Part I

Soft Diplomacy and the Diplomat

1 Introduction

Hitherto, historians of Irish–American and American–Irish political relations in the 1930s concerned themselves with the continuing settlement of Irish Americans, the activities of militant Irish nationalists in the US and the context to the outbreak of the Second World War. Themes relating to identity, immigration, independence and individuals dominate the scholarship.[1] A focus on diplomacy is relevant only from 1924 onwards when the US government officially recognised the Irish Free State, leading to an exchange of minister plenipotentiaries.[2] At first glance, the 1930s diplomatic

[1] For examples of works on these themes, see J. J. Lee and Marion Casey (eds.), *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York, 2007); John Tully Day, *Ireland and Irish-Americans 1932–1945: The Search for Identity* (Dublin, 2010); Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (New York, 2000); T. Ryle Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality and the USA, 1939–47* (Dublin, 1977); Gavin Wilk, *Transatlantic Defiance: The Militant Irish Republican Movement, 1923–45* (Manchester, 2014); Marie Coleman, *The Irish Sweep: A History of the Irish Hospitals Sweepstake 1930–87* (Dublin, 2009). Each of the following studies provides important glimpses into the operation of the diplomatic relationship during the 1930s: Raymond J. Raymond, 'John Cudahy, Éamon de Valera, and the Anglo-Irish negotiations in 1938: The secret dispatches to Washington', *International History Review*, VI, 2 (May 1984), pp. 159–332; Deirdre MacMahon, *Republicans and Imperialists: Anglo–Irish Relations in the 1930s* (New Haven and London, 1984); Ronan Fanning, 'The Anglo–American alliance and the Irish question in the twentieth century' in Judith Devlin and Howard B. Clarke (eds.), *European Encounters: Essays in Memory of Albert Lovett* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 185–221; Dermot Keogh, 'Diplomatic snapshots: The Irish consul in San Francisco, 1933–1947' in Donald Jordan and Timothy J. O'Keefe (eds.), *The Irish in San Francisco Bay Area: Essays on Good Fortune* (San Francisco, 2005), pp. 220–44; Richard H. Rupp, 'Introduction' in Robert Brennan, *Ireland Standing Firm and Éamon de Valera: A Memoir* (Dublin, 2002). See also Ronan Fanning, Catriona Crowe, Dermot Keogh, Michael Kennedy and Eunan O'Halpin (eds.), 'Introduction', *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, Volume IV 1932–1936* (Dublin, 2004) and ibid., *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, Volume V 1937–1938* (Dublin, 2006); Patrick J. Hearden, 'John Cudahy and the pursuit of peace', *Mid-America: An Historical Review*, 2 (1986), pp. 99–114; Timothy P. Maga, 'Staying neutral: John Cudahy in Ireland', *Milwaukee History*, 7 (Summer 1984), pp. 46–61; Paul Bew, 'David Gray – no cultural relativist', in Paul Bew (ed.), *The Memoir of David Gray: A Yankee in de Valera's Ireland* (Dublin, 2012), pp. i–xxxi.

[2] For the pre-1924 bilateral relationship, see Bernadette Whelan, *American Government in Ireland, 1790–1913: A History of the US Consular Service* (Manchester, 2010) and Bernadette Whelan, *United States Foreign Policy and Ireland: From Empire to*

relations appear to lack substance and offer little more than background to the outbreak of the Second World War. Interactions between the larger power and the small state seldom seem strained. Indeed, while Charles Hathaway, US consul general in Ireland (1924–27), had a deep interest in Irish political affairs, he also had a keen sense of this political imbalance.[3] His successor and the first US envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary, Frederick Sterling (1927–34), acknowledged that all Irish parliamentary issues were of a 'purely local nature and interest'.[4] By 1931, Sterling agreed with Assistant Secretary of State William Castle that 'there is mighty little of real work in Dublin, no matter how agreeable the post may be' and it was its low-key status that appealed to Sterling's successors, as will be seen.[5] These envoys accepted they were representing a large powerful state in a much smaller political and diplomatic environment. Conversely, soon after Timothy Smiddy's arrival in the US as the first Irish envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary and that of his successors – Michael MacWhite (1929–38) and Robert Brennan (1938–47) – they recognised that they were representing a small state in the considerably larger political and administrative complex that was becoming a great capital city, Washington, DC. The Irish envoys measured their achievements using what became the language of 'soft power', as will be discussed later in the chapter.[6] By 1929, Smiddy believed that he had successfully emphasised to Americans that 'we are no longer under the domination of any foreign country'.[7] MacWhite's mission was to cultivate goodwill for his government but also to sell Ireland for investment and tourist purposes.[8] Brennan sought to galvanise Ireland's 'friends' in Congress and the wider society.[9]

Independence, 1913–29 (Dublin, 2006). The relationship was elevated to ambassadorial status in 1950.

[3] H. De Santis and W. Heinrichs, 'United States of America: The Department of State and American foreign policy' in Z. Steiner (ed.), *The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries of the World* (London, 1982), p. 582.

[4] Frederick Sterling to Secretary of State, 31 October 1929, Records of the Department of State relating to the internal affairs of the Republic of Ireland, Record Group 59, M580, Roll 223, National Archives and Records Administration, Maryland, US (hereafter S/D, M580/223, NARA); Sterling to Secretary of State, 6 December 1929, ibid.

[5] William Castle to Sterling, 14 January 1929, ibid.

[6] See Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, 2004).

[7] Report for the Minister for External Affairs on the work of the Saorstát Legation at Washington to December 1928, 17/17, Department of Foreign Affairs (hereafter DFA), National Archives of Ireland (hereafter NAI).

[8] Address delivered at the 164th Annual Banquet of the Friendly Sons of St Patrick, Philadelphia, 18 March 1935, P194/437 (13)-(14), Michael MacWhite Papers (hereafter MMP), University College Dublin Archives (hereafter UCDA).

[9] Robert Brennan, 'My war time mission in Washington', p. 10, MS49,753/13, Robert Brennan Papers (hereafter RBP), National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI).

Given these comments about the respective host countries from the men on the ground, why examine the period, 1932–39, at all? Among the reasons is that the era started with the national consequences of unfettered US capitalism, which extended to the international stage and ended with a global war arising from the unchecked rise of fascism spreading from Germany. The public and polity in both the US and Ireland lived through a fraught time, and there is much to be learned about bilateral diplomatic relations during this period of peace and gestating crises. Secondly, the critical events that bookmarked the period did not exist in isolation but emerged out of specific circumstances that affected other countries. Thus, America's Wall Street woes and Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal solutions impinged on Ireland, and the international issues of debt, disarmament and isolationism entangled both countries together with specific bilateral concerns.[10] Meanwhile, Ireland's political leadership, specifically Éamon de Valera – who also had a vision for Ireland – worked to entangle American governments in his quest for political sovereignty, economic independence and international legitimacy.[11] During this crucial period when the practice of diplomacy had to adjust to these changing environments, alongside the emergence of mass ideologies, new forces such as the 'power of the press … [and] of the governed' also affected the practice of diplomacy.[12] MacWhite regarded himself as a diplomat of the 'new school' who used modern communications to connect with the host and home governments and the American public.[13] There were other contexts to the transatlantic bilateral relationship, specifically the perennial Anglo-American and Anglo-Irish dimensions, which existed alongside the framework of collective action at a multilateral level. The diplomat, therefore, operated at many levels: international, national, local and personal. The character and personality of the individual representative who, with his family, lived in various cosmopolitan centres in the US and

[10] The term 'Ireland' will be interchanged with 'Irish Free State', the official description from 1922 until 1937 when the term Éire replaced it. Northern Ireland refers to the six-county state that is part of the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland. The term 'transatlantic' is used as shorthand for the US–Ireland–US relationship as the work examines both sets of relations.

[11] Fanning used the phrase 'quest for sovereignty' in *A Will to Power: Éamon de Valera* (London, 2015), p. 159.

[12] Paul Webster Hare, *Making Diplomacy Work: Intelligent Innovation for the Modern World* (Washington, DC, 2015), http:electronicresources.bl.uk//accessnow/start.html (4 April 2016). See also Jeremy Black, *The History of Diplomacy* (London, 2010); Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its Evolution, Theory, and Administration* (London, 2011); Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, 1994).

[13] Address delivered at the 164th Annual Banquet of the Friendly Sons of St Patrick, Philadelphia, 18 March 1935, P194/437 (13)-(14), MMP, UCDA.

Ireland also influenced how the diplomatic relationship unfolded and helps illuminate the place of Ireland in US policies, priorities and opinions and the place of the US in the same Irish concerns.

Internationalism and Foreign Policy

By the early 1930s, the main principles of Irish foreign policy had been established, namely a 'commitment to multilateralism and the rule of law, disarmament and the arbitration of disputes, and the protection of minorities'.[14] These interests grew out of the way nationalists approached independence before 1921, particularly their internationalisation of the Irish cause from the seventeenth century onwards when aid was regularly sought from sympathetic Continental European countries, and the United States from the nineteenth century onwards.[15] This pattern within Irish nationalist circles to look outwards combined with the continuing interest of some Irish abroad to look backwards became distinctive features of nationalist leadership cadres including Sinn Féin, founded in 1905. The growth of Irish America, its attendant fraternal organisations and its integration into American political life created a belief among Irish nationalist leaders that Irish Americans could influence American domestic and foreign policies, particularly the Anglo-American link, in Ireland's favour. From the seventeenth century onwards, Irish nationalists also received and sent out emissaries and agents to represent their interests. By 1900, Irish people in Ireland and the US were already familiar with the services of American and British consular officials.[16]

The American and German dimensions to the 1916 rising revealed the breadth of the Irish nationalists' foreign networks and also that the leaders still looked beyond national boundaries to realise independence. Pádraig Pearse and Tom Clarke placed hope in the post-war peace conference. Arthur Griffith believed 'we are going to the Peace Conference … as a small nationality, precisely the personage for whom England fought'.[17] Such aspirations intensified after the US entered the war in April 1917 and self-determination became a goal of the Democrat president, Woodrow Wilson. Gerard Keown notes how Irish nationalists moved from basing their claims to nationhood on nineteenth-century

[14] Gerard Keown, *First of the Small Nations: The Beginnings of Irish Foreign Policy in the Interwar Years, 1919–1932* (Oxford, 2016), p. 244.
[15] Whelan, *United States Foreign Policy and Ireland*.
[16] See Whelan, *American Government in Ireland*.
[17] Quoted in Keown, *First of the Small Nations*, p. 28.

'statist' claims to colonising Wilson's language of 'liberal internationalism' to justify their requests.[18] Sinn Féin's seizure of Wilson's words revealed one of the weaknesses of Wilson's aims; self-determination was not intended for all colonial peoples. Despite many approaches by Sinn Féin and its representatives in the US and in France to Wilson, his adviser Colonel Edward House, his Secretary of State Robert Lansing and indeed French President Georges Clémenceau and indirectly to British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, among others, Sinn Féin and other dependencies' case for self-determination was not even heard at the conference.[19] Despite these failures, internationalising the Irish question remained vital to nationalist leaders' strategy.

From January 1919 when the first Dáil was established, seeking international recognition for an Irish republic remained the goal. A *Message to the Free Nations of the World* was issued, a foreign service established and hopes still lay in Wilson's plan to establish a League of Nations. This pursuit of international recognition of the republic continued throughout the Anglo-Irish War of Independence (1919–21) when publicity and propaganda were also weapons of war. But there was a stronger theme in the thinking and language of the republican leaders: that an independent Ireland would be 'an honest broker' between America and Europe, which provided the international community with another reason to recognise the republic. Keown argues that this idea revealed that the Irish leaders had 'grasped the changing international landscape' and they remained steadfast in their commitment to internationalism as the 'best guarantee' of the rights of small nations.[20] The Irish Civil War (1922–23), when the opponents and supporters of the Anglo-Irish treaty (1921) confronted each other, was a 'disaster' abroad, forcing Irish envoys to explain its complexity and feeding into the British government's portrayal of Ireland as unfit for self-government. Yet, from 1924 when official US recognition was accorded, Smiddy established himself and his office as the legitimate representative of an Irish dominion government with its own distinctive goals.[21] From 1922 to 1932, the William T. Cosgrave–led government wanted to play a part in international affairs 'regardless of size or means', while the question of neutrality seemed

[18] Keown, *First of the Small Nations*, pp. 34–35.
[19] Whelan, *United States Foreign Policy and Ireland*, pp. 178–217. Egyptian and Vietnamese nationalists were other groups not given hearings in Paris.
[20] Keown, *First of the Small Nations*, pp. 89–90; Michael Kennedy, 'Irish foreign policy, 1919–1973' in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ireland: Volume IV, 1800 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 606.
[21] Keown, *First of the Small Nations*, p. 111; Whelan, *United States Foreign Policy and Ireland*, pp. 428–69.

'academic'. By 1932, in addition to establishing its strongly nationalist agenda but a failed non-recognition policy of Northern Ireland, it had emphasised its internationalist credentials with membership of the League of Nations and the British Commonwealth of Nations. It had also continuing links to a global diasporic community and it aspired to act as a bridge between Europe and America.[22] Ronan Fanning argued that while de Valera could not influence foreign policy during the period 1922 to 1932, his experience during the revolutionary years, 1916–21, and during those 'wilderness' years of opposition, shaped his ideas on foreign policy not least to reveal his obsession with sovereignty alongside a realisation of the geopolitical realities for a small state.[23]

Just as nationalist Ireland created a more coherent state and reasoned foreign policy out of a fragmented situation in 1919, colonial America achieved this from 1750 onwards. Domestic and foreign circumstances also influenced the evolution of that policy over time. But the similarities in the origins of their respective foreign policies ends there. Thomas Bailey and Walter LaFeber argue that the US was a world power from 1776 onwards because its resources of territory, population, economic strength and natural reserves equalled those of the great European states. It also had great power ambition.[24] Brian McKercher refined this view when he suggested that US wealth gave it the potential to be the world's leading power but, until summer 1940, Britain claimed this position due to its vigorous expression of its national strength.[25] Despite this reservation, from 1776 onwards American national interests combined with the values and the principles that underpinned them were those of a great power. Territorial and commercial expansionism propelled the nation beyond its borders and so also did a belief in individualism and the centralisation of government, particularly the accumulation of presidential authority.[26]

In 1913, Woodrow Wilson did not expect to have to deal with foreign affairs.[27] But in the following year, American individualism was

[22] Keown, *First of the Small Nations*, p. 244; Whelan, 'Irish foreign policy, 1922–1932' (Unpublished lecture), p. 5; Michael Kennedy, 'Irish foreign policy', p. 608.
[23] Ronan Fanning, 'Éamon de Valera – de Valera's foreign policy' (Paris, 1986), http://books.openedition.org/psn/5220?lang-en (25 April 2018).
[24] Thomas Bailey quoted in Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: U.S. Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1896, Volume 2*, 2nd edition (New York and London, 1994), p. xix.
[25] Brian McKercher, '"Our most dangerous enemy": Great Britain pre-eminent in the 1930s', *International History Review*, 13 (November 1991), pp. 751–83.
[26] LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1896* (New York, 1994), pp. xix–xx, 779.
[27] A. S. Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist: A Look at His Major Foreign Policies* (Baltimore, 1965), p. 5.

transformed into American neutrality and isolationism, which would dominate the foreign policy narrative until 1941. When Wilson eventually led America into war in April 1917, his foreign policy values, just like Cosgrave's, were modern: concern for human rights, democracy and a belief that the United States had a role to play in international arbitration and conciliation.[28] But his version of the imperial presidency saw him dominate foreign policy decision-making and, therefore, the weaknesses of his vision too emerged: his tendency to oversimplify the complexity of international politics and his blind faith in democracy that brought an unreal quality to his thinking and policies.[29] Essentially Wilson searched for control and order at home and abroad.[30] A war-time society and economy brought the former. But in 1918 while America could claim great power status, it did not participate in the post-war multilateral architecture that restored international order in the short to medium term at least.

While President Warren Harding may have been a man of mediocre intelligence who was bereft of original thinking and who swayed with the majority popular positions, his guiding principles were a belief in American nationalism and patriotism. Just like Wilson, he expected to concentrate on domestic and not foreign affairs. The weakest part of his inaugural speech related to foreign affairs: 'We do not mean to be entangled. We will accept no responsibility except as our own conscience and judgement, in each instance, may determine.'[31] Yet, Harding, for all his flaws, understood that Americans wanted to return to normality or 'normalcy' in his words; a new order built by Americans, funded by Americans, based on American values and serving American interests.[32]

Against a background of what Joan Hoff calls 'independent internationalism' and an open-door policy whereby the new government would not brook any discrimination against US business interests abroad, Harding, Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes and Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover acted to deal with the main challenges to the US reorganising of the world economic, political and military order. These included war debts, reparations, disarmament, the Japanese threat in the east and fear of an expanding Bolshevik revolution. Under Harding

[28] Ibid., pp. 12–19. [29] Ibid., pp. 19–21.
[30] For further see L. E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations* (New York, 2002), pp. 31–47.
[31] Quoted in P. R. Moran, *Warren G. Harding 1865–1923: Chronology-Documents-Bibliographical Aids* (New York, 1970), p. 27; Randolph C. Downes, *The Rise of Warren Gamaliel Harding, 1865–1920* (Ohio, 1970), p. 339.
[32] G. H. Stuart, *The Department of State: A History of Its Organisation, Procedure and Personnel* (New York, 1949), p. 259.

and Hughes, America engineered the Washington Disarmament Conference, 1921–22, which resulted in the respective Four Power and Nine Power treaties and the Dawes Plan on debts in 1924. American individualism, not the League of Nations or an Anglo-American alliance, seemed to have curtailed the arms race and provided a solution to the rebuilding of the global financial system.[33] Despite Harding's unexpected death in 1923 and replacement by Vice President Calvin Coolidge, American capitalism and the Washington treaty system remained the 'real weapons' of US foreign policy until 1929 when domestic structures collapsed.[34]

By early 1929, the new Republican president, Herbert Hoover – whose past experience as a mining engineer and relief aid coordinator was more international than any of his predecessors – was ironically another strong believer in American individualism.[35] Revisionist historians' interpretation of Hoover's foreign policy believe that his views were 'progressively modern' for the time, citing his relief work, his pro-League of Nations stance, support for disarmament, the 1928 Kellogg–Briand pact and the World Court and his general opposition to the use of force to resolve international disputes particularly in Latin America and Asia.[36] His values centred on 'individualism, voluntary co-operation and co-operative capitalism'.[37] By early 1931, Hoover recognised that the American financial crisis had become a world crisis and American solutions such as the Smoot–Hawley Tariff in 1931 had aggravated it more than eased it. Hoover and his Secretary of State Henry Stimson clung to the Republicans' conservative yet internationalist approach to foreign policy through to 1933.[38]

Foreign relations did not feature prominently in the 1933 presidential campaign.[39] According to a contemporary account, the Democratic

[33] Joan Hoff, 'From Sarajevo to Sarajevo' in Michael J. Hogan, *The Ambiguous Legacy: U.S. Foreign Relations in the 'American Century'* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 184–89.
[34] LaFeber, *The American Age*, p. 347.
[35] Herbert Hoover, *American Individualism* (New York, 1922); Herbert Hoover, *The Challenge to Liberty* (New York, 1935).
[36] Joan Hoff Wilson, *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive* (Boston, Toronto, 1975), p. 189; George W. Carey, 'Herbert Hoover's concept of individualism revisited' in Ellis W. Hawley (ed.), *Herbert Hoover as Secretary of Commerce: Studies in New Era Thought and Practice*, (Iowa City, 1981); Gary Dean Best, *The Politics of American Individualism: Herbert Hoover in Transition, 1918–1921* (Westport, Connecticut, 1975); M. N. Rothbard, 'The Hoover myth', *Studies on the Left* (July–August 1966), (New York, 1970 edition).
[37] Joan Hoff Wilson, 'The popular image of an unpopular president' in Lee Nash (ed.) *Understanding Herbert Hoover: Ten Perspectives* (Stanford, 1987), pp. 1–23.
[38] LaFeber, *The American Age*, p. 347.
[39] Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Great Depression, 1929–1941*, p. 233