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International and Domestic Pressures on Irish Foreign Policy: an
analysis of the UN Security Council term 2001–2

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ABSTRACT

Recent debate on Irish foreign policy has often been framed by the presumed influence of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy and the dependence of the Irish economy on Foreign Direct Investment from the US. More broadly, small states are generally assumed to have little significant influence on world events. Empirical research on these issues is difficult in the Irish context given the often guarded nature of Irish foreign policy pronouncements. Ireland's term on the UN Security Council in 2001 and 2002 offers an opportunity both to examine Irish foreign policy decision-making at the highest international level and to look at the capacity of a small state to have influence. The results of this study suggest that contrary to common perceptions, Irish diplomats on the Council did regularly disagree with the US on foreign-policy decisions and that the influence of EU membership was very limited—primarily because there was often no common European policy on the most controversial issues. Ireland can, however, be seen to have influenced a number of key decisions made by the Council during its most recent term as an elected member.

INTRODUCTION*

Ireland's two-year term on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2001 and 2002 offers an opportunity to examine the state's diplomatic engagement across a wide range of issues of relevance to international peace and security. Ireland has served on the Security Council only twice previously: for a full term in 1981-2 and a 'half term' of 12 months in 1962. This most recent term would, however, prove to be different from the first two in many respects. In the post-Cold War period the Security Council has been in almost permanent session—compared with its tradition in earlier eras of holding meetings periodically. The Council, despite the continuing importance of informal consultations, now meets more often in public session and is somewhat more transparent in the way it works. In addition, the advent of the Internet means that the verbatim records of public meetings, notes on many 'closed meetings', Presidential statements, council communiqués and voting records are readily available for analysis.

This article examines Ireland's role on the Security Council in 2001 and 2002, thereby contributing to an understanding of the scope and direction of Irish foreign policy at the beginning of the 21st century. Given that speeches and votes in the Council are recorded, the article will focus on those issues that were dealt with in public sessions and on which votes were taken during Ireland's term of office.¹ Inevitably this means that some issues on which the council was inactive or, more typically, deadlocked are not examined. While such issues would be relevant to an analysis of the failures of the UN system, Ireland could have done little to resolve these matters or to break the deadlock given the structure of the Security

* I would like to acknowledge and thank officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs for their assistance and comments. The analysis and any weaknesses in the article are, however, entirely the author's responsibility.

¹Details of all the speeches, votes and resolutions discussed in this article can be found on the UN Security Council web site, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/> (1 July 2004). See also John Doyle 'Irish Diplomacy on the UN Security Council 2001-2: Foreign Policy-making in the light of Day', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* vol. 15: 73-102, 2004.

Council, within which a pre-eminent role is given to the veto-holding five permanent members and the ten elected members are in a less powerful position. Nonetheless many contentious policy areas were debated in public session and Ireland played an important role in these debates, and there were many occasions when Ireland did have to make difficult and potentially controversial choices.

For a small country, Ireland has contributed a very large number of troops to UN peacekeeping and peace support missions.² In addition, through involvement with UN humanitarian agencies and with non-governmental organisations working with or funded by UN agencies, a significant number of Irish people have direct personal experience of working with the UN system. Recent referenda on alterations to EU treaties have included significant debates on the future of European security arrangements. This was perhaps most graphically captured by the poster during the referendum on the Nice Treaty that starkly said ‘Hello NATO good-bye UN’³. The debate has, however, been more complex than a simple dichotomy between supporters of Irish involvement in UN peacekeeping missions versus those promoting an armed EU or Ireland’s membership of NATO. On occasions, a clear majority of the Irish public has wished ‘something to be done’ by some organisation with military capacity—such as in relation to events in Rwanda or Somalia and more recently in Liberia and the Congo. There has, however, been great public unease about some military developments, such as the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which triggered some of the largest public protests in Ireland in recent years. On the other hand, there was little very public discussion about Irish army involvement in NATO-led operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, where the troops’ rules of engagement were more robust than those employed by traditional peacekeepers but where the operations were seen as non-aggressive and peace supporting and, crucially, had UN Security Council authorization.

There is another dimension to the Irish foreign policy agenda, one that arises as a consequence of our economic reliance on foreign investment and foreign trade. Debate on matters that are perceived to have an impact in this area tends to be focused on Ireland’s narrow state interests and therefore can lead to decisions that appear to be at variance with the declared values of Irish foreign policy. The debate on Iraq was often framed in this way, and recent discussions on the reform of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy reflected the very explicit tension between Ireland’s own interests in agricultural subsidies versus our support for global development. In particular, public debate has raised questions about the independence of Irish foreign policy given the importance of US foreign direct investment to the Irish economy. In a slightly different context, critics of EU integration have voiced concerns that the development of a common foreign and security policy has constrained Ireland’s capacity to act and has more closely aligned Ireland with the wealthy states of the Global North.

An analysis of Ireland’s performance on the Security Council provides an insight into Irish foreign policy in practice and into the way in which ideals and state interests are balanced. In particular, this paper examines the extent to which Ireland’s decision-making during its most recent term on the Council was constrained by EU membership or by a desire not to oppose the US, in such a way as to suggest a break from more traditional modes of Irish foreign policy. It also examines the extent to which a small state can have any meaningful impact in such a forum as the Security Council—dominated as that body is by more powerful states.

² Irish soldiers and Gardai have completed approximately 50,000 tours of duty with the UN since 1958.

³The first, defeated, referendum was held on 9 June 2001; the second referendum, which was passed, was held on 19 October 2002.

THE WIDER CONTEXT

This study forms part of the debate on the role of small states in the international system. Robert Keohane's classic article in 1969 reviewed the state of research at that point.³ He argued that analysis had so often confused 'smallness' and non-alignment and that very little progress had been made on research into the question of whether small states did have unique characteristics that made their foreign policies different from the policies of larger states. Indeed, this is still a salient point in the literature today. The post-Cold War literature on the debate about the foreign policy of small states has been over-focused on the issue of alliances and the question of autonomy for small states, notwithstanding the alteration in the international system following the end of the Cold War.⁴ Small states are almost always presented in the literature as victims trying to protect themselves from the international system and/or from larger states. There has been too little work done on the capacity (or incapacity) of small states to pursue proactive international policies that go beyond the need to defend themselves from 'external' threats.

Keohane argued that small states are those that can be categorised broadly as states effectively forced to simply adapt to the international system and that have no leverage with which to exert influence. They are 'system ineffectual'.⁵ He cites Robert Rothstein's study of small states, which suggests that such states are more likely to support international organisations because of the formal equality accorded to all states within such international bodies and also out of hope of enjoying some form of collective security.⁶ This argument is problematic, given the experience of failure that has tended to be characteristic of collective security organisations. However, Keohane concludes that small-state support for multilateralism is rational, because whatever the failures of multilateral action, small- and even medium-sized states have no hope whatsoever of making an international impact if they act alone. Small states acting within international fora can play a 'systemic role' in seeking to shape codes and rules of behaviour.⁷ Ireland has made this argument in the past and it is restated in the contribution by Minister for Foreign Affairs Brian Cowen, in this volume. The question that remains, however, in spite of the aspirations of small states, is can they achieve their goals by acting in this way? Can small states have an impact on multilateral norms or do the most powerful states inevitably dominate?

Within the European Union the role of small states has been discussed in the literature in the context of European political cooperation.⁸ Small states have a particular interest in

³Robert O. Keohane, 'Lilliputians' dilemmas: small states in international politics', *International Organization* 23(2) (1969), 291–310.

⁴See for example: Gerd Nonneman, 'Saudi–European relations 1902–2001: a pragmatic quest for relative autonomy', *International Affairs* 77 (3) 2001, 631–61; Erich Reiter and Heinz Gartner (eds) *Small states and alliances* (Heidelberg, 2001); Mary Ann Tetreault 'Autonomy, necessity, and the small state: ruling Kuwait in the twentieth century', *International Organization* 45(4) 1991, 565–91; and David Vital, *The inequality of states* (Oxford, 1967).

⁵Keohane, 'Lilliputians' dilemmas', 295.

⁶Robert Rothstein, *Alliances and small powers* (New York, 1968), 44–5.

⁷Keohane, 'Lilliputians' dilemmas', 297.

⁸See, for example, Paul Sharp, *Irish foreign policy and the European Community: a study of the impact of interdependence on the foreign policy of a small state* (Aldershot,

how EU foreign policy develops: will they be swamped by the more powerful states and end up losing any sense of independent foreign policy, or can they influence the common foreign policy? In the Irish context there is a quite limited literature based on empirical analysis. With the exception of Ben Tonra's work comparing the Europeanisation of foreign policy in Ireland, the Netherlands and Denmark up to 1996⁹, much of the debate has been focused either on the internal foreign policy-making processes of the EU or on individual case studies. Tonra's study concludes that policy-makers in the three states he explored saw the EU as constraining all members—large and small—while offering small states a greater capacity for real international influence. He adds, however, that the public in Ireland and Denmark do not share their policy-makers' views and see foreign policy coordination as a largely negative cost of membership.¹⁰ Are Tonra's findings still applicable? Is the development of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy a constraining influence, pulling Ireland away from the declared values of its national foreign policy, or is the EU an effective platform for advancement of some foreign policy without placing a straight jacket on the state's actions across the range of foreign policy decision-making in other international fora?

THE STUDY OF IRISH FOREIGN POLICY

The history of Ireland's early involvement in the League of Nations and the United Nations, from 1919 to the mid 1960s, has been analysed in earlier work by Michael Kennedy and Joe Skelly.¹¹ More recently, the 1996 White Paper on Irish foreign policy captured the tension between ideals and state interests when it set out the values that underlie Ireland's foreign policy as follows (paras 1 and 2):

1. Ireland's foreign policy is about much more than self-interest. For many of us it is a statement of the kind of people we are. Irish people are committed to the principles set out in Article 29 of the Constitution for the conduct of international relations: the ideal of peace and friendly co-operation amongst nations founded on international justice and morality; and
2. Ireland is small and hugely dependent on external trade for its well-being. We do not have a sufficiently large domestic market or adequate natural resources to enable our economy to thrive in isolation. As we depend for our survival on a regulated international environment in which the rights and interests of even the smallest are protected, our interests require us to pursue an active policy of external engagement.

1990); Kenneth Hanf and Ben Soetendor (eds), *Adapting to European integration: small states and the European Union* (New York, 1998).

⁹Ben Tonra, *The Europeanisation of national foreign policy: Dutch, Danish and Irish foreign policy in the European Union* (Aldershot, 2001).

¹⁰Tonra, *The Europeanisation of national foreign policy*, 284.

¹¹Michael Kennedy, *Ireland and the League of Nations, 1919-1946: international relations, diplomacy and politics* (Dublin, 1996); Michael Kennedy and Joseph Morrison Skelly (eds) *Irish foreign policy, 1919-66: from independence to internationalism* (Dublin, 2000); Joseph Morrison Skelly, *Irish diplomacy at the United Nations 1945-1965: national interests and the international order* (Dublin, 1997).

The tension between ideals and state interests described in the White Paper has been seen to strongly influence foreign policy decision-making in the recent debates on Iraq, with the importance of US investment for the Irish economy being regularly cited as the most important reason for not being more critical of the US invasion.¹²

In late 2000, just before Ireland joined the Security Council, Minister Cowen argued against an analysis of foreign policy on the basis of values versus interests. He said it was not an either/or situation because small states could not compete in a power-seeking international system run by realist principles. Ireland, he argued, ‘like most small nations has always known that a multilateral rules-based international order *is* in our national interest. We would like to think, and I believe with much justification that we have demonstrated this, that our commitment to liberal internationalism is also based on principle.’¹³

Following the end of Ireland’s term on the Council and after extensive criticism of the stance the government had taken on the war on Iraq, Minister Cowen re-iterated the government’s commitment to multilateralism. He said, ‘...the complex of challenges facing the international community cannot be resolved through unilateral action by any one country, or group of countries—no matter how large the resources or resolute the determination.’ He then went on to quote and support UN secretary-general Kofi Annan’s point made in the Millennium Declaration Implementation Report 2003; ‘...Challenges to peace and security today are predominantly global ... They require complex and collective responses, which are possible only if the web of multilateral institutions is adequately developed and properly used.’¹⁴

KEY ISSUES DURING THE 2001–2 SECURITY COUNCIL TERM

The end of the Cold War saw the UNSC move into almost permanent session as the level of uncertainty in the international order increased. During Ireland’s two year term as an elected member (beginning 1 January 2001) there were 430 meetings of the Council. The range of issues dealt with was vast and required Irish diplomats to be familiar with the situation in areas where they had no diplomatic presence and where there were few historical and contemporary links with Ireland. The following sections seek to focus on the key issues debated over the two years of Ireland’s presence on the Council and also examine some of the process issues involved in the management of Ireland’s term by the Department of Foreign Affairs. Collectively, the next sections of the paper give a good insight into the detail of Irish diplomatic activity.

Ethiopia–Eritrea

During Ireland’s first week on the council the US renewed its bid to lift the UN-imposed arms embargo on Ethiopia and Eritrea.¹⁵ There was broad support for this US position among the Council’s permanent members and there was speculation that an end to the embargo had

¹²See, for example, *Sunday Times (London)*, 23 February 2003; *Business and Finance*, 13 February 2003; and for earlier links between domestic opinion, elections and foreign policy see John Doyle and Eileen Connolly ‘Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics: a study of the 2002 election in the Republic of Ireland’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vol. 13: 151-166, 2002.

¹³Brian Cowen, ‘Challenges to Liberal Internationalism’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 12 (2001), 2.

¹⁴Brian Cowen, Speech to annual conference of the National Committee for the Study of International Affairs, Academy House, 14 November 2003, re-printed in this volume.

¹⁵The arms embargo had been adopted on 17 May 2000 as resolution 1298.

been privately promised to the Ethiopians by the US during ceasefire talks in 2000. At an early stage Ireland took the position with regard to this matter that the conditions for lifting the embargo¹⁶ had not been met. Irish diplomats believe that Ireland played an important role in persuading the other four new members of the Council (Colombia, Mauritius, Norway and Singapore) to take a similar position. Following this, Britain and France shifted their position—from tentative support for the US to a decision to abstain—thus denying the draft resolution on lifting the embargo the nine positive votes required for it to pass. The embargo thus remained in place until May 2001, when it expired under the ‘sunset’ provisions of resolution 1298.

Iraq

The security council’s discussions on Iraq in 2001–2 can be divided into two phases. Up to mid 2002 the focus was on the impact of the sanctions regime, with many countries, including Ireland, seeking reform of the system to ensure a better flow of civilian goods into Iraq while at the same time maintaining military sanctions. After President George W. Bush’s 11 September anniversary speech to the UN General Assembly,¹⁷ however, and under US pressure, the UNSC debates focused almost entirely on Iraq’s alleged programme of weapons of mass destruction.

In 2001 and early 2002 UNSC discussion on Iraq focused primarily on the sanctions regime. The US and British approach was to adjust and prolong sanctions by allowing some additional imports to Iraq, balanced against the country’s oil earnings. There was, however, a lot of pressure on the US and Britain to agree to some reform of the sanctions regime on humanitarian grounds. In response to this pressure, Britain and the US proposed the creation of a Goods Review List (GRL)—a broad range of potentially dual use items that would still require the approval of the Sanctions Committee. Ireland unsuccessfully argued that Iraq should be allowed to operate in the economic field as normally as possible, consistent with preventing it from rearming, pending fulfilment of its obligations as set out in previous UN resolutions since the end of the First Gulf War. In Ireland’s view, therefore, merely allowing Iraq to import goods was not sufficient: Iraq should also be able to import capital for investment (for example, by obtaining World Bank loans), engage foreign consultants, have international air links, etc. The US and Britain opposed this approach as too far-reaching while Russia (and Iraq) opposed the whole idea of a GRL on the grounds that it would defuse the pressure for an end to sanctions and lead to an almost permanent status for sanctions. Ultimately, in the atmosphere that existed post 11 September 2001, the GRL concept was adopted without any of the wider reforms sought by Ireland and without a commitment to a comprehensive settlement of the sanctions issue as sought by Russia.¹⁸

At this time Ireland also argued that future sanctions regimes should have a specified time limit—to avoid a situation whereby sanctions can be kept in place by the veto power of one permanent member of the Security Council. While this approach was applied in practice from 2001 onwards, it was not adopted as formal, standard Council policy because of US opposition.

Early Council debates on the claims that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction focused on two key issues: firstly, the extent to which a new UNSC resolution on

¹⁶Such conditions had been set out in resolution 1298 as being ‘a peaceful definitive settlement’ to the conflict.

¹⁷12 September 2002.

¹⁸See UNSC resolution 1409, adopted on 14 May 2002, for details of the GRL concept, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>. (1 July 2004.)

weapons inspections would ‘automatically’ lead to action by member states to ‘enforce’ the resolution without further Security Council decision; and secondly the new conditions under which UN weapons inspectors would operate. Early US–British drafts allowed for one resolution, which would authorise member states to use ‘all means necessary’ (i.e. use military action) to force Iraq to comply with the terms of the resolution. The US–British drafts also sought to give the Permanent Five on the Council special privileges as regards the direction of the inspectors in their work. With regard to the issue of ‘automatic action’, Ireland did not favour such an approach. The Irish position was explicitly for a two-stage process, whereby the UNSC would decide whether or not Iraq was in breach of the inspection regime and if such an occasion arose would at that point decide what to do. In relation to the inspections regime, Hans Blix, the UN’s chief weapons inspector¹, supported some of the proposed ‘tougher’ rules while opposing those that he felt were unnecessary and counterproductive. Ireland was among a group of countries that strongly supported Blix; and most of the more objectionable provisions were removed from the final resolution.

The unanimous adoption of resolution 1441 on 8 November 2002 gave Iraq a ‘final opportunity’ to comply with previous resolutions on disclosure of its weapons programmes. The Irish government faced some domestic criticism for supporting the motion. In its explanation for having voted in favour of the resolution, the government explicitly stated that it was for the UNSC to decide if Iraq committed a ‘material breach’ of its obligations, in accordance with the use of that term in international law, and that only the Council and not individual members could then decide what action should ensue.¹⁹

During its term on the UNSC, Ireland’s interventions in Council debates were clear in their opposition to open-ended sanctions against Iraq, in their support for the UNSC remaining central to decision-making on the possibility of action against Iraq and in their opposition to armed intervention without UN approval. In its final contribution on this issue in December 2002, Ireland reiterated its understanding of resolution 1441, noting especially that a ‘material breach’ of the resolution required not just a false declaration by Iraq, but also non-cooperation with the weapons inspectors; that it was for the Council to decide if a material breach had taken place and that it was for the Council to decide on any action that might ensue.²⁰ As long as Ireland was on the Security Council the government was forced to take decisions—very often publicly. All of the government’s decisions and speeches that are publicly re-viewable, including numerous debates, were in keeping with Ireland’s public position of opposition to the sanctions and opposition to a unilateral attack on Iraq.

When Ireland’s term on the Security Council ended, Irish policy on Iraq was no longer as explicit. Opposition within Ireland to the government’s policy on the Iraq war focused largely on the issue of the US military’s use of Shannon airport and Irish airspace. The government responded that the strongest critics of US policy within the UNSC—France and Germany—both continued to allow the US overflight and landing privileges. As an issue, therefore, the use of Shannon as a stopover point by the US military did not fully encapsulate Ireland’s position with regard to the war. After leaving the Security Council the Irish government, unlike France and Germany, took a muted and more neutral stance on the war. This was the real shift: from the position the Irish government took during 2002 while on the Security Council to the view it held in 2003, when war became the clear and inevitable US policy. On this issue there was a clear tension between Ireland’s economic interests, given the

¹His official title was Executive Chairman of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC).

¹⁹Details of the Irish government’s statement in relation to this resolution are available at <http://www.un.int/ireland/scstatements/sc97.htm> (1 July 2004).

²⁰See <http://www.un.int/ireland/scstatements/sc97.htm> (1 July 2004).

country's dependence on US investment, and the more principled foreign policy position set out in its government's earlier statements on the issue. Once the UNSC term was over and there was a less immediate requirement to adopt and defend explicit positions, the Irish government sought to avoid an explicit policy on developments following from resolution 1441; and in particular appeared unwilling to publicly criticise US foreign policy, while continuing to emphasise the importance of Irish–US economic links.

Palestine–Israel

Ireland has tended in its foreign policy to express sympathy with the plight of the Palestinian people and to support political moves towards a settlement that recognises a Palestinian state. The US, though still clearly Israel's strongest ally, has become more wary of using its Security Council veto to block resolutions that are critical of Israel, because it is more conscious of the negative impact such vetoes have in the Arab world and internationally. The US does, however, work extremely hard in private seeking to avoid such resolutions or trying to ensure that they do not get broad support. In the Security Council term before Ireland's membership, for example, a Palestinian-promoted motion proposed in December 2000 calling for a UN Observer Force in the Occupied Territories got only eight votes, and so the US did not have to veto, as nine positive votes from among the 15 members are required to pass a resolution.

The changes to the Council's membership in January 2001, and Ireland's broad support for the rights of the Palestinian people and for the idea of Palestinian statehood, meant that a passing majority of nine votes was now more likely—potentially forcing the US to engage more fully. Nonetheless, throughout 2001 the US continued to oppose resolutions critical of Israel; but the deteriorating situation on the ground and the presence of a majority of nine on the Council prepared to criticise Israel pressurised the US to moderate its position somewhat during 2002.

The Council returned to a discussion on Palestine in March 2001. In the first of nine national statements over the course of the two-year term, Ireland presented its position on the Council. Ireland's statements with regard to the Palestinian issue²¹ stressed 5 key themes: firstly the right of the Security Council to concern itself with the Middle East; secondly, Israel's right to security within recognised borders; thirdly, the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people; fourthly, condemnation of terrorism, the counter-productive nature of Palestinian violence, Israel's excessive reaction to such violence and illegal Israeli settlements; and finally Israel's right to defend itself along with its obligation to do so in accordance with international humanitarian law. Ireland, along with other EU members and Norway, abstained on the draft resolution placed before the March meeting, which sought to deploy UN observers in the occupied Palestinian territories without Israeli agreement. Ireland believed that no state would deploy troops in such circumstances and felt that further consultations were needed on the core issues around the collapsed peace process. The resolution nonetheless got the nine positive votes necessary for passage but was vetoed by the US. There was little agreement on the issue among the European countries on the Council after this time, with Britain and Norway unwilling to vote for any resolution opposed by the US whereas Ireland and France were predisposed to support drafts from the Arab Group within the UN as long as these drafts had sufficient balance in the text.

The breakdown of the Oslo peace process prompted Secretary-General Annan to appoint as Special UN Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Terje Roed-Larson, the

²¹For details see, for example, statements and vetoed resolution on 15 and 27 March 2001, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/> (1 July 2004).

Norwegian diplomat who had facilitated the original Oslo talks. The Security Council did not intervene directly during this time, in order to allow Annan and Larson develop the UN's role within the Quartet²² without a major clash with the US and Israel. In late 2001 the crisis on the ground in Israel and the institutionalisation of the Quartet permitted the Council to re-assert itself on the issue. The re-occupation by Israel of Palestinian towns and the extra-judicial killings carried out in October 2001 by the Israeli Defence Forces was discussed informally. The US strongly opposed the holding of a public session and the Palestinians, in the heightened post-11 September atmosphere, decided not to push the issue. The worsening situation on the ground led to further informal consultations. On October 25 a joint statement by the four envoys—of the US, UN, EU and Russia—was endorsed by the Security Council in a media statement drafted by Ireland, who held the presidency of the Council in that month. While this represented a Council endorsement of sorts of the Quartet approach, the US refused to consider a resolution and the Palestinians, acting through Tunisia, refused to accept a presidential statement as a sufficient alternative.

Ireland's support for Palestinian statehood was demonstrated most clearly in December 2001 when Ireland's support for a draft resolution promoted by the Arab states encouraged three other non-permanent Council members to vote in favour, seeing Ireland's lead as giving them diplomatic cover, despite a certain US veto (and obvious British displeasure).²³ The vetoing of this draft resolution and a recognition that there was now a majority on the Council in favour of moderate motions critical of Israel were important factors in pressurising the US towards supporting the principle of Palestinian statehood. In March 2002, faced with a moderate Arab resolution that it would again have had to veto to defeat, the US introduced its own draft, which endorsed the principle of Palestinian statehood and welcomed the involvement of the Quartet as a mediating group in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.²⁴ The US also introduced its own draft of proposed resolutions dealing with the conflict on three occasions in late March/April 2002: calling for an Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian cities and welcoming Secretary-General Annan's initiative to send a fact-finding mission to Jenin to investigate claims of an Israeli massacre of civilians in that city.²⁵ Thereafter, however, the US shifted back to a position of uncritical support of Israel and managed largely to keep the issue off the Council's agenda; publicly, it argued that it took this approach to allow the Quartet time to get agreement on a roadmap' for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In late 2002, however, following the killing of UN employees by Israeli forces, the US was unable to avoid having to deal with a resolution in the Security Council and vetoed a draft resolution, one that had been supported by Ireland.²⁶

Afghanistan

Ireland held the presidency of the Security Council when the US began military action in Afghanistan on 7 October 2001. Despite the widespread sympathy for the US following the previous month's attacks in New York and Washington, DC, America initially had not

²²This is the informal group composed of the USA, the EU, the United Nations and Russia, which is seeking to co-ordinate international responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

²³See Security Council report for 14 December 2001, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/> (1 July 2004).

²⁴Ultimately, resolution 1397, based on the US draft, was adopted on 12 March 2002.

²⁵Resolutions 1402, 1403 and 1405, adopted on 29 March, 9 April and 19 April, respectively.

²⁶See Security Council reports for 20 December 2002, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/> (1 July 2004).

wanted to involve the UNSC in its response to those attacks, except to write a letter saying it had taken its action in line with article 51 of the UN Charter, which deals with the issue of the self-defence of member states. Ireland, in consort with Secretary-General Annan, persuaded the US and Britain to come into the Security Council the following day and brief the members on the actions underway in Afghanistan. This involvement created a better atmosphere for getting the work of the ‘Counter-Terrorism Committee’² underway and, ultimately, for the establishment with UNSC approval of the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul (ISAF). Though it may not have chosen the UN route without Irish pressure, the US ultimately found the Council very supportive of its position on Afghanistan.

Given the rapid collapse of the Taliban forces, there was limited opportunity for the Council to intervene during the conflict phase in Afghanistan. However, there were regular Council discussions, especially on post-Taliban reconstruction of the country. Ireland’s contributions almost always highlighted the humanitarian situation. Ireland argued against the view that political stability in Afghanistan would be threatened if the new Transitional Authority was held too tightly accountable on human-rights issues.²⁷ In this regard Ireland organised and chaired two informal meetings in October 2002 between Council members and two Human Rights Rapporteurs who had recently undertaken official missions in Afghanistan—the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Afghanistan, Mr. Kamal Hossain of Bangladesh, and the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions Ms. [Asma Jahangir](#) of Pakistan, .

Southern Lebanon/UNIFIL

Following Israel’s withdrawal from Southern Lebanon in May 2000, Secretary-General Annan had proposed that UNIFIL would become an observer mission. Even in that capacity it would still need considerable military support, but an ultimate phased reduction in mission strength from 5,851 to around 2,000 personnel was envisaged. This was ultimately approved in resolution 1337, which was passed on 30 January 2001. Tensions in the area slowed the downsizing of the force, but a reduction in the troop level to 2,700 was nevertheless achieved by December 2002. In this context the Irish government decided to end Ireland’s 24-year battalion-strength participation in UNIFIL in November 2001. In addition to dealing with UNIFIL, there were limited exchanges at the Security Council about the disputed Shab’a Farms area. Lebanon, supported by Syria, claimed that this area was part of Lebanon and that the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon was therefore incomplete. The Secretary-General and all Council members (including Ireland) except Syria took the view that this area had long since been regarded as part of occupied Syria, and that the dispute remained to be resolved in that context rather than as part of Israel’s withdrawal from Southern Lebanon.

Western Sahara

By 2001 there was widespread acceptance that the 1991 UN plan for a referendum in Western Sahara on its constitutional future was unimplementable; due to differences between

² This committee was established under UNSC resolution 1373 on 28 September. 2001. The committee is made up of all UNSC members and monitors the implementation of resolution 1373. Further information available at:

<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/committees/1373/> (1 October 2004).

²⁷ Details of Ireland’s position on this matter are available at <http://www.un.int/ireland/scstatements/sc77.htm> (1 July 2004).

the occupying power, Morocco, which claimed sovereignty over Western Sahara, and the nationalist movement, Polisario. In light of this, former US secretary of state James Baker, acting as the personal envoy of UN secretary-general Annan, had produced a 'Draft Framework Agreement' that involved the appointment of a five-year, interim government to be followed by a referendum in which every person resident in the territory for at least one year prior to the referendum could vote. The Moroccan government had 'encouraged' Moroccan migration into Western Sahara for many years and the inclusion of these migrants on the voters list would have almost certainly led to the integration of Western Sahara with Morocco. The US and France strongly supported Baker's proposal. Polisario opposed this plan and instead promoted the 1991 UN plan for self-determination.

Ireland took a strong position of principle on this issue and was an important actor in the group that prevented the Baker plan from getting a majority on the Council. Ireland supported the right of the Sahroai people to self-determination—as enshrined in the UN's proposed Settlement Plan—and the right to exercise self-determination in a free and fair way. Ireland did not oppose the adoption of other political solutions apart from independent statehood, but only if that was the free choice of the Sahroai people themselves.

At first glance, the composition of the Security Council in 2002 would seem to offer Morocco the potential support of nine votes (ultimately including the US, France and Britain) in favour of a new resolution that would have been much more supportive of its position than the 1991 Settlement Plan had been. If that had been the case, China and Russia—traditional supporters of Polisario during the Cold War—might have decided not to use their veto. As it happened, however, Ireland was quite active and vocal on the issue, especially among the ten elected members of the Council. Ireland's activity ensured that Baker's Draft Framework never had more than six or seven supporters. The Council ultimately adopted resolution 1429, on 30 July 2002, effectively putting off a decision on the Western Sahara issue for six months. Ireland's role in preventing the Council from adopting Baker's Framework Agreement was widely recognised in New York and was welcomed by Polisario. Morocco, however, was angered by the Irish position; having lined up Baker, the USA, France and Britain to support its position it assumed the Security Council would follow.

By way of a postscript, when Ireland left the council on 31 December 2002 some Irish officials feared that the new Council would abandon support for Sahroai self-determination.²⁹ However, James Baker had lost the initiative for his Framework Agreement and presented a new plan in May 2003, which was much more acceptable to Polisario but which was then opposed by Morocco. Baker resigned as Special Envoy on 11 June 2004 with little progress having been made.

Resolution 1373 and the Counter-Terrorism Committee

Following the 11 September 2001 attacks on the US, the Security Council responded immediately by describing the attacks as a 'threat to international peace and security'—this marked the first time the Council used such language in response to attacks by non-state actors of this type.³⁰ The Council subsequently adopted resolution 1373, which required all UN members to implement comprehensive 'anti-terrorist' legislation.³¹ The Council also agreed to set up a special implementation committee—called the 'Counter-Terrorism

²⁹Private information provided to the author.

³⁰Resolution 1368, approved by the Security Council on 12 September 2001, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/> (15 June 2004).

³¹This resolution was adopted on 28 September 2001, text available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/> (15 June 2004).

Committee'. This was established during Ireland's presidency of the Council, and so it fell to Ireland to get agreement on the modalities for the committee.³² The arrangements were made following a series of bi-laterals between Ireland and every other Council member and informal consultations with the full Council. This was a departure from previous practice, whereby such consultations would have involved only the Permanent Five members of the Council and the elected members would have been served with an agreed position in an effective 'take it or leave it'. Also, in a somewhat unusual move, the arrangements on the modalities for the committee were put in place following a written exchange of correspondence between Ireland as president of the Council and the British chair of the committee, Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock. This had the effect of asserting that the full Council approved (and therefore controlled) the initial work programme of the committee.

The committee's first task was to deal with the reports requested from all UN member states under resolution 1373. It appointed a number of experts to assist it, primarily in the spheres of financial law and practice and legislative drafting. It decided, however, not to recruit an expert on human rights and counter-terrorism. The proposal to recruit such an expert was directly opposed by China and Russia and it was not actively supported by the other permanent Council members—the US, Britain and France. Ireland, with support from Norway, Mauritius and Mexico, pressed the need for a human-rights focus in the committee's work and was commended by human-rights NGOs in this regard. The relationship between counter-terror measures and human rights remains contentious, however. In November 2002 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution calling on the High Commissioner for Human Rights to analyse the effects of 'counter-terrorism' measures: a similar initiative by Mexico had failed in April 2002 at the UN Human Rights Commission for lack of support.³³

The wider political context was well illustrated during Ireland's last month on the council. Following bomb attacks in Kenya on 28 November, in which Kenyan and Israeli citizens died, and an attempted missile attack on the same day on an Israeli plane, the US introduced in the Council a draft resolution that contained several references to Israel. A number of countries thought this was an unfortunate attempt to use the relative consensus on the Council regarding the Counter-Terrorism Committee to promote America's perspective on the Middle East. Ultimately, the US withdrew most of the references apart from an expression of 'sympathy and condolences to the people and the Governments of Kenya and Israel and to the victims of the terrorist attack and their families'. This was sufficient to get the support of all Council members other than Syria.³⁴

Sanctions Regimes

The 1990s (and the immediate post-Cold War era) saw a major increase in the ability of the Council to agree on sanctions regimes. In the late-Cold War period the only Council sanctions regime in operation was against apartheid South Africa. By 2001 there were ten sanctions regimes. The practice has developed whereby each regime is overseen by a committee consisting of all Council members, and each is chaired by the permanent representative of one of the ten elected Council members, acting in a personal as opposed to a national capacity. Ireland's permanent representative, Ambassador Richard Ryan, took the

³²See note by the president of Security Council 4 October 2001, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/statements/2001/prst2001.htm>.

³³Amnesty International Report 2003, '2002 in focus: "Counter-terrorism" and human rights', available at http://web.amnesty.org/report2003/focus2002_1-eng (15 June 2004).

³⁴See debate on resolution 1450, 13 December 2002, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/> (15 June 2004).

chair of the Angola (UNITA) sanctions regime, a regime that was wound up in late 2002. The Angolan situation is discussed more fully below.

In addition to expressing its position on each individual regime, Ireland articulated the following policy on sanctions regimes in general. Firstly, sanctions should be narrowly targeted on the parties to be coerced. The Council has a particular responsibility to mitigate the impact of sanction on civilians to the point of elimination of adverse humanitarian consequences. Secondly, sanctions should be time-limited and should require a further decision of the Council to extend them beyond their original time frame. This position was very pertinent in the context of the on-going sanctions regime against Iraq: the fact that it would have required a specific decision to end them in effect allowed the US or Britain to extend them indefinitely. Thirdly, sanction should be linked upon adoption to specific objectives and the Council should invariably lift/suspend the sanctions if those specific objectives are met. Again this position was clearly evident in the context of the Iraq sanctions debates. Finally, Ireland argued that there needed to be transparent procedures for adopting sanctions that respect the human, civil and other rights of people to be included under sanctions regimes, even taking account of the sensitive nature of the information and intelligence involved in such discussions.

This latter issue came to a head in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. In a series of resolutions between 1999 and early 2001, the UNSC had imposed sanctions on members of al-Qaeda and of the Taliban regime, including a travel ban and the freezing of assets.³⁶ In the aftermath of the 11 September attacks, at the request of the US, a large number of individuals and organisations were added to the list of those covered by these sanctions. Sweden in particular (following the inclusion of some Swedish citizens under these sanctions) opposed the policy of adding individuals to the list without evidence or proper procedures. The US and Britain argued strongly against an evidence-based system of extending these sanctions, on the grounds it would compromise intelligence sources. Ireland, though broadly supportive of America's 'counter-terrorism' agenda on the Council, supported the position that some more rigorous procedure was required to impose sanctions. Ultimately, a set of compromise procedures was adopted in November 2002. In a follow-up to these discussions, the Council adopted resolution 1452 on 20 December 2002, which provided for certain humanitarian exemptions under the 1267 sanctions regime against al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Prior to Ireland's election to the Council, a working group had been established, chaired by Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury of Bangladesh, that was charged with making recommendation for the improved design and implementation of sanctions. The working group's report was presented to the Council on 14 February 2001³. One of the key points made in the report was that the Council should commit itself to fixed time limits for all sanctions regimes. However, in the context of the debate on the sanctions against Iraq, the US refused to accept this principle; and attempts by Ireland during its presidency of the Security Council in October 2001 failed to find a compromise. In practice, however, new sanctions regimes established during 2001–2—that is, those dealing with Liberia and Sierra Leone and the new sanctions regime on al-Qaeda and the Taliban—did have set time limits or review

³⁶Details of these sanctions can be found in resolutions 1267 (1999), 1333 (2000) and 1363 (2001), available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/> (1 July 2004).

³ See the text of the report available at <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/514/79/PDF/N0151479.pdf?OpenElement> (1 October 2004)

and statements on the report available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2001/sc7183.doc.htm> (1 October 2004).

periods –.³⁷ However this approach was never adopted as a comprehensive statement of Council policy because of US opposition.

Angola

The chairing of the Angola sanctions committee by Ambassador Richard Ryan coincided with one of the most dramatic advances in Security Council policy. The UNITA rebel group had fought against the Angola government since the 1970s and had been backed during the Cold War by the US and apartheid South Africa. In the aftermath of UNITA's rejection of a UN-brokered peace plan, the Security Council had imposed sanctions on UNITA in 1997: the sale of weapons and fuel to UNITA and the purchase of Angolan diamonds were banned. The sanctions were, however, widely flouted. In 1999 the Canadian permanent representative, Ambassador Robert R. Fowler, took over the chair of the Angola sanctions committee and adopted a very pro-active approach that involved 'naming and shaming' organisations and individuals who broke the sanctions regime. By January 2001, when Ambassador Ryan of Ireland took the chair, the sanctions were beginning to seriously impact on UNITA's ability to prolong the war.

Ambassador Ryan visited Angola and its neighbours in March and April 2001, to reassure the Angolan government that his chairing of the sanctions committee would not lead to any relaxation in the regime, and to impress upon neighbouring governments that any renewed trafficking would lead to their public condemnation by the Security Council. He also visited a number of Eastern European states in June 2001 who had been exposed as arms suppliers to UNITA during the 1990s. In September 2001 the Angolan sanctions committee agreed an extended list of UNITA officials and family members who were to face travel restrictions, thereby limiting UNITA's propaganda activities and its attempts at securing international financing. The committee also secured the freezing by various national authorities of a number of bank accounts linked to UNITA.

Concerns were expressed by some Council members about the quality of governance within the Angolan government, for example, the IMF estimated that 20 per cent of oil revenues were missing from the national accounts, and this money was desperately needed to fund humanitarian activities. However, this concern never featured in the public comments of the Council. Angola's oil and diamond industries gave it considerable leverage over powerful states and it had strong commercial relationships with the US, Russia, Britain, France and Norway in particular. Ireland and Britain did argue for the Angolan government's own resources to be more fully used for humanitarian purposes, but governance issues were left unmentioned in any Council statements or resolutions.

Starved of resources UNITA began to lose the civil war, and the rebel leadership was eventually surrounded. When UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi was killed by the Angolan army in February 2002 most of the remainder of the leadership lost the will to continue. A ceasefire was signed on 4 April, and in November the government and UNITA reached a broader political agreement and jointly called for the lifting of sanctions. In resolution 1448 on 9 December 2002, the Council ended the sanctions regime against Angola and wound up the sanctions committee with immediate effect.

³⁷Resolution 1390 on al-Qaeda; 1408 on Liberia; 1446 on Sierra Leone.

The Balkans

Ireland's period on the Security Council coincided with a normalisation of relations between the UN and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), including the ending of sanctions that had been imposed under resolution 1160, on 31 March 1998.

Presevo Valley: The beginning of 2001 saw ethnic Albanian armed groups engaged in attacks against Serb civilians and FRY troops in the Presevo Valley in southern Serbia. The extent to which the FRY's relations with the UN had improved was demonstrated when the Council called on NATO to relax its Ground Safety Zone, which had been imposed after the NATO bombing of the region in 1999 to keep the FRY army back from the border with Kosovo. This allowed the FRY, with UN and NATO blessing, to confront armed Albanian groups, effectively ending their campaign. As a balancing measure, the Council also supported moves by Deputy Prime Minister Nebojsa Covic of Serbia to negotiate with the Albanian community.

FYROM: In March 2001 tensions erupted between Slavs and ethnic Albanians in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), in the region of the border with Kosovo. The UN conflict prevention mission (UNPREDEP) had been withdrawn in March 1999 when China vetoed its renewal following FYROM's decision to establish diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Despite this background, on 21 March 2001 the Council, with Chinese support, passed resolution 1345, which stressed support for FYROM's majority Slav government while stressing the need for dialogue between the ethnic communities. Following an upsurge in violence in the republic, the Security Council returned to debating the conflict in June. NATO, at the invitation of the FYROM government, was intending to deploy a mission to oversee weapons disposal as part of the recent Framework Agreement that had been brokered, by the Special Envoys of the EU and the US, between the communities. The Framework Agreement, signed on 13 August 2001, set out a complex agenda including a ceasefire, disarmament and disbandment of the ethnic Albanian armed groups and a series of internal reforms aimed at meeting the demands of the minority Albanian community for autonomy and greater equality in public life.⁴ Ireland argued that the force being deployed should have a UN mandate, even though non-NATO countries would not deploy troops. This position was shared by Germany and to a lesser extent France and Russia. The US and Britain insisted on NATO's right to act independently and initially refused to support any resolution that went further than offering 'support' for the mission. Ultimately, resolution 1371, which was approved on 26 June 2001, went somewhat further in that it incorporated a compromise supported by Ireland: the text of the resolution included the words 'endorse' and 'strongly support', thereby at least implying that the UN Security Council was the body competent to make decisions about deploying such missions.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: The UN mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) was discussed every three months at Council level. In mid 2001 the Secretary-General advised that mission's mandate had been successfully completed and recommended that UNMIBH be withdrawn by the end of 2002. The main component of UNMIBH was the International Police Task Force (IPTF), which was responsible for police training and oversight.⁴⁰ Following discussions between the U and the UN, the EU decided to take over

⁴ Further details and full text are available at <http://www.bndlg.de/~wplarre/back010814.htm> (1 October 2004).

⁴⁰ Details of the mission and its mandate are available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmibh/mandate.html> (1 July 2004).

these policing responsibilities. This marked the steady increase of EU responsibility in the region and the decline of UN interest in Bosnia, in line with President Bush's stated objectives. The EU police mission took over responsibility and UNMIBH was fully withdrawn on 31 December 2002.

Kosovo: Kosovo was discussed at monthly public meetings of the Council during 2001–2 and was the subject of many informal consultations, normally at the instigation of Russia. The final status of Kosovo was dominant in almost all discussions. A Security Council mission, which included Ireland, travelled to the region, in June 2001, following the adoption of the UN brokered Constitutional Framework for provisional self-government in May⁵. On this mission, Ireland explicitly compared the situation in Kosovo with regard to the Constitutional Framework to that in Northern Ireland with the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). Ireland argued that both the GFA and the Constitutional Framework provided for multi-ethnic structures and cross-community power-sharing, without prejudicing the eventual and final constitutional status of the region in question. Ireland was also extremely active on the question of ethnic Albanian political prisoners, many of who had been detained in Serbia for long periods. Ireland raised this issue at every meeting on Kosovo and was often the only country to do so.⁶ Ireland's activism on the Council on this issue was acknowledged by both the UN Secretariat and NGOs when the prisoners were finally released in early 2002.

The gradual establishment of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government occurred during 2002 in Kosovo, but that year was also noteworthy for the gradual shift in the US position from one of outright support for ethnic Albanians, which it had held since the build up to the 1999 bombing of the region, towards the more balanced EU position.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Irish diplomats saw their role on the Council with regard to the DRC as being to seek to balance the alternative perspectives of France (which tended to support the DRC government in Kinshasa) and Britain (which tended to support Uganda and Rwanda).⁷ There was a gradual evolution of the US position during Ireland's term. The new Bush administration did not carry the same sensitivities regarding the Council's failures to intervene during the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the practical result of this was that the administration was not as supportive of the British position. The situation on the ground was incredibly difficult. It is estimated that between 2 million and 3 million civilians died in the DRC between 1998 and 2002, in fighting between the Congolese military and Ugandan- and Rwandan-backed rebels,

⁵ Full text of the Constitutional Framework is available at <http://www.unmikonline.org/constframework.htm> (1 October 2004).

⁶ See records of meetings at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/scact.htm>

⁷ While some of these alliances were long standing, the conflict essentially resulted from the genocide in Rwanda and then developed its own DRC-based dynamic. Britain had close relations with its former colony Uganda, and when the then Ugandan-backed (and generally English-speaking) Rwandan Patriotic Front took power in Rwanda after the genocide Britain developed close links with Rwanda. France, on the other hand, had better relations with the French-speaking government in DRC. France also lost a francophone ally of sorts when the Hutu regime collapsed in Rwanda, and as the new government accused the French of supporting the old regime relations were poor. When the leaders of old Hutu regime who had organised the genocide fled into DRC they were pursued by Rwanda and its then Ugandan allies, who formed alliances mainly based on ethnic-kin groups. Later, tensions between Uganda and Rwanda ended their military alliances.

with the result of the conflict being the de-facto partitioning of the country: the DRC government retained control only in the south-west; Ugandan-backed rebels held sway in the north-west and Rwandan backed forces controlled the north-east.

Following the death of DRC president Laurent Kabila in January 2001 and given the increased dialogue that ensued between the new DRC government and the rebels, the UN saw an opportunity to deploy its peace mission in the country (known as MONUC) more fully to monitor a three pronged peace process—foreign troop withdrawals, inter-Congolese dialogue; and disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, reintegration, and resettlement (or DDRRR).⁴¹ France and Russia sought to prioritise the withdrawal of foreign troops and to de-link the three elements of the process—effectively supporting the DRC government’s position. The British and the Americans were somewhat muted in their reaction , leading to some speculation among others on the Security Council that this was linked to France’s recent softening of its opposition to the US/British call for sanctions in Liberia. Ireland argued that if there was not progress on all three issues—troop withdrawals, dialogue and DDRRR—there would be no progress at all.

The outbreak of violence in June 2002 in Kisangani, a city held by the then Rwandan-backed Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) ,increased the pressure on the Security Council to press for a power-sharing government for the DRC that would be inclusive of all the main factions. Following the deaths of nearly 200 people in Kisangani, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, addressed the Council in private—in ‘informal consultation of the whole’⁸. This briefing was held following pressure from Ireland, and was the first time such a briefing ever happened on a specific country situation.

Agreements between the DRC and Rwanda and between the DRC and Uganda followed in July and September 2002, leading to significant progress on the issue of the withdrawal of foreign troops. The UN Secretary-General then sought an increase in the size of MONUC to 8,700 personnel and a strengthened mandate for the mission. This was supported by all council members (including Ireland), except the US, which eventually agreed to support what became resolution 1445 on 4 December. Approval of this resolution in the Council was followed by an internal Congolese agreement on comprehensive power-sharing on 17 December. However, even then it was obvious that implementation would not be unproblematic.

Burundi

The installation of a transitional power-sharing government in Burundi on 1 November 2001 increased hopes for an eventual ceasefire in the country’s on-going civil war. Ireland was among a number of UNSC members who took the view that President Pierre Buyoya, a member of the minority Tutsi community that has dominated Burundi’s government, army and economy since independence, was obstructing the implementation of the peace process. In particular, more rapid progress was required on involving the majority Hutu community in government and on establishing an all-Burundi ‘Special Protection Unit’. The purpose of this unit was to take over from a transitional South African unit that had been protecting Hutu politicians returning from exile against threats from the Tutsi-dominated security forces. In a

⁴¹There were two Irish Army officers involved with MONUC as observers at this time.

⁸This is a UN procedure, whereby an informal ‘gathering’ of the full Council is held, in private, without constituting a formal meeting and thereby invoking Council procedures including a written record. Further information is available at: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/informal/summary.htm> (2 October 2004).

series of informal Council consultations in late 2001, Ireland pressed for a public statement critical of President Buyoya, but France consistently opposed any such statement. Some progress was made in Burundi during 2002, and a series of ceasefire agreements between most of the rebel groups was signed in October and December. Also in December, the Council adopted a presidential statement calling on the UN to look at how it might offer assistance to Burundi in the implementation of the peace agreements.⁹

Liberia

In January 2001 as Ireland joined the UNSC, the Sierra Leone Panel of Experts¹⁰ Report was being discussed. This report clearly demonstrated that Liberia was supplying arms to the notorious Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel group in Sierra Leone that came to international prominence for its systematic amputation of the limbs of civilians and for its part in a war financed by ‘blood diamonds’. At a Council meeting on 25 January Ireland condemned Liberia’s support for the RUF, and it took the same approach in subsequent discussions on a US–British draft resolution that included a new sanctions regime for Liberia. Resolution 1343, which was passed on 7 March 2001, continued a long standing arms embargo on the country, added a ban on rough diamond imports from Liberia and banned foreign travel by named senior government figures. In further public Council meetings, Ireland supported the continuation of sanctions but also (successfully) called for the humanitarian consequences of proposed additional sanctions measures to be examined before they were introduced. Intensified fighting in Liberia during 2002 between the government and the rebel group known as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) led to renewed efforts in the Council to resolve the conflict and promote national reconciliation. Liberia meanwhile accused its neighbour Guinea of supporting the LURD by means of the provision of arms and *materiel*—a claim broadly supported by the Panel of Experts. Britain and the US, however resisted attempts by Ireland and others to have negative references to LURD included in Council statements.⁴³ This led to suspicions among other Council members that the US and Britain were favourably disposed towards any Guinean attempt to overthrow Liberian president Charles Taylor. Discussion of Guinea’s role in Liberia was also made problematic by Guinea’s election to the Security Council from 1 January 2002.

As a postscript to Ireland’s Security Council role regarding Liberia, a peace agreement in August 2003 and the voluntary exile of President Charles Taylor to Nigeria led to the deployment in Liberia of a UN force (UNMIL) that included 450 Irish troops and to the

⁹Details of this presidential statement, which was adopted on 18 December 2002, are available at <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/748/02/PDF/N0274802.pdf?OpenElement> (3 October 2004).

¹⁰ This panel was appointed under resolution 1306, adopted by the Security Council on 5 July 2000. Its role was to investigate breaches of an earlier Council sanctions resolution (resolution 1171 of 1998). The panel appointed by Kofi Annan was made up of Martin Chungong Ayafor (Cameroon), as chair; Ian Smillie ((Canada), diamond expert); Johan Peleman ((Belgium), expert on arms and transportation); Harjit Singh Sandhu ((India), expert from Interpol); and Atabou Bodian ((Senegal), expert from the International Civil Aviation Organization).

⁴³Details available at <http://www.un.int/ireland/scstatements/sc50.htm> (25 June 2004).

provision of a post-conflict aid programme of approximately €7.5m over three years, from Ireland's development cooperation budget.⁴⁴

Sierra Leone

Ireland's UNSC term saw a number of significant developments in Sierra Leone. The Council passed resolution 1346⁴⁵ in March of 2001, increasing the size of the UN peacekeeping mission (UNAMSIL)⁴⁶ established in 1999 and condemning the RUF. A peace agreement between the government of Sierra Leone and the RUF in May 2001 saw peaceful presidential and parliamentary elections proceed in May 2002, with the participation of candidates from the RUF. The UNAMSIL mission was one of the largest in UN history, involving 17,500 troops, and was ultimately seen to have played a positive role in the country. The main debate in the Council during 2002 was on how it would be downsized before its eventual disbanding. The US and Britain sought a relatively quick downsizing. The Special Representative of the Secretary General, Oluyemi Adeniji of Nigeria, in discussions with the Irish mission asked for sufficient time to allow the sensitisation of the population and for various operational requirements to be fulfilled before UNAMSIL would be disbanded. Ireland supported this position in a contribution to the Council and this approach was ultimately accepted in resolution 1436, on 24 September 2002, which sets out the stages for the withdrawal of UNAMSIL and includes a number of benchmarks to be met, including consideration of the situation in Liberia.

Somalia

In the years following the withdrawal of the UN mission in Somalia in 1995 there was little appetite among either UNSC members or the UN Secretariat to re-visit the situation in that country. The US, understandably, given its experience in 1993 when a decision was taken to withdraw from the UN mission after a number of US soldiers were captured and killed, was particularly cautious. Ireland and Norway were active in seeking to raise the UN's profile in Somalia. As a result of Irish and Norwegian pressure and in the face of opposition from the US, Britain and the Secretariat a number of initiatives were taken. The Council sought to strengthen the moribund arms embargo by appointing a Panel of Experts to report in February 2003. During Ireland presidency of the council in October 2001 Ireland led negotiations on a presidential statement,⁴⁷ which called on the UN Secretariat to work to create conditions for a peace-building mission to Somalia. The Secretary-General was mandated to report to the Council every four months, a fact that in itself raised Somalia's profile to a higher level. British sympathy for the secession of Somaliland became more pronounced during Ireland's term on the Council, but this was counterbalanced by support for the unity and territorial integrity of Somalia by, amongst others, Russia, France, China and Ireland. After the 11 September attacks there were some initial signs of concern by the US that Somalia might be a

⁴⁴For details see <http://www.dci.gov.ie/liberia.asp> and <http://www.military.ie/overseas/africa.htm> (25 June 2004).

⁴⁵The text of the resolution is available at <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/312/19/PDF/N0131219.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed 12 May 2004).

⁴⁶Details of the mission are available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unamsil/> (12 May 2004).

⁴⁷This statement was ultimately released as 2001/30.

haven for terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda. However, as US fears in this regard dissipated fairly quickly during 2002 there was no change in the US reluctance to become involved in the country in any way. Despite the efforts of Ireland and Norway, there was no sign that the UN was any more likely to take a new initiative on Somalia at the end of Ireland's term than there had been at the beginning, and the reluctance of the Secretariat, Britain and the US to make any moves in this regard was as great as ever.

Cyprus

Following Secretary-General Annan's invitation to the leaders of the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot communities to engage in proximity talks in Geneva in January 2001, the Council received regular briefings from the Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Cyprus, Alvaro de Soto. Even though the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktash was generally held to be more responsible for the stalemate that stalled the talks, the Council did not intervene to lay blame. Non-aligned members of the Council sought to use their forum to support the Greek-Cypriot position. Ireland, however did not support these moves not least in an effort to avoid a Turkish-Cypriot walkout from the talks. While further significant progress did not take place until after Ireland left the Council, there was widespread optimism among Council members in late 2002 that the victory of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey's general election would create a new dynamic for change.

East Timor / Timor Leste

Ireland had taken a high profile stance on the issue of East Timor right through the 1990s—as exemplified by the work of Tom Hyland and the Irish East Timor Solidarity Group and by the efforts of then Minister for Foreign Affairs, David Andrews. It was not surprising that the government was keen to continue its interest in the country during its term as a UNSC member. As the situation on the ground in East Timor was hugely improved in 2001 from the crisis that had existed in 1999, there was some pressure to reduce the size of the UN presence there. Ireland and Singapore were the strongest voices on the Council for a significant continuing UN presence in post-independence East Timor. The delegation in New York had planned for a major presidential statement during the Irish presidency of the Council in October 2001. This statement was subsequently adopted on 31 October in a public session chaired by Minister Brian Cowen and attended by Mari Alkatiri, First Minister of the Transitional Government of East Timor, and by the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative, Sergio Vieira de Mello, who was later tragically killed in the attack on the UN offices in Iraq in August 2003.¹¹ This statement supported the Secretary-General, who wished the UN to remain engaged in East Timor at a significant level.

When the Secretary-General published his proposals for a post-independence presence after 20 May 2002 (independence day), it was warmly welcomed by those states, including Ireland, that had argued for a cautious withdrawal and continuing post-independence support. Some of the larger Council members in particular thought that the financial commitment proposed by the Secretary-General was too much. However, none was

¹¹ For full text see <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/614/01/PDF/N0161401.pdf?OpenElement> (2 October 2004).

willing to express this in public and the Council established the UN Mission of Support in East Timor on 17 May 2002.⁴⁸

Thematic Debates

In addition to geographically defined issues, the UNSC occasionally has meetings on thematic issues such as ‘women and peace and security’, ‘small arms’, ‘conflict prevention’, etc. Some of these debates are ‘showpiece debates’ chosen by the delegation holding the presidency for a given month and primarily for a domestic audience in their home country. The debates are often highly routine and rarely productive. The Irish UN mission decided not to hold any such a debate, as their Presidency in October 2001 occurred in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks when the Council was extremely busy.

A second and quite different set of thematic meetings are based on periodic reports from the secretary general on substantive issues. While no such report arose during Ireland’s Presidency there were a number during the two year term. One of the most high profile and useful of these debates was that held on ‘women and security’ as a follow-up to resolution 1325, which had sought to address the particular effects of conflict on women and girls and the particular contribution of women to conflict resolution.⁴⁹ Resolution 1325 had called for a study and a report from the Secretary-General but did not indicate a timescale for the completion of either of these tasks. When it became clear that a report would not be ready for the first anniversary of the adoption of the resolution, Ireland was one of a group of Council members that encouraged the adoption of a supportive presidential Statement; such a statement was ultimately adopted when Brian Cowen chaired the Council on 31 October 2001. A more substantial debate occurred a year later, when the Secretary-General’s report on women in peace and security was discussed. The report’s central proposal was that in order to respond to the particular needs of women in situations of armed conflict, gender perspectives had to be systematically integrated into all peace-support, humanitarian and reconstruction projects. Ireland strongly supported the report and highlighted the independent study completed by the United Nations development fund for women (UNFEM).⁵⁰ A presidential statement was subsequently adopted by the Council, affirming the importance of gender mainstreaming in peace-keeping and post-conflict programmes.⁵¹

Another significant set of thematic meetings were those on conflict prevention. In June 2001 Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented his first report on conflict prevention. This report sought to respond to three sets of concerns expressed by the wider UN membership during the drafting of the report: that conflict prevention would displace development aid; that conflict prevention would create a culture of intervention in sovereign states; and that areas where the General Assembly traditionally held competence—such as in relation to HIV/AIDS, peace-building, etc—would be usurped by the Security Council. Ireland’s presentation to the open debate focused on the complementary relationship between conflict prevention and development, the important role that could be played in relation to such issues by regional organisations and the need to improve the coherence of and capacity

⁴⁸Resolution 1410 established UNMISET. The Security Council also recommended UN membership for the country to the General Assembly on 23 May, and the General Assembly admitted Timor Leste on 26 September 2002.

⁴⁹This resolution had been adopted 31 October 2000. The text of the resolution is available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/> (12 May 2004).

⁵⁰See the report of the open meeting on 28 October 2002 and the statement available at <http://www.un.int/ireland/scstatements/sc86.htm> (12 May 2004).

⁵¹That statement was adopted on 31 October 2002.

for conflict prevention within the UN system.⁵² The problematic nature of the issues raised, however, made practical progress difficult and 14 drafting meetings were required before a follow-up resolution was ultimately agreed in August.⁵³

International Criminal Court

The establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and in particular the US attitude to it, were discussed at Security Council level on a number of occasions during 2001 and 2002. Ireland had signed the treaty establishing the court in 1998 and, following a referendum, ratified it on 11 April 2002. While US concerns about the court were known during the Clinton presidency, it became clear in the early days of the Bush administration that there would be active US opposition to the ICC. The US 'un-signed' the establishing treaty on 6 May 2002, but it failed to stop the court coming into effect on 1 July that year, because the treaty had already been ratified by more than the required sixty states.

When ratification looked imminent, the US stepped up its campaign of opposition to the ICC. During debate on the post-independence UN presence in East Timor, discussed above, the US tried but failed to insert a clause into the resolution dealing with East Timor that would have prohibited the transfer of members of the new UN mission (UNMISSET) to the ICC.⁵⁴ In June it became clear that the US was planning to veto annual renewals of UN peace-keeping operations in order to pressurise the Council to agree an exemption for US citizens from the ICC's mandate. Council members in both informal discussions and in public session⁵⁵ questioned whether the UNSC had any *locus standi*. In effect, in order to intervene, the Council was declaring that the US threat to veto peace-keeping missions was in itself a threat to international security, which justified a 'Chapter VII' resolution under the UN Charter. The US sought to have the Council invoke article 16 of the Rome Statute (which established the ICC), under which the UNSC may request the deferral of an investigation or prosecution by the ICC for a period of up to one year. Again, many Council members argued that article 16 was never intended to be utilized for advance requests for immunity from investigation or prosecution of an entire category of people, but rather was focused on actual and individual cases.

The renewal of the UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first to be affected by the US position, and only three short technical extensions of the mandate kept the mission in place while the crisis over the ICC was resolved.⁵⁶ One resolution on UNMIBH was vetoed by the US during this time.⁵⁷ Ultimately and controversially, resolution 1422 agreed on 12 July 2002 effectively gave the US its exemption from the ICC's mandate. In

⁵²See the proceedings of the open Council meeting held on 21 June 2001, available at <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N01/420/53/PDF/N0142053.pdf?OpenElement> (12 May 2004).

⁵³This became resolution 1366, passed on 30 August 2001.

⁵⁴The resolution on a post-independence presence for the UN in East Timor was ultimately adopted as resolution 1410 on 17 May 2002.

⁵⁵For details of these discussions see <http://www.un.org/apps/news/storyAr.asp?NewsID=4154&Cr=icc&Cr1=&Kw1=international+criminal+court&Kw2=&Kw3> (12 May 2004).

⁵⁶These extensions were agreed in resolutions 1418, 1420 and 1421.

⁵⁷On 30 June 2002, the resolution on UNMIBH proposed by Bulgaria and supported by Ireland was vetoed by the US. See <http://www.un.org/apps/news/storyAr.asp?NewsID=4077&Cr=Bosnia&Cr1=&Kw1=international+criminal+court&Kw2=&Kw3> (12 May 2004).

this resolution, the council asked the ICC not to commence or proceed with a case against a person from a state that is not a party to the Rome Statute without first obtaining Security Council approval. This resolution differed a little from earlier US drafts in that it was not to be automatically extended and included the phrase 'if a case arises' to move it closer to the intent of article 16. However, it is nevertheless a decision in advance of a case and it affects a category of people, not an individual. At the open meeting on 10 July, Ireland had said that the US position was 'not well founded'⁵⁸, that Ireland could not agree to the mechanism that the US sought and that Ireland believed the Rome Statute contained sufficient safeguards to prevent 'politically inspired' prosecutions.⁵⁹ Ireland and Mexico were the last two countries to agree to support the resolution, which was ultimately adopted unanimously two days later. While the UN resolution was condemned by human-rights groups⁶⁰ the controversy did have the effect of raising the profile of the International Criminal Court. Resolution 1422 overcome the deadlock on the UNSC but it did not end US antagonism towards the court and the Americans followed a policy of seeking bilateral agreements with other states to avoid ICC prosecution for war crimes against any US citizen.

PROCESS ISSUES

Ireland and the EU

During Ireland's term on the Council the delegation, along with the other EU Security Council members, Britain and France, provided weekly briefings for all EU members, in implementation of Article 19 of the Treaty on European Union. At Ireland's insistence, this was a much more structured relationship than had previously been the case and was very positively received by EU partners. Germany and Spain who replaced Ireland and Norway on the Council both resolved to continue the process. The two EU permanent Council members also seem to have been persuaded of the merits of the more comprehensive briefing.

Ireland, on joining the Council, placed great priority on the articulation of common EU positions where they existed. It has often been a source of irritation at EU level that there is a gap between then theory of Common Foreign and Security Policy and the position adopted by the two EU permanent members on the UNSC, and especially by Britain. During Ireland's term this gap was clearly visible on issues such as the ICC, Iraq and occasionally the Middle East. The members of the Irish delegation believed that they consistently articulated EU common positions on the Council. However, as the above discussion on substantive issues shows, there were many occasions when no such common policy existed.

⁵⁸Details of Ireland's contribution to the meeting are available at <http://www.un.int/ireland/scstatements/sc82.htm> (accessed 12 May 2004).

⁵⁹See <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N02/469/11/PDF/N0246911.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed 12 May 2004).

⁶⁰For details of this criticism see, for example, <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/icc-index-eng> and <http://www.amnesty.nl/persberichten/NK-PB0088.shtml>, and see <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGIOR510062004> for objection to 2003 renewal.

Relations with NGOs

The Irish delegation devoted considerable time to having a good working relationship with NGOs, especially with the NGO Working Group on Security Council matters. This group of 35 includes major international NGOs such as OXFAM, Médecins Sans Frontiers and Amnesty International. The Irish delegation held nine separate off-the-record meetings with the NGO working group over the 2 years of Ireland's membership of the UNSC, including two meetings in which Minister Cowen participated. The NGOs **acknowledged to the Irish delegation** that such access and structured discussion between NGOs and a Council member was unprecedented and was warmly welcomed. Ireland was also a supporter of Arria Formula meetings in advance of open Security Council discussions—especially on thematic issues.⁶¹ These informal discussions provide an opportunity for civil society organisations to make a case to the combined Council members.

OTHER STRUCTURED RELATIONS

In fulfilment of a promise made during Ireland's campaign for UNSC membership, the Irish permanent representative, Ambassador Richard Ryan, organised an extensive set of briefings/meetings with non-Council member states. Typically these involved working lunches with around 15 other representatives, and each delegation had three or four such meetings. This type of engagement with non-Council members was unprecedented in the UN system and was widely welcomed.

Ireland also sought to initiate closer cooperation between the 'elected ten' members on the Council. There was no possibility of a united bloc being formed given the diversity of states involved. Also, tactically the five permanent UNSC member states would have been likely to react defensively to such an attempt. However, Ireland did initiate monthly meetings of the permanent representatives of the 'elected ten', which has now become a reasonably routine practice. While the political impact of such meetings is limited, the practice did, for example, provide a means of exchanging information for many states with small diplomatic services, and it certainly played some role in maintaining a cohesive position on Western Sahara in the face of pressure from the permanent members.

Co-operation with ECOSOC

While the ongoing political crisis in Guinea-Bissau rarely featured in international headlines, its political and economic problems were the subject of a novel institutional development during Ireland's Council term. The Council agreed that Guinea-Bissau was an appropriate area for cooperation between the Security Council and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The Council established a working group on conflict prevention and resolution in Africa in March 2002, under the chair of Ambassador Jagdish Koonjul of Mauritius. Ireland was a strong supporter of the working group. In a Council briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, David Stephen, Ireland argued that peace-building needed a strong economic foundation and that while the authorities in Guinea-Bissau had their own responsibilities, the Bretton Woods institutions had to be sufficiently flexible in their dealing with the country so as to reinforce efforts at national reconciliation.⁶² ECOSOC

⁶¹For background information on the Arria Formula see <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/mtgsetc/arria.htm> (25 May 2004).

⁶²This briefing was given in a closed meeting on 8 July 2002. For the communiqué issued following the meeting see <http://ods-dds->

was also supportive of this new institutional cooperation, and it was hoped that this might add to pressure on various international institutions to acknowledge and address the links between conflict and underlying social and economic situations.⁶³

Relations with Troop Contributing Countries

The Security Council held a number of discussions in January 2001 about ways to improve relations between the Council and Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), and in particular with those TCCs that provide ‘formed units’, which included Ireland.⁶⁴ The Council decided to establish a working group to look at the issues involved.⁶⁵ Ireland was very supportive of this process, especially as the country is effectively a ‘permanent’ TCC even though it is a ‘non-permanent’ Security Council member. The five permanent UNSC members were all opposed to any significant change in relations. The first Council decisions, outlined in resolution 1353¹², set out some principles for guiding relations, but these were rejected by most TCCs as inadequate. Ireland continued to press the issues, especially during its presidency of the Council in October 2001. Eventually the permanent members, and last of all the US, modified their position and agreed to a new mechanism for structured inputs by TCCs into the Council.⁶⁶ Whereas it did not go as far as they wished, most TCCs welcomed this new mechanism as an improved arrangement.

CONCLUSION

Three key questions can be asked of Ireland’s record on the Security Council during 2001–2. To what extent did Ireland follow a common EU policy; to what extent was the Irish delegation influenced by the country’s perceived economic dependence on the US; and, more broadly, does an analysis of Ireland’s performance suggest that small states can play a meaningful role on the UNSC?

On the first question, in broad terms it is difficult to separate Ireland’s foreign policy from that of the EU’s common foreign and security policy, in which Ireland plays a full role. National foreign policy-making now takes place so strongly within an EU framework that as Tonra noted the ‘external element of’ the EU had effectively been internalised with the

ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/463/35/PDF/N0246335.pdf?OpenElement (2 October 2004).

⁶³For a general statement of Irish policy in regard to cooperation between the UN and Central Africa in maintaining peace and security see

<http://www.un.int/ireland/scstatements/sc93.htm> (15 May 2004).

⁶⁴See, for example, details of the meeting of 16 January 2001, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/> (15 May 2004).

⁶⁵Details regarding this decision are available at <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/234/27/PDF/N0123427.pdf?OpenElement> (15 May 2004).

¹²This resolution was passed on 13 June 2001. The full text is available at <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/409/44/PDF/N0140944.pdf?OpenElement> (2 October 2004).

⁶⁶This was agreed in Council decision S/2001/56. Details are available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/> (15 May 2004).

national policy-making of the three small states in his study.⁶⁷ However, many of the issues that came before the Security Council during Ireland's period of membership were ones on which the EU did not have a common position and indeed on which the EU member states were clearly divided. Irish diplomats believe that they never voted against a common EU position, but from some of the specifics in Iraq and the Middle East to issues related to Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Western Sahara, Liberia and Sierra Leone the EU did not have a clear policy and Britain and France (the only other EU members on the Council at this time) followed their own, often differing, agendas leaving Ireland to also develop its own policy. As a result there is little evidence that Ireland was pressurised by its EU membership to take a particular stance on the controversial issues it confronted. This may, however, change over time as the common foreign and security policy becomes more effective and cohesive.

Ireland was regarded as a 'good European' by other EU member states while on the Council, primarily because the Irish delegation regularly briefed other EU states that were not on the Council and because the delegation was open to bilateral approaches for briefings from other EU members. Despite the provisions of the Treaty on European Union, this was, to say the least, not common practice and was certainly not something done by Britain and France. This, rather than issues of high politics, was the most notable impact of Ireland's EU obligations on its performance on the UNSC .

On the second question of US influence on Irish foreign policy, although Ireland worked within the constraints of the UN system, Irish diplomats certainly did not adopt a position of general support for US foreign policy. Ireland, in common with the wider international community, was strongly supportive of the US in the post-11 September 2001 period. This can be seen most clearly in activity on the UNSC in late 2001, during debates on Afghanistan and in the discussions on the Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC). Even in regard to these matters, however, there were some minor issues of conflict between Ireland and the US. For example, Ireland was part of the group that pressurised the US and Britain to brief the Council immediately after they started their attack on Afghanistan. The US had simply wanted to write to the Council saying it was invoking its right of self-defence. Ireland also sought (unsuccessfully) to institutionalise a human-rights perspective within the work of the CTC.

Ireland did, on many occasions, clearly oppose US policy on significant issues of importance to America, such as:

- Palestine, on many occasions
- sanctions against Iraq, the application of sanctions against al-Qaeda and on whether a second resolution was required to attack Iraq.

On other less high-profile but nonetheless important issues, Ireland publicly and regularly opposed US policy. Such issues included:

- seeking to re-engage the UN in Somalia;
- the US attempt to alter UN policy on Western Sahara;
- and the effort in January 2001 to end the arms embargo on Ethiopia and Eritrea.
- In the wider debate on sanctions regimes in general, Ireland argued for specific time limits to be imposed for sanctions. This stance was in opposition to that taken by the US, which, mindful of its policy on sanctions in Iraq, sought to avoid such a definitive UN policy.

In addition, Ireland, with limited impact, sought to apply a UN mandate to the NATO operation in FYROM, against US and British arguments. It also unsuccessfully sought to

⁶⁷Tonra, *The Europeanisation of national foreign policy*, 285.

criticise the LURD group in Liberia, but it did help ensure a larger UN operation in Timor Leste against the wishes of the permanent UNSC members. Whereas Ireland eventually voted for the resolution that gave the US an effective exemption from the operation of the International Criminal Court, it was, with Mexico, one of the two last countries to agree to do so.

Thus, Ireland's performance on the UNSC during 2001 and 2002 is remarkable for the number of times the Irish delegation disagreed with the world's most powerful state. In this arena at least, Irish diplomats displayed a relatively consistent support for multilateralism, for the UN system and for a humanitarian and human-rights based approach to international relations. However, Ireland's term ended just before the US decision to invade Iraq became irreversible. If Ireland had been on the Council at the time that happened, it would have found itself under much more pressure to conform to the US position than on any other issue with which the Council had dealt over the previous two years.

On the final question of the potential for small states to have an impact on the Council the evidence is unclear. Ireland took a tactical decision not to use the Council as a platform to raise issues on which it had no hope of making progress. This was done in an effort to focus resources, but it does mean that Ireland's actions on the Council are not a complete reflection of Irish foreign-policy concerns. Anglo-Irish relations, or issues related to the Northern Ireland conflict, for example, were never raised in the UNSC. Ambassador Ryan, in describing the delegation's approach said 'Diplomacy is the art of the possible. We don't bring any high-flying notions to the council, and we have no colonial baggage or agenda that the Government needs to assert'.⁶⁸

The Irish delegation seems to have decided not to vote against a resolution, simply to make a gesture, if that resolution was clearly going to pass. RESTORENo resolution, therefore, was passed during the two-year term that Ireland did not support. This position seems to have been adopted to avoid being isolated on any given issue and in a bid to strengthen the Irish delegation's capacity to build coalitions of supporters on priority issues where the outcome was open. Such coalitions varied from issue to issue, and therefore all Council members were potential allies on some topic. Inevitably there were issues on which Ireland was outspoken but not successful in shifting the Council. For example:

- on Palestine when the US used its veto;
- on pre-war Iraq sanctions where Ireland (in the company of France and Russia, it must be said) failed to achieve any significant humanitarian relaxation of the sanctions;
- on the ICC, where Ireland backed down on its opposition to an exemption for the US.;
- on the attempt to achieve the institutionalisation of human rights within the work of the Counter Terrorism Committee;
- on the effort to bring the NATO mission in FYROM under a UN mandate; and in seeking to re-engage the UN in Somalia.

Given the nature of the informal consultation process that takes place around Security Council decisions, it is difficult to isolate Ireland's contribution to individual resolutions or to a successful move to block a resolution. Due to the way in which the voting rule of the Council operates, Ireland was part of a group of at least nine states for any resolution that passed (or that was vetoed), and part of a group of at least seven for any resolution successfully resisted. Nonetheless, from the public record it is clear that there are a number of

⁶⁸Deaglán de Breadún, 'Irish UN delegation is small, but it focuses on the big issues', *Irish Times*, 5 May 2001.

occasions when Ireland, in alliance with other smaller states, did have a meaningful, even decisive impact on the council:

- In the successful effort to prevent the early lifting of the arms embargo on Ethiopia and Eritrea, Ireland was crucial to consolidating the position of the other new Council members—all of which were relatively small states.
- On Palestine, Ireland was part of a group that clearly tipped the balance on the Council towards support for Palestinian statehood. It was this bloc of nine, which included Ireland, that was not open to US pressure on this issue in ‘informal consultations’ and that was willing to support motions favouring the Palestinian position, which forced the US to either constantly use its veto in public session or to modify its position—as happened in March and April 2002.
- On Western Sahara Ireland was clearly regarded as one of the lead states in upholding the rights of the Sahroai people to self-determination (as enshrined in previous UN resolutions) and in successfully resisting the efforts of the US, Britain and France to shift the UN towards effective support for the Moroccan position.
- On Sierra Leone and Timor Leste, Ireland and others strengthened UN engagement against cost-cutting pressures from the five permanent UNSC members.

Ireland’s record during its two years on the Council is overwhelmingly one of support for the UN system and for multilateralism. In this regard, Ireland acts in accordance with Keohane’s predictions. However, Ireland’s interventions were not those of a state seeking to strengthen its own autonomy. Neither did Ireland prominently advance its own narrow national interests on the Council. There is certainly no evidence that the Irish delegation felt constrained not to oppose US foreign policy because of Ireland’s economic position. Neither is there any evidence of undue pressure due to EU obligations. Ireland’s interventions were often made in areas in keeping with its declared support for a liberal multilateral world order and where its position had no other motivation based on national interests. Over the two years, therefore, Ireland’s diplomatic team can be said to have made a difference.