

Irish Foreign Policy and the Third World: Voting in the UN General Assembly in the 1980s

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This article examines Ireland's voting record and that of its EC partners and other Western European countries in the UN General Assembly in the 1980s. It is argued that Ireland has adopted a consistently positive approach towards issues of concern to the Third World and forms part of a progressive voting bloc within the EC on such matters. The EC's European Political Cooperation (EPC) mechanism is not considered a barrier to the adoption of such stances. Ireland is also found to adopt a position very similar to those of some non-EC states such as Sweden and Austria.

If voting changed anything, it would be abolished. Whatever the wider truth of that assertion, it has a certain aptness when applied to the votes taken in the General Assembly of the UN, because these votes carry no legislative power. This is of particular relevance for countries of the Third World because the General Assembly is one of the few forums where they can raise their interests and concerns with the countries of the developed world. The Assembly gives each member country an equal voice, which when allied to the fact that there are far more developing countries than developed, allows Third World countries a degree of voting influence that they do not enjoy elsewhere. The resolutions that are passed as a consequence of these votes are most unlikely to change anything, because of the absence of

legislative authority behind them. However, the votes in the Assembly are significant not just because they represent a voice for the Third World, but also because they provide an opportunity to assess how other countries respond to that voice.

This article analyses the voting records of Ireland and of other selected west European countries in the UN General Assembly in the 1980s, in order to assess Irish foreign policy on Third World issues. It is focused primarily on the voting cohesion of the member states of the European Community (EC), because those states operate a procedure for foreign policy cooperation (European Political Cooperation – EPC) which specifically emphasises the harmonisation of policies in the UN as one of its principal elements: ‘Constant efforts are made to ensure that Member States vote the same way and give common explanations of votes.’² However, the article also examines the degree of voting cohesion between Ireland and a number of states, both Community members and non-members, on a bilateral country-to-country basis rather than on a Community-wide basis.

The article will argue that Ireland has consistently taken a positive approach towards issues of concern to Third World states, and that this approach is evident in the Irish voting record throughout the 1980s. Ireland also forms part of a progressive bloc of West European nations in the UN, which is not confined to EC member states. There is an equally evident conservative bloc within the Community which has adopted a far more negative stance towards the same issues.

The article is based on an analysis of the recorded votes in the UN General Assembly of sixteen West European countries between 1980 and 1989.³ The study ignores all resolutions which did not go to a vote or which were passed unanimously by the Assembly, which account for approximately 60 per cent of all resolutions which go before the Assembly. There is thus a danger that the degree of voting cohesion is being understated if these resolutions are left out. However, the focus of this study is primarily on the differences between the foreign policies of selected West European countries rather than on the occasions when all UN members are agreed. While it is worth bearing in mind that more UN resolutions are agreed among all members than are decided by votes, there are significant differences in foreign policy stances which are only evident when voting records are examined.⁴ Where a vote was taken, each country has four options: it can vote yes or no, it can vote to abstain, or it can fail to record a vote. This record of ‘yes-no-abstain-no vote recorded’ forms the basis for the study.

The article is organised as follows. Section 1 examines the voting cohesion of all of the Community member states during the period in question, though it should be borne in mind that Greece only joined the EC in 1981 (i.e. from Session 36 onwards) and Spain and Portugal in 1986 (from Session 41 onwards). Section 2 examines how deviations from EC cohesion occurred, by identifying the number of times each member state has found itself voting either in isolation or as part of a minority group of EC states. Section 3 extends this analysis to argue that such groups form reasonably consistent blocs, and that both a progressive bloc and a conservative bloc can be identified within the EC. Section 4 looks in more detail at Ireland's voting record, and analyses the bilateral voting cohesion of Ireland with each Community state. This section also includes an analysis of bilateral voting cohesion with four non-EC states. Section 5 assesses the degree to which votes in the UN reflect support for the interests and concerns of Third World countries. Finally, conclusions are presented with respect to Irish foreign policy and the Third World.

Overall EPC cohesion

In Table 1 we present an analysis of the degree of overall cohesion among EC states for votes in the 1980s. The degree of

Table 1: EC voting cohesion, 1980-1989

session	TV	CV	%C	CV9	%EC9
35 (1980)	116	55	47.4	55	47.4
36 (1981)	134	62	46.3	85	63.4
37 (1982)	159	62	39.0	86	54.1
38 (1983)	146	44	30.1	67	45.9
39 (1984)	147	44	29.9	69	46.9
40 (1985)	152	62	40.8	79	52.0
41 (1986)	150	58	38.7	73	48.7
42 (1987)	141	69	48.9	79	56.0
43 (1988)	136	62	45.6	71	52.2
44 (1989)	116	52	44.8	63	54.3

Key: TV: total votes in session
 CV: number of cohesive EC votes
 %C: per cent cohesion of EC
 CV9: number of cohesive votes among original EPC nine
 %EC9: per cent cohesion of original EPC nine

voting cohesion has declined since the mid-1970s, when the average was around 59 per cent.⁵ The average for the ten years from 1980 to 1989 is just over 41 per cent. This fall in cohesion can be partly explained by the expansion of the Community that took place in the 1980s, with Greek accession in 1981 causing particular problems for cohesion and Spanish and Portuguese accession in 1986 adding to the complexities facing EPC. Therefore, Table 1 also presents data for the degree of cohesion of the nine original EPC partners. This suggests that although EC enlargement created some problems for voting cohesion in the UN, there was a decline in cohesion among those nine anyway since the 1970s, to an average of just over 50 per cent. It is interesting to note that in 1980, the year prior to Greek accession, EC voting cohesion was as low as 47.4 per cent.

Votes in minority or in isolation

It will be possible to judge more accurately the impact that the three new member states had upon EC cohesion if we examine the frequency with which each member state found itself voting either in isolation from its partners or as part of a minority group. Before presenting the analysis for the period of the 1980s, it is necessary to explain in a little more detail how votes in isolation or in minority were calculated. In a situation where eleven member states voted 'yes' and one abstained, it is easy to identify. However, take for example the vote on Resolution 37:9 in 1982, when Greece voted 'yes', the UK 'no', and the other eight members abstained: this has been interpreted as a vote in isolation for both Greece and the UK.

As a further example, we can consider the vote on Resolution 35:119 in 1980, when Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands voted 'yes', Belgium, Germany, Italy and Luxembourg voted to abstain, and France and the UK voted 'no', giving a total EC 'yes-abstain-no' record of 3-4-2: this has been interpreted as a vote with two minority groups, one minority voting yes, the other voting no, even though in overall terms there are more countries voting in a 'minority' than with the 'majority' of four. Not all cases result in a cohesive vote, a vote in isolation or a minority grouping: for example, the vote on Resolution 40:152H in 1985 saw five states abstain and five vote 'no': such 50/50 splits are left out of the tables in this section. One final point to mention is that in cases where there was no recorded

vote for a country, that is simply left out of the calculations: thus, for example, the vote on Resolution 38:59A in 1984, where five countries voted 'yes' and four voted to abstain, with no recorded vote for Luxembourg, is treated as if there were only nine member states.

Table 2: Divergent votes, 1980-89

	votes in isolation	votes in minority	total	per cent isolated
Belgium	3	30	33	9.1
Denmark	12	258	270	4.4
France	38	156	194	19.6
Germany	6	119	125	4.8
Greece	169	339	508	33.3
Ireland	33	339	372	8.9
Italy	3	69	72	4.2
Luxembourg	2	33	35	5.7
Netherlands	5	77	82	6.1
Portugal	4	25	29	13.8
Spain	17	111	128	13.3
UK	94	192	286	32.9
Total	386	1,748	2,134	

Based on these calculations, the analysis in Table 2 presents the number of times each member state found itself voting in isolation throughout the 1980s, and the number of times each found itself voting with a minority of Community states. It is immediately apparent that the incidence of voting in isolation is much lower than that of voting with a minority group. This supports the notion that member states are reluctant to distance themselves from their partners on their own. With only a few exceptions, votes in isolation only account for ten per cent or less of the total divergent votes for each country, and Spain and Portugal are only marginally above that figure. But the exceptions are interesting. It is apparent that Greece has found problems in accommodating itself to the EPC consensus since it joined: over 42 per cent of the votes in isolation, 169 out of 386, were by Greece, and the country has also regularly found itself in a minority group. However, Greece is by no means the only country with such problems. Both the UK and France, perhaps coincidentally the two EC members with permanent seats on the UN Security Council, frequently vote in isolation. And Denmark and Ireland also diverge from the Community

consensus on a frequent basis, though in these cases it is far more likely to be a vote with a minority group.

It is worth examining the record for divergent votes in some more detail, and in Tables 3 and 4 we examine the votes in isolation and in minority for each member state for each year. Table 3 indicates that for most countries the incidence of voting in isolation remains relatively constant. However, two changes in pattern are worth noting. First, the tendency of the UK to vote in isolation appears to have increased through the 1980s. Secondly, although Greece is clearly the country most prepared to vote in isolation, that tendency has declined since 1985. The latter partly reflects growing Greek acculturation to the norms of EPC, but also the influence of Spanish membership. On seven occasions in 1987, five in 1988 and six in 1989, those two countries voted together against the other Community states, in all cases on questions relating to Palestine. As the Community expands it becomes easier to avoid being caught in isolation.

Table 3: Votes in isolation, by member state and year

	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Total
Belgium	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Denmark	1	1	2	1	3	2	0	0	1	1	12
France	5	1	2	3	3	5	7	5	3	4	38
Germany	0	0	3	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	6
Greece	na	24	32	28	35	25	11	4	6	4	169
Ireland	6	3	6	5	3	1	2	1	2	4	33
Italy	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Luxembourg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Netherlands	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Portugal	na	na	na	na	na	na	4	0	0	0	8
Spain	na	na	na	na	na	na	6	3	4	4	17
UK	2	7	7	11	14	9	12	7	12	13	94
Total	17	38	52	49	60	45	43	21	30	31	386

Notes: na: not applicable, country not yet in EC

The patterns with regard to votes in a minority group are reasonably consistent for all the countries, though there is a suggestion of a decline in the incidence of Dutch voting in minority across the years. Ireland, Greece, Denmark and Spain are the most frequent contributors to minority votes, with in each case well over twenty such votes each year, and the UK falls just short of that mark. Some member states are also noteworthy for the extent to which they avoid voting with the minority,

most especially Belgium and Luxembourg, although the voting patterns for Italy and the Netherlands suggest a reasonably strong commitment to cohesion also. In some countries, cohesion among member states has probably become a foreign policy goal in its own right, with those countries putting greater emphasis on such cooperation and coordination than do others.

Table 4: Votes in minority, by member state and year

	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Total
Belgium	3	3	7	6	2	1	1	3	3	1	30
Denmark	29	15	20	30	29	32	37	23	23	20	258
France	21	13	18	16	16	23	20	16	3	10	156
Germany	16	11	14	17	12	9	10	10	13	7	119
Greece	na	21	36	38	40	45	51	42	36	30	339
Ireland	27	21	32	36	42	46	42	34	32	27	339
Italy	15	4	9	9	6	8	4	3	8	3	69
Luxembourg	1	5	7	3	3	5	3	2	2	2	33
Netherlands	12	10	8	6	9	8	9	7	5	3	77
Portugal	na	na	na	na	na	na	9	3	6	7	25
Spain	na	na	na	na	na	na	36	25	27	23	111
UK	22	16	22	23	18	16	22	21	19	13	192

Notes: na: not applicable, country not yet in EC

Minority blocs within EPC

So far, this article has talked in terms of minority groups rather than minority blocs. The difference lies in the degree to which the same countries find themselves voting together on a number of issues. If no such patterns emerge, then one can only talk of groups which form on different votes. If, however, there are consistent patterns of countries voting together, then one can talk of a minority bloc. Such blocs can vary according to the subject matter of the resolutions. Previous studies have identified such consistent blocs.⁶ There is a conservative one based on the UK, Germany and, on many issues, France, and a progressive one with which Denmark and Ireland are particularly identified and with which the Netherlands and Italy have also been associated.

In this study, we make use of a slightly arbitrary measure for minority blocs. Rather than analyse each issue separately, we

Table 5: Positive deviation from EPC consensus
(number of votes)

	in isolation	in minority	total
Greece	168	339	507
Ireland	32	323	355
Denmark	12	237	249
Spain	17	110	127
Netherlands	5	55	60
Italy	3	45	48
France	4	30	34
Portugal	2	16	18
Luxembourg	1	13	14
Germany	0	9	9
Belgium	3	4	7
UK	2	3	5

have taken all the votes together and have separated the occasions when a country has voted in isolation or in a minority in a positive fashion and a negative fashion. The terms positive and negative here refer only to the recorded vote, not the content of the resolution. In other words, where the majority in the Community voted to abstain, a 'yes' vote is classed as positive, a 'no' vote as negative: where the majority vote 'no', both a 'yes' vote and an abstention are taken as positive. The phrases positive and negative should not be interpreted as being automatically the same as progressive and conservative. That could only be established by reference to the text of each resolution. However, it is fair to say that the very simple measures of positive and negative being used here do provide an indication of the position of the countries. Most votes in the UN General Assembly are phrased positively, in other words a 'yes' vote tends to be a more progressive one than a 'no' vote.

This is borne out when the voting record of the Community states is examined. Tables 5 and 6 break down the data on isolation and minority votes given in Table 2 according to positive deviation and negative deviation respectively. The results of the two tables can be interpreted together, as to a large extent the two patterns are the reverse of each other. Four countries emerge with very high scores for positive deviation – Greece, Ireland, Denmark and Spain – and with the exception of Denmark, three of them have the lowest scores for negative votes. In the Spanish case, it is worth remarking that its record has been amassed in far fewer years than the other countries,

Table 6: Negative deviation from EPC consensus
(number of votes)

	in isolation	in minority	total
UK	94	187	281
France	34	135	169
Germany	6	110	116
Belgium	0	26	26
Italy	0	24	24
Netherlands	0	22	22
Luxembourg	1	20	21
Denmark	0	21	21
Portugal	2	9	11
Ireland	1	2	3
Greece	1	0	1
Spain	0	1	1

since it only joined the EC in 1986. Denmark's record of 21 votes with a negative minority group can be explained by abstention on the issue of establishing a nuclear-free zone in South Asia and on technical questions of UN procedure.⁷ These patterns support the idea of a progressive minority bloc which votes together frequently, made up of these four countries, with the Netherlands and Italy occasionally included (mostly on Third World related issues) and France (on Palestinian questions).

In contrast, three countries emerge with a strongly negative record from both tables. Britain has an exceptionally strong negative record, and is joined by Germany and France (again noting France's more positive stance on the Palestinian issue). Again, this reinforces the evidence from other sources that these countries form a conservative voting bloc within EPC on many issues, with France a somewhat maverick but still identifiably more conservative state. The record for the other countries is not particularly clearcut either way. However, it is worth noting that the Netherlands and Italy are more frequently found on the positive side than on the negative one (60 to 22 in the Dutch case, 48 to 24 in the Italian), which supports the notion that they are somewhat closer to the progressive bloc. Similarly, both Belgium and Luxembourg are more frequently inclined towards the negative bloc (26 to 7 in the Belgian case, 21 to 14 for Luxembourg), suggesting that they are slightly closer to the more conservative strand within EPC. The evidence for Portugal is indeterminate.

Thus, this analysis reinforces the idea that there are progressive and conservative blocs within EPC, and it is further borne out by the analysis which follows later in the next section. But it also suggests that 'membership' of the progressive bloc has changed since the enlargements of the 1980s. Both Greece and Spain have strengthened the progressive bloc, and Italy and the Netherlands are less clearly associated with it. Arguably, the two new states have shifted the progressive bloc to an even more progressive position than previously. In other words, the Netherlands and Italy may not be particularly less progressive than they were, but the consensus may have moved away from them slightly.

Ireland's record in bilateral comparison

In terms of Ireland in particular, what has emerged so far is that the country is clearly part of a progressive bloc within EPC on a large number of issues, and that it has maintained that position through the 1980s. In this section, we will examine Ireland's voting record in more detail. To some degree, much of this section will simply reinforce earlier findings. If, for instance, two countries are to be found in a minority bloc together, it can be assumed that their votes will coincide more frequently than others. But the section will also allow a broader perspective to be developed. Instead of concentrating on the EC, it will allow analysis of other countries as well. Rather than assess the extent to which it adheres to or deviates from an overall Community consensus, this section will assess the extent to which Ireland's votes coincide with those of each member state on their own, and also with four other West European states – Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

This paper uses a measure of the number of times each 'country pair' records identical votes. The results appear in Tables 7 and 8. It is immediately apparent that Ireland votes together most frequently with Denmark of the Community states, supporting the notion that these two countries form a regular voting bloc. Furthermore, Greece and Spain among the new members, and the Netherlands and Italy of the original EC states, come close to that bloc as well. The conservative bloc countries of Germany, France and especially the UK are the least

Table 7: Ireland's bilateral voting cohesion with selected European states, 1980-89 (number of votes)

	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Total
ORIGINAL EC9:											
Belgium	82	104	112	94	95	101	105	101	95	84	973
Denmark	105	120	132	129	123	128	136	123	119	99	1,214
France	62	97	105	77	87	92	92	92	92	76	872
Germany	71	99	108	87	93	98	97	98	88	80	919
Italy	87	104	116	96	97	103	107	106	103	85	1,004
Luxembourg	82	102	112	98	97	104	107	103	95	83	983
Netherlands	91	116	119	103	100	111	103	100	94	83	1,020
UK	63	89	95	74	79	87	88	89	77	70	811
NEW MEMBER STATES:											
Greece	89	101	116	110	107	123	126	124	121	99	1,116
Portugal	80	89	114	95	105	109	106	105	100	85	988
Spain	84	99	116	104	103	110	119	113	111	91	1,050
NON-EC STATES:											
Austria	103	116	137	124	124	128	130	128	125	106	1,221
Finland	96	116	137	124	122	124	128	123	122	102	1,194
Norway	102	119	132	116	120	124	134	122	115	98	1,182
Sweden	106	123	143	133	128	125	128	124	121	101	1,232
Total votes	116	134	159	146	147	152	150	141	136	116	1,397

closely aligned with Ireland of the Community states. However, when the bilateral comparison is extended to four non-Community countries the relative importance of EPC is put in a different perspective. Ireland records the same vote as Sweden and Austria on a more frequent basis than with any Community state, and only Denmark comes ahead of two further non-Community states, Finland and Norway. This is particularly apparent in Table 8, which presents the percentage breakdown. Denmark and the four non-EC states vote the same way as Ireland well over eighty per cent of the time, and do so very consistently: only Norway, in the course of session 38, dipped below that figure. Sweden came closest to the Irish position in the first five of the ten sessions analysed, followed by Denmark for two sessions, the first of those jointly with Austria; and for the last three sessions studied, Austria has had the greatest degree of cohesion with Ireland.

The cohesion between Ireland and the other countries of the progressive EC bloc is less consistent, although the Greek and Spanish figures seem to be moving towards a higher degree of

Table 8: Bilateral voting cohesion with Ireland, percentage

	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Average
Sweden	91.3	91.8	89.9	91.1	87.1	82.2	85.3	87.9	89.0	87.1	88.2
Austria	88.8	86.6	86.2	84.9	84.4	84.2	86.7	90.8	91.9	91.4	87.4
Denmark	90.5	89.6	83.0	88.4	83.7	84.2	90.7	87.2	87.5	85.3	86.9
Finland	82.8	86.6	86.2	84.9	83.0	81.6	85.3	87.2	89.7	87.9	85.5
Norway	87.9	88.8	83.0	79.5	81.6	81.6	89.3	86.5	84.6	84.5	84.6
Greece	76.7	75.4	73.0	75.3	72.8	80.9	84.0	87.9	89.0	85.3	79.9
Spain	72.4	73.9	73.0	71.2	70.1	72.4	79.3	80.1	81.6	78.4	75.2
Netherlands	78.4	86.6	74.8	70.6	68.0	73.0	68.7	70.9	69.1	71.6	73.0
Italy	75.0	77.6	73.0	65.8	66.0	67.8	71.3	75.2	75.7	73.3	71.9
Portugal	69.0	66.4	71.7	65.1	71.4	71.7	70.7	74.5	73.5	73.3	70.7
Luxembonrg	70.7	76.1	70.4	67.1	66.0	68.4	71.3	73.0	69.9	71.6	70.4
Belgium	70.7	77.6	70.4	64.4	64.6	66.4	70.0	71.6	69.9	72.4	69.7
Germany	61.2	73.9	67.9	59.6	63.3	64.5	64.7	69.5	64.7	69.0	65.8
France	53.4	72.4	66.0	52.7	59.2	60.5	61.3	65.2	67.6	65.5	62.4
UK	54.3	66.4	59.7	50.7	53.7	57.2	58.7	63.1	56.6	60.3	58.1

cohesion. This would seem to indicate that, in particular, Greece is less prepared to vote entirely in isolation from its EC partners, and will seek some form of support. The level of cohesion between Ireland and the Netherlands seems on the other hand to be declining slightly. However, it is still well clear of the lower end of the scale, where Germany, France and the UK dominate. The UK in particular has had a very low degree of voting cohesion with Ireland during the 1980s. In nine out of the ten sessions analysed, they had the least degree of cohesion, and in the remaining session they came second last with only France behind them. The French have finished second last on seven other occasions.

UN votes and the Third World

The votes which are taken in the UN are of particular interest from a Third World perspective. Since the waves of decolonisation created many new independent countries in the Third World, these have dominated the UN with their interests and concerns. 'Power and influence lie with the group ... of members of the Third World who possess the majority to dominate voting procedures', and this creates a situation where Western countries

have to face their concerns: 'The numerical domination of the developing countries is clearly reflected in the agendas of the different bodies and committees of the UN. These are dominated by the three major concerns of the Third World: development, Southern Africa and the Middle East. Traditional topics such as disarmament and human rights also remain, but they are subject to a specifically Third World interpretation.'⁸ As can be seen in Table 9, resolutions dealing specifically with Third World issues account for over half of all the resolutions for the study period, with disarmament and human rights issues accounting for over a third of all the resolutions.

Table 9: Subject matter of UNGA resolutions, 1980-89

	No.	%
South Africa, Namibia	237	20.1
Palestine	208	17.7
Third World politics	104	8.8
Third World economics	60	5.1
(Third World sub-total)	609	51.7
Disarmament, nuclear issues	389	33.0
Human rights	41	3.5
Procedural & budget issues	100	8.5
Other issues	39	3.3

The resolutions that the General Assembly votes upon thus reflect the interests of Third World countries more than any other group. Therefore, an analysis of voting patterns can give an indication of the policies of countries towards the Third World and their degree of support for Third World issues. In this section, we present a summary of the voting behaviour of the sixteen West European countries being examined. The summary is again based on a simplified measure, where a 'yes' vote is taken to indicate support for the Third World irrespective of the content of the resolution. This approach might be inaccurate in a minority of cases, but as discussed earlier it has a general validity, and the overall patterns that emerge can be considered accurate. The measure used is one which assesses whether countries have a generally positive or negative approach to UN resolutions. It has been calculated by subtracting the number of 'no' votes from the number of 'yes' votes and dividing the result by the total vote minus the number of times the country did not record a vote. Thus, the measure is

effectively ascribing a value of +1 to each 'yes' vote, 0 to each abstention and -1 to each 'no' vote.

The results are presented in Tables 10 and 11. Table 10 gives the total voting record for the period 1980-89. Again, the results reinforce many of the points already made. Greece emerges as the most positive nation, along with Finland, followed by a group which includes Austria, Sweden, Ireland and Spain. Denmark is noticeably more detached from the progressive states using this measure, along with Norway. Portugal is the last country on the list to have more 'yes' votes than 'no' votes and abstentions combined, and four countries have more abstentions alone than 'yes' votes. These four include Luxembourg along with the three countries already identified as forming a conservative bloc – Germany, France and the UK.

Table 10: Voting record, 1980-89 (number of votes)

	Yes	Abs.	No	NVR	Score
Greece	1020	345	28	14	71.0
Finland	914	411	57	15	62.0
Austria	892	461	36	8	61.6
Sweden	882	444	57	14	59.7
Ireland	845	475	77	0	55.0
Spain	831	452	100	14	52.9
Norway	757	466	161	13	43.1
Denmark	751	483	150	13	43.4
Portugal	699	485	211	2	35.0
Netherlands	624	516	244	13	27.5
Italy	588	556	238	15	25.3
Belgium	566	550	269	12	21.4
Luxembourg	559	561	260	7	21.5
Germany	505	598	280	14	16.3
France	503	541	329	24	12.7
UK	429	554	411	13	1.3

Key: Abs: abstained
 NVR: no vote recorded
 Score: $(\text{yes} - \text{no}) (\text{tv} - \text{nvr})$, $\text{tv} = 139$

For the most part, the order created by the number of 'yes' votes is replicated by the order of 'no' votes and by the measured score given. Table 11 makes greater use of the score of positive voting, and suggests some further patterns. Most show scores which remain relatively consistent across the decade, but there are some exceptions. The degree of Greek positive voting

was strongest in the mid-1980s, but was weaker at the start and the end of the period. The opposite pattern seems to apply for Norway and Germany. There is also a suggestion of a falling away of the positive vote for the Netherlands and Portugal. But in general, the Table once again emphasises the different voting of a more positive group or bloc, and of a more conservative group. It is worth commenting that the UK, which seems consistently the most conservative country, voted 'no' more often than 'yes' in four sessions during the 1980s.

Table 11: Score of voting, 1980-1989

	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
Belgium	24.1	21.6	20.8	19.2	12.9	16.1	20.4	30.2	22.4	29.8
Denmark	49.1	40.6	38.4	45.2	38.1	40.9	44.2	48.2	44.0	48.2
France	6.9	14.9	19.0	15.2	8.2	6.8	7.5	19.7	12.3	16.1
Germany	14.7	14.2	16.4	11.0	7.5	12.1	13.6	25.4	26.1	24.5
Ireland	56.9	47.7	54.1	57.5	53.1	53.3	53.3	60.3	54.4	60.4
Italy	31.9	20.9	27.2	21.1	15.0	19.6	25.2	35.5	29.1	30.7
Luxembourg	24.1	20.1	20.1	18.8	15.0	18.0	22.7	31.9	18.0	28.4
Netherlands	40.5	34.3	28.3	27.4	16.3	23.0	26.5	30.2	23.1	28.1
UK	3.4	2.2	5.0	-8.9	-6.1	-2.7	-0.7	14.4	1.5	7.0
Greece	57.7	61.9	75.9	81.5	81.6	75.7	70.1	70.5	63.4	65.8
Portugal	44.7	42.1	45.9	38.4	38.8	23.7	26.0	32.6	28.1	31.0
Spain	60.3	53.0	52.8	55.6	51.7	45.0	51.0	56.8	48.5	55.3
Austria	62.9	51.5	61.6	64.4	62.6	60.3	61.3	65.2	59.0	68.4
Finland	69.8	59.0	60.1	64.4	60.5	61.2	59.9	62.6	59.7	64.9
Norway	51.7	41.0	39.6	36.3	35.4	36.5	46.9	48.9	47.7	50.9
Sweden	63.8	51.9	59.5	59.6	57.1	59.1	60.5	63.3	59.0	64.0

Conclusions: Irish foreign policy

The evidence from voting patterns in the UN General Assembly in the 1980s suggests certain conclusions with regard to Irish foreign policy. Many analyses have suggested that this policy has been significantly altered by EC membership, and that it is now increasingly aligned to that of its Community partners. This has been interpreted as Ireland adopting a more conservative stance on many foreign policy issues in order to appease an EC consensus, and that this in turn constitutes an erosion of a previously held progressive foreign policy. In particular, it has been argued that Irish foreign policy towards the Third World

has become less progressive through the country's closer involvement with one-time colonial powers in the EC.

Certainly, Irish foreign policy is now made in consultation with EC partners, and the Community is the principal prism through which the country's policy is expressed.⁹ However, the evidence presented in this article does not indicate any increasing incidence of cohesion in the Community. If anything, cohesion would seem to have declined in the 1980s compared to the 1970s, reflecting not just the problems of accommodating three new member states within the EPC consensus but also the limits of that consensus even among the original EPC nine. All the countries are more likely to deviate from the Community norm by voting with a minority group rather than in isolation, but at the same time all countries have recorded at least one vote in isolation at some time in the 1980s, and in some cases (most notably Greece and the UK) have recorded a good deal more. It should also be remembered that a degree of common voting between West European states can be expected, whether they are attempting to coordinate foreign policies or not.

In terms of the total number of divergent votes (i.e. votes in isolation plus votes in a minority), Ireland recorded the second highest figure after Greece (see Table 2), so it would seem that Ireland has had no problems pursuing its own line when it so chooses. Most of those divergent votes were in a minority group rather than in isolation, which suggests that when Irish policy diverges from the Community norm, it does so with considerable support from other member states. This is supported by another feature of the study. Ireland is very clearly identified as forming part of a minority bloc with other states, most notably Denmark, Greece and Spain and to a lesser extent Italy and the Netherlands. The support each of these countries offers the others means that they can exercise greater weight within EPC than if they were voting in isolation.

This article has also argued that this regular bloc of states can be identified as a progressive one. This would again suggest that Irish foreign policy is not being re-aligned to a conservative consensus, and that previous progressive stances are not being eroded by EPC, even though there is an equally evident conservative bloc among Community states. Ireland rarely votes in isolation on Third World issues. Out of the 33 occasions during the 1980s when the country was isolated from its EC partners, 27 were on issues of disarmament or nuclear weapons,¹⁰ which are more connected with Ireland's traditional policy of neutrality than with Third World policy. But this does not mean that

Ireland pays more attention to its neutrality in an EC context than it does to Third World issues. Instead, it reflects the fact that there is considerable support among other Community members for the kinds of policies Ireland pursues on Third World issues.

Ireland's voting in the UN on Third World issues has consistently been on the more progressive side of the EPC consensus. The one weak spot in this respect seems to be questions of international economic order. Ireland is less clearly associated with a progressive stance on such issues.¹¹ In other areas, Ireland is to the fore. For example, in relation to South Africa, 'Ireland has consistently condemned the policies of apartheid in international fora',¹² and on the Middle East Ireland 'was clearly on the pro-Arab side of the European norm'.¹³ If anything, membership of the EC has improved Ireland's ability to support Third World issues in the UN. Although Ireland would be faced with these issues whether it were a member or not, it now has access to a far greater pool of information through EPC, which has been particularly beneficial for dealings with Third World issues, where Ireland has a comparative lack of its own diplomatic contacts and networks. Ireland is now also in a stronger position to try to influence its European neighbours towards more progressive positions themselves, and the likelihood is that the progressive bloc in the EC which includes Ireland will be strengthened in any further enlargement of the Community. This article has pointed out that Sweden, Finland, Austria and Norway are all close to Ireland's position and to the progressive bloc, and of those four countries, three are currently applicants for EC membership and the fourth, Norway, is considering an application.

Footnotes

1. The authors are indebted to Kathy Kennedy and Peter Holmes for their assistance in conducting the research for this paper. All errors of fact or judgement are, of course, the responsibility of the authors.
2. Commission of the European Community, 'European Political Cooperation', *European File* 13/83, (1983), p.7
3. This corresponds to Sessions 35 to 44 of the General Assembly. The voting records are taken from the *UN Yearbook*.
4. It has been pointed out that 'the EEC states vote together on unimportant questions and apart on important ones, in contrast to the Third World's voting, where the reverse is true': a diplomat of a Third World state, quoted in B. Lindemann, (1976), 'Europe and the Third World: the Nine at the United Nations', *World Today* 32 (7): 260-269, p.264
5. B. Lindemann, (1982), 'European Political Cooperation at the UN: a challenge for the Nine' in D. Allen, R. Rummel and W. Wessels, (eds), *European Political Cooperation*, London, Butterworth, p.122, Table 9.2

6. L. Hurwitz, (1976), 'The EEC and decolonization: the voting behaviour of the nine in the UN General Assembly', *Political Studies*, 24: 435-447; B. Lindemann, (1976), op. cit.; R. Foot, 'The European Community's voting behaviour at the United Nations General Assembly', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 17: 350-360, (1979); B. Lindemann, (1982), op. cit.; B. Laffan, (1988), *Ireland and South Africa: Irish Government Policy in the 1980s*, Dublin, Trócaire
7. Nine of the votes where Denmark found itself in a negative minority group were on the issue of a nuclear-free zone in South Asia, and eight were on technical UN matters.
8. B. Lindemann, (1982), op. cit., p.111
9. See M. Holmes, N. Rees and B. Whelan, (1993), *Irish Foreign Policy and the Third World*, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan and Trócaire
10. The other issues on which Ireland voted in isolation included resolutions on East Timor, Palestinian refugees, rights to self-determination, South Africa and procedural matters.
11. B. Lindemann, (1976), op. cit., p.266
12. B. Laffan, (1988), op. cit., p.24
13. P. Keatinge, (1984), 'Ireland' in D. Allen and A. Pijpers, *European Foreign Policy-making and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, p.26