
‘Her place among the nations of the earth’: Irish votes at the UN General Assembly, 1955-2005

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Abstract. Since joining the United Nations in 1955, Ireland has enjoyed a good reputation within the organization because of its commitment to multilateral diplomacy and its progressive position on human rights, self-determination and disarmament. However, when voting on resolutions in the General Assembly, the Irish delegation must take into account its effectiveness and impact on the UN, as well as the position of other countries. The USA has exerted particular pressure from the beginning, and since 1973 Ireland has also had to comply with the requirements of European solidarity. Nonetheless, various studies of Irish votes at the General Assembly show that on the whole Ireland has maintained a distinctive profile, faithful to its traditional values. Despite some changes over time, continuity seems to be the hallmark of Ireland’s UN policy, which is characterised by a moderate, constructive approach within the framework of a progressive grouping of states.

Key Words. Irish foreign policy, United Nations, General Assembly, European Union, EPC, CFSP, United States, human rights, decolonisation, disarmament, Frank Aiken.

Resumen. Desde su adhesión a las Naciones Unidas en 1955, Irlanda ha alcanzado una reputación considerable dentro de la organización debido a su compromiso con la diplomacia multilateral y su posición con respecto a los derechos humanos, la autodeterminación y el desarme. Sin embargo, a la hora de votar las resoluciones de la Asamblea General, la delegación irlandesa debe tener en cuenta la efectividad de las mismas y su impacto en Naciones Unidas, así como el posicionamiento de otros países. Las presiones estadounidenses han sido de importancia desde el principio y desde 1973 Irlanda se las ha tenido que ver con su compromiso con la solidaridad europea. Aún así, varios estudios sobre las votaciones en la Asamblea General demuestran que en general Irlanda ha mantenido un perfil característico, fiel a sus valores tradicionales. A pesar de algunos cambios en el transcurso de los años, la continuidad parece ser el sello distintivo de la política de Irlanda en Naciones Unidas; la cual se caracteriza por un enfoque moderado y constructivo dentro del marco del grupo de estados progresistas.

Palabras clave. Política exterior irlandesa, Naciones Unidas, Asamblea General, Unión Europea, Cooperación Política Europea (EPC), Política Exterior y de Seguridad Común (CFSP), Estados Unidos, derechos humanos, descolonización, desarme, Frank Aiken

Introduction

Ireland’s record at the United Nations is that of a distinctive contribution, notably in the fields of peacekeeping and of disarmament, which is recognised both abroad and at home. In 2004, Kofi Annan praised the country’s UN

record, a record which helped Ireland to be elected to the Security Council in 2001-2002 (Gillissen 2006: 31-32). In 2005, on the fiftieth anniversary of Ireland’s UN membership, the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, emphasised that the

United Nations Organization was the “cornerstone of Irish foreign policy”, an expression used in the 1996 White Paper on Irish foreign policy (Department of Foreign Affairs 1996: 150).

The organization also enjoys considerable support among Irish voters, one opinion poll conducted in 1989 showing that the Irish came second among the then twelve European member states in their approval rate of the UN (United Nations 1990: 3). This can be partly explained by the widespread perception that Ireland was able to play an important role in the UN in the late 1950s –the “golden age” of Irish foreign policy– by facilitating agreements between East and West, and North and South. Its role as model international citizen was seen as a vindication of the struggle for national independence, since Ireland demonstrated that a small independent state could make a significant contribution to the international order.

However, from the early 1960s onwards, Ireland’s high profile at the UN faded somewhat, and since then there has been some debate as to the independence of the Irish delegation, in particular in relation to the United States and to the European Union. If one studies the fifty years of Irish voting at the General Assembly, one can indeed note some shifts over time, in particular after 1960 –at the time of Ireland’s first application to the EEC– and after 1992, when the Maastricht Treaty established a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) for the European Union. Yet there is a good case for arguing that continuity is as much a characteristic of Irish foreign policy at the UN as change is.

The “Golden Age”

In 1957, the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Frank Aiken, decided to vote for a debate on the representation of China at the United Nations. At the time the question was given great importance by the United States who made it a touchstone of Cold War alignment: to support Beijing’s claim to a Security Council seat was to support the Soviet Union, while supporting Taiwan’s claim was a proof of loyalty to the Western bloc. Washington exerted strong pressure on the Irish delegation to reverse its decision, but to no avail (Cruise O’Brien 1962: 21-25).

Aiken’s determination thus established Ireland’s “activist, independent stance” and the country acquired a prominence well beyond its size and objective power (Skelly 1996: 121).

This allowed it to exercise considerable influence, notably in the sponsoring of a resolution which eventually led to the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968.

The Irish delegation was careful to maintain, and to be seen to maintain, its independence in relation to colonial powers, for reasons linked both to Irish history and to policy objectives. Ireland’s stance was similar to that of several moderate, progressive Western European states such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden, which were keen to ease international tensions linked to the Cold War and to promote international dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. They were also sympathetic to the plight of Third World countries and supported their struggle for independence. The Irish delegation had in fact explicitly modelled itself on the Swedish delegation that Conor Cruise O’Brien, then in charge of the UN section at the Department of Foreign Affairs, perceived as a reference in terms of “good international behaviour” (1962: 15).

This Scandinavian group of countries, which emerged in the early 1950s, was able to play an important role because its good faith and independent judgement were widely recognised. They could act as “honest brokers” between the Eastern and Western blocs, although they were closer to the United States than to the Soviet Union. A study of votes on Cold War issues during the second half of the 1950s confirms that Ireland was part of a group of Western states that distanced themselves from unconditional supporters of the United States (see table 1).

Table 1: Votes at the UN General Assembly on Cold War issues, 1955-59

Country	Rating
United Kingdom	+ 1.000
Austria	+ 0.783
Ireland	+ 0.739
Denmark	+ 0.643
Norway	+ 0.643
Sweden	+ 0.607
Greece	+ 0.571
Finland	+ 0.174
India	- 0.107
Soviet Union	- 1.000

Source: adapted from Driscoll (1982: 58).

This was consistent with the three principles of Ireland's UN policy as defined in 1955 by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Liam Cosgrave: (1) Ireland would uphold the UN Charter; (2) it would "maintain a position of independence, judging questions... strictly on their merits"; but (3) it was nonetheless part of the "Christian civilization" and thus should support the "powers responsible for the defence of the free world" (Cruise O'Brien, 1969: 128). There were obvious tensions between the second and third principles, however, which were not always easy to reconcile and which could lead to policy shifts depending on how they were interpreted and applied.

Thus after 1960, Ireland moved towards the Western bloc, for several reasons. On the one hand, there was the changing nature of the United Nations: the entry of many newly-independent states profoundly affected the proceedings in the General Assembly, to the point where the Irish delegation could no longer hope to play the same role as in the late 1950s (Lemass 1971: 118-119). Ireland had taken a strong stance against various forms of imperialism in the late 1950s, but was dismayed by the radicalism of many Third World delegations in the early 1960s, a radicalism which threatened to compromise the effectiveness of the UN.

An airgram sent by the American UN mission to the US Department of State on 19 April 1962 relates a meeting in which Frederick Boland, then head of the Irish delegation, explained the reasons for its new approach:

Both Boland (Ireland) and Algard (Norway) have asked us if we noted change in voting and attitude of "moderate" Europeans. They added this was deliberate policy on their part to help keep UN actions moderate and to combat "take it or leave it" tendency among some Afro-Asians when they have agreed on text of resolution among themselves. Boland told us he had himself witnessed decline of League due to disenchantment of major powers. Substantial European disenchantment with UN had already set in; radical Afro-Asians likely to produce even more of this; role of "moderates" in circumstances was to restrain radicals more than to press colonial powers (which was their main concern in last few years). Both Boland and Algard also said advance in US policy on colonial matters was key factor that made such attitude on their part

possible. (Claussen, Duncan and Soukup 2001: doc. 201)

This new context within the UN constituted a major challenge for the Scandinavian group, which had to reposition itself to take into account the Afro-Asian group. An analysis of UN voting patterns shows that after 1960 Ireland, Denmark and Norway were no longer part of the Scandinavian group, and that this group –composed then of Finland and Sweden– had itself moved within the orbit of an enlarged Western and Latin American bloc of countries (Newcombe, Ross and Newcombe, 1970: 118).

A comparison between Swedish and Irish UN policies is instructive. For instance, Sweden voted in favour of the People's Republic of China as the legitimate representative of China at the UN, while Ireland voted against.¹ Rowe, who studied US support at the UN during that period, shows that Ireland and Sweden, which had similar stances in the late 1950s, evolved in different ways with Ireland shifting "in a strongly pro-US direction after 1960" (1971: 72 n. 25). Despite an overall trend among small Western European countries towards greater support for the US, Ireland and Norway became "strongly supportive" while Sweden was more moderate (see table 2).

In other words, confronted with a lurch towards the left within the General Assembly, there was a deliberate decision on the part of Ireland to uphold a moderate line, even if this seemed to contradict the identification between Ireland and struggling colonies that Frank Aiken had made explicit in his earlier speeches at the UN (Bhreatnach 2005: 182). There was

¹ It must be said however that while Frank Aiken had insisted on the importance of a debate on the issue of Chinese representation at the UN, he had indicated at the same time that his country would probably not support the admission of the PRC. His point was to establish the freedom of the UN to discuss any issue affecting international relations, and thus to increase the competence of the organization. But it does not seem that he ever intended to support Beijing's claim to a Security Council seat. So one cannot draw the conclusion that there was any fundamental policy shift on this point, even if Ireland's voting pattern mathematically moved closer to that of the US once

no longer any possible ambiguity: Ireland was not a member of the neutral and non-aligned movement, but a small progressive Western state (Keatinge 1984: 34-35). Those states were characterised in particular by their “emphasis on the conciliatory function [of the UN, which] caused them to mistrust resolutions which fix blame and cause more conflict than they settle” (Fox 1965: 782).

Table 2: Attitude towards the US at the UN, 1955-64

Year	Ireland	Sweden	Norway
1955	SS	MS	MS
1956	MO	MO	MS
1957	M	M	M
1958	M	M	M
1959	MS	M	SS
1960	SS	MS	SS
1961	SS	MS	SS
1962	SS	MS	SS
1963	SS	MS	SS
1964	SS	MS	SS

Source: adapted from Rowe (1971: 73).

SS: “strongly supportive” (81-100% voting coincidence)

MS: “moderately supportive” (61-80%)

M: “mixed support and opposition” (40-60%)

MO: “moderately opposed” (20-39%)

SO: “strongly opposed” (0-19%)

If Ireland was less determined to demonstrate its independence in relation to the US and to the EEC after 1960, it nonetheless remained committed to issues like disarmament, peacekeeping and decolonisation. For instance, it radicalised its stance against apartheid during the 1960s, even if it was not perceived to be doing so by its critics at home (Dorr 2002: 118). In addition to its commitment to peacekeeping and disarmament, it also played a significant role in 1967 in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Miller 2005: 37-39).

The idea that the late 1950s was the ‘golden age’ of Irish foreign policy is a myth to some extent, not so much in relation to that period – which certainly deserves to be celebrated– as to that which followed and which should be seen as a ‘silver age’ rather than a ‘fall’.

European membership and the UN

To a large extent, Ireland’s stance at the UN has been maintained throughout the decades.

Several studies of European votes at the UN have been conducted, and they all confirm the distinct position of Ireland on the issues of disarmament, decolonisation and human rights, and its practical approach, focused on achieving concrete results.

After Ireland’s accession to the EEC in 1973, one could have expected Ireland to modify its position in the UN, where European states strive to “speak with a single voice.” But if European Political Cooperation (EPC) did produce a high degree of unanimous votes among the Nine between 1973 and 1975, Lindemann identifies Ireland and France as the two countries that “topped the league” for voting in minorities (1976: 265). Hurwitz, who focused on issues of decolonisation in 1973-74, finds that Ireland demonstrated “a very strong commitment to self-determination” (1975: 441), its score of 0.67 being much closer to the average of non-European states (0.70) than to that of the EEC (0.19). Foot, who studied the 1975-77 period, concludes that “the Irish Republic was in a minority voting group most often”, generally on Third World issues (1979: 352-353).

In the 1980s, the issue of apartheid in South Africa also divided the members of the EEC, with Ireland once again “willing to go it alone or to vote in the minority voting block” (Laffan 1988: 71). In the early 1980s –the period of the ‘New Cold War’– Guilhaudis described Ireland and Greece as having broken ranks with the Western bloc at the UN over the principle of nuclear deterrence (1985: 110). More generally during that decade, Holmes, Rees and Whelan conclude that “Ireland has consistently been identified as a progressive state among the Europeans in the UN, particularly with regard to Third World questions, and that identification has survived the joining of the European Community” (1993: 174). And indeed, between 1984 and 1990 for instance, Ireland was always among the top three EC countries as far as its willingness to vote alone or in a small minority is concerned (Gillissen 1995: 150).

If joining the EEC did require Ireland to cooperate with its partners in the field of foreign policy, this did not lead to a unanimous European position being imposed on Ireland by the bigger member states. In 1985, Ireland and Denmark’s voting patterns put them in a group separate from the other European member

states, along with Sweden (Kim and Russett 1996: 643-644). Prior to the 1995 enlargement, Ireland was closer to Sweden than to the EU majority, notably on issues linked to security and disarmament (see table 3).

Not only was the Irish Government able to maintain a high degree of freedom in the formulation of its foreign policy at the UN, it was also able to contribute to the formulation of a European consensus on several issues. Thus the Middle East proved too divisive for the Nine to reach agreement until the 1980 Venice declaration, a declaration that was shaped to a significant degree by Dublin (Miller 2005: 91-92). In the same way, Ireland was able to advance its agenda within EPC in relation to Latin America (Kirby 1992: 126-127).

Table 3: Average distance from the EU majority, 1979-94

Country	All votes	Security
Austria	16.27	27.36
Sweden	15.36	25.90
Ireland	11.09	24.36
Denmark	8.09	12.55
Belgium	0.64	0.36

(Minimum distance is 0, maximum 100)

Source: adapted from Luif (2003: 32-35).

Since the end of the Cold War and the establishment of a Common Foreign and Security Policy for the EU with the Maastricht Treaty, the situation has changed to a certain extent: there are fewer controversial resolutions submitted at the UN General Assembly and the member states of the EU have made increased efforts to coordinate their foreign policies, in particular at the UN (Johansson-Nogués 2004: 7). The result is a higher rate of unanimous EU votes. A study of the 1990-2002 period carried out by Young and Rees concludes that "Ireland's neutral and progressive voting history has been changing since the 1990s" (2005: 207). Luif's study of the 1979-2002 period reaches similar conclusions: Ireland's voting pattern has changed, evolving towards greater harmonization with its European partners.

Yet both studies also stress that Ireland is consistently among the states most willing to vote alone or in a minority. Thus Ireland still

had the third highest number of divergent votes (87), after France (138) and the United Kingdom (144), two countries that must be considered as somewhat apart from their European partners because of their status as permanent members of the UN Security Council and as nuclear powers with former colonial empires. It is almost inevitable that they should vote apart on issues relating to decolonisation and nuclear weapons for instance. The fact that Ireland immediately follows them in the league of EU member states willing to vote alone or in a minority testifies to the resilience of Ireland's foreign policy identity as projected on the UN stage.

Most of the votes on which Ireland diverges concern nuclear and colonial issues in fact. Nuclear disarmament in particular is an issue of concern for Ireland, while on Middle East questions, Ireland is the "EU country with the largest distance from the EU consensus" (Luif 2003: 49). Overall, Ireland has the most progressive record of all EU states for the 1990-2002 period (Young and Rees 2005: 205).

A study of Ireland's 2003-2005 voting record shows that those trends have been maintained to some extent, even though the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 led to deep divisions between EU members and to significant variations in some national foreign policies. Thus the rate of EU unanimity fell sharply in 2003, but since then it has returned to a level comparable to that of 1999 despite the 2004 enlargement which brought in 10 additional states. If one looks at the isolated and minority votes among the 15 EU members during this period, France and the United Kingdom are still by far the most divergent member states, but Ireland stands among the other member states most willing to vote apart from the majority, though it is clearly reluctant to vote alone, more so than Spain for instance (see table 4).

To sum up, if there are strong Europeanising tendencies within the CFSP group at the UN, enhanced by the post-Cold War context, one cannot draw the conclusion that Irish foreign policy has been substantially modified. In fact, there has been a strategy on the part of the Irish Government in recent years to promote its standing within the UN, notably through the New Agenda Declaration of 1998, which aimed at relaunching the Non

Proliferation Treaty, and the official Irish commitment to devote 0.7% of its GDP to Official Development Aid. In the same way, Ireland's successful bid for a Security Council place in 2001-2002 shows that the Government is keen to retain its national influence within the organization.

Table 4: Isolated and minority votes at the UN among EU 15, 2003-2005

Country	Isolated	Minority
United Kingdom	11	32
France	6	33
Spain	4	15
Ireland		19
Sweden	1	17
Portugal		12
Austria		9
Finland		9
Greece		7
Germany		6
Italy		6
Belgium		4
Denmark		4
Netherlands		4
Luxembourg		1

Source: adapted from United Nations (2003-2005).

This is consistent with the official position that Irish foreign policy is about values and enlightened self-interest, i.e. the promotion of multilateral diplomacy. How can this be explained? One reason is the fact that Ireland is a small country where the UN enjoys considerable popular support because of the Irish record within the organisation. This is the interpretation proposed by Mulhall in his study of the foreign policy specificities of small states:

When small states uncover a worthwhile international role there is a tendency for them to want to stick with it. It becomes a matter of national pride for a small state that it can, against the odds of power politics, make a positive contribution in world affairs. This factor will probably apply no matter how ambiguous the national benefits of this stance may be. Ireland's habit of outspokenness on disarmament issues and the recollection of its successes in the non-proliferation area have conditioned in Irish foreign policy an enduring conviction that further potential for honest

brokerage exists. This contributes an important element to the arguments for resisting any drift towards alignment. (1986: 14-15)

Twenty years after this statement was made, subsequent events seem to confirm it, in relation both to the EU and to the US.

Ireland and the United States

Another limit to the independence of delegations at the UN comes indeed from American lobbying. The disagreement between Ireland and the United States over Chinese representation at the UN has already been mentioned. If the shift in Irish foreign policy after 1960 can be linked to the context of an Irish application to join the EEC, the American dimension is also relevant: Lemass wished to secure American support for Ireland's application as well as increased American investments in Ireland. He was more of an Atlanticist than his predecessor Eamon de Valera and, aware of the possibilities created by the election of John F. Kennedy to the White House, he was hoping to restore Irish-American relations to a sounder footing (Skelly 1996: 234). As to the Irish UN delegation, Conor Cruise O'Brien's departure in 1961 –he was seconded to the UN General Secretariat– gave more weight to Frederick Boland's pro-US stance.

So Ireland's foreign policy became more receptive to American pressures in the 1960s, a time when Washington's influence within the UN was still paramount (Cruise O'Brien, 1967: 197-198). However, by the 1980s Washington had become increasingly isolated. In a context of renewed US-USSR rivalry, the Non-Aligned Movement had established itself as a coherent and effective bloc, while the EEC tried to uphold a more moderate line. As a result, the United States was the state which most often found itself alone opposing a resolution (Marín-Bosch 1987: 718).

This loss of influence prompted the US Congress in 1984 to demand an annual report from the State Department on voting practices within the UN, in particular those of countries receiving US aid. The first reports thus recorded all countries' voting alignment with the US and the USSR, and stated the amount of American aid each received. The methodology of the reports was modified somewhat at the end of the Cold War, since the countries'

voting patterns are no longer compared to that of the Soviet Union, and the amount of US aid is no longer mentioned. But they still provide interesting information on a state's bilateral relations with the USA.²

As far as Ireland is concerned, the reports show a remarkable consistency in its voting coincidence with the US between 1989 and 2005: it has always been among the 3 EU states most distant from the American voting pattern, with an average alignment of 54.68% (see table 5). If one compares this to the average of the other EU states that have been members since 1989, it is the second highest rate of divergence after Greece (54.52%).

There have been some variations, but they are mostly due to the policy shifts of other member states. Thus, between 1989 and 1996, Greece and Spain were much more inclined to diverge from US positions, with Ireland generally in third position. After 1996, however, the voting pattern of Greece and Spain changed significantly, moving closer both to the EU average and to the US, while Ireland maintained its previous rate of alignment. The result was that between 1997 and 2004 Ireland was systematically the most distant EU state from the US.

If one compares the difference between the voting records of Greece, Ireland and Spain with the EU average for the entire 1989-2005 period, Greece is first with 7.16, followed by Ireland with 7, and Spain with 4.56. Yet the average deviation from the EU average is much higher in the case of Greece (8.07) than in the case of Ireland (4.77), which confirms the fact that Ireland has been more consistent³.

² The reports do not take into account votes in which a country abstained while the US voted Yes or No, despite the fact that an abstention may often be a diplomatic way of expressing disagreement. Nor do they take into account positive or negative votes when the US abstained. Yet the reports may be considered as a valuable indicator concerning the independence of countries in relation to American foreign policy, especially as the reports stress divergent positions on "important votes", that is to say "votes on issues which directly affected important United States interests and on which the United States lobbied extensively" (State Department 1997: 39).

Table 5: Alignment on US positions at the UN among selected EU states, 1989-2005

	Ireland	Greece	Spain
1989	42.5	32.9	46.4
1990	41.0	41.7	45.1
1991	53.2	48.9	52.0
1992	54.5	50.0	51.0
1993	65.8	58.5	59.5
1994	70.5	71.4	68.3
1995	69.7	69.2	70.1
1996	67.7	57.1	75.4
1997	67.8	72.1	72.1
1998	62.5	65.5	65.5
1999	63.1	67.7	67.7
2000	56.4	61.1	61.1
2001	48.3	52.6	52.6
2002	44.7	48.1	49.4
2003	39.4	42.0	45.5
2004	41.2	43.5	45.5
2005	41.3	44.6	44.0
<i>Average</i>	<i>54.68</i>	<i>54.52</i>	<i>57.13</i>

Source: adapted from US State Department (1990-2006).

³ It must be said that in studies of EU votes at the UN, Greece constitutes something of a problem. From a statistical point of view, Greek representatives rarely voted in 1996, being absent most of the time, which makes it difficult to establish a European and a Greek average for that year or for a period including it. More generally, the idiosyncrasies of Greek foreign policy make any comparative approach risky. Its geographical location in the Balkans, closer to the Middle East than its European partners, helps to explain its considerable divergence in the 1980s, while the internal dynamics of its domestic politics have led to major foreign policy fluctuations over time. Thus in the book edited by Christopher Hill in 1996, which aims among other things at comparing EU voting patterns at the UN, the chapter devoted to Greece claims "neither to be exhaustive, nor strictly 'scientific' as some of the questions raised... are of such complexity that they defy scientific scrutiny" in order to explain why "some aspects concerning Greece's record in EPC, like her voting pattern at the UN... will be left out of the discussion" (Tsakaloyannis 1996: 186-187).

Since the EU enlargement of 2004, Ireland has once again been in third position in terms of divergence with American voting patterns.

This is due to the arrival of two new member states, Malta and Cyprus, that deviate significantly both from the American position and from the EU average. In fact, before their accession to the EU, their voting coincidence with the EU was lower than that of Turkey, another candidate state (Luif 2003: 46).

Table 6: Alignment on US positions at the UN among selected EU states, 2004-2005

	2004	2005
Malta	40.0	39.7
Cyprus	40.3	41.0
Ireland	41.2	41.3
Sweden	42.6	42.7
Greece	43.5	44.6
Spain	45.5	44.0

Source: adapted from US State Department (2005-2006).

Ireland's persistently high level of divergence from the United States may seem surprising, given the fact that both countries enjoy privileged historical, social and economic relations and that Dublin exerted great efforts to win Washington's support for its Northern Irish policy from the 1980s onwards, with considerable success. But its voting record at the UN shows that it is determined to preserve an independent stance within the organization. It has apparently dissociated its bilateral relations with the US from its UN policy to some extent⁴.

Conclusion

Despite undeniable fluctuations over time, there is a strong element of continuity in Ireland's UN policy. It has consistently upheld values which it considers important, in particular in the fields of self-determination, nuclear disarmament and human rights. While

⁴ The limits to this dissociation –and to Irish neutrality– were partly revealed during the build-up to the Iraq war when Ireland decided to maintain landing and refuelling facilities at Shannon airport for US military flights. While insisting in New York on the need for UN approval before any military intervention in Iraq, the Irish Government was very much aware of the economic benefits for the Shannon region deriving from such stopovers. The ambivalence of its position was further exposed with the issue of CIA 'rendition flights'.

it has had to comply with the requirements of European solidarity and with American pressures, it has maintained a distinct profile within the organization, proving that its foreign policy is indeed "a statement of the kind of people [the Irish] are" (Department of Foreign Affairs 1996: 55). It is still keen to preserve its identity as projected on the world scene, an identity which can be summarily defined as progressive and constructive.

The 1996 White Paper promised an annual report on Ireland's voting record at the UN in order to make Irish foreign policy more accountable and transparent. The idea was to encourage academic study and public debate of Irish foreign policy (Department of Foreign Affairs 1996: 1). This promise has not been kept insofar as the present author is aware, perhaps because of the methodological difficulties involved in compiling such a record. It is a pity because it prevents a better understanding of a policy which is remarkable in many ways and which certainly deserves to be better known.

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