

Title	Editorial
Authors	O'Driscoll, Mervyn
Publication date	2022
Original Citation	O'Driscoll, M. (2022) 'Editorial', Irish Studies in International Affairs, 33(1), pp. 1-6. https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.2022.0021
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed);journal-article
Link to publisher's version	10.1353/isia.2022.0021
Rights	© 2022, Royal Irish Academy.
Download date	2026-09-23 19:31:56
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/17581



UCC

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh



PROJECT MUSE®

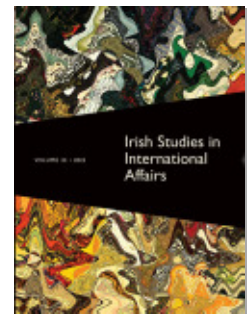
Editorial

Mervyn O'Driscoll

Irish Studies in International Affairs, Volume 33, Number 1, 2022, pp.
1-6 (Article)

Published by Royal Irish Academy

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.2022.0021>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/881937>

Editorial

Mervyn O'Driscoll

School of History, University College Cork

This *Irish Studies in International Affairs* volume is diverse in nature and content. It points towards a prevalent global and academic conviction that the global system is experiencing an unmatched period of change, transition, and even crisis.

Numerous pressures are acting against the values and basis of the multilateral system from which Ireland has succoured and profited since the 1950s. Some have attributed the term 'polycrisis' to the universal and multiple crises experienced globally during this age. It is an era of accumulating, interwoven problems and changes that defy easy disentanglement. The global pandemic has had lasting impacts. In February 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine signified the return of major warfare to the European continent. The war has shattered complacency, tested multilateral institutions, and resulted in unquantifiable human suffering, including generating the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War Two. Nuclear signalling and nuclear deterrence have re-emerged. The war has also brutally exposed the hazards of energy dependency from a single source. Despite belated efforts to decarbonise, Europe and the world will remain reliant on fossil fuels for decades. Simultaneously, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded in 2022 that the globe will surpass the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold by 2040 if dramatic action is not taken immediately. Compounding this is an intensification of economic and inflationary pressures.

It was, therefore, timely that our annual conference in 2022 should turn its attention to 'Global Power Shifts: Connectivity, Cooperation and Conflict'. Our theme recognised the growing tensions between great powers, the costs and benefits of economic connectivity, the tensions between national interests, and the pressing and multiplying need for global cooperation to address the threats to the global commons.

Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, TD, who opened the conference, outlined how Ireland's mission remains an active

membership in the multilateral institutions, particularly the EU and the UN. In his address, reproduced here, he reiterated the Irish government's enduring position that an insular path is not tenable. Its interests lie in arresting realpolitik, bolstering global governance, and fostering international cooperation and shared values. As an open economy and outward-looking society, 'Global Ireland' is apprehensive about global power shifts and the recrudescence of realpolitik in Europe and the Asia-Pacific.¹ It fears any hint of 'back to the future', i.e., the rise of unilateralism and naked power politics.

But the evidence is disconcerting and predates the Russo-Ukrainian war and encompasses several other changes in Europe, the US, the Middle East and Asia in recent years. Scholars and policymakers seek to explain the evolving US-China relationship, predict its future direction, gauge its implications, and advise governments accordingly. The prospect and consequences of the end of American hegemony and a multipolar global configuration are avidly debated. China's projected levelling up with and overtaking of the US would represent the end of 'the American century', as *Time* magazine publisher Henry Luce called it while in its midst. Graham Allison has melodramatically characterised this as the most perilous phase (the 'Thucydides Trap').²

The paper by George Koukoudakis is a defence of Kenneth Waltz's neorealism against liberal readings of developments in international affairs since the end of the bipolar system in 1989. Koukoudakis posits that neorealism remains enduringly relevant. Neorealists such as Koukoudakis recognise that America's hegemony is nearing its terminal phase with the impending arrival of unstable multipolarity, in line with what Henry Kissinger foresaw in the 1970s.

A central question, therefore, relates to Washington's international relationship management as the anticipated fragile tipping or inflection point looms. Dylan Motin contends, based on his historical reading of the in/effectiveness of America's Monroe Doctrine during the last two centuries, that it is in America's national interests not to opt for a retreat from Europe and Asia into the Western hemisphere (restraint realism). Instead, it should adopt a containment or off-shore balancing strategy. Motin endorses what he interprets as the recent US moves in this direction.

In their paper, Qin Lin and Wang Li also adopt the lens of neorealism or structural realism but do so from a Sinocentric perspective. They dissect the Biden administration's emerging Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) as a response to the Trump administration's abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Lin and Li maintain that the IPEF is a vehicle to protect US interests and suppress Chinese science and technology. They divine the aim is to

¹See Government of Ireland, 'Global Ireland: Ireland's foreign policy for a changing world', 13 January 2015, available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/133825/5b4931e8-f956-4402-848e-17236ed92cec.pdf> (30 May 2022).

²Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China escape Thucydides' trap?* (London, 2017).

create American-centred supply chains, to the exclusion of China, and tap the weapon of non-tariff barriers (US standards and industrial policy) to limit access to the US market. For China, the IPEF is viewed as American containment of China's GDP growth. Lin and Li recommend that Beijing redouble its efforts to redirect America towards 'healthy' economic competition, sustain constructive regional economic multilateralism and develop international cooperation to undermine a budding US science and technology blockade.

The paper by Greek research group Kostas Pechynakis, Georgios Fragkos, Demetrios Zounis, Andreas Belegris and Zisis Veloukas questions the fatalism and explanatory value of the neorealist perspective and advocates for neoclassical realism. It makes a solid case that the external environment and economic dependence do not govern weaker and smaller states' fates. They retain considerable domestic agency to manage their responses to the external environment. Ireland may be a model for Greece and the rest of the so-called 'PIIGS' (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain) in its rapid and triumphant exit from the Troika's austerity and bailout programme in 2013. It is thus an exemplar of economic and societal resilience that defies small state limitations. Its active, entrepreneurial state and export-led growth have withstood successive structural shocks, most recently Brexit and COVID-19, and depend heavily on national cohesion and adaptability. The challenge for other smaller countries is to emulate it. The article does give pause for reflection, but as the authors acknowledge, it may not be possible for all other small states on the European periphery to imitate Ireland, though Greece might learn from Irish governance and economic policies. Of course, from an Irish perspective, it is worth observing that the trial is different, and that is to perpetuate its success. It still hasn't recovered from the political legitimisation crisis resulting from the 2008 Great Recession and the significant social costs imposed on its population.

Ipshita Bhattacharya continues the realist flavour with a substantial paper on hybrid warfare. She explores the hybrid warfare concept, noting Carl von Clausewitz's observation that war is a chameleon. Interestingly, Russian thinking suggests that its rivals practise hybrid war, and Russia is simply modelling itself on them. The advantage of hybrid warfare is that it is an ambiguous, and deniable tool that can be used to attack an opponent covertly and achieve national aims while avoiding a major war. The article asserts that Russia has created grey zones using hybrid techniques in bordering states to exploit ethnic and other cleavages. It contends that the war in Ukraine is an escalation of a Russian hybrid war against Kyiv. Finally, Bhattacharya argues that the EU and NATO are vulnerable owing to their free societies and high fossil fuel dependence on Russia, so there is a need for urgent modifications to European and international security and legal frameworks. As Bhattacharya indicates, a critical fissure exploited by hybrid war is ethnicity.

The paper by Mohd Tahir Ganie interrogates Kashmiri youth in India in a case study of the perpetuation of ethnicity in adverse circumstances. The piece recognises the role of emotion in self-determination struggles. It argues that political narratives of hope against the odds sustain the memory and struggle of a subjugated community. Collective narratives of hope justify action in an independence movement. Remembrance of martyrs combines with future-oriented narratives of optimism. In this way, the memory of the past is combined with hope for the future, rallying present generations. Ganie's study, therefore, assists in providing an appreciation of independence narratives, chiefly among the action-oriented youth who renew the narrative and could become core fighters.

S. Harikrishnan continues the theme of bottom-up understandings of conflict and post-conflict situations. His article explores the development of shared and neutral spaces based on 'equity' in East Belfast in the post-Good Friday Agreement period. It investigates how space mixes with politics. Harikrishnan observes that organic ground-up grassroots initiatives gain more acceptance than state-led ones, drawing the example of the East Belfast GAA Club, an Irish language school and the Titanic Quarter in a diversifying unionist heartland.

Following the theme of divisions on this island, Nikos Lekakis and Timothy White investigate the possibility of the regularly mooted merger between the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), which represents the sport in the Republic of Ireland, and the Irish Football Association (IFA) of Northern Ireland. Hopes remain that these non-governmental organisations (NGOs) representing Irish football internationally can disregard political division for the overall benefit of the sport, especially in light of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Strong business, governance and international competitive advantages can be derived from a merger, but Lekakis and White conclude that the division will likely persist. Lekakis and White explore the subject from an international relations (IR) theory perspective and their conclusions figure that self-interest in the leadership of both organisations is the main obstacle.

Cian Moran interrogates the detailed evidence to explore the impact of search and rescue operations (SARs) in the Central Mediterranean from 2014 to the present, which political critics argue can incentivise migration from North Africa to Europe. Moran's painstaking and methodical analysis is a model of quantitative and primary source analysis that is interwoven with a deep reading of the broader context and qualitative materials. It confirms that the SAR operations are not acting as a pull factor for irregular migration. Indeed, Moran intimates that European states are perhaps not wholeheartedly fulfilling their international responsibility to rescue people in distress owing to the harmful politicisation of the phenomenon.

Stephen Kelly in his article appraises Gerald Boland's unrepentantly harsh handling of the Irish Republican Army during the 'Emergency' and its links

with Nazi Germany. He confirms that as minister for justice from 1939 to 1946, Boland was a classic poacher turned gamekeeper. Kelly invaluable adds new evidence from the minister's unpublished memoir. Boland showed no leniency towards his erstwhile Irish revolutionary colleagues following de Valera's proscription of the IRA after 1936. Boland's zero tolerance policy dismantled the organisation, swiftly reducing the internal threat to neutrality. Boland and Eamon de Valera's primary directive was securing the independent Irish state. In Boland's case, it was bolstered by his repugnance of indiscriminate IRA bombing combined with his unambivalent anti-Nazi convictions. Yet, he remained stout in defending Ireland's right not to hand over German agents to Britain after the war or to buckle to the unease among a significant wing of the Fianna Fáil party, including some cabinet colleagues, at his unrelenting suppression of the IRA. Kelly paints an intriguing picture of Boland as a principled individual making agonising life-and-death decisions.

In line with tradition, the journal publishes annual reviews of Ireland's foreign relations and overseas development programme. Kenneth McDonagh presents another wide-ranging study of Ireland in the world. It recalls 2021, a year of lockdowns, supply chain reductions, the departure of Angela Merkel, Joseph Biden's inauguration, the end of Britain's EU membership and much else. The EU approach to vaccine rollout confirmed the value of multilateralism. Inevitable complications occurred over Brexit, but the Anglo-Irish relationship was durable and solid. Loyalist dissatisfaction with the Northern Ireland Protocol and London's threat to invoke Article 16 required diligence and patience. The turbulence in the DUP leadership and homegrown disputes surrounding the Decade of Centenaries required adroit handling. In terms of the United States, the riots at Biden's inauguration were unnerving. But once the administration settled in, Irish audiences approved the return to pre-Trump multilateralism. Ireland relished being elected to a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. It progressed its vision of a peaceful and cooperative world, making progress, particularly on nuclear non-proliferation and peacekeeping, in line with the vision set out by the former UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld and, of course, Frank Aiken, the former Irish minister for external affairs.

In the second of the annual reviews, economists Patrick Walsh and Ciara Whelan assess the Irish Overseas Development Aid Programme in 2020. They reveal that worryingly, Ireland fell further behind in achieving its development assistance target, and its bilateral spending on Less Developed Countries (LDCs) declined, albeit marginally. The recent national preference for multilateral contributions over bilateral ones endured. Regrettably, the available statistics on Ireland's multilateral spending prevent an assessment of the extent to which Ireland's funding is focused on its national priorities of LDCs, gender equality, humanitarianism, climate change and governance.

Finally, *Irish Studies in International Affairs* is open year round for submissions. They are welcome from all disciplines and interdisciplinary approaches that fit under the international studies rubric. Articles relating to Ireland's place in the world or its international perspective are strongly desirable. The availability of the journal on Project Muse and JSTOR enhances its global reach. At the same time, the Royal Irish Academy's agreement with IReL and JISC enables immediate open access to articles of authors affiliated with participating institutions. We are grateful to the volume's contributors—authors and anonymous peer reviewers—as their scholarship sustains the journal.