9 Women in politics

Yvonne Galligan and Fiona Buckley

The centenary commemorations of the women's suffrage campaign and associated Acts, notably the Representation of the People Act, 1918, and the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act, 1918, shine a spotlight on women's political representation over the past 100 years. Suffragists thought that their victory heralded the end of inequality in political life for women. Yet, women's political under-representation persisted, and by the mid-1990s gender equality in public office became a test of democratic legitimacy and accountability for feminists and advocates of political reform. This framing of the democratic deficit was reinforced by the United Nations (UN) World Conference on Women in 1995, at which women's empowerment was a central theme. Thereafter, the Irish government was one of over a hundred governments held accountable to the UN for its commitment to realising gender equality in power and decision-making.

Thus, at the close of the twentieth century, the paucity of women in politics gradually became a litmus test for the health of democracy. The structural exclusion of one half of the citizenry from an equal share of power created a strong normative claim for redress, based on justice and equality as the fundamental principles of democracy. Important though this normative argument is for a focus on women, Irish parties have paid variable attention to the representativeness of parliament, and the presence of women in the Oireachtas remains low by European standards. Perhaps this lack of urgency reflects public indifference to the representative nature of the Dáil, as the 2011 and 2016 Irish National Election Surveys (INES) would seem to indicate. When asked what characteristics were important in a TD (such as being of the same social class, having the same level of education, being of the same age), being of the same gender as the respondent was the least important, though it was still somewhat more relevant for women than for men (Farrell *et al.*, 2018).

This raises the question, then, as to why we should be concerned about gender as a representative characteristic in political life. Yet, perhaps this snapshot in time provided by the INES survey does not reflect public indifference to the gender of elected representatives. Instead, it may be that the public thinks this issue is now addressed and that it is time to incorporate other diversity characteristics into the electoral sphere. This is quite a typical view among voters in Britain (Cowley, 2013), and could have echoes among the Irish public. Or, it may also be that the public – male and female – think that their interests are adequately represented, and so the sex of politicians is not an issue. Whatever the explanation, there is evidence to show that the public was attentive to the gender of politicians in previous times. In 2007, on the eve of the economic crash that was to send shock waves through the Irish economy and society, 60 per cent of those surveyed in a similar INES poll indicated that 'things would improve if there were more women in politics'. While just about half of men agreed, 71 per cent of women did so, indicating a pent-up demand among the female public

for better descriptive representation. Moreover, in 2011, even though respondents attached little importance to the idea of having a TD of the same gender as themselves, 62 per cent believed that there should be more women TDs, with 29 per cent wanting no change and only 3 per cent saying they wanted fewer female TDs (Farrell *et al.*, 2018). That pressure for greater female presence in politics was articulated further in the 2014 Constitutional Convention report on women in public life, where an overwhelming majority (97 per cent) of the 100 citizens and political participants wanted to see government take more action to encourage women's public and political engagement.[1]

The public view, an important aspect in understanding the politics of presence and its underlying drivers, can differ also on policy. In a study of voters' and politicians' attitudes on policy issues in a European Parliament election, female voters in Ireland were found to be more progressive than males on the four policy issues interrogated – same-sex marriage, abortion, women and paid work, and the welfare state (McEvoy, 2016: 766). This finding points to women and men collectively holding different views on policy issues, and by extension it can be argued that these policy differences should be represented in parliament. The same research shows that women MEPs hold more liberal views on abortion, as well as on women and paid work, than their male counterparts. Interestingly, it also finds that as more women enter the European Parliament, men become more liberal in their policy positions, and both women and men then more fully represent women's interests and positions (McEvoy, 2016: 772–6).

The discussion above highlights the complex dynamics of gender politics in practice, making it relevant for our understanding of how group-based interests are expressed in representative politics. Gender – male, female and non-binary – infuses all representative characteristics. In studying women/gender politics in Ireland, we draw attention to one aspect of representative politics, and in so doing highlight the working of Irish democratic processes and practices from a viewpoint that adds nuance to the rich knowledge base provided by other perspectives. We begin this chapter by taking a detailed look at the pattern of women's representation in social and political decision-making. This is followed by an exploration of the causes and the consequences of women's absence from public life. We chart the gradual inclusion of women's interests – some old, others new – in the political agenda, before concluding with a general assessment of current patterns and future challenges.

Women in society

The dearth of women in positions of political power in Ireland is only part of the wider pattern of women's absence from, or under-representation in, decision-making centres generally. Socio-cultural research confirms a positive link between women's access to legislatures, female employment levels and societal attitudes towards gender equality (Alexander and Welzel, 2007; Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Inglehart *et al.*, 2002). These are factors in the persistent under-representation of women in Irish politics also.

The early years of the state saw the passage of discriminatory constitutional provisions and laws that restricted women's access to employment, accentuated their role in the private sphere, banned birth control and facilitated the second class status of women (Beaumont, 1997). These included Article 41.2.1 of the current (1937) constitution: 'In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.' Even in 1937, this provision was hotly contested by a coalition of feminists and trade union activists (Luddy, 2005). By the 1970s, however, women's subservient role and status was challenged (Galligan, 1998; Connolly 2002). Restrictions on women's employment were lifted and legislation outlawing unequal pay was

10 The government and the Taoiseach

Eoin O'Malley and Shane Martin

On independence, Ireland became a parliamentary democracy, inheriting from Britain a system of government that has operated there in the same basic form for nearly two centuries. In this system, the cabinet or government is 'a committee of the legislative body selected to be the executive body' (Bagehot, 1963 [1867]: 66). Constitutional theory would suggest that the parliament was charged with making law and the government would oversee its implementation. This is not how it tends to operate in Ireland or in any other parliamentary democracy. Unlike in presidential systems, there is limited separation of powers; parliament and the government are fused and often stand and fall together. The government is selected by a Taoiseach who is chosen by the Dáil, and his (the office has so far been held only by men) selection of ministers is then approved by the Dáil. The government then depends on the confidence of the Dáil. Though cabinet is in practice a committee of Dáil Éireann, for a variety of reasons, many of which are dealt with in Chapter 7, the relationship between the government and the Dáil is one in which the cabinet dominates the Dáil. Laws tend not to originate in, nor are they shaped by, the Dáil. Rather, they are usually brought to the Dáil as bills by government.

This changed during the 32nd Dáil, which came into being following the 2016 election. The government formed in May 2016 fell far short of a Dáil majority, and so depended on the main opposition party, Fianna Fáil, for support. That government no longer had a reasonable expectation of passing its bills. Furthermore, the government was now in a position where it had to accept bills from the opposition that it would not have introduced of its own volition. It is likely that in a future time of majority government the usual pattern of government dominance would resume, though some rule changes are likely to mean that the opposition would retain some of its increased power.

There is much more to government than the 15 men and women who collectively comprise the cabinet and individually head departments of state. There are ministers of state (often known as junior ministers), tasked with easing the burden on cabinet ministers; senior civil servants, permanent officials, political neutrals who advise ministers and are often charged with implementing policies; special advisers to ministers who offer government ministers alternative, more political, advice; and the heads of the numerous state agencies. Together, these might be referred to as the 'core executive' (Rhodes, 1995), and any consideration of government is incomplete without them. Government, or the 'core executive', is not a unified actor. It might be better conceived as a collection of power centres. This chapter will consider these actors, their roles and relationship, how they co-ordinate, and the division of power between them.

Of the many models used to describe the distribution of power *within* governments, two of the most prominent are *prime ministerial government* and *cabinet government*. The former implies that governments are led by a dominant prime minister, while according to the latter a collegial cabinet is the apex of power (Crossman, 1972). At least three other models can

be added: *ministerial government*, where ministers are autonomous policy-makers in their own departments (Laver and Shepsle, 1994); the *bureaucratic government* model, according to which the civil service as the 'permanent government' controls policy (Niskanen, 1971); and the *segmented model* of government, which posits that different actors will be prominent in different policy areas, so we might see prime ministerial government on Northern Ireland policy, for example, but ministerial autonomy with little cabinet or prime ministerial interference in tourism policy (see Elgie, 1997 for a full overview).

It is questionable whether any model gives a complete picture of what actually happens in government, given that all models ignore the important inputs of interest groups (see Chapter 11), advisers and agencies. They also ignore another vital actor: political parties. Coalition governments – an increasingly common feature of Irish politics – are composed of different parties, each of which places different demands on the government's resources and will have differing preferences on contentious policies. Party government is the idea that the executive is subject to the control of well-organised political parties (Blondel and Cotta, 2000). We can see the centrality of party politics in the distribution of power in the core executive, and this starts with the formation of governments.

We begin the chapter by examining that process, including the selection of ministers, and then we discuss the nature of government decision-making in cabinet and the role of the Taoiseach. The chapter examines the position of ministers within their departments, and ministers' relationship with the civil service. Finally we consider the ways in which government is held accountable for its actions.

Government formation

The basic framework for the formation of a government is laid out in the constitution, according to which the Dáil selects a Taoiseach, who is appointed by the President (Article 13.1.1). The Taoiseach then selects ministers, who are approved by the Dáil and appointed by the President (see Martin, 2014 for a detailed overview). The constitution makes no mention of a fundamental part of the Irish political system, namely the party system. For much of the last century, government formation meant that the leader of the largest party, nearly always Fianna Fáil, would be appointed Taoiseach and submit to the Dáil the names of his cabinet, who would be supported by that party's TDs. These single-party Fianna Fáil governments were interposed with coalition governments of other parties who could put aside policy differences for the opportunity to break the Fianna Fáil hegemony.

Election results now rarely produce clear government outcomes. Since 1981, no Fianna Fáil leader has had the automatic support of a majority in the Dáil, so either he or the leader of Fine Gael must look for support among other parties or get the agreement of independents to allow their government to take office. But which party will coalesce with which is the result of post-election negotiations about which the electorate has no say and little foreknowledge. Up to 1989 Fianna Fáil refused to contemplate taking part in any coalition government, and on a number of occasions it formed a minority government. In 1989, Charles Haughey broke with that strategy, forming a government with the Progressive Democrats (see Chapter 5, p. 122; see Appendix 5 for biographical details of leading political figures). Fianna Fáil's decision to enter coalition politics may have made it more difficult for voters hoping to influence the formation of particular governments. Green Party voters in 2007 might have been surprised to find that their vote had the effect of re-electing Bertie Ahern as Taoiseach, despite the Green leader having described the Fianna Fáil leader as a political 'dead man walking' a few weeks earlier (O'Malley, 2008: 209). Similarly, in 2016, Shane Ross, the *de*

11 The policy-making process

Gary Murphy

Who makes public policy in Ireland and how do they do it? We will answer these apparently simple but devilishly tricky questions in this chapter, which examines the policy-making process, assesses how decisions are made, and considers who influences them. It analyses the structures through which public policy is made, implemented and monitored and discusses the crucial role that interest groups play when it comes to national policy making within the Irish state. It also reviews the steps governments have taken to ensure that policy making is open and transparent to the public, something that was not at all apparent during the greater part of the Irish state's existence. While such secrecy is not unique to Ireland, there can be little doubt that until recently the policy process in Ireland was opaque and secretive. This had the effect of preventing adequate oversight of government policy (O'Malley, 2011: 101).

Since independence in 1922, the Irish state's experience of national policy making has been somewhat random and haphazard. Policy making is an extremely complex business. While governments make policies, the process by which the decision to actually go ahead and introduce any particular policy is made can be tortuous and will normally involve many different stakeholders. These can include politicians, both in government and in opposition, the media, interest groups of various kinds, and individual citizens. Policy making can be made more complex by bureaucracy at the local, national and European level, and by the ability of various groups and citizens to exercise their right of recourse to the courts. The constitution imposes certain constraints and can be used as an excuse for inaction, and policy making also takes place in the context of Ireland's status as a member of the European Union, with the obligations that that entails (see Chapter 14). The result has been that governments have sometimes faced difficulties both in actually making decisions in the first place, and then in implementing them successfully. The desired results are not always achieved, and governments may not even be sure what results they want from their policies in the first place. Sometimes governments introduce policies and then either fail to follow them through with any great commitment or even renege on them. This is not necessarily a matter of bad faith but more a realisation of the difficulties governments face in implementing policies once the decision has been taken to introduce them.

Public policy and bureaucracy

The policy process consists of a set of arrangements under which the government sets out a framework of legislation that it wants to introduce and then implements a strategy to do so. Hill (2013: 7) compares this to going on a journey where one determines where one wants to go, works out the best way to get there, goes on the journey, and then reflects on that process for future reference. The government identifies its intended destination through

its programme for government, particularly since coalition government became the norm in Ireland in the 1980s. Then the civil service, often in conjunction with advice from consultants, develops numerous and frequently extremely detailed plans of how any particular policy will work and what its impact on society will actually be. Various organised interested groups and individual citizens lobby, often vociferously, on the particular scheme in an effort to have it changed, enhanced or perhaps withdrawn altogether. The introduction and subsequent abolition of water charges in Ireland between 2013 (when the utility Irish Water was established) and 2016 (when charges were suspended) is a good example of the impact of such lobbying, whose targets are usually members of the Oireachtas and civil servants. Finally, the legislation goes for debate to the Dáil and the Seanad, where it is subject to amendment; the parliamentary debate is invariably influenced by the lobbying to which all Oireachtas members are subject.

Once the particular policy is passed into law, it goes onto the statute book. That, of course, is not the end of the matter as even then the law can very soon encounter public protest, which might lead to modification or complete retraction. Examples include the reversal of the automatic entitlement to a medical card for those over 70, which was announced in 2008, and the introduction of water charges in 2015, as outlined earlier. In both cases, significant changes were made to public policy after decisions had been reached in cabinet (in the first example) or by the Oireachtas (in the second). By the time the policy journey has been completed, the original shape of the intention could well be quite different from what ultimately transpired. This is because the journey has been affected by various interactions along the route with stakeholders, such as civil servants and lobby groups, who may have persuaded the government to change the envisaged route, to veer off course or perhaps to abandon it altogether.

The effectiveness of public policy in Ireland has been hampered by a number of weaknesses inherent in the political system. The Irish state and the various governments that have served it have long been hostages to the short-termism and localism that have plagued policy making since independence. Long-term planning has rarely been to the forefront of governmental or even civil service thinking when it comes to policy making, while localism and constituency nursing have almost always taken priority for governments. The lack of experts at almost all levels of government has also constrained effective policy making. In January 2010 the Minister for Finance, Brian Lenihan, revealed that only two economists in his department held PhDs.[1]

This lack of expertise was highlighted during the economic crash in 2008 and subsequently, when it emerged that the government and the civil service were ill-equipped to deal with the crisis. Once the Fianna Fáil-led government became aware, or at least more aware than previously, of the scale of the banking crisis in the autumn of 2008, it was compelled to rely almost entirely on consultants, receiving advice from the financial firm Merrill Lynch, for instance, up to and including the day of the bank guarantee scheme, on how to deal with the ramifications of the solvency issues of the banks and their implications for the Irish state. Relying on such advice, on the night of 29–30 September 2008 the government took perhaps the most dramatic public policy decision in the history of the state when it guaranteed the deposits, loans, obligations and liabilities of the six Irish banks, a total sum of over €440 billion, more than twice the country's gross national product at the time (Donovan and Murphy, 2013: 200). This decision was taken without the government or the civil service having complete information on the solvency difficulties the banks faced or on the consequences that this particular public policy decision would have for the state and its citizens.

Due to the sheer scale of the banking crisis and the difficulties it caused for Irish citizens, the government agreed in January 2010 to a framework of inquiry into the crisis

12 The media and politics

Kevin Rafter

The media plays a central role in modern democracies and, in particular, the work of journalism can help democracy to thrive (Schudson, 2008: 26). This 'public service' contribution of journalism has been distilled in numerous sets of principles, which include the role of journalists in providing information to the public, undertaking a watchdog role in identifying wrongdoing and adhering to professional concepts such as objectivity, fairness and impartiality (McQuail, 2003; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007). Moreover, successful political communication strategies assist politicians to win public support for their arguments, and ultimately assist in securing power where policies can be implemented.

Few political strategies can, however, be delivered without some degree of engagement with the media. It is not possible for political leaders to meet individually, or even in smaller groupings, with all members of the public. It is thus necessary for information to be mediated to the wider public, notwithstanding the emergence of social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as new tools for communicating politics.

From politicians using social media to win arguments to the sizable audiences watching televised leaders' debates, the media today, therefore, has a pivotal place in a modern political system. But how successful the media is in fulfilling its role in assisting the democratic process is strongly contested. Indeed, what is understood by the term 'media' is also a source of considerable ongoing debate given the emergence of a host of new online outlets with distinctive ideological leanings and little attachment to traditional news coverage values.

The relationship between the media and the political system in Ireland has also not been without controversy. The practice of journalism has had political impact, stretching from the *Sunday Independent*'s 1948 exclusive on Ireland's declaration as a Republic to corruption allegations involving leading political figures, including former taoisigh Charles Haughey and Bertie Ahern, which involved several tribunals of inquiry sitting from 1997 to 2012.

In considering the relationship of the media and politics in an Irish context, this chapter starts by briefly examining some of the arguments about the media and democracy. This section is followed by an overview of the media sector in Ireland, including the regulatory arrangements that are in place. We then turn to the role of media in parliament, with a focus on political journalism and the government communication system. The next section examines the media and elections not just as regards coverage of campaigns but also concerning the issue of bias and balance in reporting and televised leaders' debates. The following section considers the impact of advances in communication technologies and new communication platforms on how the media and political systems interact, with a specific focus on the use of social media and the bypassing of traditional rules on political advertising.

Media and democracy

The media operates as a channel of communication between politicians and the public. In an idealised world the core task of the media in a democratic society could be briefly summarised as helping to create a better informed public in the hope that 'a more informed citizenry will produce a better and fuller democracy' (Schudson, 2008: 204). But the media – and the news media specifically – seek to do more than just provide information. Other scholars have expanded the functions of the media in an 'ideal-type' democratic society to include not just informing and educating citizens but also acting as a platform for public discourse, being a watchdog and operating as a channel for the advocacy of different political viewpoints (Deuze, 2005).

How well the media does in achieving these aspirations is a matter of some debate, given that media organisations also have wider objectives, including commercial pressures to deliver profits. Strömbäck (2005) attempted to set out in some detail the standard required of the news media. He argued that journalism is expected to carry out several functions, including engaging the public in the political process, framing politics as being inclusive and providing basic information on political processes and other relevant issues. Significantly, in terms of an activist role for the news media, he also argued that the media must actively foster political discussions that are characterised by impartiality, rationality, intellectual honesty and equality among the participants (Strömbäck, 2005: 340). The frequency with which this ideal outcome is achieved is debatable.

It has long been recognised that the media is not just a passive participant but that it can shape the public agenda by deciding what stories are covered (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Writing in 1922, Walter Lippmann focused on the power of the media in shaping public opinion, which, he argued, was often based on 'the pictures in our heads' that were commonly incomplete and distorted (Lippmann, 1922: 3). More specifically, the media can influence audiences by means of what is known as 'framing', that is, ensuring that certain aspects of news events are selected and made more salient. Where other aspects of policy debates are neglected, or even ignored by the media, inappropriate and biased decisions may be made, and the quality of democracy is thereby damaged.

The idealised world of media activity, in which democracy is enhanced by means of open discourse that creates informed citizens, however, clashes with many shortcomings inherent in the media, and news journalism in particular. The pursuit of professional ideals can clash with the need to generate profit, which often means that commercial news media has to 'try to supply what the news audience will accept and what advertisers will pay for' (Gans, 2003: 21). Pressure to generate profits – and, where these are insufficient, to accept reductions in newsroom budgets – can thwart attempts to achieve the democratic ideals of journalism. It may be simply easier to attract audiences, and thereby secure advertising and protect financial bottom lines, with sensational headline-grabbing reports and 'soft' entertainment-orientated news.

Driven by commercial considerations to secure greater audiences, the media may pay less attention to important but ultimately dull debates on policy, which rarely generate dramatic headlines. Instead, coverage may focus on the 'game of politics' evident in reports on personality differences between election candidates and winners and losers from the latest opinion poll. Many empirical studies have focused on the process of elections – the game frame – which concentrates on personalities, opinion polls and electoral tactics, rather than coverage of policy matters. The influence of commercial pressures on media coverage is a prominent theme in this literature.

13 Northern Ireland and the British dimension

John Coakley

When British voters opted to leave the European Union in June 2016, shockwaves went through the Irish political establishment. Political leaders had been planning for such a possibility, though not quite expecting this outcome to the referendum. The subsequent sustained campaign of the government to ensure that Irish interests were protected as much as possible in the context of British withdrawal from the EU draws attention to the unique relationship that Ireland has had with its large neighbour. Ireland's historical dependence on Great Britain and the decades-long dispute over Northern Ireland provided a distinctive dynamic to the Irish political process, as we have seen in Chapter 1, and they are explored further in this chapter.

As recently as 1985, when the Anglo–Irish Agreement was drawn up, each of the two parties to the agreement produced their own variants on the first words of the text, and both versions were signed by the two sides. The official British text described that agreement as being between the governments of 'the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland' and 'the Republic of Ireland'; the official Irish text described the two parties as the governments of 'the United Kingdom' and 'Ireland'. The shorter Irish version was no mere exercise in verbal economy. As a matter of principle, the Irish government was not prepared to acknowledge the *de jure* incorporation of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom, something that is explicit in the full title of that state; and the British government did not wish to acknowledge the implicit claim to Northern Ireland in the official name of the Irish state. In the past, British official usage had referred exclusively to 'Éire' or to the 'Irish Republic', but from the 1970s onwards 'Republic of Ireland' gained currency among British officials as a way of referring to the 26 counties (Coakley, 2009).

Behind this apparently trivial battle over names lie centuries of conflict between communities and islands. Chapter 1 has already described the historical relationship between Ireland and Great Britain, and has examined the extent to which that has coloured the Irish political process. The present chapter narrows the focus to one of the most contentious features bequeathed by this relationship, the question of Northern Ireland. The first section of the chapter looks at the evolution of Northern Ireland as a distinct entity, with its own borders and political institutions. This evolution can best be understood in the broader context within which it operated: the changing relationship between Dublin and London after 1922, the topic we then address. Both this relationship and the domestic political system of Northern Ireland itself were fundamentally redefined in the late 1990s; the third section of this chapter therefore focuses on the nature of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The final section describes later institutional reforms within Northern Ireland and the political environment within which they took place.

Northern Ireland and the South

Novel though the concept of 'Northern Ireland' was in the early twentieth century, this new political entity quickly became familiar and eventually acquired an image of permanence. This process of bedding down took place in two respects: the normalisation of the very notion of partition, and the steady development of the devolved institutions that were put in place there in 1921, issues that we consider in turn.

The consolidation of partition

The roots of the partition of Ireland are deeply embedded in Irish history (for general historical background, see Laffan, 1983; Jackson, 1999; Bardon, 2005; Boyce and O'Day, 2006; English, 2007; Kennedy and Ollerenshaw, 2012). At one level, they lie in the seventeenth century 'plantations' that changed the face of Ulster, up to that point the most Gaelic of the provinces, giving it a largely Anglo–Scottish, Protestant character. By the nineteenth century, the northeastern area was further distinguished from the rest of the island by socio-economic differences. In addition to the long-standing privileged position of Protestants (and especially of Episcopalians, or members of the Church of Ireland), Ireland's industrial revolution had been substantially concentrated in the Lagan Valley, with the rapidly expanding city of Belfast as its focal point, and the economic growth of that region left the rest of the island well behind.

To these cultural and socio-economic differences were added political ones. As electoral mobilisation took off in the late nineteenth century, unionist Ulster became increasingly sharply differentiated from nationalist Ireland, as we have seen in Chapter 1. But there were further political differences between North and South. Organised unionism was itself divided: its main organisation, the Irish Unionist Alliance, extended after 1885 only over the three southern provinces, where unionist support was thinly spread. Northern unionism was organised separately, its electoral machine taking permanent shape with the formation of the Ulster Unionist Council (still today the controlling body of the Ulster Unionist Party) in 1905. There were differences within nationalism, too, but these became obvious only in 1918, when nationalist candidates in several northern constituencies managed to withstand the Sinn Féin tide that engulfed the South – though this was aided by an electoral pact brokered by the Catholic primate, Cardinal Logue.

When partition was finally legislated for in 1920, then, the British could present it as a recognition of political realities (see Hennessey, 1998; Duffy, 2009). Since religious affiliation at this time almost entirely determined political allegiance, we can use this as an indicator of political preference, relying on the 1911 census, which indeed formed the basis of later political calculations. By this measure, the new southern state comprised counties that were overwhelmingly nationalist; the county with the largest Protestant minority was Dublin (29 per cent). The new state of Northern Ireland contained two counties with large Protestant majorities, Antrim (79 per cent) and Down (68 per cent), and two with smaller but still significant majorities, Armagh (55 per cent) and Londonderry (54 per cent). But in the two remaining counties, Protestants were a minority: Tyrone (45 per cent) and Fermanagh (44 per cent). Overall, according to the 1911 census, Protestants accounted for 66 per cent of the population of the six counties that would form Northern Ireland, and Catholics for 34 per cent. In the nine-county province of Ulster overall, Protestants amounted to only 56 per cent of the population and Catholics to 44 per cent.

Partition clouded North–South relations over the following decades for three main reasons. First, nationalists claimed that it was wrong in principle: a clear majority of the people

14 Europe and the international dimension

Brigid Laffan and Ben Tonra[1]

Ireland, according to Article 5 of its constitution, is a 'sovereign, independent, democratic state'. This assertion of the state's legal right to conduct its own affairs is an inadequate description of the state's relationship with the rest of the world. Forces of Europeanisation and globalisation have greatly increased Ireland's interaction with the international system and have embedded the state, its economy and its society within that system. The 2016 KOF Index of Globalisation ranks Ireland second in the world in respect of economic, political and social globalisation.[2] It makes considerable sense, therefore, to adapt the terminology often used by economists, and to think of Ireland in global terms as a 'small open polity'.

Such an approach also reminds us that the national political system is not self-contained but is subject to complex interactions with its external environment. On the one hand, Irish policy makers seek to project their values, preferences and interests onto the European and global stages. On the other, European and global forces have a significant impact upon events and policy in Ireland. This is true of all small states, although, given the level of interdependence in the contemporary world, no state is contained within a hard shell.

Ireland's external environment is in the throes of profound change as this 'small open polity' faces considerable risk, uncertainty and turbulence in the years ahead. The strategy of successive governments has been to focus on Ireland's relations with three key sources of influence, the European Union (EU), the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). The relationship with the USA has broadened since the 2000s, and a new focus on Asia has emerged. None of Ireland's key relationships is predictable at this time of instability, as core features of the post-Cold War order, which are very important to small states, are threatened. The EU, which is central to an understanding of Ireland's place in the world, has experienced acute pressure since the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008. This trauma was followed by a divisive refugee crisis that did not impact greatly on Ireland, but did further strain relations among the member states.

From an Irish perspective, however, it was the June 2016 decision by the UK electorate to support leaving the EU, commonly referred to as 'Brexit', that brought the greatest dangers for Ireland. Joint UK and Irish membership of the EU played a major role in normalising relations between the two islands, by taking the hard edge off the Irish border and by supporting the peace process in Northern Ireland. All of this was placed at risk by the UK's withdrawal from the EU. The election of Donald Trump as President of the USA in 2016 brought added uncertainty. His promise to put 'America First' implied a fundamental change in the US commitment to international multilateral organisations and a change in attitude to US overseas investment and trade, which has been of critical importance to Ireland. He is also the first US president since the EU was established not to regard that institution as an essential part of the world order. In fact, the Trump presidency is characterised by a pivot towards protectionism.

Thus, the Irish government, parliament and people will have to navigate the uncertainties of twenty-first-century global and European politics in a volatile world.

For its part, the European Union is a complex political system whose influence on its members is pervasive and sometimes controversial. The effects of the EU can be felt in politics, public policy and more widely in the state's constitutional and legal system. EU membership is not a 'foreign policy' issue *per se*; in many respects it is an extension of national (or 'domestic') politics. Engagement with the Union creates a new type of politics that is neither international nor domestic, but shares elements of both. For this reason, following an overview of Ireland's traditional external relations in the next section, we consider the nature of Ireland's relationship with the EU and we review the interplay of forces and interests between Dublin, Brussels and Frankfurt (as home of the European Central Bank), before turning, in the last section, to consider the new challenges facing Ireland and the European Union.

The external environment

To begin, we can ask ourselves whether Ireland really has a 'foreign policy' in the sense implied in the constitutional claim to independence quoted earlier (Tonra *et al.*, 2012). To what extent, and employing what means, do Irish governments pursue their values and interests internationally? We shall see that much of this activity now takes place in conjunction with other EU states and through the complex web of multilateral networks that has been developed since the end of the Second World War. This raises questions about the nature of specific policy areas and even about the nature of the 'sovereign, independent state'.

Any state's external environment consists of all other international actors, together with the nature of the system formed by their relationships. Over time, the international profile and even role of any state evolves and changes, and Ireland is no exception. Whether the Irish state contributes to or contests such change, however, it has no option – by virtue of its power, capacity and/or sense of self-identity – but to adapt to these new realities. What is perhaps most interesting in looking at the historical evolution of the Irish state's international position is its success to date in negotiating the shoals and reefs of international politics.

Ireland in a world of great powers, 1922–48

From the establishment of the Irish Free State as a member of the British Empire (later 'Commonwealth') in 1922 until the late 1940s, the international system was dominated overwhelmingly by the actions of the great powers, almost unmediated by multilateral institutions or international law. Although the League of Nations provided the new state with the opportunity to establish and develop its international credentials (Keown, 2015), the attempt to organise an international rule of law through the League failed. International stability was eventually only re-established through war. At first sight, it seems paradoxical that Ireland's political independence was steadily consolidated during this period, but given that the overriding goal was one of independence, this result is perhaps not so surprising. British decline was a constant theme throughout the period, as the age of empire began slowly to give way to the age of superpowers. Irish government representatives worked assiduously at both bilateral and multilateral levels first to establish, and then gradually to strengthen, the attributes of independent sovereign statehood. Over time, Ireland's ambiguous constitutional position (as a British dominion) was successfully exploited to secure the maximum leverage over Ireland's external affairs and ultimately to lay the groundwork for the decision in 1948 to declare the state to be a republic.

Appendices

John Coakley

Note: The data in these appendices refer to the territory of the Republic of Ireland, except where otherwise stated. Turnout is defined as total votes (valid plus invalid) as a percentage of electorate.

Appendix 1: Demographic data

1a: Population and social indicators, 1841–2016

| Year | Population: | | | | Religion: | | Knowledge of Irish% | Birthplace (%) | |
	Total	Urban %	Dublin %	Males in agriculture %	RC %	Other %		Other county	Other country
1841	6,528,799	16.7	3.7	74.3	.	.	.	5.0	0.8
1851	5,111,557	22.0	5.8	68.8	.	.	29.1	8.8	1.5
1861	4,402,111	22.2	6.7	64.6	89.3	10.7	24.5	8.1	2.1
1871	4,053,187	22.8	7.4	63.1	89.2	10.8	19.8	9.3	2.8
1881	3,870,020	23.9	8.4	62.6	89.5	10.5	23.9	10.2	3.0
1891	3,468,694	25.3	9.6	61.4	89.3	10.7	19.2	10.8	2.6
1901	3,221,823	28.0	11.2	61.7	89.3	10.7	19.2	11.2	3.7
1911	3,139,688	29.7	12.3	59.5	89.6	10.4	17.6	12.7	4.3
1926	2,971,992	31.8	13.7	58.9	92.6	7.4	19.3	13.4	3.4
1936	2,968,420	35.5	15.9	55.9	93.4	6.6	23.7	14.5	3.4
1946	2,955,107	39.3	17.1	54.1	94.3	5.7	21.2	16.1	3.3
1961	2,818,341	46.4	19.1	43.1	94.9	4.9	27.2	14.1	3.5
1971	2,978,248	52.2	26.9	31.9	93.9	4.3	28.3	14.8	4.6
1981	3,443,405	55.6	29.1	21.7	93.1	3.7	31.6	17.6	6.7
1991	3,525,719	57.0	29.1	19.1	91.6	4.2	32.5	18.1	6.5
1996	3,626,087	58.1	29.2	15.1	–	–	41.1	18.9	7.5
2002	3,917,203	59.6	28.7	8.4	88.4	6.1	41.9	19.7	10.4
2006	4,239,848	60.7	28.0	7.2	86.8	7.1	40.8	20.4	14.7
2011	4,588,252	62.0	27.7	8.7	84.2	8.4	41.4	20.6	16.9
2016	4,761,865	62.7	28.3	–	78.8	8.5	39.8	21.1	17.3

Source: Calculated from *Census of Ireland*, *Statistical Abstract of Ireland* and *Statistical Yearbook of Ireland*, various dates, and from David Fitzpatrick, 'The disappearance of the Irish agricultural labourer, 1841–1912', *Irish Economic and Social History* 7, 1980, pp. 66–92.

Notes: All data refer to the present area of the Republic of Ireland, except where otherwise stated. Urban areas are defined as those with a population of 1,500 or more, but figures for these and for Dublin are difficult to compare over time due to changes in boundary definition criteria; in 1971, Dublin is defined as including Dun Laoghaire, and from 1981, it has been taken as including all of Dublin county. The data on involvement in agriculture are also difficult to compare over time due to varying classification criteria, and it has been possible to compute comparable data for men only. Data on religion are expressed as percentages of the total population (which includes those refusing to give information on this matter). Data on Irish speakers from 1926 onwards refer to the population aged over three years, but the form of the question changed in 1996, so the data for this and subsequent years are not strictly comparable with the earlier ones. In all cases, knowledge of the language is self-assessed. 'Birthplace other county' refers to those born in Irish counties other than that in which they were resident at the date of the census (for the 1841–1911 period these percentages refer to the whole island). 'Birthplace other country' refers to those born outside the 26 counties.