

First of the small nations: the beginnings of Irish foreign policy in the inter-war years, 1919-1932

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Abstrak

This book traces the ideas and aspirations of the revolutionary generation in Ireland, from the 1890s to 1918, who dreamt of an independent Irish state and imagined how an Irish foreign policy might look. It follows attempts to put these ideas into practice during the campaign for Irish independence led by Sinn Fein, 1919-21, and examines how they evolved into the first Irish foreign policy during the first decade of the Irish Free State. Efforts focused on asserting the young Irish states independence as it pushed the boundaries of its British Commonwealth membership, contributed at the League of Nations and forged ties in Europe and America. Many of the ideas that still shape Irish foreign policy-small state and European country; honest broker and international good citizen; mother country with a diaspora and bridge between Europe and America-are rooted in this period. A strong vein of internationalism runs through Irish nationalism; from the desire to pursue a policy based on values, to attempts to create an international rationale for independence and an understanding of the influence of public opinion, there is much that was modern about the Irish experience. This experience also shines a light on interwar European relations and how small states manage their affairs in a world system dominated by their larger neighbours. Drawing on a rich vein of archival sources and private papers, this book charts the beginnings of Irish foreign policy and the aspiration to be first of the small nations.