

# Review of: "Bordering on crisis: A qualitative analysis of focus group, social media, and news media perspectives on the Republic of Ireland-Northern Ireland border during the 'first wave' of the COVID-19 pandemic"

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## **Cross-border policies and public health; the need for political convergence and solidarity in the face of human risks**

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### **Commentary**

In the recent published article titled "Bordering on crisis: A qualitative analysis of focus group, social media, and news media perspectives on the Republic of Ireland-Northern Ireland border during the 'first wave' of the COVID-19 pandemic" O'Connor et al. showed the challenges posed by the land borders between Republic of Ireland (ROI) from Northern Ireland (NI) in the COVID 19 pandemic. The most important challenge in this area has been Interpretations of Cross-Border Policy Disparities. Researchers have proposed two solutions in this regard: strengthen border controls, or pursue a unified all-island approach. The authors conclude by proposing greater synchronization of cross-border pandemic responses (O'Connor et al., 2021).

Undoubtedly, the article is a valuable work as a qualitative study. Researchers have tried to use and analyze different data (news media, social media and 8 focus groups discussions) to answer their question with a kind of triangulation. In addition, this article presents treasured findings about the health policy challenges in the border between (ROI) and (NI) during first wave of COVID 19. However, regarding the findings, it seems that authors ignored a deeper layer of the link between politics and public health. It means that public health policies in the pandemic are made up of general human laws, while authors limited it to border between (ROI) and (NI). Although they just refer to this issue in the last sentence of article when they refer to the context of political conflict, which exacerbates political tensions and ethnocentrism in the emergence of a transnational public health crisis risks (O'Connor et al., 2021). We believed that in such kinds of global risks, we need unified policies at global level, as O'Connor

et al. have called the cross-border policies.

I have previously dealt with this subject with my co-author, and emphasized on global solidarity away from politicization. As it has truly been said, viruses do not discriminate, nor should humankind and therefore there is an urgent need for collective action by all countries (Sadati and Bagheri Lanakarani, 2021). In other articles, we also showed that citizens expect policymakers to pay attention to the needs, concerns, and views of citizens in pandemic policies, and in particular to provide unified policies in this area (Zarei et al.,). It was concluded that creating local, national, and global solidarity in such outbreaks is an inevitable ethical necessity (Shahabi et al., 2021).

Let us return to the subject of the border between (ROI) and (NI) and their political conflict. Observing the results of researchers, it can be said that policies at this frontier should have been driven towards a kind of convergence and solidarity. This issue is more related to the common cultural and social context that is located on both sides of this border. But the question is whether it is not better to take the issue from the regional border to the world level as the COVID 19 as a global threat. Dr Tedros Adhanom the Secretary-General of the World Health Organization has repeatedly emphasized that building global solidarity several times (Adhanom, 2021).

It is clear that in a risk world (Sadati et al., 2020), human beings need more global solidarity. However, the question is that how to strike a balance between the interests of countries within national borders and global solidarity. In other words, what can be the best cross-border policy and how can it resolve this conflict of interest? This question is, of course, a great social, political and moral challenge. In my model, the policy should be based on global solidarity and universal human morality, while taking into account local priorities. Therefore, the cross-border approach means that governments, while paying attention to their national issues, respect the rules and general human morality in the face of crises and act in this direction as much as possible. Regardless of what nationality, ethnic and race we belong to, we need a political convergence and solidarity in the face of all human risks.

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