

Fifty Years of Ireland-Brazil Relations: Cultural Exchange, Academic Collaboration, and Shared Principles in the Twenty-First Century

Cinquenta anos de relações Irlanda-Brasil: Intercâmbio cultural, colaboração acadêmica e princípios partilhados no século 21

Hajer Gandouz

Abstract: The Irish presence in the Latin American region has consolidated Ireland's connection with the area and built a solid bond across the Atlantic. Indeed, the Irish diaspora has paved the way for founding diplomatic relations between Ireland and Latin America. This paper seeks to scrutinize the diplomatic ties between Ireland and Brazil, which have received little academic attention. Accordingly, it highlights the background of Irish-Brazilian ties through examining the role of the Irish diaspora in Brazil during the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. This work mostly examines these bilateral ties through the lens of Irish foreign policy. Therefore, it takes into account the evolution of the diplomacy of Ireland in the late twentieth century. Most importantly, this study assesses the diplomatic relations between Ireland and Brazil during the twenty-first century. More precisely, it considers divergent types of factors that have nurtured their bilateral relations. Consequently, it addresses cultural and academic initiatives conducted by Ireland in partnership with Brazil in the context of the twenty-first century. This paper also highlights the common principles supported by these nations, which fortify their diplomatic relations.

Keywords: Cultural Exchange; Educational Collaboration; Shared Principles.

Resumo: A presença irlandesa na região da América Latina consolidou a ligação da Irlanda com a área e construiu um vínculo sólido através do Atlântico.

De fato, a diáspora irlandesa abriu o caminho para a fundação de relações diplomáticas entre a Irlanda e a América Latina. Este artigo procura analisar os laços diplomáticos entre a Irlanda e o Brasil, que têm recebido pouca atenção acadêmica. Para isso, destaca os antecedentes dos laços irlandeses-brasileiros por meio da análise do papel da diáspora irlandesa no Brasil durante os séculos XVI e XIX. Este trabalho examina principalmente esses laços bilaterais através da lente da política externa irlandesa. Portanto, leva em conta a evolução da diplomacia da Irlanda no final do século XX. Mais importante ainda, este estudo avalia as relações diplomáticas entre a Irlanda e o Brasil durante o século XXI. Mais precisamente, considera tipos divergentes de fatores que alimentaram suas relações bilaterais. Consequentemente, aborda as iniciativas culturais e acadêmicas conduzidas pela Irlanda em parceria com o Brasil no contexto do século XXI. O artigo também destaca os princípios comuns defendidos por essas nações, que fortalecem suas relações diplomáticas.

Palavras-chave: *Intercâmbio cultural; Colaboração educativa; Princípios partilhados.*

Introduction

Ireland has historically fostered longstanding relations with Latin America. Its connection with the region has been developed by cultural exchanges and historical migration patterns. Indeed, the Irish presence in Latin America has consolidated Ireland's engagement with the region and built a strong bond across the Atlantic. Given the Irish experience with British colonialism, it is more common to highlight the existence of the Irish community in Anglophone countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. However, it is crucial to acknowledge their presence in Latin America. In this regard, the Argentine Professor Edmundo Murray contends that the Latin American region has been the destination for "Irish missionaries, soldiers, merchants, scientists, teachers and others [...]" (15). This shows the diverse Irish profiles that reached Latin America, where they played divergent roles. Although the precise number of Irish people who migrated to or settled for a short time in Latin America remains a topic of academic debate (Murray 15), the diverse range of Irish profiles in Latin America is undeniable.

Therefore, diasporas can reinforce international networks between countries through facilitating cultural exchange and establishing institutions. In this context, the Irish diaspora

might have paved the way for establishing diplomatic ties between Ireland and Latin America. Regarding the foreign relations between Ireland and this region, it is intriguing to investigate the diplomatic ties between Ireland and Brazil, which have received little academic attention. Accordingly, the objective of this paper is to examine how the Republic of Ireland has nurtured its diplomatic relationship with Brazil.

It is important to explore the existing academic works on the international relations between Ireland and Brazil. Academic research primarily examines the relationship between Ireland and the Latin American region in general. In this respect, Professor of Politics and Public Administration Peadar Kirby argues that the Latin American area has been “neglected” by the Irish state (10). To elaborate, the Irish presence and activities in Latin America were minimal compared to their involvement and, particularly, the dynamic activities of Irish missionaries in other continents, such as Asia and Africa (Kirby 10). Consequently, Kirby stipulates that Latin America is “the most neglected” region in the world by Ireland (10). Kirby specifies that this abandonment is not only practiced by the state, but also by the Irish private field and civil society (10).

In the same vein, Professor of History Dermot Keogh and his co-author Patrick Kiely argue that the evolution of diplomatic ties between Ireland and Latin America has been overlooked (6). Before the National Archives Act in 1986, academic research on Irish diplomatic history in general was narrow (Keogh and Kiely 6). This Act paved the way for creating a framework known as the National Archives (Irish Statute Book). It applies to government departments and court offices specified in the Act as it requires them to transmit records “over 30 years old” to the National Archives (National Archives). As a result, this Act has facilitated the availability of historical documents for public use. Therefore, this has opened the door to the evolution of academic research about the diplomatic history of Ireland in the 1990s (Keogh and Kiely 6).

Keogh and Kiely’s book, *Ireland and Argentina in the Twentieth Century: Diaspora, Diplomacy, Dictatorship, Catholic Mission, and the Falklands Crisis*, contributes to scholarly studies on Ireland’s diplomatic relationship with Latin America in general and Argentina in particular. The authors accentuate the diplomatic relations between Ireland and Argentina in the context of the twentieth century. In his review of the book, Professor of History Michael Kennedy notes that it evaluates the contribution of Irish Catholic missionaries in Argentina and their role in advancing the diplomacy of Ireland in this country (60). More importantly,

their book unveils how the Catholic Church played a key role in the soft power of Ireland (Kennedy 60). Consequently, the Irish Catholic missionaries have undoubtedly contributed to nurturing the diplomatic ties between Ireland and Argentina.

Edmundo Murray also comments on the lack of academic research on the Irish in Latin American countries. More specifically, Murray contends that there is a significantly larger number of studies focused on the Irish in Argentina compared to the limited academic work available on Irish presence in other Latin American nations (181). In this context, Murray asserts the significance of Oliver Marshall's book, *English, Irish and Irish-American Pioneer Settlers in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*, which offers a considerable addition to the academic work in this field. In fact, Murray maintains that it is the "first book ever" to evaluate British and Irish emigrants to Brazil (181). As this book focuses on the British and Irish diasporas in Brazil, it adopts an "inclusive" approach that entails the English, Irish and Irish-American migrants (Murray 183). This constitutes one of its primary strengths, as such a perspective is frequently absent in the confined scope of Irish historiography (Murray 183). Marshall's book also implements analytical instruments adopted from fields related to sociology, economics and history (Murray 183). Thus, this book is an insightful scholarly work for students of "identities" (Murray 18).

Besides his book on British, Irish and Irish-American migrants in Brazil in the nineteenth century, Oliver Marshall has published *Brazil in British and Irish Archives*, a collection of British and Irish archival materials related to Brazil. In this collection, the author underlines that diplomatic relations between Ireland and Brazil were mostly "indirect" and "limited" before the 1990s (37). Marshall examines the manuscript collections at the National Library of Ireland related to Brazil, which are depicted as considerably "limited" (38). He contends that the article drafts primarily focus on Irish settlement in the Amazon from 1612 to 1623 (39). He also highlights the settlement of Irish mercenaries and planters in Rio de Janeiro between 1987 and 1828 (39). As for the manuscript collections found at the Trinity College Library, only two of them were relevant to Brazil, with "disappointingly little relevant content" (Marshall 40).

A comprehensive review of existing literature reveals significant gaps that need to be addressed for a deeper understanding of the evolution of diplomatic ties between Ireland and Brazil. In this vein, it is crucial to highlight the disproportionate focus on the Irish-Argentine ties. Therefore, the bilateral ties between Ireland and Brazil are underexplored due to the

minimal academic research on the relations of Ireland with other Latin American nations. Although Oliver Marshall makes considerable contributions to scholarly studies on Irish-Brazilian relations, there is still a need for further exploration of the topic. Besides, Marshall's book, *English, Irish and Irish-American Pioneer Settlers in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*, principally accentuates the experience of these diasporas in Brazil. Thus, despite their valuable addition to the literature on Irish-Brazilian ties, there is still no academic work that lucidly looks into the evolution of the diplomatic relationship between Ireland and Brazil.

Accordingly, this paper aims to assess the development of the bilateral Irish-Brazilian relations. This work focuses on Ireland's initiatives and attempts to nurture the Irish presence in and interactions with Brazil. Therefore, it considers the background of Irish-Brazilian ties through examining the role of the Irish diaspora in Brazil during the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since this article mostly evaluates these ties from the lens of Irish foreign policy, it looks into the evolution of the diplomacy of Ireland in the late twentieth century. The purpose is to assess the fundamental factors and events that have contributed to the evolution of this bilateral relationship. This paper looks into the diplomatic relations between Ireland and Brazil during the twenty-first century. More precisely, it studies divergent types of factors that have contributed to the consolidation of their bilateral relations. Accordingly, it considers cultural and academic initiatives conducted by Ireland in partnership with Brazil in the context of the twenty-first century. This paper also highlights the common principles supported by these nations, which help nurture their diplomatic relations.

To meet the objective of this research, the methodological approach adopted in this paper is qualitative. Specifically, it is a historical analysis. Thus, to evaluate how Ireland has strategically forged its relations with Brazil, this article rests upon primary sources, such as official governmental papers, diplomatic archives, and official speeches. This paper also takes into account secondary sources, specifically academic works on Irish diplomacy and studies on the relations between Ireland and Brazil.

The Background of Irish-Brazilian Relations: The Role of Irish Diaspora from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth Century

The Irish diaspora in Latin America facilitated the exchange between Ireland and this region in general. Besides, the connection between Ireland and Brazil was initiated by the

presence of the Irish diaspora there, long before the institutionalization of their ties in the 1990s. As a result, the Irish migrants' contribution to developing Irish-Brazilian relations needs to be highlighted.

In this vein, Professor of Public Diplomacy Nicholas J. Cull maintains that the diasporas of certain nations have contributed to the “soft power” of the state (7). Initially coined and conceptualized by Professor of International Relations Joseph Nye, soft power is defined as the “ability to affect others” (21). This type of power tends to be linked to “intangible factors” which may include elements like institutions, ideas, values and culture (Nye 21). Cull also argues that diasporas and migrations can contribute to international relations (7). More precisely, the movement of people can nurture multidimensional ties between states, including economic, cultural and diplomatic.

In this respect, Kennedy argues that “soft power” is viewed as one of Ireland’s crucial pillars for its diplomacy abroad (60). Therefore, the Irish diaspora in Brazil might have played an indispensable part in initiating and consolidating the diplomatic ties between the two countries. To study the Irish presence in Brazil, it is essential to elucidate that, before reaching Latin America, Ireland had “unofficial” relations with Spain and Portugal (Murray 17). Then, numerous Irish mercenaries helped reinforce these ties as they joined Spanish and French military forces (Murray 17). As a result, this exchange paved the way for nurturing an “Iberian”¹ feature among the Irish. In other words, the Irish participation in foreign armies familiarized them with Iberian cultural specificities.

On the geographical level, Brazil has tended to appeal to foreigners due to its uncharted lands (Izarra 30). Although it had experienced isolation for nearly three centuries due to the Portuguese, Brazilian harbors became accessible in 1808 to ‘friendly nations’ (Izarra 29). Therefore, Brazil was an intriguing Latin American spot for the Irish.

A fundamental religious factor contributed to the Irish settlement in the Latin American region in general and, particularly, Brazil. Accordingly, Roman Catholic priests, who were born in Spain or Portugal and had Irish parents, went to Latin America (Murray 17). In this vein, a prominent Irish individual to make an impact in this area was Thomas Field, S.J. Born in Limerick in 1547, he joined the Jesuits² in Rome in 1574. Field arrived in Brazil in late 1577 and resided in Piratininga, now São Paulo, for three years (Murray 17). Afterward, he relocated to Paraguay, where he undertook various missions (17). Thereby,

Field is recognized as the “first Irish priest” to perform “Roman Catholic” ceremonies in the Americas (17). Although he died in Asunción,³ the Catholic journey of Thomas Field in Latin America started in Brazil.

In the early 1600s, two Irish brothers, Philip and James Purcell, founded a settlement in Tauregue, located at the entrance of the Amazon River, where English, Dutch, and French settlements also formed (Murray 99). These settlers made substantial profits from the trade of tobacco, dyes, and hardwoods (99). It is important to notice that the Irish Purcell brothers preceded the other European colonizers. In this context, the Irish settled in Brazil for economic purposes, where they managed to earn considerable revenues. However, the Irish presence in Brazil was not confined to financial reasons. There were also Irish who went to Brazil to join its Army.

In the early nineteenth century, between the 1820s and 1840s, there were Irish settlements in the Latin American region. Particularly in Brazil, an Irish officer in the Brazilian Imperial Army, Colonel William Cotter, went to Ireland to enlist a “regiment” for a mission against Argentina and returned to Rio de Janeiro in 1827 with 2,686 men and their wives and children (Murray 20). More precisely, Colonel Cotter brought these Irish to fight in the war against the new Argentine Republic over the Uruguayan lands (Izarra 29). They were convinced to join the Brazilian army as they were promised a land grant after five years’ service (Murray 20). On their arrival, the war with Argentina ended (20). However, Irish soldiers, including Diago Nicolau Keating, Diago O’Grady, and Jorge Cowan (Murray 99), did enlist in Brazilian armies.

It is crucial to mention that the African-Brazilian people mocked these Irish migrants and named them *escravos brancos*, white slaves (Murray 20). In this regard, Professor of Literature Laura P.Z. Izarra alludes to the highly negative depiction of the Irish settlers made by Brigadeiro José Egidio Gordilho de Barbuda in his writing to Emperor Dom Pedro I, on 26 September 1829 (29). Indeed, most of the Irish brought by Cotter were sent to Ireland, Canada or Argentina; only some went to Bahia in Brazil (Murray 20). Therefore, this might be the reason behind the lack of Irish presence in Brazil compared to their number in Argentina. The Irish settlers in Brazil were discriminated against by the African-Brazilians and stereotyped by Brazilian officials. As a result, this circumscribed Irish arrivals to Brazil.

Another factor that contributed to the reduction of Irish presence in Brazil was the failure of Irish colonies. In the 1850s, when the Brazilian government sought to incentivize

agriculture in the southern areas, an Irish priest, T. Donovan, guided four hundred Irish people from the County Wexford barony of Forth to Monte Bonito, near Pelotas in the province of Rio Grande do Sul (Murray 99). However, due to the shortage of agricultural equipment and water, the Irish colony promptly decayed and most of its members left for Argentina or Uruguay (Murray 99).

Subsequently, a considerable number of deprived Irish were brought from New York in 1867 by Quintino Bocayuva, a Brazilian newspaper editor and future republican leader (99). Bocayuva placed them in *Colônia Príncipe Dom Pedro*, close to what is now known as 'Brusque', in the province of Santa Catarina. An Irish Catholic, Joseph Lazenby, joined the Irish in Príncipe Dom Pedro as he sought to turn the community into an Irish Catholic settlement (99). However, this Irish colony was also prone to collapse. Murray elucidates that its location was isolated and subject to flooding (Murray 100).

Therefore, the Irish presence in Brazil was consolidated by different incentives between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, including geographical, economic, religious and military factors. Although the number of Irish migrants who reached Brazil is unknown, their presence in this Latin American country is undeniable. Nevertheless, Irish colonies on Brazilian soil tended to decay, which led to the dispersion of the Irish throughout the Latin American region. Yet, the Irish diaspora in Brazil during the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries initiated the cultural exchange between the Irish and the Brazilians.

Following an examination of the early Irish presence from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, it is crucial to focus on the evolution of Irish foreign policy in the late twentieth century. As mentioned above, this paper approaches the evolution of their diplomatic relations from the Irish foreign policy lens. We will therefore examine the factors that contributed to these ties during this epoch. In this context, Ireland concretized its integration within the European Union. Besides, this era was significant for the official institutionalization of Ireland's diplomatic ties with Brazil.

The Evolution of Ireland's Foreign Policy in the Late Twentieth Century

To comprehend the fundamental nature of Irish-Brazilian relations, it is necessary to examine the priorities of Irish foreign policy during the late twentieth century. Before the 1970s, Ireland's international performance was confined to its relations with the United Kingdom

(UK) and its participation in multilateral organizations, such as the League of Nations and, later, the United Nations (UN) (Laffan and O’Mahony 176). Subsequently, in the early 1970s, Ireland began to align itself more closely with regional institutions. During the 1990s, Ireland exhibited significant integration within the European region. Its robust engagement with Europe was initially solidified by its entry into the European Communities (EC) in 1973, and subsequently, into the European Union (EU) in 1993. Ireland’s international activities have predominantly revolved around organizations such as the EC and the EU.

Indeed, these regional and international institutions have allowed Ireland to play a dynamic role on the European and global levels. Consequently, the Irish involvement in these multilateral frameworks has catalyzed its foreign policy activity and expanded its international activity. More importantly, these institutions have enabled Ireland to operate within a “multi-actor” sphere and adjust its foreign performance according to the “structures” and “processes” of the global order (Laffan and O’Mahony 176). In this vein, in the context of the 1990s, Ireland became integrated into a wide “diplomatic network” (Rees 176).

In addition to Ireland’s involvement in multilateral organizations, another element contributed to the augmentation of Ireland’s dynamic presence on the international stage. Specifically, the economic liberalization initiated in the late 1950s by the Fianna Fáil government, led by Seán Lemass and Ken Whitaker, who served as the Secretary of the Department of Finance from 1956 to 1969. This administration pursued an outward-looking economic strategy founded on the principles of free trade. As a result, open markets helped incentivize the economy in the 1960s, which paved the way for an increase in the annual national revenue by 4.2% (Dorgan 3). In this vein, economic openness was evident in the initiatives of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA)⁴ to encourage foreign industries to invest in Ireland (Dorgan 3). Given the “exemption” from taxation on all profits generated from exports, industries were encouraged to invest in Ireland (Dorgan 3).

Most importantly, the Irish inclination towards Europe was related to its economic openness. The Irish interest in joining these European institutions, whose rationale was economic cooperation within the region, facilitated its economic growth. Both factors – the outward-economic approach and access to the European frameworks – contributed to Ireland’s unprecedented experience of economic affluence, the Celtic Tiger, which culminated in the 1990s. As a consequence, from 1994 to 2000, Ireland managed to reach “the high-income nations” of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

(Ó Riain 34). Its access to this category alongside economically-advanced European states, such as Denmark, was a crucial step for Ireland to assert its global presence. Between the 1990s and 2000, Ireland achieved more rapid economic progress than the UK (Ó Riain 35). This economic development not only allowed Ireland to demonstrate its competence internationally but, more significantly, growing its national income faster than its former colonizer, the UK, was a symbolic achievement.

Therefore, the diplomatic evolution experienced by Ireland during the context of the late twentieth century allowed the country to become more active on the international stage and diversify its relations. This global openness moved Ireland closer to the outside world after its insular experience.

The Diplomatic Relations Between Ireland and Brazil During the Twenty-First Century

Ireland's engagement with international and regional multilateral institutions, coupled with its economic prosperity, has significantly bolstered its foreign policy and global standing. These elements have demonstrably strengthened Ireland's influence beyond its national borders, thereby facilitating the expansion of its diplomatic relations. Consequently, Ireland's proactive, outward-looking approach, exemplified by its participation in regional and international bodies and its economic openness, has been instrumental in cultivating its diplomatic ties with Brazil.

The Irish-Brazilian ties were formalized in 1975 (Ministério das Relações Exteriores), thus, in 2025, this bilateral engagement celebrates its fiftieth anniversary. This half-century of exchange is the product of the evolving and sustained multidimensional cooperation between Ireland and Brazil. As a consequence, it is crucial to highlight their sustained bilateral relations and study the factors that have facilitated the continuity of these ties.

Cultural Exchange Initiatives Between Ireland and Brazil: The Irish Cultural Presence in Brazil

In this regard, the government strategy, “Global Ireland – Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025,” merits attention. This multidimensional initiative was launched in 2018 by the *Taoiseach*, Leo Varadkar, the *Tánaiste* and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, and

other Ministers (The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment). The purpose of this strategy was to foster Ireland's global presence and activity (Government of Ireland). This initiative aimed at establishing more diplomatic and trade exchanges. More precisely, this strategy aspired to make Ireland a considerable member on the global stage and contribute to "trade, culture, diplomacy, peacebuilding, and development" (Government of Ireland). Therefore, the stated purpose of this initiative reflected the multifaceted nature of this project. However, its overall aim was mainly to forge the diplomatic reputation of Ireland.

The project aimed to introduce Irish arts, heritage, and culture to new generations and audiences beyond the Republic's borders (Government of Ireland). Most notably, this government strategy entailed the expansion of Irish relations in Latin American nations, including Brazil. Given the historical bonds between Ireland and this region, this initiative sought to incentivize the Irish exchange with Latin America (Government of Ireland). As a result, the government plan encompassed nurturing cultural ties with Brazil. In 2024, a Cultural Officer was appointed to the Embassy of Ireland in São Paulo (Houses of the *Oireachtas*). Indeed, this vacancy position was ensured by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (Houses of the *Oireachtas*).

The appointment of a Regional Cultural Officer for São Paulo was among the attempts that sought to consolidate Ireland's connection with the Latin American region in general and Brazil in particular. It is noteworthy to mention that cultural officers were assigned in other areas, including Europe and America (Government of Ireland). Yet, the Cultural Officer for São Paulo was the regional representative for Latin America (Government of Ireland). Thus, this led to more cultural exchange with the region, which the Regional Cultural Officer mediated for São Paulo. As a result, cultural mediation has created a stronger connection between Brazil and Ireland, helping catalyze cooperation between the two states.

Another pertinent cultural initiative, the "Irish in Brazil" exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, conducted by the government of Ireland in the twenty-first century, should be addressed. Organized by the Consulate General of Ireland in São Paulo in cooperation with the National Library of Brazil, this exposition took place in March 2023 (Government of Ireland). The exhibition was devoted to the festivities of Saint Patrick's Day (Government of Ireland). Therefore, the partnership between the Consulate General of Ireland in São Paulo and the National Library of Brazil to promote cultural celebration unveils the openness of both

nations to this kind of exchange.

The first Saint Patrick's Day celebration on Brazilian soil was not in the twenty-first century, but in 1770 at a church in the state of Maranhão, northern Brazil (Murray; Brazil and Ireland 99). In the context of the twenty-first century, in 2023 the exhibition to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day was held in Rio de Janeiro (Government of Ireland). The latter is the second largest Brazilian city, which has been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization⁵ since 2012 as a "World Heritage Site" (UNESCO). The city has been molded by crucial historical events and enriched by a variety of cultural influences (UNESCO). Consequently, the organization of a symbolic Irish cultural initiative, namely Saint Patrick's Day, asserted their historical presence and influence in Brazil.

The exhibition sought to highlight the Irish experience in Brazil and emphasized the historical Irish-Brazilian relations. Assisted by Peter O'Neill, an independent Irish researcher in Brazil, and the Professor of Irish Studies, Beatriz Kopschitz Bastos, this exposition also had academic aspects. It accentuated the Irish literature translated into Brazilian Portuguese, including the writings of James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, Oscar Wilde and Samuel Beckett, which reflected the Irish-Brazilian cultural exchange. The translation of Irish works into Brazilian Portuguese indicates that there is an audience in Brazil interested in reading these texts.

Furthermore, this exposition underlined the evolution of Irish Studies as an area of academic focus in Brazil. The exhibition alluded to the increasing visibility of contemporary writers, catalyzed by academic structures, including the Brazilian Association for Irish Studies (ABEI), the W. B. Yeats Chair at the University of São Paulo (USP), and the Irish Studies Nucleus at UFSC (Government of Ireland). Therefore, academic efforts have contributed to the Irish-Brazilian cultural exchange and cooperation.

Overall, the ongoing cultural exchanges between Ireland and Brazil have been the fruit of their growing ties and historical links through diasporas. For instance, the Irish diaspora in Brazil helped build ties between these nations through culture, long before the formalization of their relations. Equally, the Brazilian diaspora in Ireland contributed to forging the relations between both countries as they incentivized cooperation through different initiatives (Government of Ireland). Additionally, Brazilian researchers have played a crucial role in organizing events in major capitals across the country, such as Rio de Janeiro, where the "Irish in Brazil" exhibition was held.

As a nation that often relies on “soft power” in its diplomacy (Kennedy 60), the Republic of Ireland has utilized this approach to strengthen its international relationships. This is evident in its cultural exchange programs with Brazil, which have helped cultivate stronger ties and enhance Ireland’s soft power.

Educational Exchange Between Ireland and Brazil: The Role of Academia and Research

Notably, twenty-first-century cultural initiatives between Ireland and Brazil have also encompassed an academic dimension. The “Agreement for cooperation in the field of education between the Government of Ireland and the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil” was signed in November 2010. This official paper sought to motivate a dynamic cooperation in higher education, teaching and academic research between Ireland and Brazil. This agreement paved the way for more educational partnerships and academic exchange. In 2012, the Irish President, Michael D. Higgins, went to Brazil to inaugurate the Irish-Brazilian cooperation with the Science without Borders program (EURIreland). This initiative aimed to consolidate mutual research work in Ireland and Brazil (President of Ireland).

The agreement was the formal foundation for the educational partnership between Ireland and Brazil. On the other hand, the inclusion of Ireland as one of the destinations for the Science without Borders was a concrete attempt that helped produce effective results (EURIreland). In 2013, Ireland welcomed more than 1,100 students under this program (EURIreland). In 2016, nearly 3,500 Brazilian students had an experience in the Irish higher education system (EURIreland). The rise in the number of students from 2013 to 2016 reflected how Ireland appealed to Brazilian learners and unveiled the efficiency of this academic collaboration between Ireland and Brazil.

In the same respect, another educational initiative, the “Brazil Ireland Research Event”, should be highlighted. It was a cooperative effort between the Irish Embassy in Brazil, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the Irish Research Council (IRC), the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) (EURIreland). This event was organized in Rio de Janeiro in April 2018 and gathered over 100 researchers from Ireland and Brazil (EURIreland). Its aims included expanding the partnership between the Brazilian field of higher education as well as state institutions with

Ireland (EURIreland). Encouraging communication between old and new Irish and Brazilian research partners was another goal of this event (EURIreland).

The aforementioned attempts sought to foster ties between Ireland and Brazil through academic exchange. Both nations showed their openness to cooperate in the field of higher education. Notably, Irish state agencies have been actively involved in these initiatives. For instance, the Irish Research Council (IRC) participated in the Brazil Ireland Research Event, where the consolidation of research ties between both nations was discussed (EURIreland).

Therefore, Ireland’s academic initiatives, in cooperation with Brazil, helped strengthen their bilateral relations. These efforts sought to encourage Irish and Brazilian academics to share and communicate ideas. Consequently, these initiatives can be seen as complementing Ireland’s soft power. In other words, research and academic collaborations lead to more cultural exchange. This kind of partnership facilitates nurturing diplomatic ties between Ireland and Brazil.

Shared Principles: Climate action and Disarmament

Mutual tents concerning climate action and disarmament have brought Ireland and Brazil together. Ireland demonstrates a clear commitment to climate action, evidenced by its “Climate Action Plan 2019,” which underscores its dedication to environmental causes. This government scheme highlights the Irish dedication to reaching the goal of a net-zero carbon energy system for Irish society, while simultaneously building a “resilient, vibrant, and sustainable” nation (Government of Ireland). Therefore, this plan exhibited Ireland’s willingness to adopt changes, such as curbing its greenhouse gas emissions to guarantee a sustainable future (Government of Ireland).

In a *Dáil*⁶ debate in November 2018, the *Tánaiste* and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, stated that Brazil had been a key “partner” for Ireland in climate action (Houses of the Oireachtas). He also asserted the role of Brazil in the 2015 Paris Agreement (Houses of the Oireachtas). This agreement aims to maintain the rise in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and seeks to curb the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (United Nations).

In this vein, Coveney expressed that Ireland would willingly partner with Brazil on the climate issue (Houses of the Oireachtas). Intriguingly, Brazil’s Nationally Determined

Contribution (NDC) for 2024, in line with this agreement’s objective, articulated the nation’s 2035 vision, emphasizing its recognition of the “climate crisis” (UNFCC). Brazil’s NDC also highlighted the urgency of building resilience and the necessity of planning for a “low-carbon future” (UNFCC).

Both nations have demonstrated their commitment to climate action and addressing the environmental crisis in the twenty-first century. Crucially, the Paris Agreement has united them in this common cause, since both nations are among the signatory states. Their mutual principle on climate action is reflected through their government schemes, and their similar sustainable convictions have contributed to their bilateral ties.

More recently, in 2025, in a meeting held in São Paulo between the Brazilian Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Marina Silva, and the Irish Minister of Transport, Seán Canney, a 15-million-euro donation by Ireland to the Amazon Fund was announced (Secretaria de Comunicação Social). The government-owned Brazilian Development Bank (BNDS) handles the Amazon Fund, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (Secretaria de Comunicação Social). Thus, this donation sought to subsidize the Amazon Fund’s purpose of resisting “deforestation” and environmental change in general (Secretaria de Comunicação Social). As a consequence, this funding further unveiled the bilateral bond between Ireland and Brazil, nurtured by their environmental commitment.

Another principle that has contributed to uniting Ireland and Brazil is disarmament. Ireland has adopted a neutral military principle since World War II. Moreover, as a UN member in the 1950s, Ireland voiced its worries concerning global problems such as “decolonization, disarmament, human rights and peacekeeping” (Murphy 22). Ireland is still actively involved in disarmament and non-proliferation (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). As for Brazil, its adherence to the principle of disarmament and non-proliferation was concretized when the country signed the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America. This agreement created the “first nuclear-weapon-free” area in Latin America and the Caribbean (Ministério das Relações Exteriores). Besides, Brazil is a member of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean⁷ (Ministério das Relações Exteriores). As a result, the involvement of Brazil in this institution mirrors its commitment to the principle of disarmament.

Their mutual interest in disarmament has united Ireland and Brazil to cooperate under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons⁸ (NPT). This official agreement is viewed as the essence of global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It aspires to hinder the propagation of nuclear weapons (United Nations). In 2017, Ireland and Brazil actively participated in the development of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). This treaty adds to the NPT and stipulates prohibitions on involvement in nuclear weapon activities (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). As a result, Ireland and Brazil's devotion to disarmament has contributed to their bilateral relations as they were both participants in the processes that paved the way for both treaties on nuclear disarmament. Therefore, Ireland and Brazil exhibited their dynamic cooperation in the context of the twenty-first century, which was motivated by their mutual adherence to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Conclusion

This paper investigated the evolution of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Brazil, focusing on Irish foreign policy. It explored the role of the Irish diaspora in Brazil in establishing Irish-Brazilian connections from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Additionally, the article examined the development of Irish diplomacy in the late twentieth century, noting how Ireland's international engagement and participation in European institutions significantly boosted its global presence. This transcendence of insularity facilitated the establishment of foreign relations, leading to the formalization of the diplomatic alliance between Ireland and Brazil in 1975.

This work contributes to research on Irish-Brazilian relations through its focus on the initiatives conducted by Ireland in cooperation with Brazil in the context of the twenty-first century. It examined the role of cultural exchanges, including Global Ireland – Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025 and the “Irish in Brazil” Exhibition. These initiatives have asserted the role of culture in fortifying the diplomatic. They have also shown how the use of soft power through culture contributes to the foreign policy of Ireland in Brazil. Besides, the educational exchange initiatives have also helped reinforce the bilateral relations between Ireland and Brazil. Academia and research have paved the way for more partnerships in higher education. Therefore, this kind of exchange also contributes to the soft power of Ireland in Brazil.

As for their mutual principles, Ireland and Brazil have cooperated to concretize their adherence to climate action and disarmament. Both nations sought to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement and resist the climate crisis. Their common environmental engagement has created a mutual interest for them. Their bilateral relations have been strengthened by a mutual commitment to disarmament, stemming from both countries' involvement in the establishment of nuclear disarmament treaties. As a result, Ireland and Brazil have actively performed in the context of the twenty-first century, which was incentivized by their mutual interest in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Finally, Ireland and Brazil's bilateral relations have started with the Irish diaspora in Brazil in the sixteenth century. Their diplomatic ties have been sustained to reach fifty years of cooperation and exchange in 2025. Notably, cultural and academic initiatives conducted by Ireland in cooperation with Brazil, along with their shared principles, have contributed to the consolidation of their diplomatic relations. Most importantly, these initiatives reflect the Irish efficient use of soft power in the conduct of its diplomacy.

Notes

- 1 In geographical terms, the Iberian zone encompasses Spain, Portugal, Andorra, Gibraltar, and an area in France. This notion is employed to refer to the cultural specificities pertaining to Spanish and Portuguese.
- 2 The Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits, was founded in 1540 by Saint Ignatius Loyola. It mainly advocated for the Catholic Reformation in Europe.
- 3 It is now the capital of Paraguay.
- 4 It is the institution responsible for attracting inward foreign direct investment into Ireland.
- 5 The abbreviated name of this institution is UNESCO.
- 6 It is the Irish word for Parliament.
- 7 It is an international organization that calls for nuclear disarmament in the Americas.
- 8 This treaty was put into effect in 1970.

Works Cited

Cull, Nicholas J. "Diasporas and Public Diplomacy: From History to Policy." *Routledge International Handbook of Diaspora Diplomacy*, edited by Liam Kennedy, Routledge, 2022, pp. 7–18.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *Disarmament and Non-Proliferation*. Government of Ireland, n.d., accessed 13 May 2025, www.ireland.ie/en/dfa/role-policies/international-priorities/peace-and-security/disarmament-and-non-proliferation.

Dorgan, Sean. *How Ireland Became the Celtic Tiger*. Heritage Foundation, 2006.

EURIreland. *Brazil Ireland Research Event – 12-13 April 2018*. n.d., accessed 12 May 2025, <https://eurireland.ie/programmes/related-international-co-operation/bipex/brazil-ireland-research-event-12-13-april-2018>.

EURIreland. *Brazil Ireland: Partners in Excellence*. n.d., accessed 12 May 2025, <https://eurireland.ie/assets/uploads/2018/05/Brazil-Ireland-Research-Contact-Event-2018-Final-Report-with-links-to-presentations.pdf>.

EURIreland. *Overview – Science without Borders Programme 2013-2016*. n.d., accessed 12 May 2025, <https://eurireland.ie/programmes/related-international-co-operation/bipex/overview-science-without-borders-programme-2013-2016>.

Government of Ireland. *Ireland's Relationship with Brazil*. n.d., accessed 10 May 2025, <https://www.ireland.ie/en/brazil/irelands-relationship-with-brazil>.

Government of Ireland. *Irish in Brazil Exhibition*. n.d., accessed 10 May 2025, <https://www.ireland.ie/en/brazil/irish-in-brazil-exhibition>.

Government of Ireland. *Review of Global Ireland: Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025 Achievements and New Priorities*. May 2023, accessed 10 May 2025, <https://www.ireland.ie/en/global-ireland-strategies>.

Houses of the Oireachtas. *Diplomatic Representation*. 20 Feb. 2024, accessed 10 May 2025, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2024-02-20/125>.

Houses of the Oireachtas. *Trade Agreements*. 27 Nov. 2018, accessed 10 May 2025, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2018-11-27/129>.

Irish Statute Book. *National Archives Act, 1986*. 18 May 1986, accessed 12 Apr. 2025, www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1986/act/11/enacted/en/print.

Izarra, Laura P. Z. “The Presence of the Irish in Brazil within the Latin American Context.” *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2023, pp. 23–42.

Kennedy, Michael. *Ireland and Argentina in the Twentieth Century: Diaspora, Diplomacy, Dictatorship, Catholic Mission and the Falklands Crisis*. 11 Apr. 2025.

Kennedy, Michael. “Review of *Ireland and Argentina in the Twentieth Century: Diaspora, Diplomacy, Dictatorship, Catholic Mission and the Falklands Crisis* by Dermot Keogh and Patrick Kiely.” *History Ireland*, vol. 30, no. 6, 2022, pp. 60–62.

Keogh, Dermot, and Patrick Kiely. “Introduction.” *Ireland and Argentina in the Twentieth Century: Diaspora, Diplomacy, Dictatorship, Catholic Mission and the Falklands Crisis*, Cork UP, 2022, pp. 1–18.

Kirby, Peadar. “Latin America: The Region That Ireland Forgot.” *History Ireland*, 2008, pp. 10–11.

Laffan, Brigid, and Jane O’Mahony. *Ireland and the European Union*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 175–195.

Marshall, Oliver. “Dublin.” *Brazil in British and Irish Archives*, Centre for Brazilian Studies, 2007, pp. 36–41.

Ministério das Relações Exteriores. *Ireland*. 1 Jan. 2015, accessed 10 May 2025, <https://www.gov.br/mre/en/subjects/bilateral-relations/all-countries/ireland>.

Ministério das Relações Exteriores. *Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*. 1 Jan. 2015, accessed 13 May 2025, <https://www.gov.br/mre/en/subjects/international-peace-and-security/disarmament-and-non-proliferation/nuclear-disarmament-and-non-proliferation-of-nuclear-weapons>.

Murphy, Ray. “Ireland, the United Nations and Peacekeeping Operations.” *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1998, pp. 22–45, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533319808413706>.

Murray, Edmundo. “Brazil and Ireland.” *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America*, 2006, pp. 99–101.

Murray, Edmundo. “Ireland and Latin America.” *Ireland and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History*, edited by Philip Coleman et al., ABC-CLIO, 2008, pp. 15–26.

Murray, Edmundo. “Review of Oliver Marshall’s *English, Irish and Irish-American Pioneer Settlers in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*.” *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2006, pp. 181–184.

National Archives. *Governing Legislation*. n.d., accessed 13 Apr. 2025, <https://nationalarchives.ie/about/governing-legislation>.

Nye, Joseph S. "What is Power in Global Affairs?" *The Future of Power*, PublicAffairs, 2011, pp. 3–24.

Ó Riain, Seán. *The Rise and Fall of Ireland's Celtic Tiger: Liberalism, Boom and Bust*. Cambridge UP, 2014, pp. 32–67.

President of Ireland. *Remarks at the Launch of Irish-Brazilian Partnership on Science without Borders*. 9 Oct. 2012, accessed 12 May 2025, <https://president.ie/en/media-library/speeches/remarks-by-president-michael-d.-higgins-launch-of-irish-brazilian-partnership>.

Rees, Nicholas. "Europeanisation and New Patterns of Governance in Ireland." *Ireland's Foreign Relations*, edited by Nicholas Rees et al., Manchester UP, 2009, pp. 167–195.

Secretaria de Comunicação Social. *Ireland Announces BRL 91 Million Donation to the Amazon Fund*. 15 Mar. 2025, accessed 13 May 2025, <https://www.gov.br/secom/en/latest-news/2025/03/ireland-announces-brl-91-million-donation-to-the-amazon-fund>.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. *Taoiseach Launches Global Ireland: Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025*. n.d., accessed 10 May 2025, <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/news-and-events/department-news/2018/june/11062018>.

UNESCO. *Rio de Janeiro: Carioca Landscapes between the Mountain and the Sea*. n.d., accessed 10 May 2025, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1100>.

UNFCCC. *Brazil's NDC – National Determination to Contribute and Transform*. 13 Nov. 2024, accessed 13 May 2025, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2024-11/Brazil_Second%20National%20Determined%20Contribution%20%28NDC%29_November2024.pdf.

United Nations. *The Paris Agreement*. n.d., accessed 13 May 2025, <https://www.un.org/en/climate-change/paris-agreement>.

United Nations. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*. n.d., accessed 10 May 2025, <https://treaties.unoda.org/t/npt>