

# The place of the United Nations in contemporary Irish foreign policy

Eileen Connolly and John Doyle

Centre for International Studies, School of Law and Government  
Dublin City University

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During the past decade, even with an increased emphasis on EU integration, the United Nations has retained a central place in Irish foreign policy. Both political discourse and public opinion polls indicate widespread support for the organisation as a source of international legitimacy and as the appropriate forum to make major decisions regarding peace and security; international human rights; and development. This support draws from both the idea that the UN provides the most suitable forum and safeguards for a small state in the international system and also from the identification of the ethical basis of Irish foreign policy with the founding principles of the UN. For the public at large the aspect of Ireland's engagement with the UN which has the highest profile is that of service by the Irish Army on UN peacekeeping missions. Acknowledging this An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern's speech to the 2005 UN summit began with the statement that "We have always placed the UN at the very centre of our foreign policy. Many Irish soldiers have served under the blue flag, and some have sacrificed their lives in that noble service."<sup>1</sup> In addition, a significant number of Irish people have direct personal experience of working with the UN system through involvement with UN humanitarian agencies and with non-governmental organisations working with, or funded by, UN agencies. The high level of legitimacy enjoyed by the UN in Irish society is indicated by its high profile use by campaigners for a no vote in referenda on alterations to EU treaties in 2001 and 2002. Here campaigners contrasted their perspective of the future of European security arrangements with 'traditional' UN operations - most graphically captured by the poster during the referendum on the Nice Treaty that starkly said 'Hello NATO, good-bye UN'.<sup>2</sup>

Looking beyond the rhetoric this chapter examines the position of the United Nations in contemporary Irish foreign policy. It starts with a brief examination of the first White Paper on foreign policy in the history of the state, published in 1996. This paper indicates tensions between different policy objectives and also clearly establishes the priority areas of foreign policy. These four areas - peacekeeping; disarmament; human rights; and development are then examined in turn<sup>3</sup>. To

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<sup>1</sup> Speech by the Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D. at the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday, 14 Sept. 2005. <http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/index.asp?locID=200&docID=2157>

<sup>2</sup> The first (defeated) referendum was held on 9 June 2001; the second referendum, which was passed, was held on 19 Oct 2002.

<sup>3</sup> The White Paper on Foreign Policy: Challenges And Opportunities Abroad, <http://www.dfa.ie/information/publications/whitepaper/default.asp>, para 5.8.

The continued relevance of these four areas is indicated by the fact they are the only sub-headings used for policy on the website of the Irish Mission to the UN also see, for example, the speech by the Taoiseach, 14 Sept 2005. <http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/index.asp?locID=200&docID=2157> or address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ireland, Mr. Brian Cowen, T.D., to the 59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 23 Sept 2004, New York

analysis in more detail how Irish foreign policy works out in practise the chapter will then examine Ireland's record on the security council during its term of 2001-2002.

### **Tensions in Irish Foreign policy**

In the 1996 Government White paper on Foreign Policy, which remains the states primary foreign policy document, the UN is described as 'a cornerstone of Irish foreign policy since we joined the Organisation on 14 December 1955'<sup>4</sup>. In doing this it expressed support for the UN in the context of the values that underlie Ireland's foreign policy. The White paper clearly reflects the wider public perception of the ethics underlying Irelands foreign policy, it argues

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 the Constitution for the conduct of international relations -

- the ideal of peace and friendly co-operation amongst nations founded on international justice and morality;
- the principle of the pacific settlement of international disputes by international arbitration or judicial determination; and
- the principles of international law as our rule of conduct in our relations with other states.<sup>5</sup>

In making this statement it is clearly aligning Ireland with the fundamental principles of the UN. The White Paper also discusses the way in which the government believes that these higher aspirations are essential to the self interest of small states, in that they form the basis of an international system in which small states can best function as economic and political units. This is reflected in the assertion that

It is precisely because Ireland is small and hugely dependent on external trade for its well-being that we need an active foreign policy. Ireland does not have the luxury of deciding whether or not to pursue a policy of external engagement. We do not have a sufficiently large domestic market or adequate natural resources to enable our economy to thrive in isolation. We depend for our survival on a regulated international environment in which the rights and interests of even the smallest are guaranteed and protected.<sup>6</sup>

The argument that there is a conflict between the ethical basis of Irish foreign policy as expressed by its support for the UN and Irish economic interests has been dismissed strongly by the Government in recent years. For example former Minister for Foreign Affairs Brian Cowen has 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 according to 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

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<http://www.dfa.ie/information/display.asp?ID=1587>

<sup>4</sup> White Paper, para. 5.7.

<sup>5</sup> White Paper, para. 2.40.

<sup>6</sup> White Paper, para. 2.37.

principle.<sup>7</sup> In this he reflects the view of Robert Keohane who 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.<sup>8</sup>

Although the overarching relationship between self interest and ideals in foreign policy may not be in conflict the relationship is not always one of coincidence: it also involves tensions when the pursuit of the economic self interest of the state comes into conflict with its ethical foreign policy stance. Minister Cowen's argument could be seen as an attempt to deflect criticism which surrounded foreign policy decisions which appeared to be based on narrow economic self interest. Two recent examples of this tension have been seen in the stance of the Irish government on the invasion of Iraq and also the position they have taken on agricultural subsidies to Irish farmers. The policy on Iraq which was critical of US plans to invade the country was muted by consideration of the importance of US investment for the Irish economy.<sup>9</sup> While the relatively good international reputation Ireland enjoys on development policy has been undermined by its strong protectionist stand on the question of EU subsidies for trade in agricultural products.<sup>10</sup>

The White Paper also discusses reform of the UN system and the role it should play into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It expressed support for an enlargement and reform of the Security Council and support for General Assembly reforms to enable it to play a more important role in building international consensus on key issues.<sup>11</sup> On peace and security it supported the maintenance of 'the UN's capacity to deter aggression, including if necessary through enforcement action under Chapter VII of the Charter' but sought a greater focus on 'developing the UN's capability in relation to conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-making'.<sup>12</sup> This position was continued in the build up to the 2005 UN Summit.<sup>13</sup> Ireland's credibility on these issues was confirmed by the appointment of Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern as one of just four special envoys of Secretary General Annan to promote UN reform in advance of the summit.

The White Papers four priority areas of interest for Irish foreign policy – peacekeeping, disarmament, human rights and development – are now examined in the light of the tensions that exist between the desire of the Irish state for a 'multilateral rules based international order' and the pressures of realpolitik that they face.

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<sup>7</sup> Brian Cowen, 'Challenges to liberal internationalism', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 12 (2001), 1–5: 2.

<sup>8</sup> Keohane, 'Lilliputians' dilemmas: small states in international politics', *International Organization* 23(2) (1969), 291–310, p297.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, *Sunday Times* (London), 23 February 2003; *Business and Finance*, 13 February 2003.

<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of Foreign policy in an Irish general election campaign 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.

<sup>11</sup> White Paper, para. 5.47.

<sup>12</sup> White Paper, para. 5.28.

<sup>13</sup> See for example press release fro Minister Ahern, 21 Mar 2005  
<http://www.dfa.ie/information/display.asp?ID=1719>

## Peacekeeping and the challenge of EU security

Ireland has been a very significant contributor to UN peace support operations – in particular peacekeeping. Indeed given the comparatively small size of the Irish army that contribution has been remarkable. In August 2005 for example, only Poland within the EU (or indeed OECD) had more troops deployed on peacekeeping missions worldwide than Ireland.<sup>14</sup> Ireland's deployments have not followed the pattern of other developed states. In Africa – where many of the current large peacekeeping operations are deployed, the UN has had great difficulty getting commitments from developed states to provide troops. There are now almost no European or North American troops on the African continent in the major missions under UN command. Only in Liberia where Ireland provides 426 troops and Sweden provides just over 200 are there any significant numbers of troops from developed states.<sup>15</sup> Although this reflects the regionalisation of peacekeeping to some extent, that policy is also a reflection of the failure of developed states to commit resources to peacekeeping operations.

In December 2004, 771 troops from the Irish army were deployed internationally. This included 428 in Liberia, 45 on other UN duties, 208 under KFOR command but with a UN mandate in Kosovo and 53 with EUFOR in Bosnia again with a UN mandate. None of these missions were in arenas where Ireland could be said to have a narrow economic or trade interests, but engagement of this type does boost Ireland's international standing. There are two key questions that need to be addressed on the future development of Ireland's peacekeeping role - firstly, could Ireland do more and secondly, how will the current developments in EU security and defence policy impact on Ireland's commitments in this area?

On the first issue, it is unlikely that Ireland could significantly increase the numbers of troops on UN duty unless there was an increase in the overall size of the defence forces. Keeping 800 troops abroad in effect means having another 800 in training getting ready to replace them and typically means 800 have just returned home – an effective commitment of 2400. With only 8500 soldiers in the Irish Army, that is a relatively high proportion by current international standards, given other commitments for security, training etc. There is an ongoing debate about the nature of modern military training and deployment and widespread agreement that European armies are relatively inflexible and immobile. In particular, in Ireland there is a political reluctance to consolidate the army into a much smaller number of barracks which greatly reduces the capacity for large scale training and is a drain on resources with no military rationale. One effect of the maintenance of the current number of barracks is a reduction in the number of troops available for international duty. If the government wishes to increase Ireland's commitment to peacekeeping that will in reality require an increase in the size of the defence forces or a decision to close small barracks.

The question of the development of EU security and defence policy is a more complex issue. The current commitment of a maximum of 850 troops to international duty covers both the emerging EU capabilities and the UN. The Irish army could not

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/> More generally there have been over 50,000 tours of duty, primarily by the Irish military, but in recent years also including members of an Garda Síochána

<sup>15</sup> Other large UN missions which Ireland has been involved in since the mid 1990s have included: the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). Feb 00 to May 02 Irish commitment over that time: 181; UN Mission Ethiopia / Eritrea (UNMEE). Nov 01 to Jun 03 total Irish commitment: 630.

sustain two separate deployments at that level if they were requested simultaneously. On one level there is a fear among some commentators that the pressure from EU partners to build an effective EU military capacity will lead inevitably to a reduced availability of Irish soldiers for UN duty.<sup>16</sup> Given the reluctance of most EU states to serve under UN command or to serve in Africa this might lead to a significant change in Irish practice. If the EU decides to engage in a UN mandated military mission there would be considerable pressure on Ireland to participate to demonstrate our support for an important EU development and inevitably this means fewer troops are available for other UN commanded operations.

On the other hand it is possible that if the EU were to develop a military capacity of its own to carry out significant peace support operations then this would offer the United Nations a resource which it does not currently have. States not currently participating at significant levels in UN peacekeeping might then feel more pressure to participate (and pay for) a EU led operation.

For the Irish public (and internationally) it is unlikely that the EU can have the legitimacy which the UN possesses as a near universal organisation of states. Given the previous colonial relationships of many European states with the global south and the growing gap of wealth between the global North and South it will be very difficult for the EU to build the level of acceptability that the UN possesses. EU led missions will inevitably take place in a context of unequal power relationships and with suspicions that the EU is seeking to develop military muscle to match its economic power.

At present there are a very limited range of operations carried out under European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and a judgement on the pressures they create for Ireland's traditional foreign policy priorities can only be tentative. The range of early activity has been in keeping with Irish foreign policy goals. Ireland was particularly keen to see the civilian aspects of ESDP given a central role, given domestic concerns around issues of neutrality and the high levels of public opposition to the US invasion of Iraq. In this regard, ESDP has had a range of activity other than purely military. In fact, at present there is just one significant military operation (of 7000 troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina), three policing missions (FYR Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and DRC), one on security sector reform (DRC), one on judicial system reform (Iraq) and a post peace agreement civilian monitoring mission in Aceh, just beginning at time of writing.

So far there has been no tension between EU and UN responsibilities or authority. While Ireland was unable to take part in the first ESDP military mission in Macedonia as it did not have the UN mandate required by Irish law, this was a largely technical issue due to a threatened veto by China because of Macedonia's diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. There was certainly nothing in the character of the mission which would have raised fears of an adverse public reaction in Ireland.

The second ESDP military operation 'Artemis' in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was essentially a French led affair but it had a UN mandate and involved much greater EU-UN cooperation. While there was clearly contact between the UN Secretariat and the French before a formal request for assistance was made, even allowing for that, an EU decision was made within a week of the UN request and enabling troops were on the ground within days – leading to the rapid

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<sup>16</sup> e.g. Andy Storey. *The Treaty of Nice, NATO and a European Army: Implications for Ireland*, Afri Position Paper No. 3, 2001. This was also the view expressed by the Green Party (<http://www.greenparty.ie/>) and by Sinn Féin (<http://www.sinnfein.ie>).

deployment of about 1800 troops. The Irish Army Ranger wing was offered to the French Force commander in the Congo but the offer was not taken up. There was structured cooperation with the wider UN Mission in the Congo and the Force having stabilising a potentially dangerous situation in one locality, handed over to a UN operation. This was clearly a limited operation even in the context of the ongoing crisis in the DRC. Nonetheless it played a crucial role at a potentially difficult time and was a practical example of how well trained and well resourced EU troops can play a role within a wider UN context. It led to a memorandum of understanding between the EU and UN on future co-operation in crisis management.<sup>17</sup> This idea was developed during the Irish Presidency of the EU in 2004 when the Irish military authorities hosted a seminar on EU-UN cooperation in peacekeeping, with speakers including Jean-Marie Guéhenno, UN Under-Secretary-General, Department of Peacekeeping and Major-General B. Neveux, Former EU Operations Commander in Operation Artemis.<sup>18</sup>

The positive relationship between the EU and the UN in the early ESDP operations took place in relatively benign environments and they were limited in scale. There are some suggestions that ESDP decisions in the counter-terrorism arena since the publication of the EU Security Strategy in 2003<sup>19</sup> have taken a rather narrower view and have stressed the criminal justice, border security, intelligence and military aspects over long term commitments to dealing with the underlying causes of insecurity identified in that strategy document such as poverty and underdevelopment.<sup>20</sup> If a narrow view of security based on border controls, military force and economic power dominates ESDP in practice Ireland could find real tension emerging between ESDP activity and traditional commitments to a broader view of security.

At present Ireland remains clear in its broad commitment to the United Nations as the legitimate organisation responsible for international peace and security. It seeks not only to defend but expand the UN's role in that area. As part of the deliberation for the 2005 UN Summit in New York Ireland strongly supported the strengthening of the UN's right and responsibility to intervene and welcomed the agreement to establish a Peacebuilding Commission. Given the strength of Irish public opinion on this issue it is likely that government support for ESDP missions will remain within the framework of UN mandates.

## **Disarmament**

Since joining the United Nations Ireland has had a public commitment to disarmament and in particular nuclear disarmament. However this is clearly an area where international progress has been very limited and where a small non-nuclear state has little leverage.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://ue.eu.int/showPage.asp?id=606&lang=en>

<sup>18</sup> *Synergy between the UN and EU Military Crisis Management*, Irish Defence Forces Publication, 2004

<sup>19</sup> *A Secure Europe in a Better World, the European Union Security Strategy* agreed by the European Council on 12 Dec. 2003.

<sup>20</sup> John Doyle. *Analysing the causes of "international terrorism": situating European Security and Defence Policy 2004-2005*. Working paper in International Studies, Centre for International Studies Dublin City University, 2005

Apart from discussion on nuclear weapons, landmines have been the object of a strong international campaign. In 1997, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (1997 Mine Ban Treaty) came into force and Ireland signed and ratify the convention on the first day.<sup>21</sup> As Ireland only possessed 130 mines in 1997 – for purely training purposes –this was a symbolic decision – designed to maximise political pressure.

Ireland was admitted to the Conference on Disarmament (Geneva) in 1999, most likely in response to the particular initiative taken the previous year when Ireland supported the Joint Declaration by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden “Towards A Nuclear-Weapons-Free World: The Need For A New Agenda”.<sup>22</sup> That declaration called for new initiatives on disarmament – including a commitment in principle by nuclear capable states to disarm, support for a comprehensive test ban treaty, a ban on fissile material, short-term de-escalation measures such as de-alerting and deactivating weapons and by the removal of non-strategic weapons. Based on this Ireland was one of the sponsors of a resolution at the Conference on Disarmament (Geneva) which was passed with 90 positive votes, 13 against and 37 abstentions (which included most NATO members). The resolution was brought to the UN General Assembly First Committee (disarmament) in November 1998 and again passed with most NATO members abstaining. However without NATO support the resulting progress as a result of the resolution was very limited.

During Ireland's two year period on the Security Council there were no initiatives on disarmament – as the permanent five were under no particular pressure to do so and would have blocked any initiative. There was a Irish contribution to an open meeting of the security council on small arms following the July 2001 UN conference on the illicit trade in small arms however there was no decisions requiring action taken at the meeting and no evidence of any follow up.<sup>23</sup>

This general lack of progress on disarmament was reflected in the immediate reaction to the UN summit of September 2005 when Minister for Foreign Affairs Dermot Ahern in his only negative comment said “I share in particular the Secretary-General's disappointment that it contains nothing on disarmament and non-proliferation, nor on the need to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.”<sup>24</sup> Therefore while the public commitment to disarmament has been maintained over recent years, there has been limited room for practical action and limited results.

## **Development and the role of the UN in generating consensus**

In a world with a growing emphasis on security the UN plays a key role in building an international consensus on development and utilises its position to secure stronger commitments from the developed world on aid, trade and debt relief. Both in terms of the level of its aid spending and the wider context of its overall policy on aid, Ireland has been closely tied to the UN system. The bulk of Irish development aid goes to its

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.icbl.org/tools/databases/country/ireland>

<sup>22</sup> see statement of 9 June 1998 <http://www.dfa.ie/policy/nuclearfreeworld.asp>

<sup>23</sup> security council meeting 2 Aug. 2001. for report see <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/scact2001.htm>

<sup>24</sup> Press Release 14 Sept. 2005 Dermot Ahern (New York) . text on [http://www.dfa.ie/Press\\_Releases/20050914/1839.htm](http://www.dfa.ie/Press_Releases/20050914/1839.htm)

priority programme countries, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa, and to supporting the work of Irish development NGOs. As the development cooperation budget has grown in recent years the size of the contributions to the UN agencies has grown both in absolute and in percentage terms and is now larger than the contribution to the EU development programme. In 2004 approximately €66 million was contributed to UN agencies, representing 13.5% of the overall aid budget and a 50% increase since 2002. Following a “peer review” of Ireland’s development cooperation programme by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 1999<sup>25</sup> and the subsequent Ireland Aid Review,<sup>26</sup> Ireland decided to target contributions to the UN to a much smaller number of agencies. It had funded 39 separate UN agencies in 1999 but decided to focus its contributions on a more limited number thereafter. The criteria for selection included fit with DCI’s own programmes and a focus on poverty alleviation. While some small contributions continue, spending is now more focused. Among the larger contributions in 2004, UNDP received €12.9m, UNICEF €8.5m, UNHCR €7m, WFP €2.9m, UNFPA €2.5m, WHO €2.9m, UNHCHR €2.5m and UNAIDS €2.3m.<sup>27</sup> These eight agencies therefore receive a total of €41.5m – nearly two thirds of the overall contribution to the UN.

In addition to increasing its development aid budget Ireland has been a strong supporter of the UN’s single most important initiative in the development arena - the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000. The actual goals originated in a 1996 OECD report,<sup>28</sup> but came to public prominence when the ‘Millennium Summit’, held in New York in September 2000 adopted a Declaration committing the member states to their achievement by 2015.<sup>29</sup> While they have been criticised for their limited vision the success of the MDGs has been their capacity to re-engage the governments of the Global North on issues of development and to offer a simple message to the public to mobilise support thereby ensuring government action.<sup>30</sup> In this regard the strength of the United Nations is clear, as even though there was nothing new in the MDGs they could be presented as a legitimate, universal set of principles around which pressure for reform could be build. So, although opinion polls show a low level of awareness on the actual ‘goals’ themselves,<sup>31</sup> there is very strong support for the policy principles contained within them. McDonnell and Solignac Lecomte suggest that because the campaigning has focused on the broad issues and not the “goals” per se the impact of the profile give to the MDGs by the UN is most visible in the high levels of support for increased aid, fair trade and debt cancellation within the EU and Canada.<sup>32</sup>

Ireland has given the Goals and in particular Goal 8 which focuses on the responsibilities of developed states, a central place in its development policy. The

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<sup>25</sup> OECD *Development Cooperation Review Series: Ireland*, no. 35. Paris, OECD, 1999.

<sup>26</sup> Report of the Ireland Aid Review committee, Dept of Foreign Affairs, 2002.

<sup>27</sup> For further details and a comprehensive annual commentary on Ireland’s ODA see Helen O Neill *Ireland Foreign Aid in 2004*, *Irish Studies in International affairs*, vol. 16 2005 (and see previous volumes for each year back to 1979).

<sup>28</sup> OECD DAC *Shaping the Twenty-First Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation*. Paris: OECD, 1996.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

<sup>30</sup> For a supportive but critical review see Lorna Gold *More than a Numbers Game? Ensuring that the Millennium Development Goals address Structural Injustice* Trócaire 2005

<sup>31</sup> Ida Mc Donnell and Henri-Bernard Solignac Lecomte *Policy Insights No.13: MDGs, Taxpayers and Aid Effectiveness*. Paris: OECD, 2005.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid* poll figures taken from Special Euro barometer Wave 62.2 TNS Opinion & Social, 2005, Attitudes towards Development Aid, Brussels; and Focus Canada, Environics Research Group (2004), Canadian Attitudes toward Development Assistance, Ottawa.

development cooperation agency of the department of Foreign Affairs, Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI), states:

The overarching objective of Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI) is the reduction of poverty, inequality and exclusion in developing countries. ... The eight Millennium Development Goals, agreed by the UN at a series of international summit meetings, identify some of the main causes of extreme poverty in today's world and underpin the poverty reduction policies and activities of Development Cooperation Ireland ... The Millennium Development Goals, and the specific targets set to enable their achievement to be measured, provide the context in which DCI priority sectors are decided.<sup>33</sup>

The MDGs in Goal Eight specify a number of areas for action by developed states – chief among them action on debt cancellation, increases in official aid and progress on reform of the world trade system to make it fairer for poor and developing states. Ireland has supported calls for debt cancellation for many years. Irish aid however is given as untied grants, therefore the Government did not have any debts to cancel which made it easy for them to be on the side of the angels on this issue and reduced their leverage on those countries who needed to act. On trade issues the main policy contradiction for Ireland is around the question of export subsidies for agriculture – strongly supported by Irish agricultural interests but seen as unfair dumping in developing states. There is a growing acceptance that further cuts in subsidies will inevitably take place, but Ireland has strongly resisted any attempt to reopen the current agreed set of agricultural reforms due to be implemented in stages up to 2013.<sup>34</sup> One change that is marked in the Irish context is that the policy of agricultural supports which was considered a domestic/EU issue is now also discussed in terms of its impact on the developing world. However given the indirect manner in which Ireland participates in world trade talks, (as the Commission takes the lead for the entire EU), and the absence of any debts due by developing countries, it is the level of development aid that was the key focus of domestic debate on the MDGs.

The focus on aid was signalled by both the Taoiseach and Foreign Minister Brian Cowen, speaking at the UN Summit and General Assembly in 2000. The Taoiseach made Ireland's first public commitment to reach 0.7% by 2007 and asserted that 'the specificity of the language and the timescales [in the Goals] mean that we can and will be held accountable for delivery. If we urge policy coherence and precise targets on the UN, we must be individually prepared to adopt the same disciplines'.<sup>35</sup> Minister Cowen in turn stated that 'our aid budget is both a test and a reflection of our commitment to the values and principles set out in the Millennium Summit Declaration'.<sup>36</sup> That supportive attitude to the Goals and the focus on the aid target was confirmed by the Taoiseach again in 2003 when he addressed the General Assembly; 'At the Millennium Summit, I committed Ireland to reaching the UN target for Official Development Assistance of 0.7 per cent of GNP by 2007. Since then, Ireland has increased its ODA to 0.41 per cent, and remains committed to reaching

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.dci.gov.ie/challenges.asp>

<sup>34</sup> *Irish Times* 3 Sept 2005

<sup>35</sup> Address by the Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, T.D., to the United Nations Millennium Summit, New York, 6 Sept. 2000.

<sup>36</sup> Statement by Mr. Brian Cowen, T.D. Minister for Foreign Affairs, During the General Debate at the Fifty-fifth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations 14 Sept, 2000

the target by 2007.<sup>37</sup> When the government later announced that it would not after all meet the UN target by the deadline of 2007<sup>38</sup> it generated a very high level of criticism.<sup>39</sup> After a period of internal debate by the Government it used the opportunity of the 2005 UN Summit to announce a new commitment to reaching the target by 2012 – three years ahead of the deadline adopted by the EU collectively in a decision earlier in 2005. The Taoiseach's speech also announced an interim target of 0.5% of GNP by 2007. The opposition parties responded with a promise to put the new schedule in legislation – something which Irish NGO's had called for to make a future weakening of this goal more difficult.<sup>40</sup>

Ireland's current official development aid expenditure is 0.4% of GNP. This compares to an EU average of 0.35% an OECD average of 0.25%. At present aid as a percentage of GNP ranges from a low of 0.16% from the USA to 0.85% from Luxembourg and Denmark. Apart from the two top donors only Sweden, Netherlands and Norway meet the UN target of 0.7%. Sweden, Luxembourg and Norway have subsequently committed spending 1% of GNP on aid with target dates ranging from 2006 to 2009. Even though aid, expressed in absolute cash terms is at its highest ever level this year – it is well below the percentage figure of 0.5% of GNP which is found in the early statistics collected by the OECD. The OECD has however expressed worries that some of the expected increases over the next year may not reflect real aid, for example it is estimated that a debt write off for Iraq could involve \$15 billion which could be claimed as 'aid'.<sup>41</sup> This use of aid to meet foreign policy goals in the security arena is not one which has faced Ireland to date. However there is likely to be a future debate on whether the costs of peace-keeping operations in the least developed countries could be included within the figures used to calculate aid and whether Ireland has reached the 0.7% target. This would require a collective decision by the OECD Development Assistance Committee who determine what can be counted and is not a unilateral decision Ireland could make. Indeed even in the event of an OECD decision Ireland would obviously still be free to decide to reach 0.7% without counting any allowed military expenditures

Ireland has been supportive of the UN as an institution which can build international pressure for higher levels of aid and a more coherent development strategy. In keeping with the tension between idealism and self interest that runs through foreign policy, its support for the UN reflects its belief that development and a reduction in international inequality is essential for peace and security as well as being ethical. Domestically it has also been able to use the UN agreed baseline standards as proof it is living up to its international commitments and to answer critics who argue that it should do more.

## **Human Rights and the weakness of the UN system**

Irish foreign policy regularly asserts a commitment to human rights as one of its key priorities for working within the UN system. However, there are well documented weaknesses in the UN Commission for Human Rights and one of Kofi Annan's

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<sup>37</sup> Statement by the Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D., to the General Debate at the 58th General Assembly of the United Nations, New York, 25 Sept 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Conor Lenihan *Irish Times* 8 Oct. 2004

<sup>39</sup> e.g. *Irish Times* 17 June 2005; 20 Oct. 2004; 1 July 2005

<sup>40</sup> *Irish Times* 16 Sept 2005.

<sup>41</sup> *OECD DAC Chair Richard Manning DAC news*

[http://www.oecd.org/document/25/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_33721\\_35317145\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1.00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/25/0,2340,en_2649_33721_35317145_1_1_1_1.00.html)

harshest criticisms of any UN body was reserved for the Commission when he said in his 2005 report *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*:

the Commission's capacity to perform its tasks has been increasingly undermined by its declining credibility and professionalism. ... a credibility deficit has developed, which casts a shadow on the reputation of the United Nations system as a whole.<sup>42</sup>

In this regard Ireland welcomed the creation of a separate Human Rights Council to replace the Commission at the 2005 Summit, although at time of writing it is not clear if this will be more than a change of name.

Whatever the limitations of the UN system in this area, Ireland's commitment to international engagement on human rights is demonstrated by the setting up of the Human Rights Unit, to coordinate activity in this area within the Department of Foreign Affairs immediately following the publication of the 1996 white paper. The following year former President of Ireland Mary Robinson became UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. There was considerable lobbying for the post and it was a measure, not only of Mary Robinson's own standing, but of Ireland's strong position at the UN that she received the support of the Secretary General Kofi Annan and the endorsement of the General Assembly. Ireland was also elected to the UN Commission on Human Rights for the period 1997-99 and in 1999 Ireland was elected to chair the Commission session in Geneva. Minister David Andrews announced the election in Seanad Éireann saying

It is with some pride that I tell the House Ireland has been elected to chair the session, one of the most important events in the human rights calendar. Our permanent representative in Geneva, Ambassador Ann Anderson, will conduct the proceedings and her election is a recognition of the consistent and progressive policies on human rights adopted by successive Irish Governments and a measure of her standing at the United Nations in Geneva.<sup>43</sup>

Ireland was again elected to serve on the Commission from 2003-05 after a break of just one term. Also in 2003 Judge Maureen Harding Clark was elected as a judge of the International Criminal Court (ICC), following her nomination by the Irish Government. She secured 65 out of 83 votes and jointly topped the poll.<sup>44</sup>

Ireland also used its term on the security council in 2001-2 to promote human rights when diplomats made a number of interventions. After the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Ireland argued against the prevailing on the council view that political stability in Afghanistan would be threatened if the new Transitional Authority was held too tightly accountable on human-rights issues.<sup>45</sup> 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. It is difficult to judge the outcomes of such briefing but they did reinforce Ireland's commitment to the issue.

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<sup>42</sup> Annan, 2005 para 182

<sup>43</sup> Seanad Debates Volume 158 - 17 Feb. 1999, col. 356.

<sup>44</sup> The election was among those 83 states who had signed the ICC Treaty.

<sup>45</sup> Details of Ireland's position on this matter are available at <http://www.un.int/ireland/scstatements/sc77.htm>.

After the establishment of the Counter Terrorism Committee by the Security Council under resolution 1373, the committee 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, as a Council member 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 for this stance.<sup>46</sup>

In another initiative, in June 2002 following the deaths of nearly 200 people in Kisangani in the DRC, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, addressed the Council in private—in 'informal consultation of the whole'<sup>47</sup>. This briefing was held following pressure from Ireland, and was the first time such a briefing ever happened on a specific country situation. Again the outcomes of such meetings are difficult to judge but they do add some pressure on the Council to act.

While the current international climate with its focus on countering international terrorism has narrowed the focus for human rights work Ireland has remained an active supporter of international human rights. Even with the severe limitations and lack of effectiveness of UN human rights structures Ireland continues to see the UN as the primary forum for promoting human rights and has continued to support structural reform to enhance UN effectiveness.

### **Ireland's record on the UN Security Council**

In the last decade the period of Ireland's membership of the security council is clearly the high point of their engagement with the UN system. The Security Council is both the most powerful and most prestigious body within the UN system, bringing together the five permanent members with ten others elected for 2 year terms. It has the unique capacity to initiate a range of instruments, including mediation and diplomatic pressure; compulsory economic sanctions; and military action. Once the Council decides on a course of action it is likely that the action will gain widespread international legitimacy. The Council's key weakness is that any one of the permanent five members can veto a resolution, however this does not mean that elected members are powerless. Using the veto portrays a state as isolated on an issue. The USA, for example, has gone to great lengths to have resolutions withdrawn or opposed by other members to avoid having to use its veto. As a resolution must receive nine positive votes in order for it to pass, the combined weight of the permanent five in favour of a resolution cannot guarantee its success unless they can also persuade some of the elected ten to support it.

Security Council membership placed Ireland in a high profile environment where it was required to have a public position on a range of international issues. While Ireland had been on the Council before this term took place in a much more insecure international environment and with a greatly increased Council workload. There were

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<sup>46</sup> Info from private source

<sup>47</sup>This 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>.

430 public session of the council over the two year period and permanent ongoing private consultations.

Ireland's election to the Council was itself a strong vindication of Ireland's profile within the General Assembly – as states are elected by the entire UN membership. It was not initially regarded as a strong candidate, lacking the diplomatic and economic strengths of its electoral rivals - Norway and Italy. The relative ease of the victory – 130 votes on the first round - was a result of a strong campaign certainly, but also Ireland's positive image within the Assembly, based in part on its voting record.

A recent statistical analysis of voting from 1990 to 2002 published in *Irish Studies in International Affairs* by Young and Rees paints an interesting picture of Irish voting patterns, that perhaps goes some way towards explaining the strong vote for Ireland in 2000.<sup>48</sup> Young and Rees identify what they call a progressive voting bloc of Austria, Greece, Ireland, Spain and Sweden. Of particular note was Ireland's voting record on the key issues raised by the Global South. Given the make up of the General Assembly the concerns of developing states feature much more strongly than in the security council. Over the period 1990-2002 resolutions on Palestine, the Middle East more generally, apartheid (up to 1994) and colonialism represented 38 per cent of all resolutions, while human rights and disarmament represent another 31 per cent of all the resolutions. While Ireland's support for such resolutions in the 1990s was marginally lower than shown by an earlier study looking at the 1980s<sup>49</sup> Ireland was still the EU state most likely to support such resolutions – marginally ahead of Sweden and Austria.

The Security Council term provides an opportunity to analyse Ireland's foreign policy across a range of issues, and allows a comparison between the rhetoric and practice in a situation where Ireland has influence. In particular the Council term allows an examination of those areas where Ireland's stated policy would bring them into conflict with the USA. In particular, decisions on Iraq, Palestine, the International Criminal Court and Western Sahara, presented Ireland with difficult diplomatic decisions.<sup>50</sup>

### *Iraq*

The issue of Iraq dominated the council during Ireland's term. Up to mid 2002 the focus was on the impact of the sanctions regime, which had been in place since the 1991 Gulf War, 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,<sup>51</sup> however, and under US pressure, the Council debates focused almost entirely on Iraq's alleged programme of weapons of mass destruction. On sanctions Ireland unsuccessfully argued that Iraq should be allowed to operate in the economic field as normally as possible, consistent with preventing it from rearming, and pending fulfilment of its obligations as set out in

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<sup>48</sup> Helen Young and Nicholas Rees, *EU Voting Behaviour in the UN General Assembly, 1990-2002: the EU's Europeanising Tendencies*, *Irish Studies in International Affairs* vol. 16 2005.,

<sup>49</sup> Michael Holmes, Nicholas Rees and Bernadette Whelan, 'Irish foreign policy and the Third World: voting in the UN General Assembly in the 1980s' *Trocaire Development Review* (1992), 67-84; Jan Wouters, 'The European Union as an actor within the United Nations General Assembly', Institute of International Law, K.U. Leuven Group Working Paper, (January, 2001).

<sup>50</sup> For a full account of the Security Council term see 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.

<sup>51</sup> 12 September 2002.

previous UN resolutions since the end of the first Gulf War.<sup>52</sup> 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. It was clear that there would not have been a majority to impose sanctions of that kind on Iraq in 2001 if a new resolution had been required. While this approach to sanctions was applied in practice from 2001 onwards, it was not adopted as formal, standard Council policy because of US opposition

Following the identification of Iraq by the US as an international threat, 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 Security Council 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.<sup>53</sup> During Ireland term 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 continued use of such wide ranging sanctions against Iraq, continued support for the weapons inspectors and opposition to a unilateral attack on Iraq.

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 inevitable. On this issue there was a clear tension between Ireland’s economic interests, given the country’s dependence on US investment, and the more principled foreign policy position set out in the government’s earlier statements on the issue. Once the Council term was over and there was a less immediate requirement to adopt and defend explicit positions, the Irish government sought to avoid taking a definitive position on developments following from resolution 1441. In particular it appeared unwilling to publicly criticise US foreign policy, while at the same time continuing to emphasise the importance of Irish–US economic links. However in spite of allowing US planes to land in Shannon airport Ireland did not actively support the war and the Government continued to express its preference for a UN mandated solution.

### *Palestine–Israel*

Irish foreign policy has expressed sympathy with the plight of the Palestinian people and to supported political moves towards a settlement that recognises a Palestinian state. In December 2000 just before Ireland joined the Council a Palestinian-promoted draft Security Council resolution calling for a UN Observer Force in the Occupied Territories could only get eight votes, the US therefore did not have to use its veto. Even though the US lobbies heavily against resolutions critical of Israel it prefers not to use its veto because of the resulting negative publicity which affects its relations with the Arab world in particular.

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<sup>52</sup> See debate on UNSC resolution 1409, adopted on 14 May 2002, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>.

<sup>53</sup> Irish government’s statement in relation to this resolution is available at <http://www.un.int/ireland/scstatements/sc97.htm>

In Council debates Ireland articulated its position on the conflict in the Middle East around five key themes.<sup>54</sup>

- the right of the Security Council to concern itself with the Middle East;
- Israel's right to security within recognised borders;
- the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people;
- 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 abstained on a draft resolution in March 2001 which proposed UN observers arguing that no observers would in practice ever be deployed and that the collapsed peace process ought to be the focus of activity. Whatever Ireland's motivation it was open to the charge that it had been influenced by US pressure on this first key vote on the Palestinian question. Although the resolution got nine positive votes it was vetoed by the USA.

The Council debates on Israel-Palestine were dominated by US attempts to avoid resolutions critical of Israel, while at the same time because of the emerging 'war on terror' the US was felt constrained in its ability to use the veto, given its need for improved relations with the Arab world. In December 2001 Ireland supported a draft resolution promoted by the Arab states encouraged three other non-permanent Council members to vote in favour.<sup>55</sup> The resolution simply reiterated Council support for previous resolutions and initiatives and supported the principle of land for peace. The US however vetoed the resolution. This veto, the negative reaction to it, 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.<sup>56</sup> The US also introduced and supported other resolutions critical of Israel. However it by no means abandoned its traditional support for Israel. In late 2002, for example, following the killing of UN employees by Israeli forces, the US vetoed a draft resolution condemning the killing. The resolution was supported by Ireland.<sup>57</sup>

### *The International Criminal Court*

The establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) generated a real crisis on the Council. 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. By June it was known that the US was planning to veto the annual renewals of UN peace-keeping operations in order to pressurise the Council to agree to an exemption for US citizens from the ICC's mandate.

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<sup>54</sup> For details see, for example, statements and vetoed resolution on 15 and 27 March 2001, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>.

<sup>55</sup> See Security Council report for 14 Dec. 2001, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>.

<sup>56</sup> Resolution 1397, based on the US draft, was ultimately adopted on 12 March 2002. The Quartet was the shorthand used to describe the principle that mediation in the conflict would involve the US, the UN, the EU and Russia.

<sup>57</sup> See Security Council reports for 20 Dec. 2002, available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>.

The UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first to be affected by the US position of opposition to renewals, and only three short technical extensions of the mandate kept the mission in place until the crisis over the ICC was resolved.<sup>58</sup> This happened when resolution 1422, agreed on 12 July 2002, effectively gave the US an exemption from the ICC's mandate. At the open meeting of the Council on 10 July, Ireland had said that the US position was 'not well founded',<sup>59</sup> 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.<sup>60</sup> Ireland and Mexico were the last two countries to agree to support the resolution, which was adopted on 12 July. While the UN resolution was condemned by human-rights groups the controversy had the effect of raising the profile of the International Criminal Court.<sup>61</sup>

### *Western Sahara*

Though not generating the same publicity as either Iraq, Palestine and the ICC Ireland played quite an important role on the issue of Western Sahara and it is an interesting example of active diplomacy on a relatively low profile issue where Irish activity made a real difference and where Irish motivations were not narrowly based on any economic interest .

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 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 for Western Sahara.

Ireland took a principled position 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'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 and this ultimately killed off the Baker plan. Ireland's role in preventing the Council from adopting Baker's Framework Agreement was widely recognised in the UN and was welcomed by Polisario.

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<sup>58</sup> These extensions were agreed in resolutions 1418, 1420 and 1421.

<sup>59</sup> Details of Ireland's contribution to the meeting are available at <http://www.un.int/ireland/scstatements/sc82.htm>.

<sup>60</sup> See <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N02/469/11/PDF/N0246911.pdf?OpenElement> .

<sup>61</sup> For 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 objections to 2003 renewal.

## Conclusion

The Security Council term offered a real test of whether stated priorities in foreign policy of peacekeeping; disarmament; human rights; and development would be pursued in practice against the inevitable pressures faced at that level. In coming to a judgement as to whether the traditions of Irish foreign policy were overly constrained by realpolitik during Ireland's term on the security council it is clear that Irish diplomats displayed a 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 of the invasion, it would have found itself under much more pressure to conform to the US position on that decision than on any other issue with which the Council had dealt over the previous two years.

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 on those issues, 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.<sup>62</sup> 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, on many occasions, opposed US policy on issues of importance. It did so repeatedly on Palestine, on sanctions against Iraq, and 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; the effort in January 2001 to end the arms embargo on Ethiopia and Eritrea; and the wider debate on sanctions regimes in general, in which Ireland argued for specific time limits to be imposed for sanctions. In addition, Ireland sought to apply a UN mandate to the NATO operation in FYROM, against US and British arguments. Although that initiative had little impact, Ireland did succeed in ensuring a larger UN operation in Timor Leste against the wishes of the permanent Council members who were seeking to curtail costs there.<sup>63</sup> While Ireland ultimately voted to give the US an exemption from the operation of the International Criminal Court the US use of a veto to block renewals of peace-keeping missions put the other members of the Council in an impossible position – either to weaken the ICC or to stall peace-keeping missions indefinitely.

In analysing Irish action other than on the Security Council, there are a number of important areas where Irish support for the UN has been very clear including involvement in UN peace-keeping and in particular in the commitment to African mission; support for Millennium Development Goals; increases in official development aid; financial support for UN agencies and a focus in other areas of the development cooperation programme on the poorest countries. In the areas where there has been less tangible results – notably disarmament and human rights Ireland

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<sup>62</sup> Council meeting, 8 Oct 2001.

<sup>63</sup> See 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 or reports of Council meetings on UN website for further details on these issues

has been a supporter of attempts to strengthen the UN's role. There are other pressures on Irish foreign policy, a reliance on US foreign investment has clearly constrained an active policy on Iraq since 2003. Within the EU there will be future conflicts on the extent to which emerging EU security and defence policy should reflect an attempt to deal with underlying causes of conflict and insecurity rather than simply a narrow focus on criminal law, border security and military responses. However in this fifth decade of Ireland's UN membership there remains ample evidence of a genuine attempt to strengthen UN multilateralism as a key contribution to a more equal and secure world.