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In November 1958, the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations (hereafter UN), Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., acknowledged that the Irish Minister of External Affairs, Frank Aiken, had proposed an idea with 'great appeal' that the United States and its allies would struggle to oppose publicly.[1] He cautioned that this should not be underestimated. Cabot Lodge was perceptive. Indeed, most histories and analyses of nuclear non-proliferation credit Ireland with urging the United Nations General Assembly (hereafter UNGA) to pass resolutions in 1959, 1960 and 1961 and inspiring the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (hereafter NPT) of 1968.[2]

The Irish initiative was a substantial test for the United States and NATO, especially as they were negotiating nuclear sharing within the confines of the alliance. It remained objectionable to the Dwight Eisenhower administration and most of NATO until the incoming John F. Kennedy administration embraced it in 1961. Despite Aiken's boldness in persisting with nuclear non-proliferation from 1958 to 1961, the secondary literature has not explained the roots of his thinking.[3]

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[1]Cabot Lodge to Secretary of State, DELGA 340, 3 November 1958, in William Burr, ed. '60th anniversary of Irish Resolution: A forerunner of the NPT', Electronic Briefing Book (hereafter EBB) #646, 29 October 2018, National Security Archive. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2018-10-29/60th-anniversary-irish-resolution-forerunner-npt (accessed 2 August 2025)

[2]Shaker claims that the Irish resolutions were the 'guiding concept' for the Non-Proliferation Treaty. See Mohamed I. Shaker, *The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: Origin and Implementation, 1959-1979* (London: Oceana, 1980): 3-34. This line of analysis is repeated throughout the body of literature. For example, see John Baylis, 'Conclusion' in John Baylis and Yōko Iwama, eds., *Joining the Non-Proliferation Treaty: Deterrence, Non-Proliferation and the American Alliance* (London: Routledge, 2018): 197, 201-3; Scott Kaufman, 'Project Plowshare versus the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 29, No. 1 (January 2, 2018): 79; Pascal Lottaz and Yoko Iwama, eds., *Neutral Europe and the Creation of the Nonproliferation Regime 1958-1968* (London & New York: Routledge, 2024): *passim*; Roland Popp, 'The long road to the NPT: From superpower collusion to global compromise', in Roland Popp, Liviu Horovitzand Andreas Wenger, eds., *Negotiating the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: Origins of the Nuclear Order* (London: Routledge, 2016), 19; Wayne Reynolds, '"To the Brink of Manufacture": Nuclear Weapons, the Anglo-American Alliance and Australia's Approach to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty', *Australian Historical Studies* 46, No. 2 (May 4, 2015): 278; Xinjun Zhang, 'The Riddle of 'Inalienable Right' in Article Iv of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: Intentional Ambiguity', *Chinese Journal of International Law* 5, No. 3 (2006): 653; Joseph M. Skelly, *Irish Diplomacy at the United Nations, 1945-1965: National Interests and the International Order* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997).

[3]Evgeny M. Chossudovsky, 'The Origins of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: Ireland's Initiative in the United Nations (1958-61)', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 3, No. 2 (January 1, 1990): 111–35; Catherine Manathunga, 'The Evolution of Irish Disarmament Initiatives at the United Nations, 1957-1961', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 7 (1996): 97–113; Skelly, *Irish Diplomacy at the United Nations, 1945-1965*, chapter 6.

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The extant literature, to be sure, demonstrates how Aiken, 'punched above his weight' at the UN from 1957 to 1969. He is often recalled as a hyperactive champion of the organisation, transforming Ireland into a global actor engaged in diplomatic bridge-building and preventative diplomacy. He positioned Ireland as a 'good UN citizen' with an independent voice, enhancing the UN's authority and advocating principles such as self-determination, sovereignty, equality and preventative diplomacy. This was rooted in his Irish republican anti-imperialist identity. Under Aiken, for example, Ireland initiated the Irish UN peacekeeping tradition, and it adopted striking positions on many issues, including Chinese UN representation, colonialism, Tibet, apartheid, Palestinian refugees and development aid for the emerging Third World.[4]

Despite Ireland's formative role in the conception of the NPT, there has been no in-depth research since the initial spurt in the 1990s. That produced an account of its non-proliferation campaign based on Irish Department of Foreign Affairs archives or UN official records. Previous Irish-centred research offered limited insights into the role of other core protagonists, particularly the United States and NATO, and was contextualised minimally. Thus, revisiting the birth of Aiken's campaign and conducting a comprehensive reassessment is warranted to understand the origins of this departure.

It could not have been predicted that Ireland would become a non-proliferation norms entrepreneur in 1957 or 1958 or that the issue would become the basis of its 'first [UN] resolution of political significance'.[5] Nuclear politics should not have been a priority for a neutral state preoccupied by the malaise of mass emigration and recession.[6] So, why did Ireland make non-proliferation a cornerstone of its UN agenda and persevere in the face of general Western defiance?

This article develops two central arguments. First, it demonstrates incontrovertibly how Aiken was the architect behind the Irish non-dissemination offensive. The article argues that while Aiken first floated the basic conception of a non-dissemination pact at the 13th session of the UNGA in September 1958, it was the failure of his efforts in the previous UN session at advancing comprehensive regional disarmament in Central Europe that led him to contemplate nuclear dissemination as a discrete issue capable

[4]The literature includes: Aoife Bhreatnach, 'Frank Aiken: European Federation and United Nations Internationalism', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 13, No. 1 (2002): 237-49; Noel Dorr, 'Ireland at the United Nations: 40 Years On', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 7 (1996): 41-62; Noel Dorr, *Ireland at the United Nations: Memories of the Early Years* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2010); Bryce Evans and Stephen Kelly, eds., *Frank Aiken: Nationalist and Internationalist* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2014); Christophe Gillissen, 'Ireland, France and the Question of Algeria at the United Nations, 1955-62', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 19 (2008): 151-67; Christophe Gillissen, '"Her Place among the Nations of the Earth": Irish Votes at the UN General Assembly, 1955-2005', *Estudios Irlandeses* 2, No. 2 (2007): 68-77; Katsumi Ishizuka, *Ireland and International Peacekeeping Operations 1960-2000* (London: Routledge, 2004); Michael Kennedy and Deirdre McMahon, eds., *Obligations and Responsibilities: Ireland and the United Nations, 1955-2005: Essays Marking Fifty Years of Ireland's United Nations Membership* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2005); Michael Kennedy and Art Magennis, *Ireland, the United Nations and the Congo: A Military and Diplomatic History, 1960-1* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014); Norman Macqueen, 'Frank Aiken and Irish Activism at the United Nations, 1957-61', *International History Review* 6, No. 2 (1984): 210-31; Rory Kane Miller, *Ireland and the Palestine Question: 1948 – 2004* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005); David O'Donoghue, *The Irish Army in the Congo, 1960-1964: The Far Battalions* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005); Helen O'Shea, *Ireland and the End of the British Empire: The Republic and Its Role in the Cyprus Emergency* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2015); Kevin O'Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa and the End of Empire: Small State Identity in the Cold War 1955-75* (Manchester University Press, 2018); Joseph M. Skelly, 'Ireland, the Department of External Affairs, and the United Nations, 1946-55: A New Look', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 7 (1996): 63–80: Skelly, Joseph M. Skelly, *Irish Diplomacy at the United Nations, 1945-1965: National Interests and the International Order* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997).

[5]Report of 13th UNGA, 11, in: TSCH S 16051A, National Archives of Ireland (hereafter NAI).

[6]See for example: Mary E. Daly, *Sixties Ireland: Reshaping the Economy, State and Society, 1957-1973* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 18-24.

of remedy. The article argues that Aiken's fears of Cold War nuclear escalation, which aligned with George Kennan's in 1957, played a decisive role in his journey towards non-dissemination.[7] Aiken's alarm at the risk of thermonuclear war led him to propose phased foreign military withdrawal (including nuclear weapons) in Central Europe at his first UNGA in 1957. Though non-proliferation was not his focus in the 12th UNGA, the drawback conception emanated from his general nuclear anxiety. Nuclear war fears fuelled his mediation efforts in Central European, Middle Eastern and East Asian tensions throughout 1957 and 1958.

The article's second contention is that NATO's adverse reactions to Aiken's initial proposals, particularly his Central European drawback scheme, prompted the progressive rethink which led him to identify non-proliferation as a way forward. Aiken developed non-dissemination in response to US and NATO inertia. First, Sputnik's launch in October 1957 intensified Cold War tensions, reinforcing Aiken's sense of urgency, as did repeated Cold War crises during 1958. Second, he was informed by his memories of the failure of the League of Nations in the interwar period. He framed 1957 and 1958 as comparable to 1935 when, as Minister of Defence, he foresaw the imminent outbreak of a major war. This persuaded him that a watershed was approaching, and the opportunity to prevent global catastrophe was slipping away. Third, he was inspired and felt supported by Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld's vision for the UN. Hammarskjöld encouraged inventive thinking and neutral powers to play an active role in breaking the Cold War deadlock. As such, Aiken aimed to puncture the siloed bloc politics and prevent a Third World War.[8] He recognised that neutrality was untenable as a national security strategy in the thermonuclear and ballistic missile age. By the late summer of 1958, Aiken was convinced that there was a global interest in preventing the growth of strategic complexities arising from new nuclear powers (or new 'fingers on the button'). This conviction led Aiken to raise the proliferation issue in the September 1958 UNGA.

The article also expands the primary source base compared to previous studies. In addition to records from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and published accounts from UNGA, it incorporates documents from the US Department of State, particularly those related to the US Embassy in Dublin and the US Permanent Representative to the UN. It also includes files from the UK Foreign Office. The National Security Archive briefing book, which commemorates the 60th anniversary of the 'Irish Resolutions' and was compiled by William Burr, also served as an invaluable resource.[9] US Embassy records in Dublin document interactions with the Irish administration after October 1957, and disclose US resignation regarding Aiken's singlemindedness, his profound anxiety about nuclear war and his wish to ameliorate tensions in East-West relations. US records fill in gaps in the Irish accounts, revealing the intensive discussions sparked by Aiken's draft resolution in New York during the 1958 UNGA session. These behind-closed-doors exchanges underscore the complications that Aiken's nonproliferation proposal created. UK Foreign Office records indicate how the United States and the United Kingdom worked to counter Aiken.

[7]Jonathan R. Hunt, *The Nuclear Club: How America and the World Policed the Atom from Hiroshima to Vietnam* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2022), 50-51.

[8]See Mervyn O'Driscoll, 'Ireland: Frank Aiken's Early Steps to Contain Nuclear Proliferation', in Lottaz and Iwama, eds., *Neutral Europe*, 91-2.

[9]William Burr, ed., '60th anniversary of Irish Resolution: A forerunner of the NPT', EBB #646.

The article is organised chronologically to trace the evolution of Aiken's thinking within the broader framework of the Cold War. First, it evaluates Frank Aiken's political formation. His Irish republican lifeworld and outlook were critical ingredients in his campaign. Then, the article explores the first phase of his 1957 UN activities, when he adopted an independent Irish posture and put forward his central European drawback plan. It explicates how he recalibrated following Sputnik and gradually identified non-dissemination as an issue to fabricate common ground between East and West. The nuclearisation of crises in the Middle East and the Taiwan Straits in the summer of 1958 accelerated this realisation. Buoyed by the positive public reception of his kite flying in the September 1958 UNGA, he felt encouraged to draft a non-dissemination resolution to establish an *ad hoc* UN committee to study 'the dangers inherent in the further dissemination of nuclear weapons, and recommend to the 14th session of the General Assembly appropriate measures for averting these dangers'.[10] Ironically, Aiken misread the initial reception and overestimated the support he could garner. Nonetheless, his false reading of the situation had catalysed him into putting forward a draft resolution. Even though he was eventually forced to withdraw in the face of the insurmountable opposition, he salvaged a roll call in the First Committee that acknowledged the dangers of nuclear dissemination. This served as the foundation for redoubling his efforts in 1959 to secure concrete progress.

The Aiken Factor

Without Aiken, Ireland would not have adopted non-proliferation as a central plank of its UN policy. Aiken's experiences and traits were crucial to the origins and persistence of the Irish crusade. A veteran revolutionary, who had renounced violence, he followed his lifelong political companion, Éamon de Valera, into democratic politics to birth the Fianna Fáil party in 1926.[11] Fianna Fáil dominated government after 1932 affording Aiken senior ministerial portfolios and he earned a reputation for inflexibility, particularly for his defence of wartime neutrality and wartime censorship.[12] Dublin resisted entreaties to align with the Allies in Second World War or join NATO (1949), justifying its stance on the grounds of the island's partition. Notwithstanding military neutrality, Ireland evinced a 'slightly hysterical hatred of communism', reflecting its ardent Catholicism.[13] Blocked for a decade by a Soviet veto, Ireland belatedly secured UN membership in December 1955 courtesy of a US-Soviet package deal that effectively treated Ireland as a member of the US camp. Its partisanship was transparent as it refused to exchange diplomatic missions with the Soviet Union or any member of the Eastern Bloc until 1974.[14]

[10]Agenda Item 64, 'Question of Disarmament', 'Ireland: Draft Resolution' in *United Nations General Assembly Official Records* (UNGAOR), 13th session, First Committee, A/C.1/L.206, 17 Oct. 1958.

[11]Ronan Fanning, 'Aiken, Francis, Thomas ("Frank")', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, https://www.dib.ie/biography/aiken-francis-thomas-frank-a0070 (accessed 14 March 2023).

[12]Robert Fisk, *In Time of War*, 306; Bryce Evans, '"The Iron Man with the Wooden Head"? Frank Aiken and the Second World War', in Bryce Evans and Stephen Kelly, eds., *Frank Aiken: Nationalist and Internationalist* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2014):, 133, 141.

[13]Walsh Atkins to Home, 28 July 1955, 1 in: DO 35/10772, The National Archives UK (hereafter TNAUK).

[14]Michael Quinn, *Irish-Soviet Diplomatic and Friendship Relations 1917-1991* (Dublin: Umiskin Press, 2016), 59-69; Mervyn O'Driscoll, '"A Small Country's Big Responsibility: Ireland, German Reunification and the "Acceleration of History" 1989-1990', in Michael Gehler and Maximilian Graf, eds., *Europa und die deutsche Einheit. Beobachtungen, Entscheidungen*

When Ireland entered the UN in 1955, it was governed by the Second Interparty Government (1955-7), an anti-Fianna Fáil coalition that was especially anti-communist, leading it to adopt a stance essentially indistinguishable from the Western camp. Taoiseach John A Costello was hailed by the *New York Times* as a leader of 'principle' and 'integrity'.[15] Liam Cosgrave, the Minister for External Affairs, implemented a UN policy based on three principles: strict adherence to the UN Charter, independent voting and preserving Western civilisation against communism. In a harbinger of his future stance, Aiken, sitting on the opposition benches, criticised the third principle as emasculating Ireland's ability to fulfil the second principle of national autonomy. He argued, 'One reason Communism has thrived is that non-Communist nations have not acted as they should.'[16] Costello and Cosgrave were unyielding, and in 1956 Ireland's stance at the UN mirrored that of the United States and the West, disappointing newly decolonized nations.[17]

When Fianna Fáil returned to government in March 1957, Aiken acceded as Minister of External Affairs and made common cause with Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien, the head of the new UN section of the Department of External Affairs (DEA), who favoured an independent line on Cold War questions. Aiken was a defender of the rights of small nations, and O'Brien recalled that the Minister disapproved of the previous government's undiluted pro-Westernism.[18] They judged Ireland had a duty to cooperate with the 'very small (and mainly Scandinavian) group of delegations whose chief concern was to safeguard' the moral authority of UN and uphold an independent line.[19] In the estimation of Joseph M. Skelly, Aiken's 'most valuable lieutenant' was O'Brien, who was a significant 'author of Ireland's independent identity' as an antidote to the US inclinations of Frederick H. Boland, the Irish Permanent Representative to the UN (hereafter PRUN).[20] However, it was Éamonn Kennedy, the Counsellor of the Irish mission to the UN, who O'Brien most disapproved of, recalling in his memoirs that 'he [Kennedy] was sorry that Ireland was neutral and thought it should behave as much as possible like a member of NATO'.[21] O'Brien informed Boland in September 1957, 'he [Aiken] is strongly critical of the tendency of his predecessor's [Cosgrave] speech in the General Debate last year which in his view went much too far in certain respects.'[22] Aiken and O'Brien resolved to support the Swedish Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, the independence of the UN and a just global governance ideal.

It assisted that Boland was 'a close friend or collaborator' of Hammarskjöld. Both had represented their countries in the Organization for European Economic Cooperation

und Folgen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2017), 211; Jérôme aan de Wiel, 'The Trouble with Frank Ryan; "corpse diplomacy" between Ireland and East Germany, 1966–1980', *Irish Studies In International Affairs*, 25 (2014): 203-220: Jérôme aan de Wiel, *East German Intelligence and Ireland, 1949–90: Espionage, Terrorism and Diplomacy* (Manchester: Manchester University, 2015).

[15]David McCullagh, *John A. Costello: The Reluctant Taoiseach* (Dublin: Gill, 2010), chapter 12.

[16]*Dáil Éireann Debates*, Vol. 159, No. 1, 3 July 1956, columns 129-52.

[17]Letter from Boland to O'Brien, 9 May 1957, No. 24 in: *Documents in Irish Foreign Policy* (hereafter *DIFP*) *1957-61*, Vol. XI, 23.

[18]Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Memoir: My Life and Themes* (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1999), 185-7.

[19]Conor Cruise O'Brien, *To Katanga and Back: A UN Case History* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011), chapter one.

[20]Skelly, *Irish Diplomacy at the United Nations*, 171.

[21]O'Brien, *To Katanga and Back*, 27.

[22]Letter from O'Brien to Boland, 4 September 1957, No. 67, in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 72.

(OEEC).[23] Boland had many in-depth one-to-one conversations with the Secretary-General. The Swede espoused fidelity to the UN Charter and proselytised for global values and morality.[24] A 'complex visionary',[25] he held the conviction that neutrals should provide leadership in the UNGA and thaw the Cold War to counteract the incapacitation resulting from the divided Security Council. He argued that Ireland was 'looked to for leadership, or at all events, guidance having regard to her past and present experience and history'. Ireland's anticolonial history, struggle for national liberation, military neutrality and democratic status were potent endowments. Hammarskjöld had spotted that the country enjoyed 'striking' connections in the United States owing to the 'astounding phenomenon of the Irish in the United States', in reference to the country's large 'diaspora'.[26] Hammarskjöld's vision for the UN converged with that of Aiken, de Valera and O'Brien, who favoured a global governance system based on freedom of conscience, national self-determination and, equality of states in line with the Charter. O'Brien later claimed Hammarskjöld 'more than anyone else had given the United Nations a focus of moral authority which would attract an international loyalty'. Young, idealist Irish diplomats yearned for Ireland to emulate Scandinavia's 'decent countries' and pursue a more 'Swedish' line.[27]

No Stooge

Aiken prepared intensively for his first UNGA session in autumn 1957. He planned to correct the faults of the preceding Fine Gael government.[28] His proposals were the product of discussion among a closed circle consisting of Boland, O'Brien, Aiken and, notably, 'the Chief' (de Valera). Seán Murphy, the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, did not have a key role.[29] He was retiring in weeks, was 'past his prime [,] and lacked initiative as secretary'.[30] The Taoiseach approved Aiken's landmark speeches in September, after consulting with him several times on redrafting.[31] Aiken sensed fresh thinking was essential to surmount the Cold War stasis.[32] In August, he overruled a sceptical Boland who cautioned the ideas could offend US and Irish-American opinion as neutralist or pro-Soviet. Aiken thanked him for his plain warnings

[23]Dublin Embassy to State Department, Despatch No. 65, Ireland in the United Nations, 22 August 1956, 12, in: Inactive Files (OUO) 1956-57-58, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, National Archives and Records Administration College Park, Maryland, United States (hereafter NARA).

[24]K. Kille, *From Manager to Visionary: The Secretary-General of the United Nations* (New York, US: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 77.

[25]*Ibid*., 76.

[26]Extract from a letter by Hearne to Murphy, 16 April 1956, Document No. 408, in: *DIFP 1951-57*, Vol. X, 16 April 1956, 568.

[27]O'Brien, *To Katanga and Back*, chapters 1, 14-5.

[28]Letter from O'Brien to Boland, 4 September 1957, No. 67 in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 72.

[29]Based on the records published in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, covering August to September 1957. Seán Murphy told the US Counsellor that Aiken's statement came 'as something as a bombshell' to him (Dublin to Washington, No. 104, 11 September 1957 in: File 312, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG84, NARA).

[30]See Michael Kennedy, 'Murphy, Seán Anthony', in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. https://www.dib.ie/biography/murphy-sean-anthony-a6097 (accessed 17 May 2023).

[31]Letter from O'Brien to Boland, 4 September 1957, No. 67, in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 73.

[32]See Letter from O'Brien to Boland, 26 August 1957, No. 63, in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 66-7; Letter from Boland to O'Brien, 30 August 1957, No. 66 in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 70-2; Letter from O'Brien to Boland, 4 September 1957, No. 67, in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 72-3.

but said 'it was better to face such things squarely from the start and not to minimise them.'[33]

Aiken unveiled his international philosophy to the UNGA in September 1957. He implored the UNGA to observe its charter, noticing it had been 'ignored, if not defied' in the last year (the Suez Crisis and the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution).[34] He called for global governance, equality of states and the universal 'rule of law based on justice'. The deadlocked disarmament talks were the most pressing concern, he argued, as the threat to humanity presented by weapons of mass destruction demanded urgent attention. For Aiken, the UNGA was the correct forum to formulate and express the collective global will. He noted the prevalence of the belief that nuclear deterrence kept the peace but expressed deep scepticism about its efficacy, declaring, 'fear does not always prevent war . . . science is rapidly annihilating the safety factor of distance. If we want to prevent an explosion we must waste no time'. That was his primary concern. The Suez Crisis opened a new zone of competition in the Middle East, on top of Central Europe and East and Southeast Asia. The latter was the site of an uneasy standoff between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and US-backed Taiwan in the aftermath of the Korean War. They all needed attention in Aiken's mind. Advocating the step-by-step removal of areas of 'competitive diplomacy' and encouraging disarmament, especially in contested regions, Aiken pleaded with the UNGA to construct 'the political foundations' for 'a just and peaceful world order'.[35] Overall, he evinced a realistic streak in favour of tension reduction and confidence building to break the tense deadlock. His premise: gradualism was indispensable. The all-or-nothing approach of comprehensive disarmament was a nonstarter – a decade of logjams had proven that.

In swift strokes, Aiken introduced arresting prescriptions on flagship issues from which Western neighbours recoiled. Most importantly, he provoked sharp criticism for his temerity in recalling Nikita Khrushchev's earlier offer to withdraw Soviet troops from Eastern Europe in return for the United States leaving the continent, which he thought might serve as an opener to East-West dialogue. Aiken recommended a reciprocal drawing back of foreign troops and forces from Central Europe. His drawback stratagem triggered fears of the neutralisation of West Germany, a Western citadel and Western Europe's economic dynamo. His design was distinct from the earlier Polish Rapacki Plan (1957), which proposed denuclearisation of the region. Any hint of Rapacki redux was repugnant to Bonn, Washington and NATO owing to Germany's forward position and Western dependence on a nuclear armoury to counteract the Warsaw Pact's conventional superiority. Aiken later claimed with some foundation that his proposal was 'misunderstood'.[36]

Aiken, after all, did not desire the demilitarisation and the denuclearisation of the whole of Western Europe. He advocated for the staged drawback of US and Soviet forces;

[33]See for example: Letter from O'Brien to Boland, 26 August 1957, No. 63, in *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 66-7; Letter from Boland to O'Brien, 30 August 1957, No. 66 in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 70-2; Letter from O'Brien to Boland, 4 September 1957, No. 67, in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 72-3.

[34]Agenda Item 9 (XII), General Debated (continued) in: UNGAOR, 12th Session, Plenary Meeting, A/PV.682, 20 September 1957, 45.

[35]Agenda Item 9 (XII), General Debated (continued) in: UNGAOR, 12th Session, Plenary Meeting, A/PV.682, 20 September 1957, 45-8.

[36]Emmons to State, Despatch No. 140, 17 October 1957, 3 in: Folder 312 Dublin United Nations 1957, Box 23, RG84, NARA.

even 100 kilometres on either side of the Iron Curtain would relieve tensions.[37] He did not intend to denuclearise Central Europe in isolation (á la Rapacki) as he included foreign conventional forces in his drawback designs. That was to remedy a Rapacki Plan flaw from the NATO standpoint, but Aiken's new thinking was overlooked in Western criticisms that viewed it as crudely equivalent to the Polish plan.

Fear of nuclear war lay at the centre of his thinking. Aiken's overarching aim was de-escalation: the proximity of devastating opposing forces in the nuclear and ballistic missile epoch shrank the diplomatic space and inflated the risks of inadvertent conflict. He aired a palpable sense of urgency in his UNGA address.[38] Aiken also proposed taking the Middle East out of the ambit of Great Power competition, suggesting an agreement for 'a mutual diplomatic drawing-back' comparable to military disengagement in Europe.[39] His entire UNGA speech was imbued with anxiety about the prospect of nuclear war.

Aiken voiced objectionable views, from Western perspectives, on several other matters during the autumn 1957 UN session. He critiqued the US 'moratorium' on discussion of Chinese representation at the UN – an article of faith in Washington. Aiken also espoused an advanced line on decolonisation, to the satisfaction of the Afro-Asian bloc, offending West Europeans. His appeal to France to recognise Algeria's right to self-determination, positing UN mediation, kindled French displeasure. Neither would he back Portugal on Goa UN Trusteeship matters. Aiken struck an independent bearing but set a pragmatic tone, winning recognition for impartiality.[40]

Overall, Aiken declared the responsibility for detailed negotiations on defusing the Cold War and the nuclear standoff lay with the two protagonists, but Ireland was obligated to exercise free speech and advise on ways to ameliorate the global commons. The *New York Times* even chose Aiken as its 'man of the day'.[41] By raising his ideas at the UNGA, he ensured they received significant publicity and traction, making a substantial global impact, while publicising Ireland as an impartial actor. As the US Embassy in Dublin recognised, Ireland demonstrated it was not 'an extension of Western polity'. Aiken's posture was a 'bombshell' positioning Ireland to put forward fresh ideas and build bridges with the Eastern Bloc and the emerging Global South.[42]

However, a deeper understanding of Irish foreign policy could have forewarned the West. After all, Aiken's bearing at the UN in 1957 closely echoed de Valera's at the League of Nations in 1932. De Valera entered power in 1932 and took the dual portfolio of Taoiseach and Minister of External Affairs. He was emphatic that the League was 'the force of world opinion' with the duty to advance disarmament and respect for the equality of states.[43] De Valera, leveraging Ireland's position as the President of the League Council and acting President of the Assembly, made an arresting and immediate global impression. He lectured a stonily silent League Assembly with 'brutal frankness'

[37]Memorandum by Frank Aiken, 2 October 1957, No. 74 in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 79.

[38]Agenda Item 9 (XII), General Debate (continued) in: UNGAOR, 12th Session, Plenary Meeting, A/PV.682, 20 September 1957, 45.

[39]*Ibid*., 46.

[40]See Skelly, *Irish Diplomacy at the United Nations*, chapter 2.

[41]Amembassy to State, 3 October 1957 in: File 312, Box 33, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

[42]Emmons to State, Despatch No. 104, 11 September 1957 in: File 312, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

[43]Speech by de Valera as Acting President of the Assembly of the League of Nations at the opening meeting of the Assembly's 13th session, 26 September 1932, Document No. 48, in: Éamon de Valera and Maurice Moynihan, eds., *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera, 1917-73* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980), 220.

during his inaugural address on 26 September 1932. Against a background of interminable and fruitless disarmament talks, the Sino-Japanese conflict (following Japan's invasion of Manchuria), rising militarism in Europe and global economic fragmentation, he declared:

> Friends and enemies of the League alike feel that the testing time has come; and they are watching to see if that test will reveal a weakness presaging ultimate dissolution or a strength that will be the assurance of a renewal of vigour and growth.[44]

In 1957, therefore, Aiken invoked the fertile but neglected precedent of Irish interwar internationalism. He urged obedience to the UN Charter and sermonised on republican internationalist principles of sovereignty, consent, equality and liberty, while nurturing the UN as the global representative of all states – with the mandate to promote peace and justice.

Nonetheless, Aiken's UN *coup de main* shocked Ireland's Western partners, especially the United States. The Second Interparty Government had sought US advice before its outing in the UNGA, and Washington assumed continuity would prevail on defining policy matters.[45] Similarly, London expected that Aiken would align with Cosgrave's 'cautious' approach and toe a Western line, in deference to Ireland's anti-communist disposition.[46] At first, the British and US misread Aiken's enterprise as naïveté or as a bid to increase his profile and leverage. They reckoned he would benefit from tutoring.

On instructions, US Ambassador Scott McLeod requested a meeting with de Valera to discuss the Irish about-face. To McLeod's surprise, Aiken, just returned from New York, attended the meeting on 2 October.[47] This resulted in a frank exchange. Aiken took the preeminent role in expounding the Irish position, underscoring command of his portfolio and de Valera's imprimatur. The meeting was principally devoted to Aiken's drawback plan, but Washington's opposition to Ireland's positions on China and Algeria were also raised. It was made clear to McLeod that there would be no Irish retreat, and the meeting amounted to a lengthy exchange of alternative points of view.[48] Aiken claimed he was aggrieved 'at the cavalier manner in which the US operated'. He averred that the State Department had co-opted the Catholic Church (in the person of Cardinal Francis Spellman, Archbishop of New York) to seek a reversal on the China issue. Although McLeod denied knowledge of a US effort to enlist Spellman, Aiken remained unconvinced.[49] Aiken memorably told McLeod that Ireland was not 'a stooge of the West' and that it was vital for Ireland to relieve Cold War tensions and speak frankly. It had 'done its duty by pointing up the urgency' to address the dangers of a nuclear-armed world. Aiken feared war was 'imminent', and global nuclear devastation had to be avoided.[50]

[44]*Ibid*., 220-1.

[45]See for example, Kimber to Home, Document No. 2, 25 Feb. 1958, 2 in: DO 35/10772, TNAUK; Emmons to State, Despatch No. 104, 11 September 1957 & Emmons to State, Despatch No. 79, 16 August 1959 in: Folder: 312 United Nations 1957, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA; Dublin to Washington, 16 August 1957, 5 in: Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

[46]Kimber to Dixon, 18 July 1957, 2 in: DO 35/6947, TNAUK; Hagan to State, Despatch No. 12, 10 July 1957 in: International conferences and organizations 1957, File 310, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

[47]McLeod memo, 2 October 1957, 1 in: File 312, Box 3, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

[48]*Ibid*., 1.

[49]*Ibid*., 3.

[50]McLeod memo, 2 October 1957 & Memcon on 'Irish proposals in UN' (McLeod and Aiken), 9 October 1957 & Telegram, McLeod to Secstate, No. 69, 9 October 1957 in: File 312, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

The US Embassy quickly concluded that Aiken's offensive 'was obviously a studied effort of the Devalera [sic] government and not a spontaneous effort'.[51] The Counsellor of the US Embassy, Arthur B. Emmons, wrote that:

> Irish foreign policy is, under the present Government, a highly personalized affair, and the recent incident, if it can be used as a valid indication, reveals much about the state of mind of the two principal men who make or influence it; the possibility of other surprise moves cannot be ruled out while Mr. de Valera continues in office.[52]

At first, McLeod speculated de Valera 'was the author of the general idea' of the drawback plan.[53] The US Embassy also insinuated the proposals were a joint Aiken and de Valera product to take advantage of Ireland's 'strong moral appeal'.[54] However, after months of Aiken's unstinting defence of drawback, the ambassador and embassy would subsequently revise their views. That implied he was not 'mouthing de Valera's ideas'; instead, he was the instigator, and driving force. [55]

When, on 4 October, the USSR launched Sputnik I, US Embassy records reveal that Aiken's judgment toughened. He informed McLeod on 9 October 1957 that since the USSR would shortly have the capability to strike the US mainland, tensions demanded relieving and 'the current development of atomic weapons means to reasonable men that the area of political entity which must live together under an accepted law is the world'.[56] In that sense he was a globalist. He stressed to McLeod that as Minister for Defence, he had concluded in 1935 that war in Europe was inevitable, and 'his conviction that war was imminent is much more now than it was in 1935'.[57]

The evidence points to the following interim conclusion. For Aiken, the failure of the League of Nations in the mid-1930s was a missed opportunity that contributed to the origins of the Second World War. From this, he drew the lesson that the UN had to be safeguarded, and that global collective action was vital to breaking the bipolar deadlock. De Valera had established the Irish precedent in the 1930s of seeking to cajole and shame states into fulfilling their international commitments. It was Aiken's turn, but the situation was far worse in his mind due to the nuclear age. Sputnik had catalysed his thinking.

'One Track Mind' or a 'Trend of World Opinion'?

In February 1958, the British embassy reported Aiken had 'a strangely one track mind' and was 'personally obsessed war might break out at any moment against the wishes of both sides'. It concluded that 'it would be imprudent to assume that we may not witness

[51]Telegram from McLeod/Dublin to State, 22 September 1957 in: File 312, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

[52]Emmons/Dublin to State Department, Despatch No. 140, 17 October 1957, 3 in: United Nations 1957, Folder 312, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG84, NARA.

[53]McLeod note of interview with de Valera and Aiken, 2 October 1957, 2 in: United Nations 1957, Folder 312, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

[54]Emmons/Dublin to State Department, Despatch No. 140, 17 October 1957 in: United Nations 1957, Folder 312, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

[55]In May 1958, a US official witnessed a dinner exchange between the Taoiseach and minister, which signaled de Valera's impatience at Aiken's repeated defence of the drawback plan (McLeod/Dublin to State, Despatch No. 475, 16 June 1958 in: Dublin Embassy, Political – Ireland 1958, File 350, Box 23, RG 84, NARA).

[56]Memcon between Aiken and McLeod, Irish proposals in UN, 9 October 1957 in: United Nations 1957, File 312, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

[57]Memcon, 9 October 1957 in: File 312, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

a further example of his clumsy interventions'.[58] Aiken was unwavering in his estimation of the gravity of the situation and did not tire of proposing a military drawback in central Europe in conversations with US Embassy staff in Dublin, but his thinking on proliferation and the 'armaments race' was evolving. In a meeting with McLeod on 27 January 1958, Aiken restated his rationale for drawback and, after what became a lesson in military strategy, critiqued the US proposal to locate missile sites in NATO countries for two reasons. First, he stated widespread public opposition would prevent some Western governments from accepting the offer. Second, the Soviets would respond and place missiles in their satellites, negating whatever temporary advantage the United States hoped to secure. Aiken 'evidenced considerable apprehension concerning the ultimate end of the "armaments race"'. He expressed the belief that many small countries could eventually acquire the ability to produce nuclear bombs. 'Then where will you be?', asked the Minister.'[59]

Meanwhile, the disarmament talks in Geneva collapsed, and nuclear testing hastened. The London Subcommittee's effort to revive the long-frozen UN disarmament talks had come to nothing in the fall of 1957. Harold Stassen, Eisenhower's Special Assistant on Disarmament, resigned in 1958; his methods in seeking accommodation with the Soviets had alienated administration 'hawks'. Concurrently, the 'Big Three' expanded their test series. They conducted more tests in 1957 – 55 – than in any year since 1945. This more than doubled again in 1958.[60] Public disquiet reached a crescendo in the West, particularly in Britain, which tested its first hydrogen devices in 1957 and 1958, whence the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) began and spread.[61] Public protests, direct action and passive resistance swelled in the age of full-blown nuclear fear.

Ireland favoured comprehensive disarmament but detected no valuable role to play. As early as January 1957, Boland wrote he was not disposed to intervening in the disarmament debates as the 'major points at issue are very complicated and have a long background of contention and disagreement' best left to the central players 'unless we have some very new or striking idea to contribute'.[62] However, in March 1958, Hammarskjöld stressed to Boland that there was an urgent need to dissolve Cold War mentalities in talks on modest but practical gains rather than the futile pursuit of an illusory 'package' disarmament deal or lofty speeches for propaganda purposes. Boland opined to Con Cremin, the recently-appointed Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, that the 'trend of world opinion seems to me to be against' the Cold War mentality and 'if we [Ireland] could make ourselves the mouthpiece of that trend without unduly wounding the US susceptibilities, it would seem to me to be worth doing'.[63] HQ's circulation of Boland's report to Irish missions abroad emphasised the significance Dublin attached to it. Aiken invited Hammarskjöld to visit Dublin; however, the Secretary-General was unable to do so at the time.[64] Boland continued to relate the

[58]Kimber to Home, No. 2, 25 February 1958 in: DO 35/10772, TNAUK.
[59]LaFroniere (for McLeod) to State Dept, Despatch No. 270, 28 January 1958 in: File 312, Box 23, RG 84, NARA.
[60]Nuclear Testing Tally, Arms Control Association https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/nucleartesttally (accessed 19 May 2023).
[61]Lawrence S. Wittner, *The Struggle against the Bomb*, Vol. II: *Resisting the Bomb* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1997), chapters 2, 3 and 4.
[62]Extract from a confidential report from Boland to Murphy, 14 January 1957, Document No. 525, in: *DIFP 1951-57*, Vol. X, No. 525, 729.
[63]Boland to Cremin, 6 March 1958 in: DFA/5/313/36A, NAI.
[64]Boland to Cremin, 10 March 1958 & Boland to Cremin, 2 March 1958 in: DFA/5/313/36A, NAI.

pessimism prevailing at the UN and the urgent need to alleviate tensions. Next, a crisis-ridden summer characterised by nuclear signalling and brinksmanship between the US and USSR underlined the peril.

First, the Middle East in 1958 vindicated Aiken's identification of it as a trouble spot in his initial outings at the 12th session of the UNGA. During his General Debate address in September 1957, he had recommended briefly adapting his Central European plan for '[p]rogressive military disengagement' to the Middle East, where he stated there was a need for a drawback from the 'fierce diplomatic competition between great Powers for the friendship of weaker Governments'.[65] No significant heed was taken to his admonitions relating to the Middle East at that time, as his Central European drawback plan was centre stage. But the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon led to Hammarskjöld's initiative on 11 June 1958 to send a UN Observation Group to Lebanon (UNOGIL).[66] Ireland was among a group of countries, including the Scandinavians and Canada, that responded to the Secretary-General's call to second army officers to the UNOGIL force.[67] With no material interests in Lebanon or the Middle East, Ireland was well-positioned to act as an honest broker. The bloody overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy of Iraq in mid-July led the Lebanese Prime Minister to allege external infiltration into Lebanon via Syria. Washington was alarmed about a possible domino-like spread of radicalism as Egypt's President Abdel Nasser popularised pan-Arabism, calling for a United Arab Republic. It organised the landing of US and British troops in Lebanon and Jordan to shore up those pro-Western regimes. That incited protests and Soviet calls for a UN summit. Then, the US revealed on 21 July that its forces had atomic capabilities.[68] Although the Marines left the Honest John rockets aboard their sea vessels, the President ordered SAC on alert to signal the Soviet Union not to interfere.[69]

Fortunately, Hammarskjöld had acted with alacrity after the 11 June Security Council approval of UNOGIL, and initial detachments were in Lebanon and Jordan by early July. They dampened alarmism, offering impartial monitoring of the Lebanese Civil War and casting doubt on allegations claiming external intervention from Syria, which had recently merged into a union with Egypt.[70] Rumours of an Irish withdrawal from UNOGIL after the US Marines disembarked on 17 June caused anxiety in Washington about a possible Irish withdrawal from UNOGIL. On the contrary, Boland, de Valera and Aiken adhered to the Secretary-General's line and sanctioned the expansion of UNOGIL in late July and August.[71] An Irish officer was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of

[65]Agenda Item 9 (XII), General Debate (continued), in: UNGAOR, 12th Session, Plenary Meeting, A/PV.682, 20 September 1957, 46-7.

[66]Kennedy to Cremin, 16 June 1958 in: DFA/5/313/36A, NAI.

[67]Confidential report from Kennedy to Cremin: UN observation group in Lebanon, 23 June 1958, Document No. 131, in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 178-80; 'Pink slip' of a Cabinet decision by Moynihan: UN Observers in Lebanon; Participation of Irish Army Officers, 24 June 1958, No. 132, in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 181; Telegram from Cremin to Boland, 24 June 1958, Document No. 134, in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 181; in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 195-6; Memorandum for Government by Department of External Affairs, 29 July 1958, Document No. 145, in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 196-7.

[68]'Command discloses US forces carry atomic weapons', *Irish Times*, 22 July 1958, 1.

[69]R. K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (The Brookings Institution, Washington, 1987), 66-7; Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, *Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 127.

[70]Kennedy to Cremin, 7 July 1959 in: DFA/5/313/36A, NAI.

[71]Ward to McLeod, 17 July 1958 & Telegram from McLeod to Secstate Washington, 18 July 1958 & Telegram No. 18 from McLeod to Secstate, 18 July 1958 in: NARA, RG 84, Dublin Embassy, Box 23, Lebanon file, File 350, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA. See also 'Irish observer group may be withdrawn', *Irish Times*, 16 July 1958, 1.

UNOGIL, tangible evidence that Aiken's attitude at the UN 'was not just empty rhetoric'.[72] UNOGIL began to assuage tensions, but by then, Khrushchev had called an emergency session of the UNGA devoted to the Middle East.

The Irish Cabinet discussed the forthcoming emergency session on 8 August 1958, which resulted in de Valera engaging in further discussions with Aiken.[73] When Aiken spoke at the special session on 14 August, he put forward a ten-point comprehensive regional peace plan for the Middle East based on national self-determination, Great Power disengagement and neutralisation, in the interests of world peace. Foreshadowing his later calls for a global non-proliferation pact, he proposed a regional one for the Middle East: 'member states should be asked to undertake not to supply atomic weapons or long range bombers or missiles to the region, or maintain such weapons or equipment there; and member states in the region itself should be asked to undertake not to acquire or manufacture such weapons for equipment'.[74] However, Aiken was 'over-ambitious' and 'unrealistic' in putting forward a far-reaching regional peace plan for which no consensus existed.[75] The crises quickly subsided in Lebanon and Jordan, allowing a UN resolution by ten Arab nations to secure universal approval for the early withdrawal of US and British forces. Hammarskjold's UNOGIL fire brigade worked.

Before the Middle East crisis petered out, the Second Quemoy-Matsu Crisis eclipsed it. The PRC shelled and blockaded the nationalist-held offshore islands from 23 August. The US, having deployed nuclear weapons systems to Formosa in 1957, declared its intent to break the blockade and despatched a nuclear carrier force. It was another instance of risky brinkmanship. The Soviet Union backed Beijing, but the situation illustrated to China the potential value of possessing nuclear weapons. The atmosphere was menacing as the 13th UNGA was scheduled to open later in September. The US and Soviets laboured to temper their regional allies and associates, not wishing to be drawn into a major war.

Aiken, apprehensive about the incentives the succession of crises created for states to acquire nuclear weapons, grew convinced that the complexity and number of combustible situations would swell if preventive action was not taken. His comprehensive plans for a mutual drawback in Central Europe and the neutralisation of the Middle East in August 1958 had not gained traction. He did not wish to aggravate the Taiwan Straits crisis by repeating his outspoken 1957 position on the Chinese representation question. Instead, Aiken planned to vote for the annual Indian resolution requesting a discussion of the Chinese representation but to say little. A cryptic note by Cremin alluded to Aiken's sensitivity about retreating from his 1957 position; Aiken insinuated that he had been 'misinterpreted' and that by voting for discussion of Chinese representation in 1957, it was not automatic that Ireland would vote for Peking. At one point, Cremin recorded that Aiken toyed with

> advancing an amendment to the Indian proposal that the question be discussed to the effect that the Secretary-General and the Big Powers (including Japan) and Formosa should consider the possibility of speaking to Peking with the object of bringing about a change

[72]'Irishman in US post in Lebanon', *Irish Times*, 9 August 1958, 9; Skelly, *Irish Diplomacy at the United Nations*, 161.
[73]Note of Roinn an Taoisigh, 12 August 1958 in: TSCH S 16057 B, NAI.
[74]Undated proposed speech by Aiken (c. August 1958) in: TSCH S 16057 B, NAI.
[75]Skelly, *Irish Diplomacy at the League of Nations*, 159.

in the internal policies of China, the reunification of Korea, and some *modus vivendi* about Formosa.[76]

However, he fastened on nuclear weapons as a cause of, or an irritant in, the regional contests. Cremin observed that the Minister's consistent attitude was 'characterised by an effort to ascertain the kernel of the problem and suggest that something be done about it'.[77] On 5 September, Cremin reported that Aiken was 'working very hard, and has been for some days, on his principal speech at the Assembly. The main theme is likely to be a proposal that countries possessing nuclear weapons should undertake not to supply them to other countries'.[78] The Cabinet and Taoiseach approved Aiken's initiative on 9 September at an informal discussion.[79]

US lobbying to reverse Ireland's voting for India's resolution on Chinese representation at the UNGA persisted. Given Aiken's maverick streak, preference to discuss issues on their merits and the US's inability to predict his audacious moves, Aiken was invited to meet the US Secretary of State in New York.[80] A frank but friendly exchange occurred on 15 September. Dulles divulged that the US was pushing Chiang to backpedal on Quemoy and Matsu without success. Aiken insisted on the importance of de-escalating tensions in East and Southeast Asia and the Middle East to exclude the regions from Cold War competition and build a basis for a stable peace. He claimed the Middle East crisis 'proved that Russia did not want war now at any rate', and the Taiwan Crisis was added proof. Dulles concurred but expressed fears about the PRC's intent. The records of the meeting reflected an Irish foreign minister who favoured substantive discussions and judicious compromises to test Khrushchev's 'peaceful coexistence' intentions. He wanted to disrupt the pattern of parallel monologues, power politics and polarisation.[81] However, Aiken did not inform Dulles that he planned an initiative to prevent the dissemination of nuclear weapons. The Eisenhower administration was about to get caught unawares again.

When Aiken spoke to the UNGA on 19 September, he declared that the general debate was 'the nearest approach we have to humanity's appraisal of its own situation'. He stated that the crisis-ridden environment underscored the risk of further states acquiring such weapons. Announcing that the Great Powers could 'destroy us all', this mandated finding a way to hold humanity's 'destructive powers in check'. The dilemma was to do this while negotiating a world order based on 'mutual consent' and 'the rule of law', or put differently, 'how to preserve a *Pax Atomica* while we build a *Pax Mundi*', as he acknowledged that disarmament was not attainable in the short term. Technical verification and control problems were obstacles, so

[76]Letter from Cremin to Boland, 5 September 1958, No. 151, in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 202.
[77]*Ibid*.
[78]*Ibid*.
[79]Skelly, *Irish Diplomacy at the United Nations*, 250.
[80]A discrepancy exists between the Irish and US records as to who requested the meeting. See Memorandum by Aiken on a meeting with Dulles,15 September 1958, No. 154, *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 204; Memcon, 15 September 1958 in: 13th General Assembly, Box 12, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Wilcox's Subject Files 1957-62, RG 59, NARA. However, the US ambassador to Ireland, McLeod, consistently argued to the State Department for a more accommodating US bearing toward Ireland that might include a short official visit from Dulles. McLeod sought an emollient to encourage a revision of Irish policy at the UN.
[81]Memorandum by Aiken on a meeting with Dulles, 15 September 1958, No. 154, *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 204; Memcon: Taiwan Straits, 15 September 1958 & Memcon: Chinese communist representation in the UN, 15 September 1958 in: 13th General Assembly, Box 12, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Wilcox's Subject Files 1957-62, RG 59, NARA.

the balance of terror between the nuclear powers was inevitable for the foreseeable future. The solution was a mutually beneficial agreement between nuclear and non-nuclear powers to prevent new nuclear powers from emerging and increasing strategic complexity. If the nuclear powers also assented not to supply non-nuclear states, the UNGA could pass a resolution calling on non-nuclear states to renounce acquisition, which would be the first step towards nuclear disarmament. However, Aiken believed that reducing opposing forces in contested regions was also necessary to eliminate Great Power competition. He recommended that small states voluntarily declare neutrality, guaranteed by the UN, exiting the Cold War competitive dynamic. In his way, Aiken sketched out the opportunities for expanding the rule of law – region-by-region, country-by-country, step-by-step. He finished his 1958 plenary speech by underlining the Formosa crisis and the desperate need to 'find ways of fostering our *esprit de corps* as a world community of neighbours on this satellite of the sun'.[82] In effect, Aiken proposed the collective good favoured all states acting preventively and pledging nuclear non-dissemination. Such a step promised to build confidence and peace. It was a component of his broader appeals to expand the 'rule of law'.

Aiken touched a chord, or so he gauged. In the subsequent days at the UN, many speakers acknowledged proliferation as a problem deserving attention. Heartened, Aiken drafted a resolution. The US mission in New York was informed in vague terms on 5 October. The resolution would 'ask "nuclear powers" not to make nuclear weapons available to other countries and request all other states to refrain from any effort to develop nuclear weapons'. The remark that Aiken understood India was extracting military-grade plutonium implied this was a variable in his motivations.[83] Based on the Irish records, Cabot Lodge was 'initially receptive'.[84] The immediate reactions of other delegations were reassuring, according to Irish accounts. 'Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Norway were obviously sympathetic in private conversations'. Mexico, Ceylon, India and United Arab Republic, 'all influential countries in the UN', and Burma and Sweden were approving too. Additionally, Poland expressed interest.[85] Therefore, sufficient support seemed to exist for a resolution.[86] Thomas J. Hamilton, the UN correspondent of the *New York Times*, interviewed Aiken, and the ensuing front-page article on 7 October reported Ireland 'sounding out' other delegations about a plan for a special committee to draft an international agreement. It recorded Aiken invoking Bernard Baruch's observation years earlier that 'once the smaller powers had learned to produce nuclear weapons there would be a great danger that even a small war would become a nuclear war'.[87]

[82]Agenda Item 9 (XIII), General debate (continued), in: UNGAOR, 13th Session, 751st Plenary Meeting, A/PV.751, 19 September 1958, 40-2.

[83]Cabot Lodge to Secretary of State, DELGA 86, 5 October, in: William Burr, ed. '60th anniversary of Irish Resolution: A forerunner of the NPT', EBB # 646, 29 October 2018, https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2018-10-29/60th-anniversary-irish-resolution-forerunner-npt

[84]Report on the thirteenth General Assembly of the United Nations, c. 4 September 1959, 11 in: TSCH/S/16051A, NAI.

[85]*Ibid*., 12.

[86]'Eire is worried about "nuclear club" at UN', *Belfast Telegraph*, 6 October 1958; T. J. Hamilton, 'Ireland would limit A-bomb to 4 nations', *New York Times*, 7 October 1958, 1, 16.

[87]Decode telegram from UN Mission to Dublin, No. 119, 7 October 1958 in: DFA/6/440/8/1, NAI.

'[C]lobber the idea'[88]

However, a reversal in US thinking occurred after Cabot Lodge consulted Washington, which perplexed Aiken and left him feeling misled. Subsequent discussions with the US representatives did not sufficiently clarify the crux of their problem to Aiken, as he was not told the real reasons for their hostility.

Cabot Lodge informed the State Department in Washington of Aiken's intentions to submit a draft resolution on 5 October. The next day, Acting Secretary of State Christian Herter instructed Cabot Lodge to dissuade Ireland and enlist the British and French in a campaign against such a 'potentially dangerous' resolution.[89] Aiken's proposition was objectionable, according to Herter. The US defence strategy relied on nuclear deterrence and retaliation. NATO's shield depended on US nuclear weapons, compensating for the alliance's conventional inferiority. Hence, for Washington, a comprehensive, verifiable disarmament package was non-negotiable. Moreover, the administration's view was that US atomic energy law placed strict limits on the transfer of custody to allies.[90] Aiken was 'not impressed' and was 'convinced' of the need for immediate action to halt proliferation when he was briefed about the US line by the Deputy Chief of the UN Mission, James J. Wadsworth on 7 October.[91]

By then, Aiken's proposal had a draft resolution that called on nuclear and non-nuclear powers to make reciprocal declarations, pausing the supply of nuclear weapons, equipment and information from nuclear to non-nuclear states. The UN would establish an *ad hoc* committee to draft a convention for consideration by the next (14th) UNGA with provisions for inspection and control.[92] Aiken reasoned that the US retained the right to make weapons available to allies in 'war situations', as any declaration not to supply non-nuclear powers could hardly be binding in such situations. He contended it was unnecessary and, in any case, impossible to verify existing stockpiles, and that 'overwhelming public censure' would deter violations. Wadsworth inferred it was 'futile' to intercede further with Aiken, who maintained that 'he had been studying this subject for many months and was convinced something like this should be done.'[93] The US mission firmly counterargued displaying no willingness to negotiate.[94] Nonetheless Irish efforts to revise the resolution to accommodate the US objections ensued.[95]

Like the United States, the British mission in New York deduced by 9 October that they could not deter Aiken, who declared he was 'confident' they would 'come round to his viewpoint'.[96] Aiken informed the British that, in his estimation, the Soviets shared US anxieties about the spread of nuclear weapons.[97] The Foreign Office sounded out the possibility of a US démarche in Dublin.[98] That set off consultations between London, Washington and New York. By 18 October, the State Department had determined that

[88]Memorandum of Conversation (involving Kimber and Ward), 10 October 1958 in: 350 Political - Ireland 1958, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.
[89]Herter to New York, GADEL 35, 6 October 1958, in: Burr, '60th anniversary'.
[90]*Ibid*.
[91]Cabot Lodge to SecState/Herter, DELGA 108, 7 October 1958, in: Burr, '60th anniversary'.
[92]*Ibid*.
[93]Cabot Lodge to SecState, DELGA 108, 7 October 1958, in: Burr, '60th anniversary'.
[94]*Ibid*.
[95]Report on the thirteenth General Assembly of the United Nations, c. 4 September 1959, 11 in: TSCH/S/16051A, NAI.
[96]Dixon to FO, No. 1252, 9 October 1958 in: IAD 154/4, FO 371/132710, TNAUK.
[97]*Ibid*.
[98]FO to Washington, No. 7159, 10 October 1958 in: IAD 154/4, FO 371/132710, TNAUK.

such a step would be 'counter-productive'. Aiken had made several initiatives that Washington viewed as to the Soviet bloc's advantage since 1957, but it was not advisable to intervene in Dublin again.[99] Based on his experience in Dublin, McLeod counselled Dulles that an intervention with de Valera could cast Aiken as a 'martyr'. Therefore, it was better to oppose Aiken's proposals 'vigorously' in the UN.[100]

On 16 October, the US made a last-ditch bid to discourage Aiken. James W. Barco, a member of the US mission, pleaded that 'he had been asked most "solemnly" to inform Aiken that his proposal created serious difficulties for the United States. It touched upon crucial problems of security'. It was unenforceable and could be ignored with impunity by the USSR. Aiken insisted that the USSR had not given weapons to Eastern European allies, and a UNGA resolution would equip Moscow with an 'excuse to use in resisting Chinese demands'.[101]

Aiken decided to submit a standalone nuclear restriction proposal and a revision to the US-led 17-Power resolution that had surfaced on 10 October, expressing support for the upcoming Geneva test ban talks on 31 October. The US government felt the Irish manoeuvre was a 'complicating element at [a] time when we had [the] prospect of real progress at Geneva' on a test suspension. Cabot Lodge assumed that unless 'something substantial' was offered to Aiken, such as substitute language or a new resolution, there was 'no further chance of dissuading him'.[102] The British and US delegations in New York contemplated a 'buy off' of the Irish by adding a preambular statement to the 17-Power resolution. But Cabot Lodge and his British equivalent, Sir Pierson Dixon, were 'doubtful' this would satisfy Aiken.[103] Dulles, therefore, instructed the UN mission to 'hold the line'.[104] Dixon opined that dissuasion had softened Aiken – he might still abandon his proposal in the face of 'firm pressure'.[105]

Therefore, Aiken submitted a less ambitious draft resolution to the First Committee on 17 October, simply requesting an ad hoc commission to study 'the dangers inherent in the further dissemination of nuclear weapons' and make recommendations to the fourteenth UNGA.[106] Simultaneously, Aiken tendered his amendments to the United States-led 17-Power proposed resolution, imploring nuclear weapon powers not to 'supply' other states, and states not producing nuclear weapons to refrain from manufacturing them during the test ban negotiations and any test suspension.[107] Aiken, in putting forth his amendment to the 17-Power submission on nuclear testing, unwittingly collided with

[99]Caccia/Washington to FO, No. 2809, 18 October 1958 in: IAD 154/4, FO 371/132710, TNAUK.

[100]Dublin to CRO, No. 25, 17 October 1958 in: IAD 154/9, FO 371/132710, TNAUK; McLeod to Secstate, No. 70, 11 October 1958 in: 350 Political – Ireland 1958, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA; McLeod to Secstate, No. 74, 16 October 1958 in: 312 United Nations 1958, Box 23, Dublin Embassy, RG 84, NARA.

[101]Cabot Lodge to Secstate, DELGA 198, 16 October 1958, in: Burr, '60th anniversary'.

[102]*Ibid*.

[103]Cabot Lodge to Secstate, DELGA 198, 16 October 1958, in: Burr, '60th anniversary'; Dixon to FO, No. 1284, 15 October 1958 in: IAD 154/6, FO 371/132710, TNAUK.

[104]Dulles to USUN, GADEL 60, 17 Oct. 1958 in: Burr, '60th anniversary'.

[105]Dixon to FO, No. 1284, 15 October 1958 in: IAD 154/6, FO 371/132710, TNAUK.

[106]Agenda Item 64, Question of Disarmament, Ireland: Draft Resolution, 17 October 1958, in: UNGAOR, 13th Session, First Committee, A/C.1/L.206, 17 October 1958.

[107]Agenda items 64, 70 and 72 (XIII), Question of Disarmament, The Discontinuance of Atomic and Hydrogen Weapons Tests, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Ecuador, Iran, Italy, Laos, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Thailand, UK and US: draft resolution, in: UNGA, 13th Session, First Committee, A/C.1/L.205, 10 October 1958; Agenda item 72 (XIII), Ireland: amendments to the draft resolution in: UNGA, 13th Session, First Committee, A/C.1/L.205, 17 October 1958. See also: Press Release, Text of certain amendments proposed by Aiken to draft resolution sponsored by Argentina, US and 15 other states, 17 October 1958, in: DFA/6/440/8/1, NAI.

a US-led propaganda initiative, further miring his non-proliferation campaign in complications. This will be explored next.

'[O]ne of the longest debates in the history of the UN'[108]

The disarmament discussion in the First Committee of the 13th UN session ran from 10 October until 4 November, dramatising the Cold War tensions and nuclear testing anxieties. The circumstances made it unlikely that Aiken's efforts to break the bipolar gridlock would succeed. After all, the atmosphere was poisoned by the West's paranoia in the aftermath of Sputnik, a chain of combustible crises, and the explosion of global fear demanding a cessation of testing. Eisenhower was under pressure from international opinion after the Soviets declared a unilateral suspension of tests (31 March 1958), even though that Soviet announcement was hypocritical since Moscow had finished its scheduled test series. The US President took advantage of heartening reports from Soviet-US technical talks occurring in Geneva. These posited that seismological stations could monitor a test ban, empowering Eisenhower to overrule domestic hawks and soothe international disquiet. In late August, therefore, Eisenhower invited the Soviets to test cessation talks in Geneva on 31 October, specifying the US and British favoured a one-year moratorium to allow the talks to progress. The ban was extendable if the negotiations made headway.[109]

In response to Hammarskjöld's complaints about the 'non-functioning' of the UN's disarmament machinery and to offset public discontent about the disarmament stalemate, in early October, the US approached their British, French and Canadian counterparts to draft a Western 17-Power resolution to mollify critics and counter recriminations about the history of failed comprehensive disarmament negotiations and stress the impending Geneva talks as a step forward. The 17-Power resolution welcomed scientific findings reporting progress in detecting nuclear tests, requesting that the UNGA be informed about progress at the Geneva talks.[110] The subtext, predictably, was that the US and British would not consent to a test ban treaty without a verification system. Formidable interests remained within their governments in favour of testing. The US accordingly trod a delicate line: communicate urgency to support the talks without retreating from a demand for verification whilst adopting a positive tone for the public gallery.

Consequently, Aiken's non-dissemination proposals were considered diversionary, and testing dominated the First Committee's discussion with the battle lines drawn between East and West. The Soviet Union wanted an immediate and permanent test cessation without reference to the Geneva talks or verification. Conversely, the US and Britain favoured a one-year voluntary suspension from 31 October, renewable if the Geneva dialogue progressed adequately.[111] The Soviet Union put forward a draft resolution recommending a reduction in military budgets of 10-15% and the investment of the savings in developing countries. Western delegations evaluated this was 'unreal' given the

[108]Circular instruction from the Department of State to certain diplomatic missions, 7 Aug. 1959, Document No. 84, in: FRUS 1958-60, Vol. II, 156.
[109]Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, 81-7.
[110]See IAD 151/2, FO 371/132703, TNAUK.
[111]Report of 13th UNGA, 11, in: TSCH S 160051 A, NAI.

indeterminacy of military budgets and the impossibility of policing them, but the Soviet ploy held appeal to African and Asian representatives.[112]

Aiken was allocated time on the First Committee on 17 October. He sought compromise on test suspensions: the differences between East and West on the discontinuance of nuclear tests were bridgeable, and while a permanent ban was desirable, prudence recommended a one-year cessation with the option of renewal. He also queried the contention that test cessation would prevent new nuclear states, indicating that, strictly speaking, testing was not essential. According to Aiken, the motivation for his draft resolution and amendments to the 17-Power text was to 'focus attention' on 'uncontrollable' nuclear dissemination. He presented his nonproliferation scheme as a natural accompaniment to a test ban and talks to prevent surprise attacks, insisting that the nuclear peril would expand 'in geometric progression', if smaller states and revolutionary groups acquired them. They could destabilise the nuclear balance ('stalemate'), especially in contested regions, and ignite global nuclear war. He anticipated criticisms of his designs for giving rise to nuclear haves and have-nots. However, he claimed that self-denial was voluntary on the part of 'have-nots' but advantageous to them as it contributed to their security and global security. Likewise, he questioned the US and NATO line of reasoning that a nuclear power should retain the right to 'hand over' nuclear weapons to their allies, that that in some way enhanced security. He pointed out that alliances were impermanent, so this was an unwise course of action, implying that once nuclear weapons were transferred, they could not be returned if the alliance broke down. Furthermore, any temporary strategic or tactical advantage would vanish when their adversary followed suit to share nuclear weapons with their partners to restore the balance.[113]

In the committee discussions, many speakers referred to Aiken's non-dissemination pitch, acknowledging the risks while not revealing their voting intentions. Initially, Aiken cabled Cremin on 20 October and remained hopeful.[114] However, a close reading of approving First Committee statements from the delegates of New Zealand, Canada and Australia, who shared his anxieties about indiscriminate dissemination, were hedged by concern about a ban on transfers within an alliance and the issue of verification.[115] Argentina objected to the prospect of nuclear apartheid or inequality and noted it would abstain. NATO members, such as the Dutch, insisted that the vast armies of the Soviet Union represented 'an ominous threat that can only be held in check by nuclear armaments'. Cuba argued that the proposals offered Moscow the 'green light for world conquest'.[116] A radio interview by the Soviet representative 'seemed to foreshadow opposition': Irish designs would not prevent nuclear war and legalised weapons of mass destruction.[117]

On the other hand, the UN correspondent for the *New York Post*, Joseph P. Lash, captured some ambivalence within NATO when he reported on 17 October, '[t]here was

[112]Report of 13th UNGA, 19 in: TSCH S 160051 A, NAI.

[113]Agenda items 64, 70 and 72: General Debate, in: *UNGAOR*, 13th session, First Committee, 953rd meeting, A/C.1/SR.953, 17 Oct. 1958, 51-2.

[114]Cable from UN Mission to Dublin, 20 Oct. 1958 in: DFA/6/440/8/1, NAI.

[115]'Support for Irish proposals', *Evening Press*, 21 October 1958 & 'Canada backs Mr Aiken's appeal', *Irish Independent*, 21 October 1958 & 'Canada and France back Aiken plan', *Irish Press*, 21 October 1958 in: See DFA/6/440/8/1, NAI.

[116]'A criticism of Ireland's plan at UN', *Irish Times*, 22 Oct. 1958.

[117]Report of 13th UNGA, 12-13 in: TSCH S 16051A, NAI.

a surprising amount of undercover sympathy for this proposal from diplomats representing NATO countries.' He stated some preferred to keep missile bases and nuclear stockpiles out of West Germany, fearing 'inevitable pressure' for German control over the warheads. But they would not break NATO ranks. Lash observed support for the test ban was linked to a belief that it might achieve one part of Aiken's plan and freeze the nuclear club: 'A test ban would not prevent the US or the Soviet Union from handing atomic weapons around to their allies, but it would keep those allies from becoming independent producers of such weapons.'[118] The Canadians even intimated to the Irish that they had advanced similar non-proliferation ideas within NATO, and they estimated the Irish initiative at the UN was 'very helpful to them and to what they described as "the more cautious elements" in NATO'.[119]

The Swedish position was a harbinger for Ireland. A neutral, threshold nuclear weapons state, its ultimate decision on whether to pursue a military nuclear program would be critical. Irish diplomats monitored the divided opinions within Swedish society and government, recognising Stockholm's 'special position' in the nuclearisation discourse.[120] If a traditional neutral state chose nuclear weapons that would denote a calamitous deterioration in global security and a significant step towards the normalisation of nuclear weapons.[121] However, the Swedish Foreign Minister, Östen Undén, led resistance within the ruling Social Democratic Party against nuclear weapons, and Aiken's proposal buoyed his arguments and aims.[122] Therefore, according to Ireland's UN mission, Sweden was 'very much in its favour' (of Aiken's resolution) in October 1958.[123] Progress at Geneva could curb the demands of nuclear aspirants in Sweden and globally.

Cabot Lodge was ill at ease. Ireland could count on 'little positive support' and be beaten with the votes of US allies and friends. He informed Dulles on 23 October that US victory was assured in terms of raw politics, but the conundrum was how to 'publicly explain' it in a 'reasonable and persuasive manner'. African, Asian and Latin American states did 'not want to vote against something designed to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, a principle with which they agree', and several US allies were wavering and likely to abstain. Cabot Lodge searched for a formulation to express public support for non-proliferation as 'it is inherent in our own long-range disarmament position' but to vote against the Irish resolution, perhaps on the grounds of poor draughtsmanship.[124]

On 24 October, Dulles replied. He advised Cabot Lodge that the US favoured preventing the spread of nuclear weapons for the reasons Aiken outlined. It could not, however, abandon an 'integrated' approach to disarmament without endangering security. After weeks of equivocation, he explained to Cabot Lodge a 'further reason (which cannot of course be used publicly)' was the creation of nuclear stockpiles in NATO allies' territories as per the December 1957 NAC decision. With the passing of the Irish

[118]J. P. Lash, 'Plain and fancy', *The New York Post*, 17 October 1958.
[119]Report of 13th UNGA, 12 in: TSCH S 16051A, NAI.
[120]*Ibid*.
[121]Brennan to Cremin, 13 October 1958 in: DFA/6/440/8/1, NAI. There were similar concerns about Switzerland, although it was not a UN member.
[122]Thomas Jonter, *The Key to Nuclear Restraint: The Swedish Plans to Acquire Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016), 18, 19, 128
[123]Report of 13th UNGA, 12 in: TSCH S 16051 A, NAI,
[124]Cabot Lodge to SecState, DELGA 250, 23 Oct. 1958 in: Burr, '60th anniversary'.

resolution and amendments, 'we would be vulnerable to attacks that we are in fact contributing to [the] spread of nuclear weapons through [the] NATO atomic stockpile programme. Such attacks would ignore [the] fact that [the] US retains custody.'[125] Under instructions, Cabot Lodge continued lobbying against Aiken's whole idea with arguments that Aiken was not persuaded by. Eventually, the stonewalling worked.

The disputes on test suspensions in the First Committee stirred up concerns that they might sour the forthcoming US-Soviet talks about to begin at Geneva. In a constructive gambit, at a meeting of the Irish delegation chaired by Aiken on 25 October 1958, Ireland's UN mission decided to withdraw its proposed amendments to the 17-Power draft resolution 'to further the object of securing a unanimous resolution'.[126] It did not want to generate additional barriers and aggravate the atmosphere.

The test ban quarrels continued in the First Committee on Friday, 31 October, without resolution, even as the Geneva talks were to begin in a matter of hours, and the decision was made to continue late into the night. The Dutch urged voting on the competing Eastern and Western test ban resolutions before the opening of the Geneva Conference. The Irish interpreted this as a NATO ruse to force a vote on all the resolutions and secure a Cold War 'victory' in front of US television cameras for the 17-Power one for electoral purposes, with Congressional elections scheduled on 4 November.[127] Aiken objected to voting without debating the other resolutions, namely the Irish non-dissemination one. Finally, Aiken spoke for the Irish draft resolution, although in less-than-ideal circumstances.[128]

Aiken's address juxtaposed the committee's failure to agree on a resolution on test suspensions, after two weeks of discussions, against the urgency of restricting nuclear weapons.[129] If the difficulty 'index' in manufacturing agreement on a test ban resolution was so high in a world of just three or four nuclear powers, negotiating comprehensive disarmament would be impracticable if the nuclear club expanded. Aiken wanted 'to localize the fire' while disarmament discussions continued, disputing the case for an 'atomic democracy' (whereby all states acquired nuclear weapons) as that would magnify the nuclear danger. He remarked that states would acquire nuclear weapons at different times, creating the temptation for preventative strikes. This would test self-restraint when states possessed 'a decisive temporary advantage over a rival'. He countered claims that he was proposing 'a clique of atomic aristocrats', as the Spanish had posited.[130] His intent was that a temporary freezing of the nuclear club minimised the risks and limited the growth of additional barriers to disarmament. It was presented as rational prudence to reduce the 'appalling risks': 'if the matter is simply allowed to drift as it is now drifting, then we believe that risk of war will multiply beyond hope of control.'[131] Overall, these arguments were intellectually prescient.[132]

[125]Dulles to USUN, GADEL 67, 24 October 1958, 2 in: Burr, '60th anniversary'.
[126]Delegation meeting No. 3, 25 October 1958, 2 in: DFA/5/313/36/1, NAI.
[127]Report of 13th UNGA, 17 in: TSCH S 16051 A, NAI.
[128]Report of 13th UNGA, 17 in: TSCH S 16051 A, NAI; Agenda items 64, 60 and 72 in: *UNGAOR*, 13th session, First Committee, 970th meeting, A/C.1/SR.970, 31 October 1958, 137-8.
[129]The verbatim, not the summary, record of the UN will be employed here as the summary record fails to show how advanced his non-proliferation thinking was at this early stage.
[130]Agenda Items 64, 70 and 72 in: UNGA, 13th Session, First Committee, Verbatim Record of 970th Meeting, A/C.1/PV.970, 31 October 1958, 67.
[131]*Ibid*., 62-5.
[132]In many ways, his presentation anticipated the iconic Scott Sagan and Kenneth Waltz debate about the dangers of proliferation by decades. Scott Douglas Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate*, 3rd ed (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2013).

Aiken also addressed practical criticisms, drawing attention to two cardinal points. First, 'the diversion of nuclear production from peaceful purposes to weapons is capable of detection under a comparatively simple inspection system.'[133] In this, Aiken revealed an awareness of the prospective role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (still in a protozoic-like state). Second, if existing nuclear powers did not transfer 'control' of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapons states, then his plan was realistic.[134] They could, pending a general agreement on disarmament, hold nuclear weapons on an allied territory, if they retained ownership and control. He noted, in reference to the United States, that some nuclear powers 'are at present prohibited by their own parliaments and congresses from giving these weapons to other parties'.[135] He admitted that no plan was foolproof, but both parts of his were 'interdependent'.[136] Aiken called for an 'inherently self-enforcing' gentleman's agreement between nuclear and non-nuclear powers that would be voluntary during the period in which negotiations were undertaken, ie. until the next UNGA session.[137]

Nonetheless, by 31 October, it became evident that contrary to Aiken's optimism, 'abstention will be very heavy and negative votes will somewhat outnumber positive.'[138] Aiken decided it was folly to proceed, but he was not prepared to admit defeat. Victory on a point of principle was engineered. The Irishman called for a separate rollcall on the second paragraph of the draft resolution: ' . . . that the danger now exists that an increase in the number of states possessing nuclear weapons may occur, aggravating international tension and the difficulty of maintaining world peace and thus rendering more difficult general disarmament agreement . . . '. It gained a vote of 37 in favour, with none against, and 44 abstentions. Exploiting this recognition of the menace, he declared satisfaction that the principle was not opposed. Then, he withdrew the resolution from a formal vote, asserting that extra time was required to develop machinery to implement it, as delegations had objected to establishing an *ad hoc* committee to investigate the matter. Moreover, most delegations did not have ample time to study the resolution. It sidestepped a crushing defeat by Ireland's Western neighbours.

Conclusion

Frank Aiken possessed a 'mind over matter' philosophy. His anxiety about the nuclear revolution's implications, the 'nuclearity' of regional disputes and the potential for a Third World War suffused his entire approach from 1957. Aiken sought innovative solutions to break the bipolar impasse and backed the UN Secretary-General. He drew encouragement from Ireland's interwar internationalism and influential figures like de Valera and O'Brien. Thus, Aiken proposed a phased foreign military withdrawal from Central Europe in 1957.

He redoubled his efforts after the hostile Western reception his drawback plan received. The launch of Sputnik and the collapse of disarmament talks in Geneva

[133]Agenda Items 64, 70 and 72 in: UNGA, 13th Session, First Committee, Verbatim Record of 970th Meeting, A/C.1/PV.970, 31 October 1958, 72.
[134]*Ibid.*
[135]*Ibid*., 76.
[136]*Ibid*., 76.
[137]*Ibid*., 73-5
[138]O'Brien to Cremin, 31 Oct. 1958 in: DFA/6/449/8/1, NAI.

signified the worsening environment. Nuclear testing accelerated, with 1958 seeing more than double the number of tests conducted in 1957. The Lebanese crisis and the Second Quemoy-Matsu Crisis in the summer of 1958 intensified his fears but his plans for neutralising the Middle East failed to gain traction.

These events and several rebuffs led Aiken to shift away from broader disarmament advocacy and regional deconfliction to identify a manageable and definable problem, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, which culminated in his proposal for a global non-proliferation pact. He reasoned that curbing the spread of nuclear weapons would limit strategic problems, prevent new escalation risks and sow mutual confidence. Aiken imagined that it was in the US and USSR's interests to prevent additional nuclear states. A pragmatist, he toiled to win US backing throughout October, appreciating that its hegemonic position in the West had to be reckoned with. Many in the Western camp privately or publicly acknowledged the proliferation risks but would not break ranks to vote for Aiken's resolution. His proposal was overshadowed by tactical manoeuvres leading up to the Geneva test ban talks on 31 October. The Soviet Union called for an immediate and permanent test cessation, while the US, Britain and allies preferred a one-year voluntary suspension. International attention was focused on nuclear test fallout, making securing time for the proposal's debate in the First Committee exceedingly challenging.

The US was fortunate that nuclear tests deflected attention from Aiken's 'dangerous' proposal. The State Department wanted to suppress the discussion of non-dissemination. Parallel to Sputnik animating Aiken to find inventive methods to mitigate international tensions, the US engaged in delicate alliance management to address the crisis of confidence among its partners. Its prescription was a NATO nuclear stockpile and the deployment of Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) in Europe. The emollient of 'nuclear sharing' remained vague and untested. Talk of non-dissemination made the yet-to-be-clarified NATO 'nuclear sharing' concept vulnerable.

Overall, however, his arguments highlighted the risks associated with the spread of nuclear weapons, but the time was not yet ripe. Aiken overestimated the support for his 1958 initiative but won appreciation for his tenacity and for 'not pushing his resolution to a vote … sparing people the embarrassment of having to vote against it.'[139] He secured a partial victory by obtaining a last-minute roll call vote from the First Committee that acknowledged the dangers of proliferation and granted him justification to resurrect his campaign in 1959 and secure the first 'Irish resolution'.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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[139]Letter from Boland to Cremin, 20 November 1958, Document 162, in: *DIFP 1957-61*, Vol. XI, 216.

history. Some of his work includes *The European Parliament and the Euratom Treaty* (2002), *Ireland, Germany and the Nazis, 1919-39* (2004; 2nd edition, 2018), *Ireland in World War Two* (2004), *Ireland through European Eyes: Western Europe, the EEC and Ireland, 1945-1973* (2013), *Ireland, West Germany and the New Europe 1949-73* (2018). In addition, he has published numerous journal articles and book chapters. He is the editor *of Irish Studies in International Affairs*.