defeat at the 2024 general election. The leadership race commenced on 24 July and is expected to last for over three months, with Rishi Sunak’s successor being confirmed on 2 November, when the result of the party membership vote is set to be announced. Sunak will remain as acting leader until his successor is appointed. Six candidates have been approved for the leadership contest including Kemi Badenoch, James Cleverly, Robert Jenrick, Priti Patel, Mel Stride, and Tom Tugendhat.

On the Bookshelves

Diarmaid Ferriter, The Revelation of Ireland. 1995-2020 (Profile Books London)

Anthony Seldon and Raymond Newell, Johnson at 10. (Atlantic Books London)

Diarmaid Ferriter’s 550-word companion to his earlier ‘*The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000*’ has been

14. <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/c0jqixe8d1yt>

15. <https://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/harris-expresses-disgust-at-irish-tricolour-flown-during-attacks-on-police-1657947.html>

16. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2024/9-august/news/uk/this-is-not-protest-this-is-not-english-archbishop-welby-upbraids-the-rioters>

welcomed as “simply outstanding” by the *Irish Independent*, “fascinating...rich in insights” by the *Irish Times*, and “sets the bar high for good writing and scholarship” by the *Financial Times*.

Diarmaid Ferriter writes of the earlier book that its title now appears provisional having regard to the pace of change – an ‘abundance of transformations’ - in the early twenty-first century. He describes this latest work as “an attempt to make sense of the scale and texture of those changes and endurances through a long historical lens. It is thus a contemporary history infused with a longer perspective, seeking to document the fortunes and frailties of recent decades in both the north and south of Ireland. The book’s title was prompted not only by what has been revealed about the past, but also how Ireland from the mid-1990s has revealed its potential and its limitations.”

The book’s seven chapters cover themes such as Irish Political Culture, Northern Ireland’s Road to Compromise, Ireland and the World, and The Loosening Grip of Catholicism, with Ferriter’s characteristic mastery of sources reflected in seventy pages of ‘Notes’ and almost thirty pages of ‘Bibliography’. He argues that there are good reasons for attempting to make sense of recent events, “including to challenge the infuriating mantra ‘We are where we are.’”

Anthony Seldon –with Raymond Newell – continues his series of more than forty books on contemporary history and politics and adds a further title to Brown, Cameron and May ‘At 10’.

Anthony Seldon describes Boris Johnson as “Britain’s most iconoclastic and outlandish Prime Minister since David Lloyd George a hundred years before.” He writes of Johnson seeing his country “through one of the most historic resets in Britain’s relationship with continental Europe, the worst health epidemic and the severest challenge to Northern, Ireland’s continuation in the United Kingdom since Lloyd George was at No.10.” He then argues that, like his predecessor, “Both fell from office because they lost trust and credibility with the public, amid accusations that they had tarnished the office and public life.”

‘Johnson At 10’ – in more than 600 pages – is based on as many as 200 interviews with “key aides, allies and insiders” and succeeds in giving a remarkable insight into a premiership “the shockwaves of which are still felt today”. A key insight relates to Johnson’s decision to back Brexit in the 2016 referendum campaign. He had been quoted as saying “If I come out for Brexit and we lose I position myself as a hero Eurosceptic from which I can win the leadership at the next contest. If we win, then I’ll be a clear favourite for Prime Minister.”

The ten-chapter headings tell the story – Rise –Brexit – Election- Dreams- Covid- Cummings Domestic- Global – Grown-ups – Downfall. A significant element of the story relates to Johnson’s negotiation with the European Union on the exit Trade Deal, including the Northern Ireland Protocol. Seldon writes that Johnson had no interest in what was agreed on the NI Protocol. “He was told repeatedly how the Protocol would work and what it meant. ‘I just want it done’ was his response.” He also comments that Johnson must be credited for bringing “pride and purpose to the nation” in his response to Putin’s invasion of Ukraine.

Johnson’s fall is documented – “Barnard Castle, Pateron, Partygate and Pincher” – and Seldon concludes that “Johnson had the potential, the aspirations and the opportunity to be one of Britain’s great Prime Ministers, His unequivocal exclusion from that club can be laid at the feet of no one else, but himself.”

Section Three: Background Material and Further Reading

Background Material

GOV.UK Prime Minister to drive UK growth on European visits. GOV.UK, 27 August 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-to-drive-uk-growth-on-european-visits-as-he-launches-major-german-partnership>

RTE Starmer to visit Dublin in September, seeks reset in ties with Ireland. RTE. 17 July 2024. <https://www.rte.ie/news/uk/2024/0717/1460274-harris-starmer-visit/>

BBC PM Keir Starmer condemns “far-right thuggery” on UK streets and says those involved “will regret it” 4 August 2024. . <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/c0jqjxe8d1yt>

Guardian There’s a lesson for the EU from Britain’s riots: do more to prevent hatred and division-or violence follows. *Guardian*, 28 August 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/aug/28/britain-riots-lesson-eu-hatred-elections-europe-racism>

Belfast Telegraph Suzanne Breen. Unionist siege mentality is sterile and self-defeating and time for realisation is running out. *Belfast Telegraph*, 26 August 2024. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/suzanne-breen/unionist-siege-mentality-is-sterile-and-self-defeating-time-for-realisation-is-running-out/a37293343.html>

Further Reading

Sathnam Sanghera *Empireland* Penguin Books

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