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An Irish Exit: Modeling the EU Referendum in Northern Ireland

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AN IRISH EXIT:
MODELING THE EU REFERENDUM
IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Kelly Barr

Mentor: Andy Sobel

In the wake of the 2016 EU Referendum, pollsters and the public alike have tried to piece together how the United Kingdom left the EU and what this means for the future of Europe. An often-overlooked region of the UK—Northern Ireland—voted Remain as expected, but defied forecasts with 40% of its constituencies choosing the Leave vote. This paper regresses a range of demographic variables for the electorate of Northern Ireland to understand if voting motivations for the EU Referendum in Northern Ireland differs from those in Great Britain. Results reveal that what determined the vote between the two regions could not have been more different—an ethno-political cleavage with roots in historical conflict unexpectedly overwhelmed the vast majority of the Northern Irish vote.