

Ireland's Global Strategy and competing with Norway and Canada for a seat on the UNSC

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Abstract

Canada, Ireland, and Norway are vying for two non-permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council for 2021–22 with voting by the UN General Assembly to take place in June 2020. An added dimension to the contest is that Ireland's bid is part of a long-term strategic Global Ireland 2025 vision to increase its profile, influence, and position in the world, and to act as a buffer in a post Brexit world. This paper examines the past records of the three candidate countries in the areas of peacekeeping and nuclear weapon; women, peace and security; and development aid. It also assesses Ireland's UNSC bid as part of its broader foreign policy strategy to double the scope and impact of its global footprint by 2025.

Policy Recommendations

- United Nations strategies and targets can usefully inform the domestic policies of member states.
- A nation's foreign policies should be informed by and aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Foreign and domestic policies need to align and not be contradictory.

Introduction

With reports on Brexit occurring daily, the small nation of Ireland is also receiving global attention. This has mostly been in the context of the fact that the only European Union land border with the United Kingdom is between EU member, the Irish Republic, and the UK ruled province of Northern Ireland. While Brexit related commentary and turmoil continue, Ireland has been busy developing a long term strategic global vision for itself beyond any final Brexit outcome.

As a small neutral state on the far west of Europe, Ireland's ambitious strategy expands on the capacity of smaller states to shape the international community and focuses on Ireland's place in the world. In doing so it aims to advance and strengthen its strategic interests and boldly deliver results that impact the lives, well-being, and livelihoods of people in Ireland and beyond. It is targeting 2025 to double the scope and impact of its global footprint with a multi-targeted approach.

A significant aspect of Ireland's overall strategy is to garner support for its bid to be elected to a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2021-2022 term. Ireland has wisely included the bid as part of its broader foreign policy strategy, rather than the bid itself being its foreign policy objective.

The United Nations Security Council is an influential and powerful international body. A seat at the Council brings with it enormous responsibility as well as power, prestige and influence. The five permanent Security Council members known as the P5 - China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States - preserve their positions against all forms of criticism and calls for reform (Parker and Burke 2017). In addition to the P5, each year the United Nations General Assembly elects five non-permanent

members, out of ten in total, for a two-year term. The successful candidate countries require a two-thirds majority vote from the General Assembly's 193 member states.

Decisions and actions by the UNSC have far reaching consequences and impact across the globe. As such, election of the non-permanent members has implications for all nations. A seat on the UN Security Council comes with political positioning power and provides a platform to achieve an international agenda. The ten non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis. In this contest, Ireland is competing with two worthy contenders, Norway and Canada, for one of the two available seats within the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) which is one of five unofficial regional groups in the United Nations that act as voting blocs and negotiation forums. The WEOG is unusual in that geography is not the sole defining factor; Europe is divided between the WEOG and the Eastern European Group. The WEOG also includes Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Israel¹.

WEOG Candidate countries

Canada is the largest candidate country geographically and by population (approx. 37.3m) and it has been a member of the United Nations since it was established in 1945. Canada is a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a member of the British Commonwealth. Canada has successfully achieved six separate terms on the UN Security Council, once every decade, although it failed to secure a seat in 2010. Canada's current aspiration for a seat for the 2021-22 term stems from its efforts to reclaim its soft power in the international system and to become a trusted voice once more after its previous failure and loss of influence. Canada is seeking to amend its failure in 2010 which has been attributed to its past policies of

¹ For the 2020-21 term, the one seat open in the Eastern European bloc is being contested by Estonia and Romania, who face election this June. India and Vietnam are competing for the single Asia-Pacific seat.

The remaining groups - Africa and Latin America-Caribbean - usually avoid public campaigns by preselecting countries through rotations.

decreased UN work, embassy closures, and a significant reduction in Canadian development and peacekeeping programs. Those actions affected a number of UN states at the time and likely influenced their vote in 2010. In announcing its bid for a seat for 2021-2022 (Nichols 2016), Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, referred to, 'playing a positive and constructive role in the world' and stated that the UN is a 'principal forum for pursuing Canada's international objectives – including the promotion of democracy, inclusive governance, human rights, development, and international peace and security' (Trudeau 2016).

Norway (population approx. 5.4m) was also a founding member of the United Nations in 1945 and, like Canada, it also joined NATO in 1949. Further, it has the notable distinction that the first Secretary-General of the United Nations was Norwegian - the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trygve Lie. Norway has been elected to the UNSC on four occasions for two-year terms -1949-50, 1963-1964, 1979-1980, and 2001-2002. Indeed, Norway feels comfortable in the UN Security Council Chamber itself, as the Council Chamber was a Norwegian gift to the new UN headquarters. While Norway is a member of the European Economic Area Agreement and other bilateral arrangements with the European Union, it is not a member of the EU.

Coinciding with Norway's bid to seek a seat on the UN Security Council, Norway announced this year that it is increasing its core funding to six UN organisations to a total of NOK 3 billion (approx. USD 350 million). This will include about USD 72 million to the UN Development Program (UNDP) and approximately USD 11.5 million to UN Women. Norway proudly states that this is 'the highest amount of funding Norway has ever allocated to these organisations combined' (Norwegian Delegation 2019).

European Union member, Ireland, joined the United Nations in 1955 and its membership has been a central pillar of its foreign policy since that time with its emphasis on

multilateralism, peace, and human rights. As the smallest candidate country (population approx. 4.8m) it has been notably active in many spheres of UN work particularly peacekeeping, human rights, and development assistance. On three occasions, Ireland has previously held a seat on the UN Security Council for two-year rotating terms in 1962, 1981 and 2001. The former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights from 1997-2002, followed by Ireland's membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2013-2015.

There were several momentous events during Ireland's last tenure on the UNSC where it maintained an independent position and acted with integrity to uphold the principles of the UN. During its term there were 430 meetings of the Council dealing with a multitude of issues and Ireland held the Presidency for one month in October 2001. At that time, the US began military action in Afghanistan following a series of terrorist attacks in the US in September of that year, subsequently known as 9/11. In the aftermath of the attacks, the US with the support of the UK sought to add groups and individuals to a list of those covered by sanctions without evidence or procedures. Ireland, however, supported a more rigorous approach and a compromise was reached and adopted in November 2002 (Doyle 2004).

During Ireland's previous term on the Council, the UNSC discussion about Iraq focused initially on sanctions and subsequently on its disarmament. Ireland was clear in its opposition to open-ended sanctions on Iraq and argued that future sanctions should be time limited to avoid them being kept in place by the veto power of P5 members. From 2001, Ireland's proposal regarding time-limited sanctions was adopted in practice but it was not adopted as formal Council policy due to US opposition. Following the shift in Council focus in 2002 to Iraq's disarmament, there was a unanimous resolution (1441) in November of that year which gave Iraq a 'final opportunity' to comply

with previous resolutions on disclosure of its weapons programs.

Ireland has also been consistent and clear in its support for Palestinian statehood including during its last tenure on the UNSC where Ireland's stance was at odds with the US position which favoured Israel. But, following a change in the balance within the Council the US subsequently accepted the principle of Palestinian statehood. This resulted in UNSC Resolution 1397 adopted on 12 March 2002 that welcomed the involvement of the so-called 'Middle East Quartet' (UN, US, EU, and Russia) and call for an end to violence and a return to negotiations in the Middle East (Elgindy 2012).

In launching Ireland's bid, the Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar, noted that 'for Ireland to do well in this changing new world, we need to protect institutions that stand for multilateralism, institutions like the UN'. Firmly establishing Ireland as a voice for small states, including island nations, he added that without these institutions, 'the big powers call all the shots' (Carswell 2018).

While the representatives of each candidate country are busy in the United Nations and around the globe seeking to secure votes for their respective bids, it is timely to examine each of their records and ambitions in areas that are significant to their candidacy for the UNSC. Article 23(1) of the United Nations Charter requires that when voting for non-permanent seats to the UNSC, due regard must be 'specially paid, in the first instance to the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization, and also to equitable geographical distribution' (United Nations 2019). This paper compares the three candidate countries past records and what they might offer in three areas - peacekeeping and nuclear weapon; women, peace and security; and development aid. Each of the candidate countries is conducting different campaigns but with the overall intention of increasing their own visibility,

reach, and impact that will ultimately lead to securing votes for a seat on the UNSC. Through this prism it is also possible to assess Ireland's chances for a seat on the UNSC as part of its global strategy.

Peacekeeping, nuclear weapons and non-proliferation

Global peacekeeping and nuclear weapons, particularly disarmament, are recurring and important themes within the UNSC and UN General Assembly.

Peacekeeping

Since its inception in 1945, the United Nations has entrusted decisions associated with global peacemaking to the UNSC. The Council adopts resolutions to establish peacekeeping operations, determine mandates, and assign tasks. These include maintaining peace and security; facilitating the political process; protecting civilians; assisting in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants; supporting the organisation of elections; protecting and promoting human rights; assisting in restoring the rule of law; and authorising the deployment of troops, including any increase or reduction in troop strength as the situation demands (UN Documentation 2019). Given the Council's power to authorise multilateral sanctions and military action, its members have played a role in some of the most significant world events.

Ireland has an impressive record of contribution to UN peacekeeping around the globe. Since 1958, it is the only nation to have a continuous presence on UN and UN-mandated peace support operations (Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2019). At a ceremony in 2018 for the 60th anniversary of Irish peacekeeping for the UN, the Irish Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar, said, 'I really believe that the blue helmet, which is the symbol of UN peacekeeping, is every bit as much a symbol of Irish identity as the shamrock or the harp' (Carswell 2018). As of 30 June 2019, Ireland had nearly three times as many

deployed peacekeepers as Canada and Norway combined, with 628 personnel deployed by Ireland.

Canada's record is notably less impressive given its pledge in 2016 to commit up to 600 troops to UN peacekeeping missions yet, in mid-2019 less than a third of the commitment -176 Canadian personnel - were deployed, while Norway had just 141. There is little evidence to suggest Canada is seeking to redress this imbalance. There is also no evidence that internal motivations and external expectations might alter Norway's priorities. Norway has moved its focus of contributions from UN to NATO-led operations. From the mid-1990s to 2017, Norwegian UN uniformed personnel deployments decreased from around 1500 (United Nations Peacekeeping 2019).

Peacekeeping is a significant issue for the UN and for its individual member states, especially those experiencing conflict. Based on the past records, current activities and stated future intentions overall, Ireland appears to have a notably better peacekeeping record and presence than Canada or Norway. Given Ireland's own experience of past conflict, its consistent peacekeeping commitment may well prove persuasive for some nations to support its UNSC bid.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Norway is making its presence felt in other areas. In June 2019, it assumed the Chair of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. Norway's role will be important in the lead-up to the 2020 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Norway, a member NATO, is also chairing the international work on nuclear disarmament verification and will become a member of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency later in the year (Norwegian Delegation 2019b). This is of note particularly at a time when the United States and the Russian Federation have announced they are suspending their

obligations under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Norway is building on its earlier commitment in 2016 to intensify its work on nuclear disarmament verification and it put forward a resolution on this matter to the UN General Assembly. The resolution was adopted with the support of 177 member states. While no countries voted against the resolution, seven countries - Belarus, China, North Korea, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Syria - abstained (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018).

Norway and Canada, among others, were participants in the Stockholm Ministerial Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in June 2019, just one year away from the 50th anniversary of the NPT. Next year, 2020, they seek an outcome that reaffirms the role of the NPT as the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime giving real meaning for the implementation of Article VI of the Treaty (Government Offices of Sweden 2019).

While Canada's stated policy on non-proliferation and disarmament is built around the NPT and reinforced by related initiatives, it has expressed its 'serious reservations' about the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in its statement at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly in February 2017 (Government of Canada 2017). Canada stated that the Treaty divided the international community. It further commented that Canada could provide the necessary leadership through its chairing of the High-level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) Expert Preparatory Group that is developing treaty elements for eventual negotiation. Canada has subsequently stated its intention to remain focused on a practical and inclusive approach toward nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. This includes advancing progress toward an FMCT, building global capacity to address the technical challenges of nuclear disarmament verification, and strengthening nuclear security (McCarney 2018). As a member of NATO, Canada works with like-minded States

to promote nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament including with its allies in NATO, the G7 Non-Proliferation Directors Group, and the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI).

Unlike Canada and Norway, Ireland is not a member of NATO, but it became a signatory to NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP) program and the alliance's Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1999. Since that time, Ireland has been an active participant of the PFP program notwithstanding its reluctance to become a full NATO member which may stem from Ireland's experience of foreign aggression and subsequent wariness of foreign military associations. Successive Irish governments have followed a policy of military neutrality, and its long term policy of neutrality is a cornerstone of Ireland's foreign policy although it is not enshrined in its constitution despite a number of moves to do so. In April 2018, the Irish republican political party, Sinn Féin, proposed the Thirty-Eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Neutrality) Bill to enshrine neutrality in the Irish constitution, but it was rejected.

Ireland has been a long term actor involved in disarmament as part of the Core Group of Negotiators on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty originated in an Irish initiative at the UN General Assembly in 1958, and Ireland was the first country to ratify the Treaty. Ireland has been acknowledged globally for its contribution in the area of nuclear disarmament. Irish diplomats were well represented in the voting by more than 2,500 individuals from over ninety countries to determine the '2017 Arms Control Person(s) of the Year' in recognition of their efforts to secure the historic 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (Arms Control Association 2018). At the time the Treaty was opened for signature in 2017, the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, publicly recognised the work of his small nation to achieve the world's first legally binding treaty prohibiting the development, testing, manufacturing, purchasing or

possessing of nuclear weapons (Higgins 2017). More recently he was quoted as saying, 'we are engaged in disarmament not for its own sake but because of the effects that these terrible weapons have had on the many human beings who have suffered the appalling and generational consequences of their use' (Gaffey 2019).

Ireland's stated position is to refocus disarmament in the context of humanity, rather than in isolated abstract security terms. It supports disarmament and arms control within the scope of sustainable development, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and the implementation of the actions set out by the UNSC. It has committed to engage actively and constructively in its national capacity, as well as with the EU, New Agenda Coalition, the Vienna Group of 10 and other like-minded partners. In addition, Ireland, as a co-chair with Canada, Namibia and UNIDIR, of the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, supports efforts that strengthen the application of gender perspectives in multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control fora (Gaffey 2019).

Women peace and security

All three candidate countries have recognised the importance of the women, peace and security agenda as part of their domestic and foreign policies and their campaigns for a seat on the UNSC. The Special Edition of the Secretary-General SDGs progress report (Secretary-General 2019) highlights that major gender inequalities persist. Women represent less than forty percent of those employed, occupy only about a quarter of managerial positions in the world, and face a gender pay gap of twelve percent. To date, seventy-nine countries have established National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security to advance this agenda.

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) conducts reviews of each country that has ratified The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination

Against Women which was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. Instituted in 1981, the Convention is described as an international bill of rights for women and it has been ratified by 189 states, including the three candidate countries. The CEDAW reviews each country on a four year rotating basis and in each of the candidate country's reviews the CEDAW noted both progress and areas of concern regarding elimination of discrimination against women. For example, it noted specific issues related to discrimination associated with Canada's indigenous population (CEDAW 2016); and that Norway's Arctic oil and gas exploitation increased greenhouse gas emissions that disproportionately affect women (CEDAW 2017); and that domestic violence was not criminalized in Ireland (CEDAW 2017b).

Looking at the candidate countries, Ireland and Norway have gender equality and empowerment in their domestic and foreign policy agendas but only Canada has a completely feminist foreign policy agenda and whole-of-government approach to its engagement in fragile, conflict, and post-conflict settings. Canada launched its second National Action Plan 2017-2022 for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, and this is at the heart of Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy that includes its Feminist International Assistance Policy and Defence Policy. On this basis, Canada intends to take a leadership role to implement global objectives that will support the integration of the women, peace and security agenda in initiatives related to fragile and conflict-affected states (Government of Canada 2017b).

Norway has a long-standing tradition of endeavouring to promote women's rights in its foreign and domestic policies. Norway's Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, has made global education, for girls in particular, one of her priorities. As a result, Norway has doubled its contributions in this area over the past four years (Aas 2017). At the beginning of 2019, Norway launched a new national

plan - its fourth - on women, peace and security, targeting peace and reconciliation processes; peace agreements; operations and assignments; and humanitarian efforts. Norway's intention is to have a more systematic focus on women, peace and security in its efforts to support the implementation of peace agreements, strengthen the gender perspective in international operations and missions, and to increase efforts for women and girls in its humanitarian work (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019).

Norway has made women, peace and security part of its platform for a UNSC seat in 2021-2022 stating, 'Norway wishes to contribute to targeted and systematic follow-up of the commitment to women, peace and security across the full breadth of the Security Council's work. We emphasise that women must be active participants in all peace and security efforts and that it is in both men's and women's interests that peace and security work is inclusive (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019). Recognising the link between the Sustainable Development Goals and the role of women, in July 2019 Norway's Ambassador to the UN stressed that 'there is simply no way that we can achieve the 17 SDGs without achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls' (Jul 2019).

Like Norway, Ireland argues that without gender equality, the world cannot achieve the new Sustainable Development Goals, and Ireland has pledged to help maintain momentum behind both. Well before Ireland launched its current bid for an UNSC seat, Irish President, Michael D Higgins, at the Global Leaders' Meeting in September 2015, said, 'We should not have to wait fifteen years to end violence against women and girls; any paradigm of gender equality is not the gift of men, either generously or reluctantly given'. He ended his speech by noting that, 'we cannot achieve the new Sustainable Development Goals if we do not achieve gender equality' (Higgins 2015).

Ireland's past history of colonial subjugation and violent conflict position it well to be a strong voice on women, peace and security. Ireland's candidate for the UNSC in 2021-22, Geraldine Byrne Nason, chaired the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women global conference on women's rights in March 2019 in New York. As the current chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, Ireland is working to ensure the body is active in promoting women's rights, highlighting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It argues that such discussions should be mainstreamed into nuclear disarmament discourse and can add another dimension in how nuclear weapons are considered and why they should be eliminated (Gaffey 2019). This type of lateral thinking may position Ireland and appeal to UNGA members in their vote for the UNSC in June 2020. Ireland has developed a series of National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security based on UN Resolution 1325 (2000) and its four pillars of participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery, and the subsequent seven associated UN resolutions². The first National Action Plan was launched in 2011 and its third most recent national plan was launched in June 2019. Gender equality is a priority area of Ireland's foreign policy, and the prevention of, and response to, gender-based violence is another priority which underpins the health, well-being and livelihoods of millions of women.

All three candidate countries have a strong history of actively pursuing the women, peace and security agenda. Only two women currently sit on the Security Council: Britain's ambassador, Karen Pierce, and Poland's ambassador, Joanna Wronecka. Possibly to strengthen their case and to support their

² Subsequent UN Resolutions related to women, peace and security 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 1960 (2010), and 2242 (2015). While these are considered the main WPS resolutions there are other resolutions which recall these resolutions and also include references to how

gender affects elements of post-conflict situations. These include Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security and Resolution 2418, which focusses on links between armed conflict and conflict-induced food insecurity and the threat of famine.

stated positions in support of gender balance, both Norway and Ireland have proposed female candidates for the UNSC - Mona Juul from Norway and Geraldine Byrne Nason from Ireland.

Development Aid

Development aid is a significant aspect of UN work with the Sustainable Development Goals providing a holistic agenda for change. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) provides all member nations with guidance to support UN country teams to reflect the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at their core so that member states can achieve the 2030 Agenda (United Nations Sustainable Development Group 2017). It is an important document the three candidate countries need to be cognisant of and, importantly, be seen to implement.

Norway is the largest per capita donor in Official Development Assistance (ODA). It is also one of a few countries to meet the donation target of 0.7 percent of Gross National Income (GNI). As noted earlier, it has increased its core funding to the UNDP by USD 72million. Such levels of commitment may well influence and sway the voting decisions of some nations, particularly, development aid recipient countries.

Based on its own past experience of famine and the resulting migration of its people, Ireland may have a keener understanding of third world issues than other developed countries, including its competitors for a seat on the UNSC. The effect of the 2008 GFC had a significant impact on Ireland and this has affected its ability to reach the 0.7% target. Nonetheless, Ireland spends about €700million (USD 783million) every year in overseas aid – that is close to 0.4 percent of

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national income and is rising, but still short of the UN's 0.7 percent target (Haughton 2018). Ireland has put the UN Sustainable Development Goals at the centre of its approach to international development, and the government has committed to the UN target of allocating 0.7 percent of GNI to ODA by 2030. While it may be pressed to meet this target, Ireland is making every effort to achieve its goal of doubling its foreign aid funding to more than two billion euro by 2030.

In addition to its development aid support through the UN, Ireland has also been expanding its support directly, notably in the Pacific region where it hopes to gain support from island nations for its UNSC bid. In May 2019, the Irish Government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed agreements establishing the Ireland Trust Fund for Building Climate Change and Disaster Resilience in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) aimed at strengthening preparations in the region for natural disasters and climate change. The trust fund is committing to an initial six year program of funding of €12million (approx. USD13.4million) for the period 2019 to 2024. Funding for the second half of 2019 will be €1.5million (approx. USD1.7million) and it is envisaged that some projects can commence this year. The trust fund will primarily support technical assistance and capacity development in the SIDS (Asian Development Bank 2019).

Against the efforts of Norway and Ireland, Canada's ODA in 2017 was just 0.26 percent of its GNI. Indeed, Norway and Ireland have donated considerably larger portions of their GNI to ODA in the last two decades. Although Canada has promised an extra USD 2 billion for foreign aid over five years, that will fail to restore its aid spending to where it was in 2012. A report in 2018 by the OECD Development Assistance Committee was critical of Canada with the Committee Chair noting, 'It is important to now set out a path to increase aid volumes to add weight to Canada's global advocacy role'(York 2018).

The levels of promised and actual development aid support by the candidate countries are sure to be noticed by many of the African, Asian and Pacific countries whose votes they would need in their respective bids for a temporary seat on the United Nations Security Council. In this area, Norway is at the forefront with its significant financial commitment. With Ireland's long-term record, determination and tenacity it is making inroads and establishing itself as a very serious contender. Canada, on the other hand, would need to improve its standing significantly in the remaining months before the critical vote in June 2020 for it to be taken seriously within the area of development assistance.

Overall

The three candidate countries are now moving to the final stage of their campaigns to gather support and important votes for their respective bids. A seat at the UNSC provides an opportunity to respond to and to shape global affairs as well as providing opportunity to pursue their own international agenda, profile, and standing. Credibility and consistency in the final stages of their campaigns will be important not only for key relationships but also to maintain domestic support.

Some nations are willing to declare their voting intentions ahead of the June 2020 vote. New Zealand has already stated its support for Ireland (Edwards 2018), but many UN member states do not make public their voting intentions. The way members of the General Assembly will finally vote will be influenced by a range of factors additional to the requirements of UN Charter Article 23(1) noted earlier relating to the maintenance of international peace and security and geographic distribution.

The relationship of the P5 with each of the candidate countries is of special interest and may influence their vote and that of other UN member states. Norway has an historic and ongoing tense relationship with Russia, but this is balanced by its established relationship

with France and Britain. Ireland's current relationship with the UK is strained by Brexit and may influence the UK vote, but as a member of the EU Ireland should be looked on favourably by P5 and EU member, France. Ireland's large diaspora in the US may be a form of soft power to secure the US vote noting that the US played a significant role in facilitating the negotiations that led to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement between the British and Irish governments³. Canada's relationship with the US reflects that of awkward siblings but its membership of the Commonwealth may sway the UK vote towards it, noting that the UK representative is generally from England, not from the other parts of the United Kingdom - Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. Canada's large Chinese diaspora may prove sufficiently influential to help win China's vote, and Canada's French speaking population may be enough to influence France's vote. But, like each member of the General Assembly, the P5 members have only one vote each.

The task of winning a seat at the UNSC is more than visibility and profile. In addition to assessing the international reputation, image and whether the campaign narratives of candidate countries align with their foreign and domestic policies, there are other critical factors that may sway the final vote next June. One such area is their past voting patterns on contentious issues such as Israel and Palestine – where the candidate countries represent divergent positions.

The three broad areas of peace keeping and nuclear weapons; women peace and security; and development aid, provide useful insights into the contemporary and future direction of each of the candidate countries' past records and future intentions. All three candidate countries are worthy contenders, but there

are only two seats available for WEOG members for a UNSC seat for 2021-2022, and one country will miss out.

Norway has the highest contribution to the UN general budget per capita of the three, although Canada contributes the largest overall amount (United Nations Secretariat 2018). It is also the biggest financial contributor to peacekeeping operations. While Ireland's financial contribution is notably less, its involvement of peacekeeping personnel is highly evident reflecting that it is one of the largest per capita contributors. Although Ireland's financial commitment is less than Canada's, Ireland's visible and continuous presence over sixty years on UN and UN-mandated peace support operations add to its credibility.

In the complex area of nuclear weapons and disarmament, the UNSC has a mixed record of decisions regarding nuclear weapons, including testing. For example, the 15-nation body convened 282 public meetings in 2017, an increase from 237 in 2016, adopting 61 resolutions and issuing 27 presidential statements. Most of its actions were taken by consensus, but six texts - dealing with Middle East issues - were vetoed by permanent members (United Nations Security Council 2018). Notwithstanding the spectre of the veto power of the permanent members, the active involvement by any of the three candidate countries may improve the decision-making process. Each of the contenders has a credible and well established record in promoting the women, peace and security agenda in their domestic and foreign policies. The high level of financial commitment in the specific area of development aid is likely to raise Norway's profile. Whereas Ireland, with its past record and future commitment to development aid,

³ The Good Friday Agreement 1998 is also called the Belfast Agreement because it was signed in Belfast on Good Friday. The Agreement established a devolved power-sharing administration, and created new institutions for cross-border cooperation and structures for improved relations between the British

and Irish governments. It was approved by referendums in Northern Ireland and Ireland in 1998 and was subsequently incorporated into British and Irish constitutional law and other areas of legislation.

including through non-UN mechanisms, is well ahead of Canada which has significant ground to recover.

The above areas provide insights into the past records and future commitment of the three candidate countries. Other areas of activity such as actions to address climate change, transnational organised crime, and the thorny issue of refugees may provide the candidate countries with the opportunity to improve their leverage to gain a seat on the UNSC before the final vote in June 2020.

Ireland, Norway and Canada are countries of integrity with impeccable credentials as carriers of UN values. Whichever two countries from the WEOG are successful in their bid for a seat on the UNSC in 2021-2022, we can expect they will bring valuable insights and balance to the Council discussions and, hopefully, its decisions.

In terms of Ireland's unprecedented global ambition, given its efforts and Ireland's strong reputation at the UN it may well be successful in winning a seat on the UNSC in 2021-2022. So far, it has managed to align its international reputation with credibility and actual performance in its contribution to international peace and stability through its peacekeeping, development aid, and financial support to the UN. If successful, a strong performance on the Council would enhance Ireland's standing in the world to progress its goals to shape the international community and to develop its scope and global impact.

In a post-Brexit world, Ireland may well prove to be the inspiration and reasoned voice for other small nations in a world currently dominated by loud bellicose ones. As previously noted, the Irish Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar observed that without institutions like the UN 'the big powers call all the shots', and there he made a stand on behalf of all small states to have a global voice.

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