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# Manuscript [5000 words]

## Section one: Introduction [882 / 1000 words]

In the run up to the EU referendum, amidst discussions of migration, identity, expertise and economic impacts, the issues of Northern Ireland and its border with the Republic of Ireland received scant attention. This lack of focus on pan-Irish issues seems a conspicuous oversight given: that the Republic of Ireland will remain an EU member state, to which other EU citizens have rights of migratory access; the long and porous border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; and more troublingly the long history of violent sectarian conflict in the region. At the time of writing (5 June 2017), just days prior to yet another political vote of seismic political importance, issues of terrorism have taken centre stage due to two barbarous attacks on English citizens over the campaign period; firstly the suicide bombing of concert-goers on 22 May 2017 in Manchester, resulting in 22 deaths and over one hundred injuries; (Www.bbc.co.uk, 2017) then later a combined vehicle and knife attack by three individuals around London Bridge on the night of 3 June 2017, resulting in the deaths of ten people and the malicious injuring of dozens more. (Www.bbc.co.uk, 2017) In the wake of these events, discussion of terrorist threats and the effective management of risks to UK citizens have only rarely drawn parallels with the UK’s experience of conflict in Northern Ireland. Once again, this absence of focus appears odd in light of the UK’s, and Western Europe’s, longer-term history of terrorism, where available statistics of deaths clearly indicate that the ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland consistently led to much higher levels of civilian deaths in Europe than have been associated with Islamic terrorism after 2001; indeed, for many decades Northern Ireland, along with the Basque region of Spain, have been the geographic fulmination points of terrorism-related deaths in Western Europe. (Www.economist.com, 2016)

This paper argues there is a pressing need for a deeper analysis and understanding of the causes and consequences of violent conflict in Northern Ireland, for learning from the history of the region about how a series of political and military mis-steps by the British Government over many years initiated a wave of lethal violence which propagated itself through the fabric of Northern Irish society for over two decades, and for considering whether the socioeconomic and cultural conditions still exist in the region such that further political mis-steps risk reinitiating violent instability in Northern Ireland and additional terrorist risk throughout the UK. I argue such issues seem particularly pertinent given a lack of clarity regarding plans for the Irish border in Brexit negotiations, and the importance of daily freedom of movement across the border in the island of Ireland for both cultural and economic reasons. Three specific empirical aims of this paper are: to use demographic data to visually illustrate the ‘excess deaths’ that appear attributable to the initiation of violent conflict in the early 1970s; to produce a number of estimates of total numbers of excess deaths attributable to the conflict, based on observed patterns and trends in overall mortality, and compare these with estimates based on deaths directly attributed to violence; and to characterise the particular pattern of excess mortality observed in Northern Irish demographic data, and describe why this is consistent with a tit-for-tat form of sectarian conflict. The main substantive aim of these empirical findings is, combined with a discussion of the political and military history of the island of Ireland, to highlight that the fundamentals which led to this earlier wave of death and instability both may still be present within Northern Irish society, and that poorly handled Brexit negotiations risk re-initiating a fresh wave of violence that, once started, may take decades to settle down again. Apropos to this argument about the self-sustaining nature of conflict in the region is a fundamental challenge to a dominant causal narrative about the peace process in Northern Ireland: a suggestion that key political events in this process, such as the IRA’s ceasefire announcement in 199X and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, followed rather than led trends towards reduced violence in the region.

The structure of this paper is as follows: section two, history, will provide a brief history of both the origins of Northern Ireland as a distinctly administered political territory, of the events which led to an initiation of violence in the early 1970s, and of key events and trends in violence and peace which occurred in the decades since. Section three will introduce the data and methods used to both visually identify the impact of sectarian conflict on deaths in Northern Ireland, and produce estimates of the total number of additional deaths which might be attributable to the conflict. Section four will present firstly visual representations of mortality patterns seen in Northern Ireland, in comparison to neighbouring countries and regions; and secondly estimates total excess mortality associated with the conflict. Finally, section five, the discussion, will begin by comparing my estimates of conflict-attributable mortality with extant estimates of conflict-attributable deaths; then conclude with a discussion of political, sociological and social psychological literature which may shed light on the patterns uncovered, before highlighting a number of critical pitfalls that Westminster should be mindful of in Brexit negotiations to reduce the risk of a new initiation of conflict in the region.

## Section two: History: Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the Troubles [1745 / 1000 words]

Understanding the causes of the eruption of violence in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s requires a broader understanding of the longer-term history and dynamics of the island of Ireland and its complex relationship with British rule. An understanding of historical dynamics requires going somewhat beyond the listing of historical and political facts, and briefly considering some broader theories, even grand theories, of empire formation and the functional role of religion therein.

The mathematical ecologist turned historian Peter Turchin has argued that one of the central challenges in the establishment and maintenance of complex, large, hierarchical societies – empires – has been the promotion of social cohesiveness across ethnic groups. Turchin thus suggests that complex societies can emerge only once ­*meta­ethnic ­*communities, in which group membership can be readily identified through ‘symbolic markers’, have been established and agreed upon. Turchin states that the “most commonly used kind of symbolic marker to delineate metaethnic communities is religion – particularly, the exclusive, proselytizing kinds such as Christianity or Islam.” [p. 181] Common metaethnic identity allows for greater within-group cohesiveness and for the assimilation of otherwise ethnically heterogeneous populations, but where distinct and mutually exclusive metaethnic groups are territorially contiguous, *metaethnic* frontiers form, and at these frontiers competition and conflict between societies is often intense.

This sweeping characterisation of societies as metaethnic communities, and metaethnic frontiers as endemic sources of conflict, is useful to consider in reference to the following sweeping generalisation about the spread of Catholicism and Protestantism throughout Europe: Catholic religion pre-existed Protestantism, began in Southern Europe, and spread north and west, including to Ireland at Europe’s western periphery. Protestantism then emerged later, from Northern Europe, and spread south and west. The conditions for a metaethnic frontier in the island of Ireland, demarcated along Catholic-Protestant religious distinction, were thus centuries in the making.

Within the political organs of an imperious, expansionist state united by Protestant identity, positions for Catholics were limited, and there were concerns amongst British imperialists that Ireland could be used as a cultural and potentially military ‘back door’ through which the Catholic Spanish and French Empires could undermine British imperial power and influence. Ireland thus held an ambivalent position within the British Empire, geographically proximate yet culturally distant, a ‘colony within the core’. Many of the patterns of political control and population management developed in the case of Ireland later formed a blueprint for British colonialism for later, larger overseas territories such as India. (Anderson & O’Dowd, 2007)

The longstanding harsh British indifference to the conditions of the Irish was the target of Jonathan Swift’s 1729 satirical essay ‘A Modest Proposal’. Such indifference and colonial mismanagement had contributed to the Great Famine of the 1840s, leading to mass emigration and population decline. Together with a steady influx of Protestants over many generations, by the end of the 19th century the demography and economy of Ireland had shifted to the North East of the island, in particular to the city of Belfast, and the populist Protestant Orange Order had emerged in response to increasing political agitation from Catholic populations for improved voting rights and the return of Irish Home Rule which had been abolished with the Act of Union in 1801. Whereas in Westminster the Tory party supported Irish Unionists in opposing Home Rule, the Whigs supported this measure, and in the 1910 General Election the Whigs were able to establish a minority government with the support of Irish Nationalists, leading to the passing of the Third Home Rule Bill in 1912. The backlash to Home Rule from Ulster Unionists led to the establishment of paramilitary organisations by both sides, and a period of civil war which continued with the Great War of 1914, and culminated in the Easter Rising of 1916, in which fifteen Irish nationalists launched a failed coup attempt and were executed by firing squad. These executions then enflamed rather than quelled nationalist opposition to British rule, and in 1918 the newly formed Sinn Féin party were elected with more than three quarters of Irish seats in Westminster; when political demands for independence over the whole of Ireland were unsuccessful, civil war intensified, and the paramilitary Irish Republican Army (IRA) fought a guerrilla war into the 1920s. Ireland was partitioned through the Fourth Government of Ireland Act in 1920, into territories defined as ‘Northern Ireland’ and ‘Southern Ireland’, and a truce was established in 1921. The majority Protestant ‘Southern Ireland’ renamed itself the ‘Irish Free State’ and became an independent state in 1922, leading also to the formation of Northern Ireland in that year as a distinct administrative geography, which voted against Home Rule and to remain a British territory.

(Anderson & O’Dowd, 2007) summarise the legacy of the establishment of the Northern Irish border as follows:

Under one-party unionist rule for 50 years, Northern Ireland provide to be the most problematic legacy of partition. It provided a ‘cage’ for two communal blocs locked into a mutually antagonistic and self-reproducing relationship with each other. The sizeable nationalist minority – initially a third of its population but threatening to erode unionism’s ‘safe’ majority – was the main loser, disaffected and permanently excluded from state power. The majority unionist bloc maximised its micro-territorial control within Northern Ireland, but it retained endemic fears of being undermined by nationalist population growth, and/or physical attacks on partition, and/or being ‘sold out’ by British governments. The relegation of Ireland, including Northern Ireland, once again to the status (of a now reconfigured) imperial frontier, had clearly reduced the capacity or willingness of British governments to combat the dynamics of separation and division set in train by the partition settlement. The eruption of ethno-national violence a half-century after partition was part of the imperial legacy. [p. 947]

The dormant but unresolved tensions described above led to the conditions for a reignition of conflict beginning in the late 1960s. A series of errors in the British Army’s deployment to Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1972 have been identified as important in making the situation much worse, and turning the initially envisaged task of ‘peace support’ into one of fighting an insurgency.(Thornton, 2007)

The post-War background to the Northern Ireland conflict has been summarised as follows: in the late 1960s a Catholic protest movement emerged, inspired by the civil rights’ movement in the United States, prompting an often violent Protestant counter-movement opposed to Catholic marches, leading to widespread clashes between sides. By 1969 such clashes could not be controlled by the police forces in Belfast and Londonderry (numbering around three thousand full time officers and ten thousand reservists), and around 2,500 troops from the British Army were mobilised. Though the forces were somewhat successful at containing violence by keeping the sides separate, large amounts of Catholic property – including homes – were still damaged, and little guidance was provided about how the Army should operate, and strategies and tactics developed for the containment of insurgencies in British colonies, such as Malaya in the 1950s, may have been applied. In 1969 and 1970, the Army was considered relatively effective in protecting Catholics from Protestant attacks, and restrained in its response to violence, and so resistance to the Army from the IRA remained limited, as were IRA reprisal attacks on Protestants. The IRA was conflicted in its response to both the Army presence and Protestant reprisals, however, and in 1969 split into the less-militant Official IRA (OIRA), and the more militant Provisional IRA (PIRA). The Army, the OIRA and the PIRA then each competed to win favour and appear legitimate from the perspective of Catholic communities, with the PIRA to some extent hoping and goading the Army into behaviours which would de-legitimise the Army’s presence in these communities, in particular through their handling of sectarian tensions during marches. Examples of subsequent Army mis-steps included: the deployment of the Protestant-sympathising Scots Guards in 1970; and deploying too few troops for peaceful containment (‘minimal force’) strategies to be effective. This lack of numbers possibly led to excessive use of CS gas in riots which lasted for many days in Ballymurphy, the creation of Army ‘no go’ areas and so a power vacuum which the PIRA was able to fill, and being unable to properly defend the Catholic Short Strand enclave against Protestants in June 1970. Army attempts to disarm Catholic communities, combined with a lack of success defending them on all occasions, further acted to delegitimise the Army amongst affected Catholic communities. With reduced support for the Army in Catholic communities, the PIRA then began attacking the Army in 1971; worsening Army-PIRA relations led the Army to publicly name IRA leaders on 5 February 1971, swiftly followed by the first killing of a British soldier by the IRA the following day. Internment, i.e. indefinite detention without trial of suspected Republican paramilitaries, then swiftly followed, and on a large scale; on 9 August 1971, 342 people were arrested (of which only 55 were PIRA members), leading to protests over the following days in which 23 people died, including a Catholic priest. Army troop numbers increased by around a quarter within the year, reaching nearly 16,000 by October, and PIRA bombings and killings intensified. The effect of internment was to bring an end to Army-IRA relations in 1971; amity was then further increased through the deployment and actions of the Parachute Regiment (‘the Paras’), who were more inclined to use deadly force than existing forces. It was the Paras who faced a 7,000-strong Catholic civil rights march on 13 January 1972, ‘Bloody Sunday’, and shot dead 14 people later found to be unarmed, further delegitimising the Army and legitimising PIRA within many Catholic communities. This event, more than any other, can be seen to have ignited the decades of sectarian conflict that followed.(Gerike et al., 2016)

The lack of effective military intelligence in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1975 is considered to have had a detrimental impact on security and violence reduction and containment in the region.(Sanders, 2011)

Paramilitary ceasefires in late 1994 were identified near the time as important developments in the peace process, and the best hope for resolution of the conflict for over twenty five years.(Boyle & Hadden, 1995) Paramilitary operations by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) officially ended on 31 August 1994; six weeks later, on 13 October 1994, a cessation of violence was announced by Loyalist forces, leading to a situation described in 1995 as a ‘cold peace’.(O’Leary, 1995) A resumption of IRA violence occurred on 9 February 1996, marked by the bombing of Canary Wharf in London.(Kyle, 1996)

## Section three: Data and Methods [732/500 words]

Data on all-cause mortality and population size, disaggregated by gender, age in single years and year, were extracted from the Human Mortality Database (HMD). Mortality rates were calculated by dividing death counts by population exposure (adjusted population counts). All data management and analyses were performed using the R statistical programming environment.

In the first stage of the analysis, mortality rates by age and year were explored visually using level plots in which each column is a different year, each row a different age, and each cell is a mortality rate or log mortality rate for a specific combination of year and age in single years. This arrangement is known as a Lexis surface. A qualitative colour scheme, ‘Paired’ from the RColorBrewer package, was used to colour cells in the level plots such that different ‘bands’ of mortality rates or log mortality rates can be identified by cross-referencing the colour of cells with colour key legends to the right of each plot. The R packages Lattice and latticeExtra were used to produce the visualisations.

In the second stage of the analysis, level plots for males aged between 15 and 45 years inclusive were produced, again using the same ‘Paired’ colour scheme but with a narrower scale of values, meaning cells are coloured differently. This gender and age range was focused on as a mortality pattern that appears attributable to the conflict post 1972 appears very clearly for this group, whereas in females and males at other ages no similar pattern is apparent.

In the third stage of the analysis, a model was developed which aims to reproduce the main features of the level plot of mortality values over this Lexis surface for this gender and age group, and in which the conflict-attributable pattern of excess deaths is modelled as a separate variable. The final model specification was developed by comparing the penalised model fit of different model specifications using AIC and BIC, as well as the root mean square (RMS) error, and by visually exploring both the Lexis surfaces of predicted values, and of residuals (differences between predicted and actual values) in order to assess whether the model appears to capture the most salient features of the Lexis surface of the data itself. The model specification is as follows:

Where indicates the mortality rate for males of age in year , the superscript indicates which of three distinct phases in mortality improvement to which year belongs, and indicates the number of years since the start of the mortality improvement phase to which year belongs. The three mortality improvement phases, identified through visual exploration of the Lexis surfaces, are: Phase One: 1922 to 1938 inclusive; Phase Two: 1939 to 1955 inclusive; and Phase Three: 1956 and later. Within these three phases, the rate of age specific mortality improvement tended to be greatest in Phase Two (1939 to 1955), despite this period including World War Two.

is the function which models the mortality effect of the conflict. It assumes that the additional mortality effect is greatest in the first year of the conflict, then decays exponentially with each subsequent year. The rate of decay in additional mortality is modelled using the parameter , and can have any value from 0 to 1 inclusive. In the fourth phase of the analysis, numerical optimisation is used to select k such that AIC (penalised model fit) is minimised. Given , the ‘half life’ of the conflict, i.e. number of years it takes for the additional mortality risk to fall by half, can also be calculated using the formula .

Finally, in the fifth phase of the analysis, the numbers of deaths at each age and in each year are estimated by applying the model’s predicted mortality risks to the populations exposed to these risks, i.e. , where is the number of deaths at age and in year under the active conflict scenario A, and indicates the size of the population at this age and in this year exposed to the mortality risk. A counterfactual surface of risks is modelled by setting to 0 in all years. The total number of conflict-attributable deaths estimated by the model in this age range is then the sum of differences in deaths estimated under both scenarios, i.e. .

## Section four: Results [1500 words]

## Visual exploration of patterns

Figure 1 shows the Lexis surfaces of log­10 mortality rates for both genders and for each age between newborns and 90 years. White cells indicate missing values due to no deaths occurring at those particular ages, but other cells are coloured according to mortality rate. The legend on the right show which colours correspond with which mortality values. Because a base-10 logarithmic transformation is used, the values on this legend indicate the ‘number of zeros’ associated with the mortality risk. Ranging from 100or 1.0 risk for light blue at the top, then to 10-1 (one in ten) for some lighter green shades, 10-2 (one-in-100) for lighter reds, 10-2 (one-in-1000) for some reds, 10-3 (one in 10 000) for the middling orange shade, 10-4 (one in 100 000) for the middle purple shade, and finally 10-5 (one in a million) for the brown shade at the bottom of the scale. Because the population of Northern Ireland is relatively small, at ages and in years in which mortality risk is very low, missing values for log mortality risk, indicated by white cells, are more likely than these very low values, because no deaths occurred. These ‘missing data’ cells are observed more in females than males, and in particular in childhood since the early 1980s. This is consistent with mortality trends in the affluent world elsewhere, where mortality risks in childhood tend to be very low.

Figure 2 provides a stylised ‘pen portrait’ of some of the main features seen in figure 1. As with in many other countries, there is a much sharper increase in mortality risk once males reach adulthood, not observed to the same extent in female. In more recent years this can be seen by noting that for males almost all purple cells are seen in childhood, with cells at older ages coloured light or dark orange. This broadly corresponds to somewhere between half an order of magnitude, to a full order of magnitude, increase in mortality risk after males reach adulthood compared with their risks in childhood. By contrast for females the difference in colour and shade in early adulthood is much less different to in childhood.

Within Figure 2 P1, P2 and P3 indicate ‘Phase 1’, ‘Phase 2’ and ‘Phase 3’, each demarcating periods of years in which there appeared to be systemic differences in the rate of change in mortality risk at different ages. As described previously Phase One covers the years 1922 to 1938 inclusive, Phase Two the years 1939 to 1955 inclusive; and Phase Three the years 1956 and later. The much more rapid falls in both female and male young adult mortality over Phase Two is evident in the Figure 1 levelplot by noting that most of the cells in the age range 20 to 40 years are red before the late 1930s, whereas during this Phase they turn dark and light orange. This represents close to an order of magnitude fall in mortality risk at these ages over these years. This is despite the period including the World War Two, indicated with a shaded polygon in Figure 2. There is evidence of World War Two having some effect on mortality patterns, with some cells after around 1941-2, for males in their early twenties, switching back to red after having turned orange a few years previously, before reverting back to orange in later years.

The effect of the Troubles on mortality is evident by noting the faint vertical band of red cells which appears in the male level plot from around age 18 to 40 after the early 1970s. Before this red band appeared cells tended to be a darker orange shade (slightly under 10-3 or 1-in-100 risk of dying), and a slightly lighter orange/yellow shade after. No similar discontinuity at this age range after the early 1970s is evident for females. Figure 3 explores this pattern further, by plotting the number of deaths for males and females aged between 18 and 40 years. A grey band is added indicating the years 1971-1973. Male deaths risk in 1971 and 1972, peak in 1973, and then remain above those seen in earlier years for many years afterwards; by contrast no similar increase is seen for females. It appears that the Troubles had a longer term effect than WW2 on male mortality, and within Figure 2 this is represented by a polygon that extends to a slightly further to the right than the WW2 polygon.

Within Figure 2, the large horizontal grey band indicates the age range 15 to 45 years, within which further analyses will focus. Figure 4 shows level plots for males and females for this age range only, using a slightly different colour scheme and range of log10 mortality values to before. Within this plot the effect of the Troubles on male mortality is even clearer, and appears as a band of light red, then dark red, cells after the early 1970s after orange and dark red cells in earlier years. Again, no similar pattern is seen for females. The disruption to earlier trends for males appears mainly to affect males once they have reached adulthood, and to be sharpest at younger adult ages, from around the ages of 18 to 21 years of age.

## Modelling

The model specification is as described in the methods section, and was arrived at through attempting to develop a specification for male mortality rates that produces a predicted Lexis surface qualitatively similar to that observed in the data itself. This process involved both comparing standard metrics such as AIC and RMS error for a range of model specifications, as well as qualitative comparison of both the predicted surface against the data itself, and exploration of the surface of residuals to identify any forms of systemic bias. Figure 5 shows the modelled surface on the top row, compared with the data on the same scale on the bottom row. We can see that the stylised assumptions incorporated in the model, as described in the methods section, are able to produce a surface qualitatively very similar to the data surface itself, including the sharp rates of improvement observed during phase 2. Figure 6 shows a surface of residuals; within this figure red cells indicate that the model over-estimated age-year specific log mortality rates, and blue cells indicate under-estimation, and the shade of cells indicates the degree of difference between actual and predicted values, with light cells indicating small differences and dark cells indicating larger differences. An important feature to note in Figure 6 is that there is no systemic pattern of residuals observed in the early 1970s, suggesting that the model specification, and in particular the parameters which model the effect of the Troubles as a spike in mortality followed by an exponential decay, have been reasonably successful in characterising the nature of this additional mortality component. Given the characterisation of the Troubles effect as having this characteristic pattern of exponential decay, as discussed in the methods section the effect of changing the decay rate parameter k on model fit was explored both by using the optimise function in R to minimise AIC, and also by plotting the relationship between AIC and k; this is shown on figure 7, and indicates that the model has a best fit when k is 9.748%. This value suggests the ‘half life’ of the Troubles was around 6.76 years.

## Counterfactual estimation

Using the approach described in the methods section, the number of additional deaths attributed to the Troubles by the model can be estimated by applying mortality risks to population sizes under both the ‘with-Troubles’ and ‘without-Troubles’ scenarios. Figure 8 shows the estimated number of additional deaths at each age and year after 1972. These tend to be concentrated at the youngest adult ages, then reduce with age. This is further confirmed by extracting the coefficient associated with the Troubles for each age, as shown in Figure 9, which include the equivalent coefficients for females if using the same model specification. For males the effect is positive at almost all ages, and is largest at age 18, then falls at most older ages; for females it tends to be negative, suggesting the model may be misspecified for females, and instead capturing broader continual improvements in mortality risks over this time period. Table 1 shows the number of estimated additional male deaths by year and age group in five year intervals to the nearest whole number.

## Section five: Discussion [1500 words]

# References [1000 words]

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