



**Ireland's Non-Recognition of Palestine
Master's Thesis**

**European Politics and Society - Václav Havel Erasmus Mundus Joint
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Glossary

1. Oireachtas - The bicameral parliament of Ireland
2. Dáil Éireann – The Lower house of the Oireachtas
3. Seanad Éireann – The Upper house of the Oireachtas
4. Teachta Dála – An elected member of the Dáil Éireann
5. Fine Gael - a liberal-conservative and Christian-democratic political party in Ireland
6. Fianna Fáil - a conservative and Christian-democratic political party in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland
7. Sinn Féin - an Irish republican and democratic socialist political party in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.
8. Palestinian Authority - the government body that exercises partial civil control over areas A and B in the West Bank.

Important Figures

- Simon Coveney - Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence from 2020 - 2022, Fine Gael
- Charles Flanagan - Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade from 2014 to 2017, Fine Gael
- Sean Sherlock - Minister of State from 2011 to 2016, Labour Party (In coalition with Fine Gael 2011-2016)
- Dara Murphy – Minister of State from 2014-2017

List of Abbreviations

1. oPT = Occupied Palestinian Territory
2. DFA = Irish Department of Foreign Affairs
3. CFSP = Common Foreign and Security Policy
4. TD = Teachta Dála
5. UNSC = United Nations Security Council
6. MEPP = Middle East Peace Process
7. EC = European Community

Abstract

Despite strong public support and a history of advocating for Palestinian rights, the Irish government has still not recognised Palestine as a sovereign state. This paper examines this, answering the research question, 'What underlying factors contribute to the Irish government's stance on official recognition of Palestine?'. Utilising a theoretical framework based on constitutive recognition theory, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with political figures to shed light on Ireland's non-recognition of Palestine, and the influences that explain this policy. Results reveal that Ireland's non-recognition of Palestine is driven by political consideration that reflect divisions in the current governing coalition on when to recognise Palestine. On the European level, Ireland is struggling to hold Palestine's position on the agenda in an EU distracted by geopolitical challenges, and increasingly sceptical of maintaining common foreign policy positions. Examining Ireland's attitude towards Palestine's non-recognition contributes to the academic debate between constitutive and declaratory recognition theories and the understudied field of Irish recognition policy. It also serves as a case study for the growing challenges facing small member states in uploading policies to the EU level.

1.Introduction

‘Achieving and recognising a Palestinian state has always been the Government’s objective, and everything we do on the Middle East is directed towards that aim’ - Charles Flanagan, Irish minister for Foreign Affairs (2014). This statement followed a debate in the Dáil Éireann on a Sinn Féin motion calling on the government to officially recognise Palestine as an independent, sovereign state, ‘as a further positive contribution to securing a negotiated two-state solution¹ to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict’ (Adams 2014). The non-binding motion passed unanimously, following a similar Palestinian recognition motion in the Seanad Éireann (JTA et al., 2014; Ryan 2014). Briefly, it seemed the Irish government would accept the call. Reports in the press suggested the government was preparing to recognise Palestine, with Flanagan quoted as saying recognition could be a means to ‘help to jump-start a [peace] process that has stalled’ (Collins 2012). Adding to this expectation, Minister of State Dara Murphy affirmed that it was government policy to recognise a ‘fully sovereign State of Palestine (...) in concrete reality and not just in theory (...) as early as possible’ (Murphy 2014). Yet recognition was not granted, and to this day, Palestine has not been recognised by Ireland. This paper examines this decision, answering the research question,

What underlying factors contribute to the Irish government's stance on official recognition of Palestine?

Official government policy towards Palestinian recognition is clear, and remarkably similar to the 2014 motion. It commits to ‘recognise the State of Palestine as part of a lasting settlement of the conflict, or in advance of that, when we believe doing so will progress efforts to reach a two-state solution or protect the integrity of Palestinian territory’ (Programme for Government 2020, 112). However, the factors shaping the decision are not so well-defined.

Support for Palestine in Ireland is high, with perceived parallels between the Irish and Palestinian experiences of colonisation, partition and struggle for liberation fuelling a public camaraderie that is relatively uncontroversial, in contrast to many EU countries (Miller 2005). According to a 2011 Journal.ie poll, 71.8% of respondents supported Palestinian membership of the UN (Reilly 2011), indicating broad Irish support for Palestinian legitimacy. Blocking recognition seems to go against public opinion, and contrast with Ireland’s support for Palestinian liberation on the international stage. In the past, Ireland has been unafraid to push for Palestinian recognition and promote supportive

¹ The two-state solution is a ‘proposed framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by establishing two states for two peoples: Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the Palestinian people’ (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2023). The plan was agreed upon in 1993 by the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Israeli government. It led to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.

measures. Ireland voted for Palestine's UN observer status in 2011, opposing Israel, the US, and EU allies in the process (UN Press 2012), and maintains strong relations with the Palestinian Authority. Palestine features so prominently on the Irish foreign policy agenda that Simon Coveney, the former Foreign Affairs Minister, visited Ramallah during his tenure more than any other city, save for Brussels, Washington and London (DFA 2022). Additionally, the government became the first in the EU to officially condemn Israel for 'de facto annexation' (Reuters 2021). This strong domestic support for Palestine suggests that the answer to the research question may be found by investigating external factors. Consequently, this project focuses primarily on the foreign policy aspect of Ireland's non-recognition.

In 2014, the French, British, Spanish, Portuguese, European and Irish parliaments passed non-binding motions calling for Palestinian recognition, in what was described as a 'sense of urgency' (Mogherini as cited in Martins 2015, 286) to alter the status quo and motivate progress towards a peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict (Eriksson 2018). However, only Sweden granted recognition, making it the only country to recognise Palestine while a member of the European Union. Ireland and Sweden share some similarities; both were neutral, non-aligned countries, and before the 2022 war in Ukraine, were not aspiring members of NATO, and until 2014, both supported the EU and US-backed two-state solution policy (Eriksson 2018). Sweden was even credited by Flanagan with inspiring the EU to re-examine the issue (JTA and The Associated Press 2014). Yet Ireland chose to maintain the status quo and adhere to the two-state solution. Examining why Ireland did not follow Sweden's example is key to this investigation.

Through seven semi-structured interviews with elite political figures, utilising a constitutive recognition theoretical framework, this paper bridges a gap in the academic literature where modern study of Irish state recognition practices, their place in the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) framework and Ireland's non-recognition of Palestine are largely absent. Results reveal Irish recognition policy is now constitutive, with political considerations driving decisions at the expense of legal criteria that might support Palestinian statehood. In absence of consensus, Ireland is unwilling to act independently of EU partners to recognise Palestine, preferring to remain aligned with European and international allies. Since 2014, building consensus on Palestinian affairs like recognition has become increasingly difficult. A split in the current coalition government between Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil on when to recognise Palestine was revealed, reflecting a wider trend of divergence on the issue at the EU level. Ireland is struggling to hold Palestine's position on the agenda in an EU distracted by geopolitical challenges, divided on the Palestinian question, and increasingly sceptical of maintaining common foreign policy positions. This highlights the growing challenges that small states face in uploading policies to the European level, as the coalition and consensus building techniques

pursued by Ireland are proving ineffective. Ireland's multilateral approach to foreign policy, of which recognition is a tool, leaves it exposed to diplomatic pressure from allies, and unwilling to deviate from previously agreed upon positions, even at the expense of Irish public opinion.

The research question is worth answering, as examining Ireland's attitude from a theoretical perspective serves as an important nexus in the academic debate between recognition theories, where declaratory and constitutive theorists contend their respective theories are more relevant for understanding modern state recognition. The research provides a fresh perspective on Europeanisation in foreign policy, and small-state foreign policy within the EU's CFSP framework. In an EU foreign policy arena experiencing growing division and some 'de-Europeanisation' as member states' priorities shift, understanding the complex interplay of factors that guide Ireland's strategy towards Palestinian recognition contributes to academic and policy discussions on small state diplomacy and their role in conflict resolution. Furthermore, it demonstrates the growing challenge of maintaining the salience of Palestine and the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) on an EU foreign policy agenda increasingly occupied by geopolitical challenges.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, a review of the literature examining state recognition theory, Europeanisation, and small state foreign policy, from which three hypotheses are derived. Next, a discussion of the methodology, followed by the analysis of the interview data. Finally, the conclusion summarises the findings, and suggests potential areas for further study.

2.Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the dominant state recognition theories to establish a theoretical framework to approach answering the research question. Constitutive and declaratory theory posit alternative explanations for how states emerge onto the international scene, and how recognising states decide whether to affirm or withhold statehood status. Mentioned only as part of wider analyses of Irish foreign relations (Ó'Beacháin 2015), Ireland's non-recognition of Palestine constitutes a gap in the already limited literature on Irish recognition practices, which have not been thoroughly studied since the early 1990s (Symmons 1993). A constitutive theoretical framework allows for this gap to be filled, as it considers the political factors that guided Ireland's non-recognition, and the influence of political actors in the decision-making procedure. The debate between constitutive and declaratory theory, as well as Irish and European recognition practises, inform the formulation of hypothesis one, which is complementary to the following two hypotheses. Subsequent sections examine the Europeanisation of foreign policy, EU small state foreign policy projection techniques, and the role of international allies in Ireland's non-recognition. The hypotheses derived from this literature incorporate constitutive theory's argument that international influence and political factors drive recognition decisions. The hypotheses predict answers to the research question, guide the semi-structured interview questions, which are elaborated on in chapter three, and provide a structure for analysing the collected data in chapter four.

Constitutive versus Declaratory theory

The debate between declaratory and constitutive theory has lasted for decades, with the former favoured by legal scholars and the latter by constructivist international relations scholars (Erman 2013). It centres on how states emerge onto the international scene and gain recognition from the international community, and with proponents split over which is more relevant. Sufficient analysis of Ireland's non-recognition of Palestine requires an understanding of both, as well as the concept of non-recognition. These, alongside Irish and European recognition practices, are expanded on in the following sections.

Declaratory Theory

Declaratory theorists believe that statehood is an empirical reality (James 2000) that is achieved by fulfilling criteria that qualify an entity for statehood (Kursani 2023). States can assert their sovereignty and access the international arena once these criteria are met (Worster 2010). Declaratory theory focuses on the conditions within a political entity that qualify it as a state, with this affirmed by the state itself (J. Crawford 2007; Erman 2013). Declaratory recognition by other nations is considered a

formality that is guided by the fulfilment of conditions within the state, with declaratory theorists arguing recognition has no legal impact on *creating* the state (von Glahn 2022; Shaw 2003), simply serving to affirm its existence. Affirming recognition declaratively is therefore a decision based on fulfilment of criteria. Though declaratory theory is supported by various statutes, treaties and conventions, there is no central authority to evaluate whether a political entity qualifies as a state, nor are there universally accepted criteria or guidelines for this procedure (Talmon 2005). This leaves the assessment and certification of statehood to states themselves. The most commonly cited treaty is the 1933 Montevideo Convention, which asserts that statehood should be affirmed once a political entity has a permanent population, defined territory, functioning government and capacity to enter into relations with other states (Grant 1998). Although Ireland and the EU have not ratified this convention, Irish officials did reference it in their decision to not extend recognition to Palestine in the 1980s (Symmons 1993).

Some contemporary scholars still hold the view that state recognition is declaratory, and an assertion of fact (Vidmar 2012). However, while it has been argued that recognition is a logical consequence of following international law, without a universally standardised process, recognition by fellow states remains an executive prerogative (Fabry 2013). Therefore, declaratory theory's relevance in characterising and explaining modern state recognition practices is considered by some to be waning, with criticism aimed at its overly formulaic approach to understanding sovereign states' emergence (Erman 2013).

Constitutive Theory

Constitutive theorists argue a political entity acquires its statehood, and derives its rights and obligations, through existing states' recognition of it as a sovereign state (Coggins 2014). External legitimacy can only be acquired through the acquiescence of existing states, and without recognition, the entity does not exist as a state, and statehood cannot be obtained (Badarin 2021). From a legal perspective, recognition by states within the international community creates an entity's statehood (Lauterpacht 1944). The international system is 'inherently social' (Coggins 2011, 435), so membership is dependent on the acceptance of the aspiring state's peers, and often powerful actors' endorsements. In this context, the international community can become an arena for powerful actors to protect and promote their interests. When a state recognises another, its decision can therefore be seen as informed primarily by political considerations. Erikson (2018) and Worster (2010) argue that constitutive theory is challenging declaratory for predominance, as international norms and political dynamics have played a larger role in recognising recent states' emergence. This was exemplified during the emergence of former Soviet and Yugoslavian countries in the 1990s, when statehood was

inconsistently granted to some and not to others, often in contravention of traditional declaratory standards of statehood (Crawford 1995). Fabry (2010) argues that constitutive is the more realistic of the two theories, for if the approval of other states was not necessary, the practice of state recognition would be irrelevant. Conversely, an overly positivist approach to constitutive theory risks reducing recognition to a 'mere manifestation of national interests among the recognizing states' (Bartelson 2013, 115) at the expense of the correct application of legal principles.

Some scholars have argued it is inadequate to adhere to just one of the theories to understand modern recognition practices as a tool of foreign policy (Escudero Espinosa 2022), as in isolation they are 'conceptually fuzzy' (Erman 2013, 37). Reliance on declaratory theory overlooks the factors that influence international relations and foreign policy, while relying only on constitutive theory risks understanding statehood as solely determined by political powers, rather than the empirical facts and laws that underpin it. Palestine's non-recognition by almost exclusively Western states suggests a political, constitutive approach to Palestinian recognition, though consideration of the legal, declaratory aspect is vital as well. Consequently, both constitutive and declaratory theory inform the formulation of hypothesis one.

Non-recognition

Non-recognition is a less studied element of recognition policy, which generally focuses on how states gain recognition, rather than how they may be deliberately barred from it. Although non-recognition aligns more with constitutive theory due to its status-preventing effects, constitutive theorists have been criticised for struggling to explain non-recognised states' responsibilities under international law (Talmon 2005). Declaratory recognition theory has also been criticised for not adequately explaining non recognition. With a declaratory understanding, if recognition affirms statehood, in absence of this affirmation, the state logically does not exist, and can theoretically be excused from the rights and obligations of statehood, which in reality is not the case (Talmon 2005).

From a declaratory perspective, recognition is withheld when the criteria of statehood are not met, and the entity does not therefore qualify for statehood, generally with the expectation that this situation is temporary, and remediable (Vidmar 2012). Non-recognition, however, is a decision to not recognise an entity or de facto state as a punitive measure, to prevent its gaining statehood status and bar its entry into the international community, usually in response to the state emerging illegally, or through seceding from a larger, non-consenting state (Escudero Espinosa 2022; Vidmar 2012). Breakaway states can remain unrecognised, particularly if countries who want to discourage secession refuse recognition and discourage allies from recognising them, to avoid legitimising secession (Ferrero-Turrión 2021). Maintaining non-recognition temporarily, or permanently, can also be a form

of coercion (Middlebush 1933), as non-recognition withholds the privileges and rights that come with statehood (Escudero Espinosa 2022). Consideration of a potentially punitive or coercive element to Ireland's non-recognition is necessary to approach answering the research question. Although Irish officials have indicated that Palestine will be recognised in the future (Flanagan 2014), some of Ireland's allies have a vested interest in maintaining Palestine's limited recognition, so, in line with constitutive theory, may have lobbied Ireland against recognition. This is factored into hypothesis one, and hypothesis three.

Ireland's recognition practices

Described as proceeding 'silently in an ad hoc fashion' (Symmons 1993, 175), Ireland's recognition practices are understudied, with Symmons' 'Irish Policy and Practice on Recognition' article being possibly the only full paper investigating them. Although found to be clandestine and unpredictable, policy trends, like increasingly mirroring European recognition practices, were identified in the study. Definitive explanations of Irish recognition policy are lacking but examining Symmons' work within the context of modern Irish foreign policy and Europeanisation studies, combined with government statements, allows for tentative hypotheses to be drawn. The article depicts Irish recognition as containing constitutive and declaratory elements, again highlighting the value of applying both to this topic.

Ireland's decision to withhold recognition of Palestine dates back to at least the late 1980s, when it seemed declaratory, and guided by the Montevideo Convention (Symmons 1993). The government felt unable to recognise Palestine due to 'some or all' (as cited in Symmons 1993, 180) of the convention's criteria being unfulfilled, including a permanent population, a defined territory and a sovereign government. However, a gradual trend towards constitutive recognition through foreign policy Europeanisation was identified during the 1990s. Later recognition decisions were reported as being coordinated with 'partners in the twelve' (as cited in Symmons 1993, 175), and conforming to the 'requirements laid down' (as cited in Symmons 1993, 176) in the European Community Guidelines, expanded on below. Modern statements indicate that this trend has continued, and that Ireland's decision in 2014 to maintain non-recognition was constitutive. Recognising a Palestinian state has been a consistent government objective, with commitments made to 'assist in the development of (...) democratic and state institutions', though recognition now seems to depend on achieving the two-state solution first (Sherlock 2014). In 2021, recognition was again declined, as it would 'affect Ireland's influence (...) at EU and international level' (Oireachtas 2021), arguably demonstrating the political, therefore constitutive, nature of Ireland's non-recognition, where wider strategic and reputational concerns appear to inform the decision. Ireland's recognition policy approach vis-à-vis Palestine

appears to have undergone a marked paradigm shift, displaying a trajectory from declaratory to constitutive, propelled by external factors and political calculations. However, the limited scholarly research in this area necessitates further exploration before a hypothesis is formed.

Examination of the European Community Guidelines may provide answers. Created in the early 1990s in the wake of the emergence of post-Soviet states, the guidelines are arguably the most comprehensive EU-wide rules for state recognition. They set out new standards that entities should meet to be granted statehood, with democratic, human rights, and nuclear disarmament stipulations also included. Though similar to the Montevideo Convention, the EC guidelines can be understood as constitutive, and developed to utilise state recognition as a political tool of foreign policy (Rich 1993). Crucially, they allowed for an acknowledgement of the ‘political realities in each case’ (Intlaw 2010) when deciding whether to recognise. This added subjectivity to the decision-making procedure, opening the door to inconsistent application of the guidelines, and thus legitimising the circumvention of criteria (Ryngaert and Sobrie 2011). As an EC member, Ireland referred to these guidelines. Moving forward, the guidelines’ more rigorous vetting system and tacit encouragement of constitutive recognition might help illuminate the Irish government’s recognition practices and explain its non-recognition of Palestine.

Based on the constitutive versus declaratory debate, the implications of non-recognition, scholarship on Ireland’s recognition practices, and the EC’s guidelines’ impact on European recognition, the following hypothesis was formed:

H1 - The Irish government's non-recognition of Palestine is guided by political considerations, at the expense of adhering to strict legal criteria.

The upcoming two hypotheses rely on the accuracy of hypothesis one, as they expand on the assumption that political factors guide the government’s non-recognition of Palestine.

Europeanisation

As shown, Irish foreign policy is progressively coordinated with the EU. The EU has slowly moved towards realising its ambition of states speaking as ‘one voice’ in foreign policy (Aggestam 2018, 81), particularly since the creation of the CFSP in 1993, in a process called Europeanisation. Europeanisation is the ‘penetration of the European dimension into the national’ (Major 2005, 176), which reorientates domestic policies to reflect and support EU economic and political priorities, and ensures they become part of the ‘organisational logic of national politics and policy making’ (Ladrech 1994, 69). Examining how Ireland’s decision might have occurred in conjunction with Europeanisation is instrumental in answering the research question. Additionally, the Israel-Palestine conflict is a ‘highly

Europeanized' (Dyduch and Müller 2021, 570) issue, suggesting that coordination among EU member states to approach it in a united fashion may have been a priority. The conflict has been a 'profound and longstanding' foreign policy priority for the EU (Mueller 2013, 20), and its successful resolution through the establishment of a two-state solution is a common long-term goal (Dyduch and Müller 2021). Though Ireland has resisted some integration policies and expended political capital on maintaining its neutrality (Tonra 2000), it shares the EU's aim for a two-state solution.

EU countries are susceptible to Europeanisation, exhibited through downloading of EU policy to the domestic agenda. But Europeanisation also presents the chance to upload domestic foreign policy to the EU level (de Flers and Müller 2012). Ireland has a history of promoting Palestinian support, often in relative isolation in the EU (Boughton 2022), so it might have advocated for recognition in EU CFSP meetings, then choosing to not recognise Palestine after this effort proved unsuccessful. Understanding how small states like Ireland upload policies is therefore necessary to formulate a relevant hypothesis and analyse Ireland's approach to Palestinian recognition within the EU. On a controversial subject like Palestinian recognition, Ireland might try to build consensus, or a coalition, before trying to upload its priorities to the EU level, to shield it from the risks and costs of pursuing this alone (Tonra 2000). Coalition building is a well-established technique for small states to increase their policy reach and chances of success (Jakobsen 2009; Pastore 2013). Ireland has used these tactics in the UN security council (UNSC) to promote Palestinian recognition, building and supporting coalitions to oppose measures supported by EU and international allies (Doyle 2019), warranting investigation into Ireland's potential moves in the EU to support recognition since 2014.

Uploading policy preferences through consensus and coalition building are tried and tested techniques, but recent literature suggests that reaching any form of consensus is becoming an increasingly difficult task. Disagreements within the CFSP system recently 'have reached a new level' (Maurer and Wright 2021, 386), and it has been argued that some domestic foreign policy agendas have gone through a process of 'de-Europeanisation' as member states grow less willing to coordinate foreign policy or implement previously agreed upon strategies (Müller, Pomorska, and Tonra 2021). In an environment increasingly unreceptive to compromise, Ireland may be unwilling to expend political capital on Palestinian recognition. Small states tend to be more proactive in policy areas where they have a distinct economic or political interest, as they often lack the capacity to project multiple policy goals onto the European level (Thorhallsson and Wivel 2006). Palestine is clearly an important foreign policy issue for Ireland, though perhaps not one that it would be willing to act independently to pursue, particularly in the face of opposition within the EU. In a 2019 study, Ireland was found to have acted independently to promote Palestinian issues in the UN, but refrained from diverging from areas that already have agreed upon positions in the CFSP (Doyle 2019), further indicating that Ireland may be

hesitant to plot a new path and act independently to recognise Palestine. Ireland values its reputation within the EU, and the international weight that EU membership has afforded it (Tonra 2000), so acting on a controversial issue like Palestinian recognition could damage this, leaving Ireland isolated.

This background of Europeanisation, Ireland's ability as a small member state to upload policy objectives, and an increasingly divided EU CFSP leads to the following hypothesis:

H2 - Irish recognition of Palestine is dependent on Ireland achieving consensus among some or all EU member states.

International influence

In line with constitutive recognition, the influence of the international community plays a significant role in the acceptance of new states into the club (Coggins 2011). Consideration of the role of states outside the EU, like the US and Israel, may also help contextualise Ireland's attitude towards recognition. The US, EU, and Israel are players in the Middle East Peace Process that wield considerable influence globally, and Ireland maintains historically close relations with the former two, and a working, but occasionally strained, relationship with Israel (Ó'Beacháin 2013). EU foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is marked by a high level of cooperation with allies, and the EU, as part of the 'Middle East Quartet' (The US, EU, Russia and the UN), has previously adapted its approach to the conflict to back initiatives led by the US, and by Israel, even when the EU disagreed with aspects of their respective approaches (Dyduch and Müller 2021). If the EU has deprioritised its own objections to align with allies, this process may have been mirrored on a member state level, with Ireland potentially changing course on recognition to also align on this issue. Furthermore, the relative harmonization of partner strategies addressing the conflict may have caused certain policies to be discouraged by international actors like the US and Israel, particularly if they are seen to contradict or interfere with wider strategic interests in the region. An assessment of the influence of allies is examined during interviews to check for this eventuality.

The US and Israel, as leaders in the conflict, have considerable interest in ensuring Palestine remains unrecognised by allies (Rumley and Tibon 2015). States or ethnic groups that are seen to challenge the international order, as Palestine is arguably seen by some to do, are less likely to receive support for their recognition bid (Coggins 2011; Saideman 2002). Furthermore, Israel has a demonstrated track record of lobbying states to change or water down policies relating to the conflict that it opposes, for example by exerting intense 'diplomatic pressure' (Eriksson 2018, 4). The US also has a history of discouraging pro-Palestinian policies in Ireland, for example the Occupied Territories Bill in 2019. The bill would have banned the import of products produced in Israeli occupied Palestinian territories to

Ireland. It was met with criticism in the US, with several politicians and business leaders informing Irish lawmakers that passing the bill could have serious consequences for Irish immigrants and businesses in the United States (McDermott 2019). Like the 2014 recognition motion, the bill passed the Seanad and the Dáil, only to be subsequently blocked by the government (Quann 2023). The similarities could hint at similar motivations. This example, and the above literature, add credence to a hypothesis that tests whether Ireland was pressured by allies into blocking, or delaying, recognition.

Consideration of the US and Israel's prominent roles in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, their relations with Ireland, and the EU and Ireland's subordinate positions behind the US in mediation of the conflict informed the following hypothesis:

H3 - Ireland withheld recognition after facing pressure from international allies.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology used to answer the research question, 'What underlying factors contribute to the Irish government's stance on official recognition of Palestine?' is explained. First, the methodology is justified, then the research design, participant selection, preparation and interview procedure are explained. A description of the interviewees, then an overview of the analysis techniques is provided, followed by the methodology's limitations. Chapter 4 then discusses the data collected during the interviews.

To uncover the motivations behind Ireland's non-recognition of Palestine and test the three hypotheses, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Collecting data from experts with related insight and experience through semi-structured interviews helps reveal motivations behind governmental decisions and shed light on otherwise hidden policy formulation processes, and potentially reveal contradictory or supplementary information (Harvey 2011). This is appropriate considering how secretive and difficult to predict Irish recognition practices were revealed to be by Symmons (1993). Research pre and post interview was also conducted to help with question preparation, guide the interview process, identify inconsistencies and inaccuracies, unveil new avenues of research, and contextualise the findings (Bryman 2012).

Research Design

The period of analysis is 2014, when the original recognition motions were passed, to the present. 2014 arguably represents a watershed moment in Ireland, when the salience of Palestinian recognition increased in Irish political discourse. Palestinian recognition was absent from all Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin general election manifestos from 2002-2011, though since 2014 it has been elevated by all three to a foreign policy manifesto pledge, with varying levels of commitment (Pidgeon 2022)

To identify participants with insight into the topic, a process of stratification was implemented. Potential participants were selected based on their proximity to the government, and their involvement in the process and discourse surrounding Palestine's non-recognition. Figures who met these criteria who also had experience on the domestic, European, and international levels of Irish foreign policy were selected to gain a full perspective of every arena in which Palestinian recognition might have been discussed. Ministers and civil servants working in foreign policy, as well as ambassadors and diplomats were selected. Elected officials working in European institutions, like the European Parliament and Council, were also selected, as they might provide perspectives into Irish foreign policy coordination with EU partners. External perspectives from figures not aligned with the government were also sought, to provide balance to potential bias from government figures. They also

would potentially add critical voices and add alternate perspectives, and bring a measure of accountability that might be absent from exclusively interviewing government officials. Participants were found on government and coalition party websites, the Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence member list, and by reading Dáil and Seanad debates on Palestine, Israel and the MEPP. European Parliament committees and delegations, Irish and Palestinian embassies, NGO websites and related newspaper articles were also perused.

Shortlisted candidates were emailed interview requests that included descriptions of the project's aims, with information included on their right to speak anonymously, retract, or alter their responses, and details on how their interviews would be used. This was done to ensure participants felt safe to speak openly (Richards 1996). Interviewees were also requested to sign a consent form, which they were free to alter. Research on candidates and for question preparation was conducted using a range of primary and secondary sources, like Oireachtas debates, government statements, press releases, European Parliament debates and United Nations Security Council and General Assembly debates and resolutions, news articles, journal articles, and related books.

From the forty-seven contacted candidates, seven interviews were conducted, representing a fifteen percent success rate. Although more interviews might have added to data validity, additional participants were not available. However, many aspects of the research were reaching saturation point, with participants often providing similar responses, suggesting that sufficient information had been collected. Unless otherwise requested, interviews were recorded, transcribed, and included in the appendix. Two participants spoke anonymously. The former's interview was not transcribed, with the request that no direct quotes be included. The latter allowed quotes to be used but requested that no transcription be included.

Interviews were scheduled to increase data validity through triangulation, with participants interviewed in order of least to most connected to government policy formulation, to allow earlier participants' criticisms, perspectives, and insights to be factored into questions for subsequent interviewees. This ensured substantial preparation, to capitalise on participants' level of expertise and insight, resulting in highly focused information extraction. As recommended (Beamer 2002), interviews began with open-ended questions, with more targeted ones asked later. This allows for a broad exploration of the topic, and for unanticipated information to be volunteered, before transitioning into a deeper probe into specific areas of inquiry (Beamer 2002).

Matters relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be controversial, so it was important to build a rapport before broaching these and other topics that might cause discomfort, as recommended by Harvey (2011). Effort was made to foster a safe and relaxed atmosphere, and participants' rights to

anonymity and control over their information was highlighted again. Questions specifically relating to Palestine and Israel were posed with sensitivity, and generally towards the end of the interviews. Questions were tailored to each participant in advance, though follow up and spontaneous questions were asked, and a conversationalist approach was taken, where appropriate.

Interview list

Interviews were conducted in the following order:²

1: Dr Jilan Abdalmajid - Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland.

2: Clare Daly – An Irish MEP for Independents 4 Change, a left-wing party in the Left in the European Parliament group, and former TD (Irish MP). She was present during the Dáil debates on the motion to recognise Palestine and has spoken frequently on the issue of Palestinian recognition and Palestinian rights in the Oireachtas and the European Parliament.

3: Thomas Pringle – An independent TD who reintroduced the Occupied Palestinian Territories Bill to the Dáil, after it was originally introduced by Senator Frances Black. He regularly speaks out on Palestinian matters and Irish foreign policy within the EU.

4: Counsellor in the Political Division of the Irish Department of Foreign (DFA) Affairs. Career diplomat, henceforth referred to as AnonDFA.

5: Senior figure in the Irish DFA Mission in the occupied Palestinian Territory, based in Ramallah. Henceforth referred to as DFAoPt

6: Sean Fleming - Minister of State at the DFA and a Fianna Fáil (a conservative Christian-democratic party) TD since 1997.

7: Sonja Hyland - Deputy Secretary General & Political Director at the Irish DFA. Career diplomat since 1996.

The ambassador added a Palestinian perspective, articulating her thoughts and the Palestinian government's expectations, aspirations, and arguments, shedding light on Palestinian diplomatic efforts, interactions with Irish politicians, civil servants, and the public. This provided a nuanced understanding of the Palestinian narrative and perspective on Ireland's non-recognition. Discussions with the MEP and TD contributed a broader context, and two Irish, non-governmental perspectives, as well as insight into the Irish and EU legislative processes. The counsellor and deputy director general provided non-political civil-servant perspectives, fuelled by their institutional knowledge and

² Interviews henceforth referenced by their respective interview numbers, e.g. [1] = Interview 1

experience of policy formulation and implementation. Their long careers combined with the continuity of the civil service provided insights spanning consecutive administrations. The minister of state supplied a view into cabinet discussions, coalition negotiations, political party dynamics, and government and DFA decision-making. The Irish representative in Ramallah incorporated experience of Irish foreign policy implementation in Palestine, local knowledge, and experience of bilateral relations.

Limitations

Interviews are subjective, and truth is not guaranteed (Richards 1996). To minimise this risk, responses were contextualised through further research, and compared with subsequent interview data. Responses also informed later questions, to address gaps and unaddressed aspects, build on previous insights and increase focus, thus increasing overall data validity.

Data analysis

The theoretical framework was incorporated into the analysis, exploring how Irish recognition processes are informed and shaped by the government's commitment to uphold international norms, preserve diplomatic relations, and consider the wider implications of recognising Palestine. Analysis involved interpreting themes, patterns, and recurring ideas, and factoring in the wider socio-political environment, historical context, and relevant events. This ensured similarities and discrepancies were recognised, and the underlying dynamics of Irish foreign relations, and recognition's place within these, were identified. These are expanded on in the following chapter.

4. Analysis

This chapter examines the data collected in the seven semi-structured interviews, guided by the three hypotheses formulated in chapter 2, to answer the research question, 'What underlying factors contribute to the Irish government's stance on official recognition of Palestine?'. Ireland's non-recognition of Palestine is shown to be constitutive, and driven by domestic, European, and international political motives. Results are analysed in order of the hypotheses, comprehensively revealing the forces, motivations, and dynamics influencing Ireland's non-recognition of Palestine.

First, a brief discussion of Irish public opinion on Palestine. Irish sympathy and support for Palestinians featured across the interviews, demonstrating the salience of justly addressing the Palestinian question among the Irish. Irish historic dispossession was described as causing a 'huge resonance (...) in the Irish psyche' [2] with Palestinians, and Ireland's experience with colonisation was linked to Irish empathy with Palestine's struggle for liberation [6], an issue that the Irish 'really care about' [7]. The frequent references to Irish support for Palestinians substantiate this project's primary focus on the external factors that motivate Ireland's non-recognition, as they indicate that this decision does not align with the public's preferences, and that the stimulus likely comes from elsewhere.

H1 - The Irish government's non-recognition of Palestine is guided by political considerations, at the expense of adhering to strict legal criteria.

Hypothesis one posits that Ireland's non-recognition of Palestine is a constitutive act to withhold recognition driven by political motives, not a decision based on whether Palestine fulfils statehood criteria. This implies a shift from declaratory recognition in the 1980s, when Ireland's non-recognition was justified using the Montevideo Convention. The convention is one example of legal criteria to which the hypothesis refers. The European Community Guidelines are another. Results were found to support hypothesis one. Political motives now drive recognition decisions, with the two-state solution, coalition disputes and EU foreign policy coordination currently outweighing legal standards that might support Palestinian recognition. Ultimately, participants agreed that Ireland's non-recognition is 'fundamentally a political decision rather than a legal decision' [7].

Achieving a two-state solution as part of a comprehensive peace deal currently outweighs legal considerations, with Palestinian recognition contingent on achieving this first (Murphy 2014). This political consideration is current government policy (Programme for Government 2020) and agreed upon by allies in and outside the EU. Although Ireland funds institution building projects in Palestine, the presence and level of democracy and rule of law in the country play no role in Ireland's decision whether to recognise. The EC Guidelines stipulate that new states should respect 'the rule of law,

democracy and human rights' (Intlaw 2010), though it was confirmed that these projects are only to promote an environment 'that will allow for the Palestinian State to actually take hold' [5], not to increase its chance of gaining recognition. The emphasis on achieving a two-state solution before recognition [7, 6, 5] is a political not legal goal. Additionally, the dismissal of the idea that legal criteria relating to democracy, and the implication that a Palestinian state has yet to take hold, clearly demonstrate how Ireland's non-recognition is politically, not legally, driven, and officials do not view Palestine as a state yet.

Maintaining stability and the status quo is also a high priority. Though the government has frequently admitted that no progress has been made towards achieving a settlement to the conflict, participation in the government seems to have stifled political will to push forward with recognising Palestine. Fianna Fáil committed in 2017 to fast-track recognition (Fiach 2017), and its 2020 manifesto committed to 'spearhead' recognition efforts (Fianna Fáil 2020), but this has not happened, and the original two-state solution remains government policy. Fine Gael, which is in coalition with Fianna Fáil, were found to have opposed the idea, causing it to be dropped [5,6]. 'Not every other party shares our views to the same extent' Fleming explained, meaning 'everything we wish[ed] for hasn't been signed off' [6]. Although described as one of only three sticking points during coalition negotiations [5] in 2020, it was subsequently deprioritised to expedite reaching an agreement so that the government could quickly address the Covid-19 pandemic [6]. This demonstrates that although recognition holds a certain level of salience, it can quickly be overshadowed by more urgent political concerns. Sidelining Palestinian recognition indicates that it is not deemed a priority that warrants expending excess political capital on, particularly when there are other pressing challenges to tackle.

The political interests guiding Fine Gael's opposition were not revealed, though potential answers may be found through comparison to Sweden's recognition of Palestine. The newly elected centre-left Social Democrats' plan for recognition marked a change to established policy that they hoped to upload to the EU level (Eriksson 2018). As a new government, they were not yet socialised into the EU CFSP, which is typically when governments are freest and most determined to try to alter the EU status quo (Beyers 2005). This contrasts with Fine Gael, which is centre right and has been in power for over a decade, which is more than enough time to become fully socialised into the EU establishment. Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil's reputation in the EU as a government that will not 'rock the boat too much' [3] supports Beyer's socialisation theory that establishment governments in the EU are less likely to upset the status quo, in this case meaning Palestinian recognition is unlikely to be unilaterally granted. This may have been compounded by a new approach to foreign policy within the EU, where efforts are being made to 'confirm the EU as Ireland's 'geopolitical centre of gravity'' ((Rees and O'Brennan 2019,

595), to reposition Ireland as a reliable partner within the Union. In this context, potentially challenging established norms by recognising Palestine seems unlikely.

Although seen as a negative by some participants, keeping in step with the EU on foreign policy is a key political consideration that impacts recognition policy. Unilaterally recognising Palestine would constitute a breakaway from the majority, and potentially damage Ireland's reputation among key EU partners. EU aspirations and policy objective are highly prioritised, representing Ireland's 'main key driver of (...) foreign policy' [6]. This was seen to reach such a level that one participant described Ireland's approach to foreign policy as 'kowtowing' [3] to the EU. However, maintaining a good relationship with the EU, and thus not straying from the EU-agreed upon two-state solution, has strategic advantages for Ireland. Fleming highlighted Ireland's strong reputation across the EU helping it gain a seat on the UNSC in 2021-2022, a feat mentioned by almost all participants. This was 'a big achievement for a small country' [6], that was won through 'having great support' [6] in the EU which translated into votes for Ireland. Risking Ireland's reputation through unilateral recognition outside the two-state solution is seemingly something the government is not prepared to do [6]. Although some felt that domestic support for Palestinian recognition is not adequately communicated at the EU level [2,3], it seems that the strategic payoffs, like UNSC membership, of not rocking the boat and risking Ireland's reputation are worth it.

International law and legal conventions *do* play a role in recognition, though ultimately this process is instigated and concluded through political determinations. The DFA and the executive are the initiating and deciding actors in this process [5], with the civil service assessing the legal parameters, guided by 'certain conventions' [7], to determine whether a recommendation for recognition can be made. Palestine appears to have passed this section of the process. 'We're not coming at it from we can't recognise Palestine' [7] Hyland explained, indicating that from a legal standpoint Palestine could have its statehood affirmed. In the end, the decision would ultimately be a 'judgement made by Ireland' [7] on when to recognise Palestine, not on whether it deserves or qualifies for recognition, thus supporting hypothesis one's prediction.

Interviewees' general lack of awareness of conventions or rules that might guide the decision also demonstrates the lesser importance of legal criteria in assessing whether Palestine should be recognised. None of the politicians, even the Minister of State, knew about legal mechanisms like the Montevideo Convention, but were in general agreement that recognition is 'subject to the political mood of the times' [2]. If one of the most senior figures in Fianna Fáil is unaware of legal criteria that might theoretically prevent the recognition of Palestine that his party has committed itself to, one could assume that the decision was not driven by legal considerations. Interviews did not reveal

whether Fianna Fáil had consulted legal experts before committing to recognition, though they seemingly would play a minor role in a procedure that is driven overall by politics, again supporting hypothesis one.

H2 - Irish recognition of Palestine is dependent on Ireland achieving consensus among some or all EU member states.

Hypothesis 2 examines the importance of coordinating Ireland's recognition of Palestine with EU colleagues, implying that in absence of some consensus among a group or all, Ireland will not act independently to recognise Palestine. Interviews revealed that Ireland faces considerable challenges forming any kind of consensus around Palestinian matters in the EU, but that it is still unwilling to take unilateral action on recognition. Formally recognising Palestine has dropped down Ireland's list of priorities within the context of many EU member states' shifting positions. These findings suggest that Irish recognition is heavily influenced by the internal dynamics and complexities in its relationship with other member states and show how attitudes towards Palestinian recognition in Ireland and across the EU have evolved in the past 10 years. Ireland, despite further integrating into the EU CFSP, is becoming increasingly isolated wanting to address Palestinian problems, leaving it with limited room for manoeuvre, and a decreased willingness and ability to lead on these matters.

Integration into the CFSP has impacted Ireland's foreign policy capabilities, increasing its preference for tackling issues multilaterally (Rees and O'Brennan 2019). Irish officials are aware of the advantages that moving as a group has for bolstering effectiveness and amplifying Ireland's influence. Fleming described the EU's role in 'strengthening' [6] Ireland's foreign policy capacity, which is reflected in Ireland's regular calls for collective EU responses (Sherlock 2014). However, this perspective of Irish empowerment within the EU, described by Fleming as 'strength in numbers' [6], is now manifest in Ireland's reluctance to act independently, at the cost of promoting subjects that do not align with EU common priorities. This presents a considerable roadblock to Palestinian recognition. Pringle criticised the government for exploiting Ireland's small member state status to defer responsibility for issues like Palestinian recognition, willingly 'following the line of supporting Israel and supporting the Israeli regime and what they're doing in Palestine' [3]. This reluctance to act autonomously was recognised by all participants, indicating that, in absence of a consensus among some or all EU states on Palestinian recognition, Ireland is unlikely to do it alone.

As mentioned above, acting collectively has strategic advantages alongside shielding Ireland from having to act independently. As demonstrated in the literature, small states join together to increase their chances of successfully uploading their policy to a higher administrative level (Jakobsen 2009), and this principle is mirrored in considerations of when recognising Palestine might be appropriate, in

absence of a two-state solution. Hyland explained how, ideally, a group of states would recognise in tandem, 'because it would just be more impactful' [7], while AnonDFA questioned whether unilateral recognition would change anything. It should be highlighted that the idea that Ireland is waiting for a group of EU states to recognise was questioned, as recognition is 'very much based on our own [DFA] analysis of the situation' [7]. However, Ireland's preference for multilateralism appears to have dampened any resolve to consider early, unilateral recognition. Even in the face of the increasing division in the EU CFSP, Fleming confirmed, 'we have no intention of going on our own' [6].

This does not mean that Ireland has not tried, nor that it is Palestine's only ally in the EU. Officials are making sustained efforts to promote Palestine's position on the agenda and maintain consensus on the Middle East Peace Process, though this is proving challenging. While some supportive countries, like Belgium and Luxemburg [1, 7], remain, Palestine has 'lost some voices within the EU' [1], with former allies like Greece and Cyprus now loyal to Israel thanks to increased economic ties, at the expense of support for Palestine [1]. Even with Ireland's efforts to work with supportive countries to keep attention on Palestinian matters, described as 'constantly banging that drum' [7], consensus is increasingly difficult to reach.

In an EU CFSP system 'overwhelmed by disagreement between member states' (Maurer and Wright 2021), changing priorities within the EU and countries realigning to support Israel at Palestine's expense post are making it increasingly difficult to maintain previous agreements. Consequently, consensus on Palestinian recognition is no longer an immediate, or realistic, goal, with officials often simply aiming to 'avoid the opposite' [6]. This fraught environment leaves little opportunity for progress to be made and indicates that Ireland may be forced to abandon or delay certain policy objectives, simply to maintain a dialogue with more intransigent states. Under the current circumstances, Ireland is both unwilling to act independently on Palestinian recognition, and unable to elicit any movement on the issue on a European level.

The lack of sympathy for Palestine has also translated into a disinterest in maintaining previous common EU positions. The sense of urgency to recognise Palestine suggested by Martins (2015) appears to have dissipated, replaced by backsliding on formerly agreed policies. Although confident that compromises and consensus are still achievable, Hyland confirmed that agreement on Palestinian matters routinely cannot be reached. 'A number of EU member states have moved quite sharply' [7] away from supporting the two-state solution, losing interest in recognising Palestine with or separately from this. Furthermore, they are no longer 'sufficiently robust' [7] in promoting this and other related policies. Although participants agreed that Ireland remains a strong supportive voice in the EU, this disunity and divergence represents a substantial obstacle to Ireland building any consensus on

Palestinian issues, recognition included. Furthermore, it has required a reappraisal of strategy, with efforts now increasingly spent on holding states to previous positions, rather than pushing for new ones [7]. Member states' reduced interest in pursuing former commitments demonstrates the diminished priority in the EU that resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict, and then recognising Palestine, now have. This makes it harder for Ireland to steer CFSP, effectively paralysing the issue of recognition, and leaving Ireland isolated, with many in the EU unreceptive to new measures to address the Middle East Peace Process. And without backing, Ireland will not act alone.

The protracted nature of the conflict means that, with major geopolitical challenges like the Ukraine war and the Covid-19 pandemic, Palestinian policies are being sidelined on the EU level. As highlighted by the collective responses required to tackle these challenges [6, 4], coupled with a distinct sense of 'MEPP fatigue (...) around the EU table' [7] it is evident that Palestine has 'dropped down the international agenda' [5]. The decreased importance of the Palestinian question suggests that member states, already divided on the issue and steadily less sympathetic to the two-state solution, are unlikely to devote time and expend political capital on building consensus around Palestinian recognition. The ever more unstable balance of political priorities in the CFSP underscores the complex environment that Ireland would need to navigate to reach quorum on Palestinian recognition. This further supports the hypothesis that without consensus, recognition will not unilaterally come from Ireland.

H3- Ireland withheld recognition after facing pressure from international allies.

Hypothesis three predicts that Ireland faced pressure from international allies before withholding recognition from Palestine. This is informed by constitutive theory, which highlights the international community's role in admitting new states, and Coggins' (2011) argument that powerful states leverage their strength to prevent would-be states being recognised, in order to protect their interests. The United States, and Israel, were foreseen as likely candidates for lobbying Ireland to refuse recognition, based on their proximity to the Israel-Palestine conflict and their relationship with Ireland and the EU. Pressure that Ireland might face could take many forms, for example diplomatic pressure, exerted by state representatives and diplomats during bilateral meetings, or institutional pressure, arising perhaps in international forums like the UN.

Ireland's relationships with international allies were explored, providing insights into the complex interplay of international aims and domestic motivations that inform Ireland's foreign policy within and outside of the EU's CFSP. As mentioned already, the EU was described by Fleming as the 'main key driver of (...) foreign policy', suggesting that coordination with the block may have influenced Ireland's decision to withhold recognition. Some respondents felt that Ireland had been 'frogmarched' [2] into the CFSP, constituting a form of pressure that had severely curtailed Ireland's independence and

compromised its neutrality. However, the EU's role in Irish foreign policy has been discussed already, so the following sections focus on the role of non-EU actors and their influence on Irish non-recognition. Results were inconclusive. Pressure from the US was not explicitly identified, while linking Israeli pressure to policy change was not possible. Participants generally agreed that, while Ireland takes a consultative approach to foreign policy which factors US and Israeli ambitions into calculations, the two nations play a distinctly secondary role in Irish foreign policy in comparison to the EU. Ireland's ability to resist and exert pressure to promote its own goals, including Palestinian recognition, was also discussed, revealing a pragmatic, multilateral approach to foreign policy.

The United States is arguably the most significant external power in the Israel-Palestine conflict, and perhaps Ireland's closest non-EU ally. The US' 'outsized' [7] role in the conflict mediation process, described as being 'the lead', indicates their prominent position in Ireland's policy calculations regarding Palestinian matters. Ireland generally takes a collaborative approach to foreign policy, with Irish officials regularly seeking US opinions on the MEPP. If Ireland were to recognise Palestine separately from the two-state solution, officials would 'need to discuss and take into account thinking in Washington' [7] before implementing anything. Inviting consultation and policy coordination could be interpreted as an attempt to avoid conflicting with US interests that might cause the US to pressure Ireland. However, it could also be viewed as a pragmatic approach that values US opinion in formulating Irish foreign policy, particularly when the two-state solution is still a shared objective. Distinguishing a coercive element was not achieved here. Although it is possible that Ireland faced US diplomatic pressure, it is challenging to empirically prove either its presence or absence. Drawing a direct connection between Ireland's refusal to recognize Palestine and pressure from the US is therefore not possible, due to the complexity of their generally positive relationship, and a lack of concrete evidence. Additional interviews with US officials might shed light on these power dynamics and areas of disagreement and potential pressure.

While acknowledging the importance of US input, Ireland has exhibited a careful resistance to US policy preferences relating to Palestine. 'Ireland would take quite a different view on the Middle East peace process' [7] to the United States, which has been displayed in international arenas. However, the setting, policy area, and the availability of potential collaborators are crucial. As stressed by Fleming (five times), Ireland is a 'small country' [6], with *relatively* limited influence internationally. Ireland therefore employs its 'strength in numbers' [6] tactic, collaborating with other states and leveraging its relative freedom in settings like the UN. There, where it can represent its own interests [4], Ireland has consistently promoted pro-Palestinian policies, resisting pressure to change course. During Ireland's 2021-2022 term on the UNSC, it supported resolutions opposed by the US that condemned Israeli actions (IIEA 2021), and lobbied UN partners to collectively reiterate calls for Israel

to respect resolutions that protect Palestine's territorial integrity [5]. Backed by a significant number of states, Ireland can and does resist pressure from the US and other states, and even collectively exert its own, while maintaining positive international relations with the US and other allies. This was confirmed by Fleming, who remarked 'I don't think it complicates us with America, at all', referencing Ireland's support for Palestinian recognition. This multilateral, collaborative approach, combined with strong economic and cultural ties [6], seems to empower Ireland to maintain relative foreign policy autonomy outside the confines of the EU, and resist pressure from international allies.

Ultimately, Ireland's vulnerability to US pressure may be low simply because pursuing unilateral recognition outside of the agreed two-state solution is not currently a priority. Contrasting with Ireland's 2001-2002 UNSC term, when it promoted and supported resolutions that pushed for liberation and eventual recognition of Palestine (Doyle 2019), Ireland did not push for Palestinian recognition, publicly at least, during its 2021-2022 term [5]. The US and Ireland are generally more united on the issue now, despite Irish acknowledgement that the two-state solution has stalled (Flanagan 2014) and that Israeli settlements have jeopardised its viability (DFA 2022). This unity likely prevents significant disagreement or pressure, as on Palestinian recognition, the two countries come from 'same angle (...) but maybe with a different emphasis' [7].

Contrasting with the US, Israel emerged as an international ally with the capacity to exert significant pressure on Ireland to block Palestinian recognition. Israel's record of deploying retaliatory measures and diplomatic pressure in response to perceived pro-Palestinian policies, in Ireland and abroad (Miller 2010), was noted by participants. Israel's forceful diplomatic response to Sweden's recognition of Palestine, described as 'really very harsh' [1] serves as an example of indirect pressure that may have influenced Ireland's decision to withhold recognition in 2014. Moreover, as an ally and major player in the conflict, Israeli diplomats engage with their Irish counterparts [7], presenting ample opportunity for Israel to communicate its opinion. During these meetings, Ireland has been openly warned against Palestinian recognition, being told it would have a 'very negative effect on our bilateral relationship' [7], demonstrating direct diplomatic pressure applied to discourage Ireland. Fleming highlighted Ireland's substantial economic links with Israel, so its possible that this threat might have prompted Ireland to contemplate potential repercussions of unilateral recognition. Precisely gauging the impact of these factors, however, remains challenging. Israel has the capacity to exert pressure, and Ireland has certainly been exposed to it, but empirically linking this pressure to Ireland's non-recognition poses difficulties. Consequently, definitive evidence to show Israel's influence on Ireland's non-recognition was not found, despite direct evidence of Israeli pressure being identified.

However, additional research into Ireland's relationship with Israel may allow for some tentative conclusions to be reached. Ireland has remained relatively unyielding to Israeli pressure, exemplified by a range of policy and diplomatic measures. For example, the government backed a 2021 motion condemning Israel's de facto annexation, publicly expressing its 'huge concern (...) about the intent of the [Israeli government] actions' (Reuters 2021), which provoked a furious response from Israel. The government has also exerted its own pressure. In 2011, an Israeli diplomat was expelled from Ireland following the discovery of Mossad agents using fake passports in an operation to assassinate a Palestinian commander in 2010 (Ó'Beacháin 2013). Additionally, Ireland's visits to former Palestinian President Yasir Arafat during the second intifada elicited open condemnation from Israel (Miller 2010). Ireland maintains good relations with Israel, as evidenced by Irish officials' 'regular conversations with the Israelis' [7] but it is evidently capable and willing to forge its own path, irrespective of Israeli pressure. This suggests that, even when warned against Palestinian recognition by the Israelis, it likely did not elicit substantial policy change, if the government was planning to recognise at all.

Acknowledging the limits of this analysis is necessary here. The absence of evidence to demonstrate overt pressure does not rule out the existence of more covert influences or factors. Hypothesis three predicts Irish susceptibility to pressure from international allies, but further refinement and possible consideration of an alternative hypothesis or methodology might enhance analysis in this area in future studies. Conducting additional interviews with US, Israeli and international officials, or obtaining access to private papers, would likely be necessary to identify pressure, and potentially link it to policy change.

Analysis conclusion

To conclude the analysis, Ireland's non-recognition is driven by domestic and European political interests, with the government's preference for multilateralism making it unwilling to act independently, while exposing it to some pressure from allies. These are the factors that influenced Ireland's non-recognition, though results may vary under a different government. Sinn Féin was mentioned several times [1, 2, 3, 5] as a likely candidate to recognise Palestine upon entry into government. Alongside Palestinian recognition being a central tenet of its foreign policy (Pidgeon 2022), as a new government, Sinn Féin may also be free from some of the factors, like socialisation and commitments made by forerunners, that might restrict a more established administration. Of course, there is no guarantee. As demonstrated, there are many political factors that might prevent recognition, and Sinn Féin's commitment to Palestinian liberation has already proved somewhat inconsistent. Pringle described how the party refused to reintroduce the Occupied Territories Bill in the new legislative period [3], despite publicly supporting it, which raises questions about its

authenticity. As this study's findings show, the gap between manifesto pledge and actually implementing Palestinian recognition is considerable. Whether Sinn Féin has the resolve to make this jump and finally formally recognise Palestine remains to be seen.

5.Conclusion

To conclude, using a constitutive theoretical framework and conducting seven semi-structured interviews, the research question ‘What underlying factors contribute to the Irish government's stance on official recognition of Palestine?’ was answered. It was revealed that Ireland’s non-recognition of Palestine is constitutive, and driven by political considerations, rather than legal criteria, presenting a development from the Irish government’s declaratory decision to withhold recognition in the 1980s. Constitutive theory’s emphasis on the strength and influence of the international community on admitting new states was found in Ireland’s non-recognition of Palestine. Disagreement in the current coalition government on when to recognise Palestine was revealed, reflecting a wider trend of divergence on the issue at the EU level. Ireland is struggling to hold Palestine’s position on the agenda in an EU distracted by geopolitical challenges, divided on the Palestinian question, and increasingly sceptical of maintaining common foreign policy positions. In the absence of consensus, Ireland will not act unilaterally to recognise Palestine. Ireland’s preference for multilateralism in foreign policy exposes it to diplomatic pressure from allies, though assessing the impact of this was beyond the project’s scope, presenting a potential new avenue of research for future scholars. Ultimately, Ireland is unwilling to deviate from previously agreed upon positions regarding Palestinian recognition and the two-state solution, even at the expense of Irish public opinion.

To build on this study, interviews with a wider range of participants might add to the findings, and potentially reveal more definitive conclusions for hypothesis three. Interviews with Fine Gael, pre-2020 coalition partners, and US and Israeli representatives might have provided a more substantial insight into areas like internal party dynamics, and relations with international allies. Nevertheless, additional interviews and data may result in similar difficulties in proving the impact of pressure. The diversity of participants, all of whom had relevant knowledge and insight, provided ample data, so future study might instead approach the subject with a reformulated hypothesis to derive more conclusive results. Additional investigations might also build on this study’s findings to analyse whether other EU common policy positions are no longer being sufficiently implemented, as states move towards a more domestically focused foreign policy approach.

This paper contributes to the literature on state recognition practices, demonstrating how Ireland, perhaps typically in the EU, takes a constitutive rather than declaratory approach to recognition, in coordination with EU partners. It adds a much-needed follow-up to Symmons’ paper, demonstrating the continued trend of Europeanisation in Irish recognition policy. The findings also provide a case study demonstrating the growing challenges facing small states in uploading policies to the European level, as traditional coalition and consensus building approaches prove increasingly ineffective in an

EU marked by increasing de-Europeanisation and preference for nationally driven unilateralism, at the expense of multilateralism and conforming to common policy positions.

Going forwards, a range of factors may alter Ireland's stance on Palestinian recognition. The situation in Palestine and the level of Irish support may influence the issue. Periods of conflict tend to increase the salience of the Palestinian question in Irish political discourse, and in the face of worsening Israeli-Palestinian relations, pressure from the Irish public for change may make Ireland's non-recognition stance untenable. Although the government's insistence on consensus presents a considerable roadblock to this happening, if divisions persist and the EU becomes unable to reach common positions, things may shift, particularly if Sinn Féin enters government, as polls suggest it is likely to do (Politico 2023). Under the current leadership, Palestinian recognition looks set to remain a vague aspiration for the future. But, as this project has shown, commitments to old policies can change.

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Appendix

Interview transcripts

All interviews were transcribed using transcription software Otter.ai.

Questions are italicised. All interviewees were given an overview of the project before beginning. An example of this statement is provided for interview 1.

Interview 1

So just to reconfirm, it's okay that I am recording this. Wonderful. Thank you. So just to briefly tell you my my research focuses on Irish Palestinian relations within the EU, particularly interested in sort of building a timeline of Ireland's relations since around the time that the doll passed the the motion to recognise Palestine. But then the government did not actually recognise Palestine. So I'm very interested in that event and the sort of the events leading up to it. And since then, I think Ireland has a very interesting relationship with Palestine, particularly compared to some of its European Union neighbours. So that's my research focus. The questions have three parts. There's Irish, Palestinian relations within the EU, then there's a section on precognition. And then there's one shorter section on sort of the Palestinian efforts in Ireland. So if it's okay, well, we'll start now. So question number one.

How would you describe the current state of cooperation between Palestine and Ireland and other any specific areas where the relationship faces challenges?

I mean, the relationship between Palestine and Ireland goes back to the early 70s, when we have the first representative, Palestinian representative to Ireland, Mr. Yusuf Alan. He was like, as the PLO Information Office here, trying to help through the civil society, Irish civil society and the long history of colonisation of Ireland, that makes easy for the Irish people to understand the plight of the Palestinian people. You can start from there. And you can realise that this kind of special relations between the Irish and Palestinians. When it comes to the government as well, you know, the government is a reflection of what the people want, it reflects what the people of Ireland want. At the end of the day, it reflects the parties who are elected to be in the parliament and then forming the governments. And whether you talk about the Fine Gael or Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, Social Democrats, we have very good and strong relations with all of them, no matter like, you know, you can focus on certain parties, but at the end of the day, even though we have this support, whether within the Irish dail, or within the other international platforms, you talk about the EU or the UN. And if you follow the news during when Ireland was in the Security Council, before the last like, you know, ending the term of this couple of years, end of last year, Ireland voted in favour of the advisory opinion of the ICJ and what, which was a very, very strong position from Ireland, among like, you know, comparing with other(s in the) European Unions, and if you see yesterday, this, this meeting between Sunak and Netanyahu, when they signed this 2030 agreements between Israel and and, and the UK, one of these issues talking about BDS. And the other talked about the ICJ and that was strong opinion. You know, you talk about international law, and, of course, Israel (said Ireland but from context she means Israel) opposed this, opposed the ICJ. I mean, even for the Palestinian to, to have this advisory opinion. Comparing to Ireland who voted in favour and comparing to other European countries who favour who

didn't like vote in favour of this, but Ireland was strong. And this is like a very strong reflection of how Ireland, on the official level, supported Palestinians. When it come to the BDS, I remember that. And you can go back to the Dail transcripts, that Minister Simon Coveney, when he was the minister of foreign affairs, and he had received a question about the BDS. He said that freedom of speech in Ireland will be always respected. Yes, he might not support the BDS but he will not like you know, stop these people from like, you know, having their freedom of speech and represent themselves. This, it gives you on the official link. On the on the other parties like Sinn Féin, and the Social Democrats you talk about the Labour (party) as well. Pople before Profits, the Fianna Fáil. Even many of the independents within the Irish Dail, they were always in support of Palestine. There are many motions since the 2014 Recognition [Bill]. It's the annexation movement. It's the occupied territories Bill. The occupied territories bill, yes was presented by Frances Black Senator Frances Black to the Sinnead. But the Fianna Fáil, I mean, Minister now, Niall Collins or Mike Collins from the Fianna Fáil TD, he presented this occupied Territories Bill to the Dail. And you know that at the third level, the the Bill stopped and didn't, didn't pass. But last summer, I mean, the Dail as well pass a motion, presented by Sinn Féin and was unanimously I mean, approved by the Dail. It's the annexation motion describing what's going on what, what policies Israel is taking or what's going on in Palestine from colonisation and creeping annexations. They, they they amount to de facto annexation. So I mean, you can talk over these years. And I, I think that this strong relation, as I said, on official level and on, like, you know, party level and people level, you can see this, and you can witness this on the streets, you can witness this in many of the sort of solidarity groups. And you see that last November, I mean, 15 solidarity, I think 15 or 12 solidarity groups signed and the campaign statement, apartheid campaign statement, and they have already started last month to meet and to arrange, how this apartheid and campaign will be launched from Ireland? And in what, in what sense? In what directions? And what are the features of this campaign?

Yes, thank you for that answer. We've also answered a follow up one saying, Do you think that the state support is reflected in the in the population? So my next question would be, How would you describe the EU's relationship with Palestine? And what countries do you feel are most or perhaps least sympathetic to towards Palestinian recognition?

Yeah, I mean, we have as well, like, you know, quiet, not not long, but quite long history of support from the EU, you know, the EU support, I mean, like, announce itself as supporting human rights, justice, and this come within the part of like, you know, supporting the Palestinians. Calling for justice and human rights, and, of course, self independence. And in the Israeli occupations, we have, I can say that strong relations with the EU, however, like in the recent years, especially after, like, the Ukrainian war, things started to be like, shifted, I don't want like, you know, to say any, anything about like, you know, the double standard and all these things. However, there is like, there is a time maybe to talk about it. But let me say that there is a shift from the relations within the Palestinians or supporting the Palestinians to the relations with, or they [the EU] focus on the war of Russia and Ukraine. And this is normal, because it's in their home. But the way that it took the relations between the Israelis and Palestinians, because we depend on the EU financially, and as well, politically, the shift of this relations bring the Israelis under like, they don't care about anyone, because nobody's caring. So I maybe I use this, like, you know, very simple wording to describe the whole situation. But you can, of course, I'm sure that you can, you can say it, in your own words, later on when you make the transcripts, but because, I mean, Israel is not accountable of its violation of the international law and human rights law in Palestine, whether to the United States to the EU, this gives Israel like, you know, a full hand of continued violations because as long as you're not accountable, you can do whatever you want. So Israel acted all these days with impunity. And the situation deteriorating over the time we talk about, even before the election of this far right, fascist government now in Israel, and you could, you could

see now from the news if you follow the news, how the situation in Israel comparing to the Palestinian, I mean, occupied territories. So, I guess that in the last couple of weeks, I mean, the EU realise that all this time that they didn't react, or even if they react with like, you know, kind of shy statements, they don't give any, it's just words without any, like, you know, concrete measures that go that's the whole situation is to be deteriorated over over the time, especially after this far right government. And I think the last statement issued by the EU after the settler violence in Hawara and Nablus and in the whole West Bank and insist on like, you know, continued colonisation, however, the meetings and Acaba and Sharm el Sheikh, they agreed on certain issues. But Israel, the moment that these meetings finish, Israel continues and the Israeli Government continues with with its violations. And I mean, even expand with with more settlements units, they just do something on one hand within the international community, because they're not states attended this Jordan, Egypt. And on the other hand, they just don't pay any, any respect to these agreements. So when the EU realise that this is not working in the right way, I mean, the last statement was a little bit strong and stronger than before. I hope that the EU will take concrete measures against Israel, not just issue a statement. Still, I can say that the EU government is the big supporter and donors to the Palestinians, I cannot deny this, this kind of financial support continues. Yes, we had a problem during, during the commissioner Farley, this Hungarian Commissioner, when they stopped or froze the the financial support to the Palestinian Authority 21-22 for more than one year, because of the issue of the books, the school books, of course, accusing [Palestinians] of incitement. But that all, I mean, based on lies that didn't actually bring any kind of like, proof of that, at the end of the day. And by the way, they released the money, and they came back to the normal budgetary support of the Palestinian Authority. But I cannot deny that this strong relations, even capacity building even the support for so many, like, you know, the government, the Palestinian Authority, and the NGOs. So we have this kind of strong relations between the EU and the Palestinian people.

Thank you for the first two answers already. Have Irish officials ever indicated to you that they are eager to build consensus among EU countries before initiating certain pro Palestinian policies like recognition or other bills?

Yeah, I mean, the issue of recognition is part of the Irish government's manifesto, and many of the Irish party's manifestos I mean to recognise Palestine, yes. The previous government, like you know, with a minister Coveney, he used to repeat that the time like, you know, 'when there's appropriate time to recognise it, we will do so'. And they always repeat that. I mean, Ireland can't go by itself, like you know, to recognition because you know, Ireland is a small country. And they definitely, I mean, when Sweden recognised Palestine, there was many, like the relations between Israel and Sweden. They were like, No, totally. Let me say I don't want to say to use the word collapse, but it was Israel, they were really very harsh on Sweden on certain issues. Anyway, at the end of the day Cyprus recognised Palestine as a safe from the Western European countries. There are other like, you know, Luxembourg, I mean, the minister, Ellsberg was among those who support like, Palestine and the recognition of Palestine. So there were small countries, I mean, the whole story of, of the recognition is not one certain country by itself to recognise, you know, if there are small countries among the European countries to support the Palestinians, and we would coordinating this, but until now, you know, the situation is not, it's not like, you know, appropriate to have such such a step. Among those countries who were like, show interest in recognise small claims, like, I mean, Luxembourg, Ireland, Portugal, Belgium, they show interest, like, you know, if not one state by itself to recognise, but as a whole, you know, not individually.

What role do you think Ireland can play in advancing the Palestinian cause in international forums, like the UN and the EU? And do you feel like it's already taking these measures to briefly covered that before...

Yeah, I mean, I mean, still Ireland, even though it's a small country, but I know that they have a very good relations with the United States, which is as well, like, you know, we need the Irish voice within the United States. And they did it. When there is an opportunity to help in that sense, or in that direction, Ireland wouldn't regret to do that. As well. I mean, as I said, like within the EU, still, we have the Irish voice, is a strongly support Palestinians. And you know, that many of the European countries is not anymore [supporting] like before. We lost a few voices within the EU, we have always like, you know, voices, like Czechia, Hungary, maybe Bulgaria as well. But Czechia and Hungary are the two countries that always oppose like, you know, Palestinians. Adding to this list, it's Greece and Cyprus, as well. I mean, they are like, you know, in the middle not like before, they used to be a strong supporters of the Palestinians. We have Ireland, Luxembourg, Belgium, and other like, you know, states, but Ireland, Ireland, I mean, continue to support Palestinian, regardless, all of these like, you know, differentiations, or, like these kinds of lowering of the support of the EU, they still lead in that. They can do, like, you know, the United States and EU and the EU are like, you know, those big blocks of the international community who can have their own politics towards the Palestinians, and who could like, you know, go to, to put some pressure on Israel? Not yet. They do that, but they did that, but we still feel that they can do more to support the Palestinians and to end the Israeli occupation.

Do you and your colleagues noticed any changes or developments in Irish foreign policy and relations towards Palestine following outbreaks of violence in the region, particularly when they're initiated from the Israeli side? Or does it stay sort of constant?

No, Irish policy, Irish foreign policy is the same, even when there is no Simon Coveney now in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Michael Martin, the Irish policy is consistent towards Palestinians. There is no up and down in this. Irish they see that the Palestinian people, they have the right to exist. They have the right to self-determination. They have the right to be in an independent state of Palestine. I mean, they support the two state solution actually, it was an Irish proposal, like, you know, in early 80s, it was an Irish, it was an Irish initiative. So I don't see a change. I don't see any change in the Irish Irish policy, it might go up and down in the eye even though I can't say that there is a change. I mean, it was stable. Yes. Mr. Simon Coveney was very active. He did so, so many things. I mean, while he was, but I mean, Minister, Minister, Mr. Michael Martin, as well, he used to be supportive of the Palestinians, maybe still, like, you know, it's just a few months since he started and, you know, they have the issue of the North and the Brexit, and, you know, the border lines. So if he was busy, but still, I still feel that they're there much to do within this government, the current government, yes.

Okay, moving on to the section more focused on on recognition. How has the Irish government's stance on recognition of Palestine developed over the years? And you sort of answered that, just briefly there

Yeah, I mean, as I said, it's in the government programme. But it was conditioned with like, you know, if the situation like, you know, allow to this kind of recognition, we still follow up on this with other parties, we still insist that the recognition is something very important, it will help us in any future negotiations. Yes, maybe the second day, nothing will change. But this will enhance our position in any future negotiation in like, even though for the Palestinian people themselves, sometimes it's important to see that other nations, they support the right to exist and to have like, you know, a free state. Yeah.

What do you believe that the potential benefits and drawbacks of official recognition of Palestine for the Irish government?

Listen, I mean, Ireland as a Western European country, to have such a step that would like give the Palestinians the kind of strength to say that, yes, I mean, we are on the right way. And we will gain more and more within the EU, if Ireland will recognise Palestine with other small European countries, this will give impact on the other big countries like, you know, European countries where you have 27 European countries if, like, you know, we have Cyprus, Sweden, and if there are other five or six small countries recognise Palestine, that as well would give, like, you know, a good kick for the for the for the recognition. However, like, you know, I said, Ireland supported the recognition resolution within the UN, in 2012. But I know that there are challenges facing the Irish government, however, we continue to call on the government to recognise the state of Palestine in each meeting, whether from the embassy or when we have official visits, we still like, you know, call the Irish government to, to apply, like, I don't know how to take the Dail support and take it into account and recognise the state of Palestine.

Yes. And then considering how this this motion back in 2014 had cross party support, and I think it would be safe to say is supported by the majority of the public? Do you think then that recognising Palestine would be more of a benefit or perhaps have more drawbacks for the actual Irish government? Because they evidently have their reasons for not doing it?

This is a very good question. I mean, from my point of view, as I said, like, you know, the recognition wouldn't do wouldn't add anything on the second day, there is nothing like you know, on the ground, that will change, but this support it will, it will help us as Palestinians. It will not do anything for the for the international community because this is has no like impact on any other countries or even in Ireland itself. Because Ireland, even though without recognition, Palestine, they support like, you know, Palestine on many international platforms. I mean, whenever we need the voice of Ireland, we'll have it there. I mean, I know that Irish foreign policy and the balances in relations within the United States, within the EU, make this step a little bit difficult. But I'm confident that this will happen soon. The recognition that will come from all European countries. If the Palestinians stopped dreaming or stopped, like, you know, working for their dreams, I mean, who would be at all on this earth? Like, you know since 1948?

Have any ministers from the Irish government or the governing parties indicated any kind of timeline for when they might? Or is it still just whatever the EU wants? And

Unfortunately, I didn't hear any kind of commitments, when because they said, like, you know, even even when, when the other parties have it in their programmes or their manifestos over the years, let's say that the Sinn Féin will be in government... whether it will be in government next time or not, they will recognise or not, what I mean, I can't say that official in the government, they said that. But many, many of the other parties than like, you know, the Fine Gael, and Fianna Fáil, they said at some points that the recognition of Palestine should be like, you know, come into, into fact, like, you know, when we are in government. But I'm still like, optimistic about this, even though from this current government with the Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Greens, even though there are no promises, I feel that it's near there. Let me let me say, without any commitment, without any saying, but I feel that because the whole circumstances in Palestine, like, you know, to at least to protect the two state solution, recognition is something very important.

Yes. So, have the government given you or your predecessor, perhaps any specific reasons why they have not recognised Palestine yet?

No, it's they said, that it's not the right time. It's not the time. I mean, they see that the time is not convenient. It's not like, you know, they see that the whole situation, it might be harming more than

benefiting, not the Palestinians, but in general, like it will bring some, some issues within the EU or within like, you know, the relations with the United States. So,

Yes. Okay, already, particularly another question here. You're very good at this. But just before I jump on to sort of the international aspect, referencing a recent discussion for the joint committee of foreign affairs and defence, which I believe you were at, actually, I think, last month, Mr. Martin, called for elections in Palestine, saying it's important that democratic legitimacy is affirmed by elections. So I was wondering, have any Irish officials indicated that there are certain criteria that Palestine should fulfil? Or perhaps if there was a strengthened democracy, there things might change? Or is that to think that's at all related to the issue of recognition?

They will always I mean, they will always point out these elections. And we always come back to this. The EU has a role in this because when we signed also agreements, I mean, the election should be within the whole occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, and the Israelis refused to give, I hate to say give permission to do that in East Jerusalem, because this is an international agreement. And the guarantors of this agreements were the United States and the EU. They should facilitate this with the Israeli government. They did it twice before, and they should play this role as it was. I mean, last year, not last year, I think the year before when the President announced that there will be elections and we we went through all the process and when it comes to them, Israel facilitating this in East Jerusalem, Israel rejected that and refused to allow the Palestinians to be we have 350 [thousand] Palestinians living in East Jerusalem and East Jerusalem is an occupied territories according to international law, so we have the right to do that, we have the right to participate. If one Palestinian accept the elections to go on without East Jerusalem, that means that East Jerusalem is out of this our commitment to the occupied territories in general Westbank including East Jerusalem and Gaza. This might bring the whole Palestinians in a very, in a very bad situation. And very, like, you know, people will not accept that. So the leadership decided to, to postpone the election. I know that each Palestinian believe that election is very important. Even the Palestinian leadership believes that it is important to go ahead with this elections. But without East Jerusalem, no one there to take any decisions to go ahead with the election without East Jerusalem. And the part that the EU should play wasn't, wasn't there, the Americans as well, they didn't do that. But before like, was the European role to put like, you know, to facilitate this with the Israelis, for the Palestinians to have it in East Jerusalem, but it's very important. I mean, all the Palestinians, they wanted this elections to happen, because this is part of our legitimacy, and, you know, talking to the international community.

So, what factors do you think might have influenced the Irish government's attitude towards official recognition? You touched upon perhaps the US relationship?

It's not only the EU, it's the relationship within, among European country, I mean, the EU and, and the United States. As I said, like, you know, it's, it's sometimes you're not playing by yourself in this world, I mean, international community, it's like, it's like a block, if you wanted to play and to have your own, like, you know, Ireland is growing as an influence within the international community. And they achieved so much over the human rights issue, over the justice issues. When Ireland took a place as a small country in the Security Council they worked over so many topics like more woman empowerment, climate change, and other, things. So Ireland is going like this, it is important for any country that built an image in the world to be careful with its foreign policy. I know that as a Palestinian, maybe I think differently, but this is my reflection why Ireland, they don't want to take this step individually without any other support from the EU. They worked hard within the EU countries, they work hard for Palestine they work with, with other small countries for the Palestinians, they support us in, like, as I told you, when they froze the, the financial aid for the Palestinian Authority, they were positively towards like, you know, unblock this money. They worked with the social with, the civil

society when Israel blocked the civil society and assigned them as terrorists groups. They work very hard within the EU. So they have they have a growing role within the EU, even as a small country, and in the international community. They have to think about this. I mean, but I still say that we still have a place for this. I mean, the recognition of Palestine should be considered within the Irish government's they agree on that many of the Irish people who support the government, they support the recognition of Palestine because it was in the manifesto in the government and in Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, Social democrats, Labour, People before Profit all of them they have the recognition in their, in their manifestos.

Do you think perhaps powerful allies have played a role through international pressure in influencing Ireland's decisions on recognition, but also on other legislation that has perhaps failed to be adopted by the executive recently, like the occupied territories Bill?

[RETRACTED] But I reflect on like, you know, I see Ireland that they are growing within the international community. So you have to be like, you know, in a good calculations and good strategies, when you design your own foreign policy yes they support the Palestinians, they might take decision of recognition, they might not, they might postpone it. [RETRACTED] Yes. But I mean, any country and this world, they make calculations, they know how what's like, you know, the International? Where are you going? What do you position yourself? So to be able to position yourself here, you have to do some things. So it's a matter of balancing? It's a matter of like, you know, yeah. But I didn't hear at all that there is pressure. Yes, there was a pressure over the occupied territories bill. Yes. Because we saw with this, this was on the door on the papers on the door, but on the recognition issue. No, it's something that... yeah.

Also, the international pressure argument was more grounded in my one of my hypotheses, because if some of the literature with international recognition suggests that the international community plays a big role.

What, what do you think is the biggest roadblock just in general for Palestine to achieve recognitions in any country, not just Ireland?

Every country has a different own perspective, like, you know, some of them they don't, I don't know, they definitely have the relationship with Israel and Israel, of course, like all the time, they are not like, you know, into this kind of recognition. Of course, it's the occupying power, they wouldn't allow this. But however, like, you know, in 1947, when the United Nations, they took the partitions a plan, and according to this Partition Plan, the Israeli state was born and or was created. So they were created by the international law. But when it comes to this far, right, governments, they don't believe in that they only believe that this is a biblical promise. And it's like, you know, it's God's promise, and going into this channel or this path, it will lead us to nothing. So each country thinks different, because Israel has strong relations with the whole world, not only like, you know, diplomatic relations, but they have other interests, like, you know, financially trades, research, scientific research, so many things that Israel involved within the international community, so many countries, they might think that it's their interest might be harmed. But we always remind the international community that I mean, international law doesn't have two faces. Either you support international law, or that's not like, you know, the case. So each country is having different and definitely they have always had their Israel relations. In their mind, it depends what kind of relationship they have with Israel. We were recognised, I mean, in 2012, 139 countries recognised the state of Palestine. And after the, like the 88, in, I mean, announcement of the independence from Algeria, we have as well, like 10s of countries around the world recognise Palestine as a state. So what we're aiming now is just to bring the Western like countries to recognise Palestine, because they are within the very close relations with the

Palestinian Israeli cause. So that makes them more into this kind of relations. However, that's why actually, we tried to push for this recognition. Now, actually, we're aiming more at as well, to the international law, like, you know, we approach the ICC, we approach the ICJ because Israel, I pretend now that this is not occupied territories, and we wanted to prove by the international law, that this prolonged occupation, it is illegal, and I mean, to prove the rights like, you know, within wider international law. But on the ground, the situation is deteriorating, and I don't know how to balance between what's going on internationally and on the international like, you know, international law platforms. And on the ground. This is a big, big issue for the Palestinians. But that doesn't mean that we will stop working on the international... I mean, with the international community, whether the international law and international organisations will continue to do that. But as well on the ground, the situation is not really supporting us. So as I said, I'm coming back like, you know, I don't want to deviate more. I mean, each country has its own reasons why they don't recognise Palestine.

One last one on recognition. And it's okay if you don't feel that you want to comment on this. Why do you feel that Sweden was able to go ahead with recognition while other small countries and the EU have not? Because there was that wave of Parliament's pushing motions...

Yes, I think it's the social Socialist Party. I mean, the prime minister by that time, the I just forgot the name of the lady who took the decision was from the Socialist Party. So it's one is the government there is people support Palestine or party support Palestine, definitely they will gain the majority of the parliament to go ahead. So this as well, depends on who is in government. Yes, definitely. That's one of the reasons when it's far right government? Of course, they wanted they would have more relations with Israel.

So now on to the Palestinian efforts, what efforts have you and your team made to engage with the Irish government and advocate for recognition of Palestine? And have you faced any challenges here? Or is that even your role?

No, actually. I mean, we always have a close contact with the parties. So even though we meet the TDs or senators, we are always in constant meetings, we don't stop like, you know, we always open doors with the parties. And even though with the parties that we have good relations, we still believe them, we continue to believe the parliaments and like, you know, the solidarity groups, because as well, they have influence on the on the public. We are in constant communications with the government itself. And every meetings we always like, you know, we call the Irish government we call the TDs, we call the parties to end I mean, to support end the Israeli occupation and recognise the state of Palestine. So this is like, you know, it's part of our daily exercise, or our part of our daily work is to meet with Irish people, whether it's official, whether it's solidarity groups, even though with like, you know, people who come sometimes, knock the door and say we support the Palestinians. We always have like open doors for the Irish people.

Actually, I think to be honest, you've covered I think all of my questions sort of already you go great, very good answers.

There's one that I kind of pulled to the end because I wasn't sure if I would answer it or not. But you mentioned how it's in the manifestos of all of the parties and Fianna fail, I believe, in 2017. They very publicly said that when they get into government, they will recognise Palestine. Obviously, Mr. Martin has been Taoiseach is now the foreign minister again. And it hasn't happened. I was wondering if you had any contact with him or discussion about why perhaps it didn't happen when he was the Taoiseach? But a few if you don't want to comment, that's also fine

Actually, he was the Taoiseach. But it's a coalition government. The greens as well support us in this in this. But, you know, I mean, they sign agreement among the parties, and they can't take the decision by themselves. But still, I mean, I still have some hope, before the end of this government's term, or minister Michel Martin from Fianna Fáil to be the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but we'll see. I mean, it's not something that I... never lose hope within Fianna Fáil, you know, I know that they have long history of supporting Palestinians. And I still have hope that maybe before the end of this government, there's something might be happening. We will continue working to have this.

Interview 2

How do you think Ireland's membership of the EU, particularly in the 21st century, has impact its foreign policy?

It's actually in the last five or so years, I think we've seen a demonstrable change. I suppose prior to that, when Ireland joined the European community was very much it's an economic project. And we frame the EU in the context of it being a vehicle for peace in Europe, there's a maybe an element of truth in that book, like, obviously, there, the bigger picture was much more an economic one. But then as the treaties developed, and Lisbon a nice and the idea of High Representative, the idea of the EU having a common foreign policy, that certainly began to creep in a bit more. Now, I would say that the key reasons for the rejection of Lisbon and Nice by the Irish people was very much framed in the context of wanting to protect our neutrality, which would be most clear, I suppose, in the arena of Foreign Affairs. So being neutral from the foundation of the Irish state has always been sort of framed in this idea that small nations can survive, they'll never be the big buys. And the only way in which they can protect themselves is by relying on international law on the resolution of disputes through dialogue and diplomacy, rather than militarism, and then basically staying out of a fight in that regard, you know, so that's not actually an isolationist position. It's a very positive position, I would call it active neutrality and Ireland, all the state, we chose the United Nations. And we punched way above our weight in the United Nations. And that framed a huge amount of our foreign policy in that we were famous the world over as peacekeepers with the United Nations. Interesting. Let me now having been much more frogmarched into the idea of a common EU foreign policy. We've had the announcement for the Irish government in the last number of weeks that they are taking out their peacekeepers in order to hand them over to an EU battle group. So that, to me is the most demonstrable impact of how EU foreign policy is impacting it's actually playing a role in moving us away from our position of neutrality into this idea of what is increasingly now being pushed as an EU, which is maybe all the talk now is less about an EU army, because they don't need us because the idea of a European military project is accelerating through this idea of the strategic compass where we're all supposed to have the same goals. But demonstrably, we don't have the same goals because the experience, say of Ireland, with the likes of Russia will be completely different than it is for the Baltic states with the likes of Russia, you know, and obviously, our relationship with the UK is different than other people's etc, etc. The former colonial powers and all of that. So that's a big, long round winded pain but creeping and creeping through a tails and little pieces of legislation and cooperation and training and sure it's only a little bit of getting together. All of that has an impact in shifting our foreign policy absolutely where the establishment in your in Ireland we're all was really not wedded to our interest because even

though officially we were and it's very popular with the Irish people in practice, we weren't, they were openly, you know, facilitating the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan and all that kind of thing. So they never really wanted it. But they have to be careful in how they undermined it. So while they were undermining it, they were talking as if they still were shining up to neutrality. Now, they don't do that. Now they say, we're in a new situation, we have to do more, we have to look at this, our policy is outdated, we need to be part of the European club. So it's very much the idea of not wanting to be an embarrassment in Europe not wanting to be different. But for me, the European project isn't about everybody being the same. We're not the United States of Europe, where we are all, we're all countries with different histories and traditions, where we're trying to work together. And that's a good thing. It's longer, and it's cumbersome, but that's a good thing. Whereas they're trying to marshal it into one block where we all think and do the same. And I think they'll flounder on that. So that's very long winded, but I think it kind of touches on some of the issues are, do you want me to? If you want me to go specifically into some of them? Just

Thank you for that thorough answer to an open-ended question. I would pick up on one point you made about how neutrality is very popular with the public, but it's not so popular with the government. What do you think motivates the government's view here, and do you think they are primarily motivated by domestic or international factors?

Oh, totally. Absolutely, totally. And I mean, it's kind of ironic, like, you know, all over the years in some ways when we didn't join NATO, a lot of that was to do with the fact that Britain was in NATO, and hence no way we were going to join an alliance with them. So interestingly, the National question kind of framed that rather than any principled, pacifist ideals or anything like that, you know, but kind of when we got our independence, Irish capitalism never really developed. So they immediately looked for somebody else to prop them up, you know, what I mean, and play the role. That sort of took the form twofold; One was US foreign direct investment, which the Irish economy prostrated itself to and our leaders sort of said, well we have to keep the Americans happy. Now so sure, look, if they want to use our airport, we should really let them so they allowed the economic pain there to creep in, whereas I don't think they needed to, the US would have invested anyway. And then the second phase of that was the European Union, that we want to be in the European club. And I think particularly since Brexit, that has got worse now. that they want to be really.. because their allies since before Brexit are in the EU, before they were always Britain, and because Britain was one of the big powers, they had a lot of influence in the EU. Ireland now is kind of an island beside another island that's not in the EU. So we're a bit removed. We don't have the same languages. You know, as other countries, we are different in that way. So we've lost our big brother, and now we're clinging on to someone else. So our ruling authorities now have very much fallen in line with the EU thing because they're not confident in their own ability. So it's very much the, I suppose, the government's that we've had recently in Europe, very much take their lead from wanting to be in with the club in Europe, rather than pleasing what the people of Ireland want, you know, probably the one exception to that is Palestine, which is interesting, but yeah...

Okay, that's good you mention that. Now. I'll come to that in a minute. Do you think Ireland is prepared to act independently of its EU allies, particularly in Western Europe? Or do you think it prefers to wait to build consensus when enacting foreign policy.

Well, they could have done that, you know, but you only have to look at the role they played... like Ireland got on to the UN Security Council, by basically going around and selling our history and our past as world renowned peacekeepers, and our neutrality and the countries of Europe voted to put us onto the UN Security Council, a war breaks out in Europe during our time on it. And we were in the unique position to be, on the one hand, a country that's very pro-Western, very pro-American because

of all the historic links of, you know, all the diaspora, all the Irish Americans and all that that's a very firmly pro-Western and pro-American, but a country that was colonised and invaded by a stronger neighbour, a country that has managed to broker a peace process and a way out of that. So, we were uniquely placed to issue a call for peace, for dialogue, knowing what it was like to be invaded, but also being kind of Western. And we could have done all that, but we didn't flipping do it when we got elected, it's a complete waste of a UN Security, we just immediately joined the war hawks, the NATO US agenda in ratcheting up the conflict. And not playing that, whereas Mexico who joined as well on the UN played the role for arguing for peace and dialogue. So, we could have had a really unique position of facilitating, being that bridge if you like from east to west, because you know, people in eastern countries, Eastern Europe, have a history of being a bit afraid from Russian invasions in the past and German and all of that kind of stuff. It's a different history to ours. But the way to resolve that isn't to arm up to stand up to Russia or whatever. In the same ways. We're not saying arm up to stand up to Britain, it's about dialogue and sitting down, so we could play that role. We haven't done it. We show no interest in doing that. So, our leadership wants to just... they find it embarrassing if Ireland says something different. So, they think that the fact that there's Irish MEPs out here who would have become very well known for saying something different. That's not a good thing. That's embarrassing. They find that shocking that, in the same way as when the Irish people rejected Nice and Lisbon, the political establishment were mortified. They were furious. Rather than listening to the people who elected them and going in and battling for the Irish people in Europe, they were kind of going 'Oh, my God, we are so sorry. This is humiliating' and how could they patch it up to get back into the European clubs? So, they've always been that servile in these areas.

So, you've already talked about this a little bit, so perhaps just briefly- How do you see Ireland's relationship with the US and other international partners impacting foreign policy?

Yeah, well, I mean, I'll do as I say, Ireland is very pro US, millions of Irish people have emigrated to the US, every Irish or every US president wants to claim Irish ancestry, such is the influence of Irish Americans. So it's a very close relationship, culturally, through language, through film, through everything. Every Irish person knows Americans, their family, emigrated, whatever. It's a very, very close link, culturally and everything. And I think in terms of economic policy, there's an overstatement of the role in which US foreign direct investment play, but unfortunately, Ireland has facilitated US foreign companies to not pay tax at home, we had the big case of Apple and Google and all of them not paying their taxes, and the Irish government basically taking an action to allow them to not pay their taxes, which is against the interests of the American people as well. So we have a very close relationship with the US economically, historically, culturally, we don't have that with Russia, obviously, the Ireland's relationship with Russia, we never really had much relationship, we're further away, but not problematic, either. China is usually now more so important because of, obviously, trade and that kind of thing, as well. So has it had an impact on our foreign policy? It has, I mean, there's demonstrable proof that during the Iraq war in Afghanistan, the Irish government were pleading with the Americans, and the WikiLeaks cable show this, so to say, 'Listen, lads, could you, Could you let us do a few searches even off the planes just to get the public off our back because we're under a bit of pressure now where these renditions and stuff that they might be coming through Irish airports, and we're supposed to be neutral.' So, an Irish Minister even said to the American stuff, look, 'we could set up a few searches', and the American said, 'No, fuck off. You're not searching them'. And they said, 'Okay', you know, so that really servile stuff, like, you know. And that has always been so.

Yes. So now moving on. Are you aware of any principles or rules that guide Irish recognition policy? And what do you think the Irish government's considerations are when making these decisions?

Well, I mean, I would have hoped that they would have been, sort of international law and that whole area and arena but, I might say, that is a huge factor, like, you know, but I don't know. I mean, I couldn't know what I suppose behind the scenes government diplomacy or how they operate. I don't know like, you know,

Yes, that's ok.

I suppose it shows that they are, like they're subject to the political mood of the times really, is what decides, you know, within the context of international law or that, or it should, like, you know, but should they flagrantly ignore that then when it fecking suits them, like, you know? International law and the UN has been totally debased, like Ireland would say, a lot of its role internationally has been framed in the context of the UN. And historically it has. And when we gained our independence, we immediately sought to join the UN, the USSR blocked that for about 10 years. But when we joined 10 years later, we immediately became known on that stage. It was Ireland that moved the first non nuclear treaty, it was a sole Irish resolution and everybody from everywhere backed it, which shows how a small country can play a role, but all of that's subsumed now, the UN has its own problems, but they are more under the thumb of the EU now. That's how they see their internationalism now is in the EU, whereas we would see it in the UN as part of a world. They see it as part of the Europe, as part of a white world with the US very much being in that camp.

Yes. So, and again, if you don't really know much about this topic, that's totally fine. But a similar kind of example of Irish recognition would be Kosovo, comparable to Palestine in some ways, i.e. its territory, it's disputed, conflict and so on. But Ireland felt able to recognise Kosovo. Could you speculate perhaps as to why it was possible?

Well, I suppose yeah, it was more... I couldn't really because it's not something that I hugely follow. But it was, it was within the pack. Like, you know what I mean, it wasn't a European except that was the accepted norm, if you like, across Europe, generally. So they kind of towed in behind that they'd be quite happy to go along with that, like, you know,

yes, yes. Okay.

Because generally, they want to please like, generally, they don't want to be doing anything different doing something different is, you know, considered to be not on like, you know, so I would say that just kind of went along with the big boys and in the EU on that, like,

There is a quote from Bertie Ahern explaining his decision and also saying to Serbia and the other side, that it's not an act of aggression. Moving on now, more specifically to the Palestine issue, or referring back to the discussion in the Dail for the motion back in 2014. You said during this debate, 'the fact that the government is not opposing the motion, in some ways shows how toothless the motion is. But then at the end of the day, they still did not' end quote. At the end of the day, they obviously didn't follow the advice of the motion. So, in your view, what might the primary factors have been that influenced the government to not accept the motion?

I suppose it's a hard one to know. And I find it interesting that you know, even across the spectrum, like the right-wing in Ireland like so Fine Gael, as the most conservative political party with no kind of huge, you know, okay, Fianna fail are incredibly conservative as well. But historically, they would have been more nationalist, I suppose. And national liberation and that kind of thing, but you would see an overlap with Palestine, (interruption, disturbances on my end) So I guess you could ask, like, why is Ireland so wedded to the Palestinian cause? It has to be from our history, I suppose of being dispossessed, like, you know, it has a huge resonance there in the Irish psyche. Uh, probably back to

our traumatic past the fact that we had a famine and that kind of thing. It must be something in the subconscious that even the establishment kind of feel a sympathy there, which like when we came to the European Union, we are shocked at some of the statements that are made in the European Parliament about Palestine because it's just nobody, from the most conservative people in Ireland wouldn't think like that. But across Europe, they just take the Palestinians are, I don't know, animals or mad or they don't see them. They've completely dehumanised them, and they are completely and utterly under the sort of influence of the Israeli lobby. Now maybe that's part of it. Maybe there's less of an Israeli lobby in Ireland, potentially. That is something obviously, you know, huge Jewish and Israeli influence in the likes of Russia, for example, and in the US. And in Germany, because of the embarrassment, we don't have that. I suppose we were not involved in the war, we were neutral in World War Two, we weren't involved in that, it kinda... didn't pass us by, But in terms of the memory of that conflict its different in Ireland, because there was maybe the odd air raid, one bomb dropped by mistake, bit of rationing, but like that was it, we were excluded, even though a lot of people went to fight, and so there's probably partly that, (indistinguishable) any single thing that moves on this issue, the Israeli state and lobby are down on it like a tonne of bricks. So anybody who says anything, even halfway neutral, or halfway sympathetic to Palestine, on a radio programme, on the TV outlet is immediately downed upon. But, and that happens in Ireland to but, it just doesn't wash with the public. And in that sense, any Irish politician who wants to just go into that camp will be so out of sync with the Irish public that it just wouldn't make any sense for them to do it. That's a really bad explanation. And I find it hard to understand why it's like that in Ireland post. It really is like, I think it's maybe the history of suffering and famine, occupation and invasion, and it's just so blatant there what's been done. I don't know, you know,

I think that's why it's such an interesting question. There seems to be a contrast between the domestic preference and the Irish government...

Well you see, what they do, when I should have, like, we would have talked to the Irish Foreign Minister at the time when we were in the Dáil, Simon Coveney, you know, and he would openly talk about going, and we'd be critical saying, you haven't done enough, and you have Israeli settlements and this kind of thing. And he would have said to us, like, we have, I have gone into those meetings. And I can tell you, I have gone in, and I have argued the position as best we can. But we're working in a collect, and I am the only voice making that point, he said, and we have made it and we believe them like that the Irish ministers do go in, and they bat harder on this issue than they do on anything else. And I firmly believe that they push it as much as they can, which is dramatically more than anyone else does. But they said they get nothing, not a single, even half murmur of approval by anybody else. So I mean, if you're not coalescing with anyone else, you know, you're kind of you make your points and they go, Yeah, okay. You can't really engage in that. So I believe that point officially, their position is a bit of a fudge, I do believe that diplomatically they make their voices known. And I know they have done it on the UN Security Council and that, they have. We would say it's not enough, but it's well, well, more than any other country does. It's still not enough. It's totally unacceptable, but they definitely do, behind the scenes. 100%. They do, like, you know, and that's why I think you have that peculiar fudge that, on the one hand, they make their stance, they make it clear, like the settlements, the illegality, and they'll be very firm on that. But then they kind of do a little bit of the two sides stuff as well like and also, (indistinguishable) but then say, no, nobody actually is going a little bit of that. They don't want to upset Israel, really in that sense. But that's probably more for America rather than Israel. You know.

And that leads very well on to our follow up question. What role, if any at all, do you think international pressure from allies like the US and Israel might have played in Ireland's decision if at all. Could you comment?

Oh it would have been absolutely massive. It would have been unrelentless from the Israelis absolutely unrelentless all the time, like I know from radio problems and TV programmes and that anytime anybody goes on and says anything, they are diligently scrutinised and dumped on by the Israelis. I mean, they did a whole book of sort of anti-Semites in Ireland, or whatever, which is about that big, and we were all in it, all the left, all the Sinn Féin, loads of mainstream politicians, like mad stuff like you know, really, really crazy stuff. So all of that would have gone huge massive Israeli pressure, but like it wouldn't be that wouldn't really have an impact in Ireland now the way in which it might in Germany cos they're obviously embarrassed with their history and all that, that wouldn't be so much. It wouldn't wash.. that doesn't go well in Ireland, but the American influence would, absolutely. So Israeli Americans are Jewish Americans and that, and the pro-Israel lobby in the US would have had a bigger impact, I think. But absolutely, the Israeli state would have been dumping on them like, and, you know, increasingly, we see, and it's a big battle now in the EU, this definition of anti-Semitism being used to silence criticism of Israel, legitimate criticism of Israel. So, they be a little bit worried about that, like, you know, they'd be they wouldn't have the backbone to stand up on that. So, it would have had that would have definitely had an impact for sure. You know?

Yes. And I watched your comments on that definition which you commented recently in the European Parliament...

Now, this is getting absolutely worse, it was totally the same as that whole ridiculous nonsense with Jeremy Corbyn. But this has happening now in the EU. So, the EU has adopted this definition, despite the fact that loads of Jewish organisations have said it's deeply problematic, particularly the examples in it. But it's 100%, it was so obvious in one of the debates we had, which I think was, I don't even think that was recorded, where the EU's anti-Semitism person, basically, when I made the point said, 'Well, you know, where do you want to hold it? So you know, it's not practical for all the Jews, or all the Israelis to leave, and I didn't ask them to leave, you know, I didn't say anything about driving them out or leaving. I'm asking about the rights of them to respect the rights of Palestinians under international law, but they are definitely into that camp now as well. And also, it's that's gonna get worse. Yeah, sure.

So going back to another quote from, or not a direct quote, but you mentioned how it was rich, that the government remained silent on the fact that Irish defence forces engaged in military contracts with the Elbit Systems. Do you think that there could be as this was part of your same comment on that debate in 2014? Do you think that there could be an economic or defence interest element to the Irish government's decision?

I don't think that would be strong enough. But I think that, I suppose the reason of mentioning that was to point out the sort of hypocrisy of their stance toward, or the doublespeak that, you know, saying we're friends of Palestine, and we want a vote, but at the same time facilitating, and using Israeli defence hardware, there's a contradiction there. But did they need that, or did they feel under pressure from it? I don't I don't think so per se, do you know what I mean? I don't think they're necessarily under the thumb of the Israeli military, or that they're reliant on defence contracts with them. But it's more that they haven't done their due diligence in terms of human rights compliance, that on the one hand, we say we're friends of Palestine, we want to uphold international law. On the other, we're doing this by propping up that defence industry and that hardware, which has been tested

on real Palestinians, well, there's a contradiction in their actions rather than I think, an economic reliance on that point.

Okay, thanks. So next question. Do you think that there's perhaps a difference between Ireland standards for recognition, recognition, and those of those when it comes to past speaking that frame like the EU policy?

Yeah, I think there is. Ireland's position would be seen as very, as probably the most pro-Palestinian country. Now other countries are a bit more neutral. I think that the likes of Belgium and that are actually okay. There might be one or two others that are in that camp. But generally speaking, most of them are in the other camp, so there is a contradiction there for sure. I think Ireland does try to make the points. But are they going to fall out or, you know, split over it? No, but they are going to stick to their position on it. Do they see themselves as going around actively trying to turn the others? Probably a bit, but I wouldn't say they kill themselves over it, you know, they would do a bit, and I'd be absolutely sure that they would. And particularly, you know, when the times come under pressure when the Israelis level EU investments, and you know, all of that and put settlements on them, or whatever, the pressure is on Ireland to be pushing to say, 'Jesus, look, we can't do this', but like, are Ireland going to do really? They're not going to fall out, they're not even going to publicly condemn the EU. So it's not good. I mean, I'm all for diplomacy, and working behind the scenes, and I do think they make the points. But I think they could do that, but be more openly critical of EU policy. That's not disloyal, that's actually giving hope to loads of people across Europe who think differently on the subject. And that would give the confidence to the other governments because other people in other countries would say then to likes of Belgium, but why aren't you doing that a bit more? And then that becomes a bit of a snowball, but it's bit like the Ukraine war. If people who are talking for peace are not challenging the official narrative? Well, then the official narrative remains the same. And then all the people who think differently are not being given a voice, and they feel alienated then. So I think that they do a bit, but they should do a lot more publicly, and there'd be nothing wrong with that, they'd be doing the EU a service if they did that.

Do you think that Ireland is pushing for consensus building in relation to Palestine within the EU?

Well, I think they're doing a bit, you know, I'd say they are behind the scenes, but they're pushing, it's a brick wall, in a lot of cases, and I don't think they're doing enough on it. They could be doing more, and they publicly could be doing more to challenge, and I think one of the reasons why publicly, we don't see enough on this is precisely because they're trying to use this antisemitism thing to silence legitimate criticism of Israel. And that's particularly in the context of the sort of apartheid definition, which is clearly a legal definition about the present state of Israel, it is not a generally anti-Jewish, it's very much rooted in reality. And so, yeah, I mean, they're doing a bit but not enough.

I have three questions that we briefly cover if that's okay. So one, Simon Coveney in 2018 said, Ireland will be forced to recognise Palestine if peace talks fail. Four years, on what do you make of that statement, given the current situation?

Yeah, well, where are we now? No where, even flipping worse than we were then. And if anything, Ireland is much more silent on it now than we were before. I mean, it is interesting that around that time, there had been a lot of work done by Francis Black in Ireland with the illegal settlements legislation, which had an electrifying effect in Palestine itself, and across Europe, like loads of other countries then started to look to that model. So that was a discussion I suppose going on in civil society, in Ireland and in the EU, and he was making that comment in that context, so it was much more an immediate discussion, you know? Now less so, now they've gone quieter. So it just shows really, I

suppose that he was reflecting a certain pressure at home. At that stage, that pressure has probably receded a bit now, you know, against the backdrop maybe of Ukraine and all the rest of it in terms of international issues.

In your opinion, or what would need to change for Ireland to recognise Palestine?

God, well, it will be interesting when we see the next Irish government, which will be, obviously led by Sinn Féin. Sinn Féin, its guaranteed, whether it will make a difference or not, will be interesting to see whether they will use that position in a different way. Obviously, they carry the hopes of an awful lot of people that that will be so. They will also carry the anger of the establishment, who will want to make sure that it isn't so, and so it'll be... they'll try and do a bit of a balancing act, I don't immediately expect them to come to power and recognise Palestine, that will not happen. But the mood music and the statements will be more. And one of the reasons why they will be more is I don't think they're going to deliver on issues like neutrality, or you know, US troops. They're not going to go there. They definitely aren't, even though they said they would, they won't. So this is, in the minds of the Irish public, a more acceptable, radical Foreign Affairs Policy, because it's not actually radical in Ireland, but it will be seen to be radical internationally. So I think they will push that more, for sure. That will be Sinn Féin's foreign policy issue, it will be Palestine, and that will be different. So maybe out of that, that could happen. Yeah.

And they have definitely made that front and centre of their foreign policy priorities.

It will be the easiest one for them to deliver on in terms of Ireland, you know, so it's kind of handy because it allows them then, to have the veneer of radicalism. You know, without really challenging some really serious stuff like, you know, but it would be positive. I mean, it'd be a good thing, like, and I want Sinn Féin to be in government. So let's see, but it will be their easiest one. But that's Irish politics for you, you say one thing and do the other.

Last question, do you think that the EU as a whole is likely to recognise Palestine in the near future?

Absolutely not

And if it does, do you foresee Ireland acting alone to do so?

Yeah. Oh, the EU is absolutely unbelievable. But the EU, to me is becoming increasingly more extreme. The European Parliament certainly is increasingly more disconnected. So they're kinda like, a superstructure over the countries, they want to feed themselves, they even want to take over the ruling of the countries now, but they have an interest separate to the interests of member states. So they're actively if you like, engage in to, you know, take on governments that they don't like, but that's really unsustainable as well. Like, you know, we're supposed to be an alliance of countries and that kind of thing. So yeah, Ireland will be going it alone, I would imagine.

Interview 3

So jumping into Ireland's foreign policy within the EU at subject, you've been quite vocal on it in the past. How do you think Ireland's membership of the EU, particularly in the 21st century has impacted its foreign policy?

That's going to have very serious implications for Ireland, foreign policy in the future. As usual, with everything within Ireland, the government goes ahead and does stuff and then presents it as a done deal to the people without the people having a proper debate and discussion about what's actually involved. Maybe what you'll be getting those my personal opinion here was maybe a bit slanted as well. But, I mean, the problem is that I believe that the government is moving down the road of fully integrating into the European Union in terms of foreign policy. And that at the moment creates a difficulty for the government from their from their point of view, because they have to maintain this image of having an independent policy. And I've also been supportive of some of the issues that government had been in the past, like the Palestinians, and something out there as well. And the needs like neutrality. Because our neutral stance and policy of neutrality wouldn't fit in within the European structures and European Framework. I think that's going to have very serious implications for Ireland in the future. And people say every people are going to realise that we're participating in a war in Africa or something, and that Irishmen are dying. And then people are going to say, 'hang on, how did we end up here?' That's really what I think is gonna happen. If you think about it, the only thing that Ireland can contribute to a European army is manpower, and that's what I think is the goal as far as Ireland is concerned, as far as Finna Fail and Fine Gale and, have to say the Green Party at the moment as well, too, are pushing for in a European context.

So, do you think Ireland is kind of similar question, but do you think Ireland has become more or less able to make its own foreign policy since things like the Lisbon Treaty or Nice and so on?

Yeah, Lisbon and Nice were the the formal rolling out of this quality of integration. Yeah, I probably hadn't thought of that in the context of the treaty parameters putting restrictions on the government, as you know, I think it's always been something that Fine Gael and Finna Fail were always willing to do. So maybe there are some treaty parameters, which would have an interesting pressure if I ended up in government. If I ended up supporting the government, one of the things that would be that would

be have to be a government that'd be very strong in terms of Irish neutrality, and possibly pursuing that policy. If that had conflict with the treaties, it'll be interesting to see how that will develop as well. Because even if it does have conflict with the treaties, I think it's something that needs to be pursued. And I think it's something that the Irish people would openly support as well to be quite happy to see pursued.

Yes. What do you think are the main considerations of the Irish government when they formulate foreign policy?

Kowtowing to Germany and France.

Could you expand on that a little bit?

Well, basically, I think Ireland adopts a foreign policy that basically, we're only a small, a very small country, and we don't know what we're doing. And I can still find that they, they basically will follow the lead that Germany and France have given to them. I suppose in the context of probably the Ukraine invasion, there's a lot of talk that Ireland is more closely aligned to the other Eastern European countries that are in the EU, at the moment, but really and truly I think they'll follow the foreign policy line that the big countries have and that Europe is following. And that can be seen by the willingness, I believe, to forget about neutrality and to go down the road. And even as I think it's very interesting, the Irish government, when in the Dail and places like that there will make very strong statements in terms of Palestine and what needs to be done. But then when it goes to the European level, it just dies, and it just fizzles out, like. And they have the perfect come back, 'Well, you know, we have to talk to our European colleagues and we have to follow the European Union', which is clearly what they're doing, which is obviously just following the line of supporting Israel and supporting the Israeli regime and what they're doing in Palestine as well, which is, which is very sad, because I think, I think Ireland historically has had a very honourable role in foreign policy across the world. And it has been, I think, a probably been a sign of light for the for the smaller countries around the world as well about how far a Western European country can actually stand up and be independent of the European colonial powers that we're partners with. You know, and I think the government is quite happy to see the back of that and get rid of that policy as well, which is a retrograde step.

I have a quote here from from a former colleague of yours, who criticised how Ireland too often serves the interests of the EU, not the Irish people in foreign policy. What would your thoughts be on that statement?

It's possible that countries can pursue that was important for themselves, also within a European context. But Ireland doesn't do that. I think it's just an impression that Ireland gives that we're an independent nation and that we're pursuing a foreign policy that's different. It's what they're selling to the Irish people. And in reality that isn't what they are actually doing. They're kowtowing very quickly to the bigger European states and to their common foreign policy areas as well.

Do you see Ireland as a country that has been successful in building consensus within the EU? And do you think it prefers to act as part of a group, rather than alone, when it's making policy decisions?

Definitely prefer to act as a group, they don't like being alone. And regardless of what the issue is, they want the backup of the larger countries. I think Ireland, probably if you look at the position of Irish people within the infrastructure of the EU and stuff, obviously, Ireland has been quite successful. I think some of that may be due as well that it satisfies the European need to make it look like that they are all for equality, and to allow people from Ireland who aren't going to rock the boat to get into positions of influence within the European Union. And they're quite happy that those people are going

to pursue the European ideals. And that may be the ideals that they hold as well, which is fair enough, but it could be really that they're not going to rock the boat too much. So therefore, they're quite happy to allow them to be in positions of power. You look at Paschal Donohoe being president of the Eurogroup there as well. They you know, and basically, it's a safe pair of hands as far as the EU is concerned. This goes down well in Ireland, as we're a small country, and we're getting this big position within the EU. But really, we're not going to rock the boat, so that's probably why we're allowed to get that position.

So continuing with this theme, how do you think that Irish foreign policy should balance the interests of the EU, the UN, but crucially, its own national interests? And do you think that Ireland actually does that?

I think we've probably done it a lot more successfully in years gone by. I think we should actually go down that road, and we should be very proud of our situation as a neutral state. And the fact that we potentially could have a role as a bridge between the EU and the rest of the world, through the perception of neutrality. That's something that could have been developed a lot further, I feel, and actually, bizarrely, probably, it would have been in the interests of the capitalists of the European Union as well to have somebody in that situation. Maybe they're still interested in using it, if that perception is still there, probably a bit. It was used very successfully by Ireland by achieving the position on the Security Council at the UN. And it'd be interesting to see in a couple years time, I don't think Ireland will be able to get the same support, sadly.

And so this lack of flexibility that Ireland seems to be going towards, is that a result of EU integration, or what is the main cause of that?

Yeah, it's a result of EU integration. I think Ireland has basically accepted, well the Irish government have accepted, basically that EU integration means that we have to give up everything to actually be part of the European Union. And they're quite happy to go along with that. And, again, I think it's something that the Irish people don't fully understand, and you know, and the context of Europe, it's always sold, as a great way you can travel around the rest of Europe without a passport. And that's, that's the whole thing about the European Union, that's all there is to it. Like, you know, but it's a lot more insidious than that, and it's very difficult. Unfortunately, I think we're only going to realise it when it's going to be too late. But possibly, if we had an alternative government in Dublin, we might be able to stand up for ourselves and stand up for neutrality, even within a European context, which would change the whole shape of how discussions take place. This would be important. The government constantly argue that, oh, look in terms of Brexit, look at how Europe protected us during Brexit. Europe didn't protect us during Brexit. Europe saw us as a way of kicking the Brits, who were basically their common enemy. And that's what they wanted to do. And they wanted to make sure that it would be made as difficult as possible for any country to leave the EU. And it'd be very interesting to see if it had been some other country that would maybe wouldn't present such a problem. They serve their own purposes, which benefited us to a certain extent. But if you look at how the Irish fishing industry was treated during the Brexit negotiations, it's been appalling. And the French basically looked after themselves and gave the two fingers to Ireland and everybody else went along with it as well.

Ireland, and the Irish public seemingly has a very positive and sympathetic view of the Palestinian people and their struggle. Do you think that this has been adequately reflected in the actions of the Irish government over the last 10 years or so?

No! I think the government in an Irish context says an awful lot of the right things and says it's doing the right things. It's very hard to get to the bottom of what the actual structures are within Europe and

how it actually works within Europe in terms of the role of Israel and what's happening there. And I don't think the Irish government has been strong enough in terms of a European level, and fighting on behalf of the Palestinian people there and highlighting the case that the Palestinians have, which is a real problem because, you know, as its very hypocritical to be doing that. But I think it's more that the Irish government has its eyes on, and knows that the Irish public are very sympathetic towards Palestinians and their situation. So therefore, the Irish government is wanting to be seen to be strong on it, but actually they are not doing too much. Now, there is a debate about whether how much we could do in terms of a vote. But the occupied territories - they could have they could have passed that here, which would have sent a very strong message to Europe and to the Israelis as to how we view what they are doing. I think it comes comes back to us being subservient to the European Union in terms of foreign policy and what the European Union is pursuing. And it's very, just, I still don't know, and nobody can really fully explain what the relationship is at a European level, between Israel and the EU. Obviously, the EU is very supportive of Israel, and obviously isn't going to turn a word in their mouths. It probably goes down to the whole security apparatus and how that functions. But you know, the Irish government could be a lot stronger and have a lot more moral power. And I don't think that would undermine Europe, either. And I think actually, a lot of the people in Europe would be very supportive of the Palestinians as well, if their governments and the European Union was listening to Palestinian voices too.

I have a quote from the earlier question, but I think the answer is clear from your previous answer. 'Ireland needs to step up and stand up against this inequality and this apartheid state'

I don't think it's changed too much. We'd love to where do we get into power for things to change.

As as a member of the of the Dail, what is your view on the Irish government's position regarding the recognition of Palestine, which it still has not done?

I think basically, if Europe recognised Palestine, the Irish government would regulate it the day after. The Irish government isn't going to do anything that's going to upset the powers that be in Europe. And that's, that's their bottom line and everything. And that's where everything in terms of foreign policy now has to be gauged, I think, as to how our European masters are going to look at it, and how they're going to respond. So until that happens, you'll hear nice words from debates in the Dail [from the government] but you won't actually see any concrete action after that. The debate will be whether that will change if the government changes. That's open to question as well at the stage.

So you said that it seems to be that they don't want to upset the EU. I was wondering, do you think there are any other powers or reasons that you think the Irish government has not recognised Palestine?

To a certain extent, its the Americans as well. But I don't think even in support of the Americans, I don't think Ireland would go against EU policy. It's probably convenient that EU policy is probably in line the the Americans, and that they're not gonna to piss-off Israel anyway. That's the bottom line, as far as they're concerned. An Irish government will always be conscious as to what the foreign policy stance of the Americans is as well. But I think Europe is the one that carries the most weight at this stage.

This ties in with the occupied territories bill, I remember that several members of the House of Representatives essentially said, if this passes, we will make life difficult for you and Irish immigrants here. I wonder if there was not the push back in the in the EU, do you think Ireland would have still considered the objections from the US or do you think if the EU went for it they would have as well?

I suppose they probably would have been conscious of it. And it would have been part of what their thinking would have been. But it suits, from their point of view, that it's because of your European context that they're going not to do it and that they can always rely on the advice of the attorney general that it's illegal under EU law to identify the occupied territories and implemented legislation that's only ban the sale of products from there. But if you had a different Attorney General, you would have different legal advice. And that would be very interesting to see. And, unfortunately, I believe that I don't know whether Sinn Féin would be any different than what we have now. I would hope that they would be. And certainly if I was going to be supporting any government, it would be on the basis that they they would pass this bill. The Occupied Territories Bill was on the legislative programme in the previous Dail. And what happened here, after you have a general election, all that legislation falls, and it has to be reintroduced. And the person who was putting that forward legislation, Francis Black in the Senate, asked Sinn Féin to reintroduce it into this Dail, and they made all sorts of excuses that they couldn't and that it was very difficult. So she asked me, could I have a look and see what the problem was? So I introduced it two days later, and put it on the agenda here. So I wonder why it was so difficult for Sinn Féin to do it. That's something that may be a difficulty. Sinn Féin will be in power after the next election, more than likely. Who they're in power with is still an open question at the moment. But, you know, I would be worried about that a bit. Why they weren't willing to put that forward on the agenda.

Yes. Because, as I understand it, not the Occupied Territories Bill, but the idea of Palestinian recognition, has been a foreign policy objective of all of the main parties, it's been on the manifestos, yet, like Fianna Fail very clearly said in 2017, this will be something we do if we come into power. And we've just seen, we know who the Foreign Minister is now, and who the previous Taoiseach was (Fianna Fail), but it's still not happened. And so I wonder why that is, but also whether Shin fain would also face these hidden reasons to not do it?

Well, I mean, it's interesting. Politicians in Ireland are very good at saying, you know, well, that was our manifesto, but we can't really look at the manifesto in terms of a coalition government, it was a negotiation process, and we have to see what we can get through, and therefore you should really look at the programme for government. And then when Fine Gael were probably opposed to that. And so Fianna Fail will say, Well, you know, we couldn't get that through in the programme for government. So that's probably why that hasn't happened. Now, that hopefully won't be the situation with Sinn Féin, but we'll have to see what how that develops?

What do you believe are the potential benefits and drawbacks of official recognition for pastime for the government?

The benefits are, that it's something that the Irish people have been in favour of, and have wanted for many years. The benefits at this stage, I think it would also show that Ireland is an independent country, and Ireland is willing to pursue independent foreign policy goals. And I think it will also send out a very clear message to the rest of the small nations around the world, that Ireland is honourable and that Ireland is prepared to do what it says. Now then, I suppose the risks are how the Americans would view it. And how the EU would view it as well. The likes of American multinationals operating in Ireland, they operate on the basis of profits, not on whether you support Israel or the occupied territories or not, so if you're not impacting their profits, I don't think that they will be able to do anything. But maybe there's something there that has to be looked at in terms of how you actually manage that.

You made some comparisons recently, between Ireland and the EU's condemnation of Russia, with their lack of condemnation of Israel. Why do you think that Ireland and the EU are slightly selective with their condemnations of certain countries, and also perhaps more or less supportive of the victims of certain nations, so Ukrainians versus Palestinians?

It goes to where the power is and who the enemy is. And, you know, Russia is the enemy, so therefore, everything's okay. Whereas Israel are friends, so everything they do is okay. It's very interesting when you look at the European nations and Ireland as well saying that the Putin should be arrested and handed over to the International Criminal Court, but they won't arrest George Bush or anybody else. And the Americans have refused to recognise International Criminal Court. And I think they actually went to they the extreme of threatening the judges of the International Criminal Court, that if they ever indicted an American citizen, that they would they would arrest them if they came into the US. So I mean, that's the problem. Like I mean, what the Russians are doing in terms of the invasion of Ukraine is horrific and completely wrong. And that goes in... well, it doesn't go down because you have to say it in everything you do, because you'll be hammered straightaway if you don't.

But equally, what is just as bad, if not worse as its been going on for an awful lot longer, is the way the Israelis have behaved towards the Palestinians and what they do to the Palestinians. But yet, that's okay. And nobody is talking about referring any Israelis to the International Criminal Court. And we say that that's alright. And that's wrong. And what went on in Libya? I mean, well, basically a country was destroyed, and we've created created this whole stream of boat people coming to Europe, and well, now Frontex are turning people back, back into the sea. And that's the kind of Europe that we've created now. And that's Europe that we're pursuing. And I just, it's very hard to live with it, when you when you see the hypocrisy of it. And in the meantime, innocent Ukrainian people are dying, but also innocent Palestinian and innocent people in Libya and in Sub-Saharan Africa are dying.

If you have a change you have the option, the possibility for change is there. Maybe what a lot of us strive for is the possibility of change rather than actual change.

How would you respond to a statement saying that Palestine did not meet Irish or EU standards to merit recognition?

I've never heard of any standards. In terms of the good back good guys or bad guys. Yeah, unfortunately. Obviously, I think the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian civil society leaves a lot to be desired. But I mean, the situation that they're living in is as close as you can get, and the EU have done a lot in terms of providing funding to the Palestinians, as well, like, you know, so they would have a say in how that Palestinian authority could develop. [indistiguishable] I don't think that that's quite a maybe an issue. I don't think it's something that central multiple either.

Yes.

Yeah, unfortunately. But look, I mean, yeah, I mean, obviously, I think the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian civil societies of the ghetto leaves a lot to be desired. But I mean, and the situation that the Lebanon has probably as much as as close as you can get, and the EU, the EU have done a lot in terms of providing funding to the Palestinians, as well, like, you know, so they would have a say in how that Palestinian Authority could develop and that to do like, you know, I don't think that that's quite a maybe an issue. I don't think it's something that central mountable either.

Yes. There is an argument I recently heard. This was in response to a quote from Simon Coveney saying that there need to be democratic elections. And that might bring some kind of progress. And she remarked on the point that in the in the West Bank and the occupied territories, they want to have elections, but they would need to include East Jerusalem, and Israel is not allowing that to happen. So if they went ahead with elections, not including this, Eastern Jerusalem, then that would be a sort of signal that that is no longer part of of Palestine, which I thought was very interesting, I thought heard that perspective before.

I hadn't heard that before, what I have heard before is what he called the guys that are in power in the in the Gaza. That they would be there, we would probably be very successful if there was a Palestinian election, and therefore the Palestinians don't want to have elections, because they don't want to hand over control to them. But I mean, that's, that's very interesting what you're saying about the East Jerusalem as well, even?

You recently voted for a motion that called on the government to extend the emergency ban on evictions. During the debate, the government was adamant that it had taken adequate action to prevent these problems. And if I understand it correctly, because it was last week, I think they were planning to push on. What can TDs like yourself do to pressure the government to heed the requests in this and other motions when the government is determined to go another way?

Unfortunately, all we can do is highlight in the Dail. But the government has the numbers to pursue this policy regardless, and that's what they intend to do. And in fact, tomorrow morning, there is a motion of no confidence has been put forward by the Labour Party, which then is twisted into a motion of confidence in the government, which is going to be debated tomorrow morning. And currently, at the minute, there's a debate on Sinn Féin legislation about reinstating the evictions ban as well. So basically, that's all that's all we can do is try and put pressure on them. Unfortunately, it's fallen on deaf ears, and they're not interested. It's bizarre to figure out why they're not interested, but it's clearly because the class that they represent is the landlord class. There may be some difficulties, maybe some rationale for why they're doing this would stand up under closer scrutiny, but the measures could be put in place to actually prevent those, like the problem of somebody returning home who's house has been rented and something out there, that can be dealt with, without actually abandoning the evictions ban totally. There are people who are going to be evicted from the 1st of May, and that's the reality of the situation. And the reality is, they have nowhere to go.

Interview 6

What are the government's main considerations when formulating Irish foreign policy?

The first thing is that we're a country of peace. So that's the main issue, we're not an aggressor. We've never been a colonising country. So I think we're in the space that we respect people's territorial borders to start with. And in the EU, there would have been a lot of countries that had a different approach in the past and have different history, whereas Ireland itself has never been... we've been colonised. And I suspect for one in a minority in the Western European states that can actually say that. So that's one of the reasons we speak with a particular voice. And we've always been neutral. We're a small country. So I think even if we were to have a significant army, it wouldn't be significant in European or world context anyway. And we've remained neutral during the World War. We're militarily neutral, what I would say, as opposed to politically neutral, we're in favour of democracy, we're not in favour of dictatorship. So from that point of view, where Irish people have a clear view on what they want, or when it comes to military action and engagement in military activities. We see ourselves as militarily neutral, or I would say about Ireland's role in areas where there has been more, we joined UN about 60 years ago. And we, we have since today, but six years ago, I think about now we send our first peacekeeping forces, to areas where there had been difficulties in terms of peacekeeping, maybe after the the fighting had ceased to some extent. And from that day to this day, for 60 years, there has never been one single day where Ireland has had not, some of its peacekeepers in some country in the world. So we would see ourselves more in that area, keeping the peace because after things settle, it's important to keep the peace for a duration afterwards as well. So that's our forte. We're recognised internationally for that. And I will see that the main contribution our defence forces, working with you here at the UN, which was on for 60 years without a single day's break.

And what are Fianna Fail's top foreign policy priorities going forwards?

Well, mainly, we see ourselves as a very strong member of the EU. That's the first issue. As you know, we're there 50 years at this stage. This is our 50th anniversary, and we will see our involvement at European level as our main key driver of our foreign policy. We're not a standalone country. We're not in NATO, as you know, but we are very strong in the EU. And I will say the Irish people recognise

themselves that the two biggest things that benefited Ireland in the last 70 or 80 years, one was the introduction of free education in the 1960s. And the second thing was joining the EU in the 1970s. So those two things single items have brought Ireland to the level of prosperity we have. So we want to continue to encourage that. We now have the bonus of being the only English speaking country in the EU. We're a member of the euro, which I think 19 of the 27 countries are members of the euro. And we see our growth at European level as our main foreign policy issue. But of course, we have views when it comes to other countries as well. And that I know you might come to But definitely, that has been the main focus of our foreign policy and our programme for government to promote democracy. And that's in our programme for government. So essentially, what we have in our programme for government is, is what Fianna Fail fully supports. Three party government here Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Green Party, and everything in there is Fianna Fail policy as well. There's nothing in the programme for government that we've compromised on from the basic Fianna Fail views on all those issues.

Since joining the coalition, have any plans been delayed or changed or shelved to join the coalition?

No, probably the opposite, because the illegal invasion of Ukraine happened very quickly. Of course, we had COVID. Literally, the government was formed during COVID in 2020. So the government came together, I think, in the need that we collectively needed to form a government, it's first time we've had our party be involved in a three party government. And it was voted on by the individual membership of each of the three parties separately. So it wasn't up to the members of the parliament to make the decision. So it had good support from our party rank and file and supporters. So that's very important, and gave us the confidence to do that. So since then, Ukraine has been the single biggest issue affecting us here as European level. And that has, I think, changed everybody's attitude, because that issue has raised issues in relation to defence and security. And it was it has exposed us to, even since the government was formed, with the big cyber attack on our health service executive, which is same as the national health in the UK, caused enormous difficulties, it slowed down a lot of the administrative work for quite a period of time, consultants were unable to have their laptops at the bedside. So it's a shock to services and caused a lot of difficulties. We never paid ransom, we were asked to pay ransom. But I think when they knew the full arm of the state was involved, it wasn't a private company that they could get some money out of. And this is all to raise the Ukraine issue. Issues like security of supply of energy, the Nord Stream pipeline has caused big difficulties, and also an issue that has come to light, the undersea cables that, you know, are near our shores crossing the Atlantic, you know, with so much information and data. So the Ukraine invasion has led to a heightened sense of the need for greater security in our Ireland. [THIS] wouldn't have been the case a few years ago, those type of issues I've just mentioned, were not on the agenda during the last general election. Nobody would have even foreseen them. So it has focused people's minds completely in a direction that we hadn't had to look at before. And the government is now looking at kind of establishing some forums. It's not worked out yet over the summer to discuss defence and security issues, because, thankfully, they were issues we'd never had to even discuss too much in the past, but they've now become an issue. I've now highlighted some of the points that I feel everybody in Ireland is now aware of. They wouldn't have been aware of these issues before.

Yes. So, how do you think Ireland's membership of the EU particularly in the 21st century has impacted its its foreign policy approach, priorities, and ability to conduct it on the world stage?

It is strengthened this. Now the first thing I will say is, if you look we've just completed a term in the UN Security Council. That's a big achievement for a small country. And we got that through having great support. And we conduct and, and and it's not just based on foreign policy, its how Ireland is seen worldwide is the issue. And that's how we got the votes to get on that at first they adopted the

EU votes and, sure there are about 190 votes, and the EU is only 27. So we didn't get on the UN Security Council, just by getting the support to European level. I look at the African several countries where we got a lot of votes and I'll give you an example, we spend 90%, of our overseas aid on projects in Africa. And I've just come back from Malawi, the poorest country in the world, and Zambia, there, I spent a week between those two countries, in my role as overseeing Irish aid. There's tremendous goodwill out there. And I'll give you another example. There's a big Food Summit in Senegal in January, where I accompanied as a minister, the president of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, to that foods conference in Senegal, as I mentioned, and he was the only head of state from outside the continent of Africa to be invited to the conference, or 34, heads of state. And he gives the opening address, and he remained for the three days, and he spoke at the conclusion of the event. So Ireland, has great relations across many parts of the world, through our soft diplomacy and through our overseas aid. And we're we're welcome actually, in every country. And because of that we were able to take... succeed in getting elected to the UN Security Council as well. So that did during that we did want to deal with the issue in Ethiopia, as you know, we raised that and caused upset with Ethiopian government. And we had to expel some of our diplomats in the embassy during that period. And even though Ethiopia as a country, we have a lot of, you know, Irish aid projects, but that happened. And we're slowly building back up relations with the Ethiopian government with a view to our diplomats, we continue to have the ambassador there with the full complement of diplomats restored to the country. So we took a brave decision, they felt first the UN matter, we felt it is so serious, that human rights matter. And it was unwelcome by them that we were so forthright, but definitely we elevated the issue in Ethiopia to UN level, which was the right thing to do.

How important do you think it is for Ireland to build consensus among EU member states when making foreign policy decisions? And do you think Ireland is willing to act alone? If the rest of the EU was not ready?

No, I don't think so. You know, I don't believe the Irish people would want us to stand out from the EU in relation to foreign policy issues. And there has been nothing, given that we've had Ukraine situation on our borders. Let's take all the the sanctions that were introduced, they cost Ireland money, because there's lots of countries that trade with the EU, for example, There's one company, I don't want to name just now but you can look it up yourself. They have a lot of aircraft leasing, aircraft leasing is... a very large proportion of all the worldwide Air aircraft leasing is done through Dublin, and Ireland. And some of the companies in Dublin had a large amount of their airlines leased to the Russian airlines Aeroflot, and they've been grounded and haven't been able to retrieve them. And there's ongoing issues. So they affected companies here operating in Ireland, directly as a result of that. We have a very big international financial services centre as well. And there would have been lots of sanctions put on those accounts, therefore, deemed to be connected to various key people in Russia as well. So to an extent, even though implementing those sanctions costs Ireland money and our Exchequer and businesses in the country, we take that on the chin, so we have no intention of going on our own.

Would you say that Ireland's approach to foreign policy, working with the rest of the EU has changed significantly since Brexit?

No actually what it has shown with Brexit, and it's very good that people probably don't get the subtleties of this. Primarily, the issues with Brexit are in relation to Northern Ireland and trade in Northern Ireland, visa vie the UK and visa vie the island of Ireland, which are part of the EU, which was quite clear during the Brexit debate in the UK and in Northern Ireland. That issue was never even considered... that's just the truth. And people never thought of the details until after the votes were over. But I will say the negotiations in relation to the trade in Northern Ireland between the EU and the UK has been lead by the EU not by Ireland. Very important. We're not in negotiations with UK on

this. This is a UK EU issue. Of course we are the ones who have a particular involvement in this course, we are not doing any side deals or one to one deal, because that could involve us stepping away from the other 26. So we only do out negotiations, even though we're the ones with most at stake, we still don't do it on our own. So, power and numbers.

That's an interesting point you've made because I was looking into the academic literature on this and reading a very interesting article that was saying that since Brexit, Ireland has kind of tried to move more towards the rest of the EU and develop stronger relations. And then there was sort of an implication that it was as a way to kind of repay the support that Ireland received through, you know, ensuring there would be no hard border and so on. What would your thoughts be on that?

I don't think it's as simple as that. Now, I give you my honest and my straight view, because trade is done by business people, not by politicians. Okay. That's the first thing I'd say. So people buy and sell goods for business purposes, not... politics doesn't enter into business man's head. So what actually happened and I, up to Christmas, I was in the Department of Finance with responsibility and authority for insurance. And we found immediately after Brexit, we had a hard border on insurance, a number of EU or UK companies, because they were no longer in the EU, they could issue insurance policies in Ireland from London. But once they're outside the EU, they couldn't issue insurance policies into Ireland, and they just walked away from the Irish market, immediately like that. So that was never appreciated, we did actually have some hard deadlines as a result of Brexit, which is not appreciated. So what happened is, the customs office had documentation that had to go between Ireland and England, it was a new, a new burden that's up front, it is a burden of Brexit, a cost caused by Brexit. And they get the paperwork and the online costs and systems and the checking of trucks, a lot of English companies just decided to cease trading into Ireland just wasn't worth the hassle for the size of the 5 million market. And they stopped sending their trucks. So trade between England and Ireland. So just purely for the logistical, operational reasons. And then the trade between Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland increased, because it was much simpler. And then year to four was not the same as heretofore mine ours with a few exceptions. So what actually happened then was trade between the UK and Ireland dropped because of that. And obviously, we had to supplement some of our trade because of those customs issue to the rest of the European Union. So it wasn't a political issue, as a pure pragmatic business approach to having to deal with the extra burden of customs and documentation. And like our business people, most of them took the simple rules. And it was a financial decision rather than a political decision, but yes, trade did drop for a period. I don't know, has it fully recovered? But it did drop in the immediate aftermath between the two countries. That was not the long term, when we joined the EU to start with, over two thirds of all our exports went to UK, we had to take whatever price UK gave, that's one of the reasons we joined the EU to give us opportunities in a bigger market. And now with the other 26 countries in the EU, they take the vast majority of our exports, and we get a lot of our imports from there. And the proportion of our exports and imports from the UK has reduced as a result, and we have more trade with the United States than we did have. So what you've seen after Brexit, Brexit that had been happening over the period of our membership of the EU anyway, because we were now getting new markets.

Yes. How does Ireland approach foreign policy decisions that they know may have a negative impact on its international reputation, or perhaps relations with certain countries?

Well, I'm not sure which one... none immediately springs to mind. You know, we're a northern hemisphere country, you know. So I think our relations, especially in the northern hemisphere are very good with our EU partners with, you know, the Americas and everywhere like that. So far, there's a particular issue you want to refer to? Generally we don't I don't think too many people... Some countries might have an issue with a foreign policy, but I'll let you ask a question if you have

As you probably guessed from my hint earlier on, so the Israel Palestine conflict is obviously very heated in terms of who is on who side and so on. Ireland I think has a strong relationship with Palestine but this is not always popular, perhaps with the US. So how does Ireland kind negotiate these very complex dynamics?

Yeah. And I understand completely and we have kind of a two-nation policy approach to that issue. Our party has had that, as long as I can remember before most other countries had it. We've been here in our views on that all along. And we just feel the people of Palestine have been treated most unfairly. And like Ireland, being the small country, we are, we're always on the side of the underdog, full stop. So we're never on the side of the aggressor, and we always support the people who are under attack. So the view of the Irish people will be generally in support of those who are suffering the most. And that will be the people in Palestine. So it's, it's a kind of part of the core of the Irish people to think like that, you know, and as I keep saying, We're never a country that invaded anyone else. So we're never on the side of the people who are attacking other countries. So the same with Russia and Ukraine, Ireland, Ireland, Irish people, minds get made up just like that, because we know since it's in our DNA, so that's why we've always been strong in that issue. I don't think it complicates us with America, at all. I get, I get the train of thought. But it's not an issue that comes up because as I said, you know, there's a lot of trade between Israel and the USA, and between Ireland and the USA. And I, while I am a politician, business people will put politics aside, if an American company wants to set up a plant in Israel, they will do it if they choose to do so if another company wants to set up a plant in Ireland, as Ireland does in America as well, just to make the point. It was very clear during the Biden visit, the figures that came out, were obviously, they... the American, the multinational sector in Ireland, which is primarily the USA's... where substantially the USA employs 370,000 people directly in Ireland, not to mind the spin off and Irish businesses in the USA, because we have a long history of people immigrating to the USA, have businesses in every state in America. And we apply well over 100,000 people across all 50 states. And we will be the ninth biggest investor in the United States in terms of foreign investment from their side, which is remarkable for a small country. That's business, not politics. Okay?

I didn't know that. Yeah. Yeah. So that's interesting to know. So, moving on now to a set of small section on recognition just in general. Could you describe the process through which the Irish government decides whether or not to recognise a state, perhaps referencing Kosovo? I know you were a TD during that decision, and it was a Bertie Ahern led government, so Fianna Fail?

Yeah. The one thing we always believe in the rights of people to self-determination. And when you mentioned Bertie Ahern, we're very pleased that he was, I think he was... Ireland had a presidency [of the European Council] in 2004, when 10 countries joined the EU. And that includes the Cyprus, Czech Republic of Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. So he was particularly open arms to bring that about. It wasn't just him, he happened to be in the position at that time, where we always believed their strength in numbers. So what I will say it, it's always a delicate issue. But enlargement was a straightforward issue wants to have a clearly defined country boundaries, and we're happy to support efforts on stages, you know?

Yes. And then I know, during, for example, the breakup of Yugoslavia, the European community did try and establish [coughing] excuse me, I have a bit of a cold. Tried to establish some, some European Community Guidelines on state recognition. Do you know if Ireland tends to follow any particular guidelines or legal principles?

Okay, I'm going to give you a straight answer, which is unusual for a politician. I mean, im in my department now and simply I don't know the answer to that question. So its something I can research

but I'm well informed on a lot of issues. If I'm not fully informed of an issue, I won't guess or speculate. So I won't waffle. And I just have to press the pass button on that question.

Yeah, that's, that's fine. Actually, the the literature on this issue says how it's not very clear and quite ad hoc, so I think that's perfectly understandable. So now I will briefly talk about Palestine and then get some more specific Fianna Fail questions. So obviously Ireland is heavily involved in Palestine, lots of development projects and aid going to Palestine. Can you discuss any instances where Ireland within the EU or the UN has acted independently of the majority in the EU to promote Palestinian cause during the conflict?

Well, I think it's well known our position in the EU. And sometimes we are an independent voice. But we do are talking at around the tables, you know, not on the ground. Okay. So I think our views and the views that we express are very well clearly established. And that does often help us internationally, not to be seen as one of the big power brokers in our own right. And it does actually give us some understanding that I mentioned earlier and respect that we can get, for example, that letters have been able to get to a position on the UN Security Council. So people know our position. You know, ultimately, we've had in the Middle East, you know, different reasons that the Middle East peacekeepers on the ground,, some of our people have come under attack in recent times, which is unusual. And I will say, it's often very difficult to get to the bottom of those particular issues. So I will say how the Irish brand is well known and well respected. But we don't take unilateral action on the ground, we try and convince people around the negotiating table.

Ok

Or, sometimes if you don't get consensus, you're trying to avoid the opposite. Just keep keep either side from going to the extreme. There mightn't ever be a full consensus. But you want to keep everybody within arm's reach. Rather than saying, Lookit, we're finished here. So it's not always a question, You'll get consensus. But sometimes you have to, although it's often as important to keep people from walking away from the process, even though you still mightn't achieve consensus.

Yes. And recognition of Palestine is a policy objective for Fianna Fail, at some point in the future?

It has always been, yes.

Yes. And I was wondering, is there a timeline perhaps for when this might happen? Is it it's been two years since the manifesto, or three? Sorry? Is there a timeline for when that might happen?

No, that's the straight answer. And timelines are probably the worst thing to introduce in politics. Because if timelines aren't achieved, you're setting yourself up for a failure, which is only an artificial timeline. In any event, it's the best estimate. So look at processes take their time, lookit, its a long term aim of Finna Fail, to have a united Ireland on the Island of Ireland by peaceful means. Okay. That's our long term objective. But if you asked me today, can they give an exact timeline on that? The answer is no. But I feel there, there is greater cooperation, respect and trade between the people and contact, And like we have state agencies that promote Ireland now. The tourism industry in Ireland on on all Island bases, we have the electricity grid on an island basis. So there's a lot more cooperation happening, and issues on the ground working their way to the system without them being politically politicised. And that's the way we would work. And you can put a timeline on that because even a team like Ukraine or COVID, if you had the timeline, they set timelines back anyway. So timelines, timelines, are... they're something people like you know, just to have a checklist to say you did or you didn't achieve something? But the process is more complicated and the date on the calendar and that's all i'm saying.

Yes. Do you have any sort of reasons why perhaps when in 2014, this motion to recognise Palestine was introduced, why it did not quite make it to actually become government policy. I know Fianna Fail was not part of the coalition then. Could you hazard a guess?

Well, I think to fit in Fianna Fail party is the strongest and this issue in Ireland, not every other party shares our views to the same extent. And I think that's the reason there isn't a consensus. And when we came in and formed a, I talked about the the recent programme for government. What I will say is, it was in the middle of COVID, you know, and that was the focus to country needed government. So everything we wish for hasn't been signed off and agreed in the problem for government. Most I will feel most of the programme for government came from the Fianna Fail manifesto, and other people were able to sign up to a lot of aspects of that. But I'm just saying governments have to make choice in the middle the COVID. I think the health and safety of the country, we knew we had a two year battle ahead of us on that one. They were the priorities. They were the priorities at that time. Yes.

So we've talked about Ireland building consensus and not willing to act on its own. Do you think it would ever? There have been points made about how if the peace process just does not work, Ireland might be encouraged or forced to act to recognise Palestine if Israel does not play its part in ensuring peace? Do you think that there will be any reality where Ireland would go alone away from the rest of the EU and recognise Palestine? Or is it we have to wait for?

Well, I put it I don't think so. I don't believe so. And one point that is probably not understood by a lot of people, internationally or in Ireland. I'm here in our parliament, as a member of parliament now for a number of years. And 85% of all legislation that goes through our parliament now comes from the EU. 85%. So it's a phenomenal amount, like everything to do with environmental laws, labour laws, consumer protection, all of that is modelled on what comes from the EU. And we're transposing it into Irish law. Of course, we make our own annual budgets within the EU, and ECB guidelines, and you know, to make sure our debt is sustainable, and all those issues, and there is legislation we do pass on its own. But most of the legislation we pass is based on the EU. So the idea of thinking that we were going to go alone on any major issue, I don't think so. Again, going back to where I am, and I've been several times, I think, Ireland's position in the EU... we punch above our weight. And I think everybody recognise that that whether it's for international foreign investment, whether it's on the EU level, or at the UN level, we punch above our weight, and I think we can achieve more by staying in the ring, rather than getting out of the ring.

Has Ireland been making efforts to lobby other states, perhaps Belgium or Luxembourg, which are quite close to Ireland's position on on issues to do with Palestine, to work together on Palestinian issues?

The biggest issue I mentioned in recent times was in relation there, Ethiopia. Right. And that's the issue during the UN Security Council, which we were on until Christmas, just the end of last year. And we were very strong on that. Or that we had to bring other countries with us to raise the Ethiopian issue. And you know, the amount of tragic killing and warfare that was going on internally in the state. Initially, countries felt it was an internal matter, it didn't involve the second country. But that might not have been as simple as that. And we felt a lot more to it than just merely an internal matter. There were outside influences. And we did get the European or the EU Security Council [DOES HE MEAN UN?] to see our point of view on that. And I said we've made, we paid a bit of a penalty on that as well. And be that as it may, we'll take that on the chin. And we're working to regain good relations or better relations with Ethiopia again. So that has been our main focus in terms of taking a stand in another country, we actually feel the Horn of Africa, and Africa is probably one of the more poorest reasons on the planet. And you mentioned already, I've just come back from Malawi, which is one of the poorest countries on the planet. So our our effort is to help those that are furthest behind first.

Okay, that's the philosophy. So African countries where we can help when we're in a position to do so. I call it back to our Irish aid, ethos; help those furthest behind first. and we felt that was needed in Africa at that time.

Okay. Just two more on Palestine, sorry to labour the point. But it's very interesting to me. Do you think Palestine has not met certain standards for state recognition? Or is from that perspective, do you think Palestine is ready to be recognised as a state and there are factors?

There has to be a level of peace before you can get there, simple as. Okay, there has to be level, you can't do that when there are people on the battlefield or approaching the battlefield or on the edge of the battlefield. And there has to be a period of peace. And that's why we would ask other countries who have more of an influence in Israel than we have to please try and recognise that, and we've seen what's happened internally. Where they're trying to change the judiciary, and within Israel, we've seen that as even more citizens appear to be opposed to those type of changes made by the government and we would ask other governments with greater influence in Israel than we have to ask them to respect to Palestine and not proceed as they have been proceeding. And only when, only when there's peace and calm, can you actually talk about those issues. So we're just not there yet. We're just not there.

Yes. Okay. Um, and regarding things like levels of peace and so on, would it be the Irish government that determines that? Would you have people on the ground to go and monitor these elements? Or how would you decide that it reached this level of peace? Because I think it's split on who was sometimes starting these conflicts.

And I agree with this, and I would have looked at a little bit like Northern Ireland, many, many years ago, who is responsible for the trouble. People would say, the institution, the institution there caused this division and inequality. And then people take the view that the British army came in, allegedly to support them when the minority Catholics, but I didn't work out that way. So I'm just saying yes, in every conflict, hang on. Did you ever go to a football match? Right? And there's a penalty, depending on what side you're on a team today. So we're all biased, that's the point. That's whichever side you're on, you are biased. So it's hard to get a neutral observer to get a neutral referee some of the time for that, to get a neutral observer. You know, that's that's where we have to get to and that'll probably be the IOC, the UN, have to play a role here as well, as not just our view, we'll try and influence Europe. But more than Europe is involved here, the UN will ultimately have to make some issue on this issue. But they'll only do that when there's a period of calm.

Interview 7

I have some questions about Irish foreign policy, and then a bit about recognition policy and so on. So if it's okay with you, I'll dive right in. So could you briefly walk me through the decision making process when it comes to making Irish foreign policy?

Across the board? In general, our foreign policy?

Yeah, I think so.

Okay, all right. Okay. And that's a big question... That's a question with lots of lots of bits where to start, but I guess broadly speaking, ummm the I suppose the programme for government, we've an agreed programme for government, as, as we always do, with governments, because obviously, governments in Ireland for decades have been coalition governments. So they negotiate a programme for government and that programme for government that is adopted when the government takes office. So the programme for government, I guess, is the sort of overarching, overarching guide, and that has a fairly detailed, a fairly detailed outline of all policy areas, domestic and foreign. So that's the sort of the starting point, let's say, and that tends to deal with, in a reasonable amount of detail, the sort of overarching priorities for government. And in addition to that, then the Department of Foreign Affairs has, we have statements of strategy, which we have, which we update regularly. And we have two sort of I guess, well, three really core documents, which also describe in more detail, what our foreign policy priorities are. One is Global Ireland, which is from 2015. One is the Global Ireland strategy, which is more across government strategy in relation to sort of our global footprint, but it's obviously has a fair amount on foreign policy, as well. And then the other one is a Better World, which is more in the development space, it's more on our on our developmental humanitarian policy. So that's sort of the framing essentially. And so everything we do is within that framework. And then on a day to day basis, I think it's, I mean, I think the best way to describe it is probably as an iterative process between the minister and the sort of political side, and then departments and officials. So you know, you're, you're, you're going up and down, essentially. So the minister, obviously, based on the programme for government, and based on the wider foreign policy framework, you know, has particular initiatives or particular issues that they're, you know, particularly engaged on that they want to move forward. And then the department obviously responds to that. And then similarly, the Department of official level, you know, there's various things that are always on the go, let's say are on the boil, and we and then you know, so we have, we have sort of ideas and initiatives and policy decisions and policy

recommendations going up really well all the time. And then just to sort of add to that, then obviously, the Oireachtas, the Dáil, and the Seanad are an important part of it. The through the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, and then also Joint Committee on European affairs, they'd be the two relevant committees that would be most engaged on various different aspects of foreign policy. So the minister, either the minister or the two ministers of state would regularly go to brief the Committee on various different issues, the committee would have a lot of, you know, their own thoughts and their own views, they would engage with the minister, we would engage with them at official level, to brief them on various different issues. And then obviously, through the parliamentary system and parliamentary questions, and so on the minister regularly goes, and of course the Minister of state regularly goes to the Dáil to answer questions on on foreign policy issues, then, and the opposition and members of... members of the House in general question then and put their their thoughts on foreign policy to the minister as well. So broad brush, I'd say that's the system.

Yes. Thank you. So with foreign policy that's not directly relating to issues in the EU or perhaps America or with allies, how high on the list of considerations are EU priorities, and perhaps also international allies interests when formulating foreign policy?

Yeah, I mean, I think, you know, I think the EU piece obviously, is central because, you know, we're a member of the EU, obviously, and we're a core like every other member state, Common Foreign and Security Policy is the sort of core piece of that [background noise] mechanism and structure architecture in Brussels, where you have a working group. You have the Political and Security Committee, you have COREPER and then that goes up to the Foreign Affairs Council. And so the Foreign Affairs Council meets monthly. So I would certainly say that that's, that would be a big piece and a big driver of our policy making because obviously the Minister is going every month. We are, it's the opportunity for us to to I suppose at the Foreign Affairs Council to sort of express them to put forward our views a political level, and then in all of the working groups that go up to that it's our opportunity to try and impose an influence into into the EU's policy on it. Well on everything basically, on the full range of foreign security, Foreign and Security policy issues. So that's definitely a big piece of what we do. And the other thing is, I mean, the other sort of big multilateral space, obviously, that we were active in, up until up until the end of last year was the Security Council. So again, that was, you know, another big, you know, for two years as of 20. We have this opportunity to sort of influence international peace and security through our membership of the UN Security Council. But certainly now coming having come off the UN Security Council, it certainly I think we would see the EU and the Common Foreign Security Policy, as you know, a key part of or key theatre, I guess, in which to, in which to pursue our foreign policy aims, and as well as you know, lots of other multilateral organisations as well. And, of course, our bilateral engagement directly with partners.

I think often foreign policy issues don't really register in the minds of your average voter. With that in mind, how does the Irish government balance its obligations to the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy with domestic concerns? And which would you say plays more of a role on formulating foreign policy?

Yeah, I think it's a mixture. I mean, I think in Ireland, as you probably know, there's a couple of issues on the foreign policy side or the Foreign and Security policy side that are quite resonant with with the public, and that are more like almost domestic political issues and have a lot of have a lot of interest and engagement in Parliament, and, you know, to a certain extent, with the wider public. So Israel-Palestine is, as you know, is a big piece of that, probably, through this certainly in Parliament, and also with civil society in Ireland. And, you know, to extent I think, with the broader public, its an issue that people really are interested in really care about. So I suppose where are you where the where that balance lies is, you know, say across, if you look across all of all of the issues with respect to the Middle

East, you know, Israel-Palestine is definitely one where Ireland is probably most active. And that definitely comes from both the fact that it's an important priority for governments. And obviously, the fact that that is also a domestic political priority, and an issue that Irish people and that the Irish parliament cares about. So you know, so we probably engage more on that issue, say, than we might on Iraq, let's say so, you know, as an example, whereas in other countries, they might put more emphasis on other aspects of Middle East policy. But I think it's also not the only thing that would drive our engagement and interest. So say, for instance, and while we were on the Security Council, we had the responsibility for the cross border, humanitarian crossing on Syria, we have the responsibility for the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] 20 to 31 resolution on the nuclear file on Iran, you know, so we were paying equal attention or more even maybe spending more time on on those issues than we were at the time, say on... well I mean, we were spending a lot of time on all Middle East issues. And again, it sort of depends on whether we have a specific international role or feel that we can play a specific international role or have specific international responsibilities. So again, this time last year, we would have been working extremely with, you know, a lot on on Syria, because of that particular responsibility, we had to get that mandate over the line in the in the council in July. If this time, right, you know, at the moment, of course, we're still engaged on Syria, maybe a little bit less so because that responsibility is gone. But of course, we're still we're still trying to engage and still trying to influence the policy and other policy and on that. The other thing I'd say, just in terms of interests from domestic point of view, two other bits, I think that are of real interest to people is the first is that of the humanitarian, humanitarian issues in general, I think the Irish public and the parliament are very engaged on, you know, Ireland's responsibility, or you know, what we can contribute to, to address the humanitarian needs. So again, you'll get a lot of parliamentary questions on, you know, issues like Yemen, on issues like the Horn of Africa, food security, climate, climate change, and climate insecurity, and so on. So those issues do resonate with with the public. So again, and I think that does, UN Human Rights also. So I think that does certainly focus our foreign policy towards a sort of a humanitarian, international humanitarian law, human rights, take or slant on, on particular issues. And then the final thing I would say is the on security policy, obviously, the whole issue around neutrality, and our security policy is very high up on the agenda politically. So again, that's something that is a domestic as much as a foreign policy choice. So again, the work that we do right, all the work that we do on on CSDP, but also on our partnerships. With peacekeeping with the UN and the partnership. We have three Partnership for Peace with NATO. All of that is quite high up on the political agenda in Ireland on on the domestic agenda in Ireland as well as being a foreign policy issue.

Yes, okay. Just briefly as well, could you think of like an example when Irish public opinion and EU foreign policy priorities conflicted? How did the Irish government work to resolve this?

I don't, I'm not sure about conflicted because, again, it's, you know, I think it would be unusual because again, we're at we are like every other member states, you're at the table when EU Common foreign security policies are being discussed all the time. So you don't tend to have a situation where, you know, a definitive EU policy on something, so you think you'd have council conclusions on something or you'd have a sort of a strategic decision or approach on something, that doesn't take into account in any way, Ireland's concerns, you know, so most of us, you know, like most of the most of council, when you've ccouncil conclusions on something or when you have a strategy on something that's been approved by the by the Foreign Affairs Council by the Council of Ministers, by the by the ministers, it's unanimous. 27. So you have to basically be at a stage where everybody is happy to sign off on the conclusions. So any any policy, it might be exactly as we would have written it in Ireland, but it's going to have it's very unlikely that you'd have a policy that is approved by the Foreign Affairs Council that is wildly conflicting with and completely different foreign policy. But I would say, I think ISRAEL PALESTINE is a good example of something that is, I would say that we take a particular stance on that over time,

I would say, you know, reasonably, probably a majority of member states have moved the other way on, let's say, so I think our view on the conflict is very much one that would have been sort of a standard view across the EU about 10, or 15 years ago, a number of EU member states have moved quite sharply away from that. I think they're, I think they're sent, you know, a lot... I think a lot of them their calculation is the relationship with Israel, for various different reasons, overrides maybe some of the concerns in relation to International humanitarian law and human rights. And, you know, just to get back to the fact that Israel is occupying the sort of post 1967 borders. You know, I guess the balance has changed a lot of memberstates' views as to which of those are more important. From our point of view, we've maintained our view that you know, that the occupation is a is a very serious issue, that it needs to be something that the EU is engaged on that the two state solution and a solution around international parameters is where we need to focus our efforts on and where we need to be. And that does mean obviously calling out Israel for extensive violations of their obligations as an occupying power, it means it means pulling them either in relation to human rights abuses and IHL violations and so on. So I suppose that's an example of something where the trend in the EU is in the opposite direction to what Irish foreign policy would want to focus on. And so I think in that case, what we're what we do and what we do every day in Brussels is we just continually try and put forward our you know, our views on this, the way we feel that the EU should be engaging on it, and again, push the EU and push member states to, to basically to continue engage to continue to engage based on what is formerly EU policy on this. So the last time we reached council conclusions on on MEPP, I think, was I can't remember 2014 or 2016, it was quite a long time ago, because it will be hard to agree some of those conclusions now because people have taken a different stance. But as 27, we do have an agreed position, the fact that many member states are moving away from that individually doesn't mean that the EU should move away from it. Because until we negotiate a new position, if there is a new position to be negotiated, we need to be sticking with what we have agreed at 27. So that's very much our line. That's what we push all the time. You know, what, sometimes we're successful, sometimes we're less successful on that. But I think that's sort of the way that EU foreign policy works in a way, which is that member states, you know, their every member state has issues that they are particularly concerned about that they're particularly interested in, that they're particularly sort of seized of. And you know, out of those 27 comes comes a formal policy. So that will be that will be an example, I think.

Yes. And then just briefly carrying on with that theme. Obviously, the EU is looking for sort of consensus. So there's compromise. And do you feel that Ireland has compromised on its stance on certain ISRAEL PALESTINE issues to come slightly more in line with the majority or the average?

Yeah. I mean, I, again, because ISRAEL PALESTINE is one of the issues and one of the relatively few issues, I think that there's quite sharp divisions in the EU about, I think I mean, what's interesting about about CFSP is that it's, you know, the vast majority of member states on the vast majority of issues are broadly in a similar space, and so it's not that difficult to come to come to agreement on Council conclusions on on issues. It takes... It takes a long time. There's lots of vigorous debate. It's all very... there are lots of arguments. But fundamentally, we tend to get to a compromise solution that most people are happy with. And that pretty much reflects the sort of core underpinnings of people of individual country's interests and values and so on. I think ISRAEL PALESTINE is one of the very few where that's not at the moment, that's not where we are. But I don't think from like, from our point of view, our view is that, you know, we all again, we will probably compromise to get to the kinds of conclusions that we have from whatever it was 2014 or 2016. You know, we probably might have wanted to see at the time more emphasis on IHL, human rights, we would have wanted to see more emphasis on Israel security, and we managed to get to a place where we have a new policy that's written down, that we are comfortable with and that we feel expresses our... the core priorities for us. I think where we are at the moment is less that we've had to compromise on the EU's formal policy

and more that, what we're what we think from our perspective, what we're seeing is an EU that is not sufficiently robust and implementing that policy, because others have moved. So it's not so much that we really have to compromise, it's more that we feel that the EU is is not Is that is that the trend away from what we've all agreed in council conclusions means that the EU is not acting in as robust, and as rigorous and as proactive a way that it should be, so we keep pushing that. So I guess yes, we don't feel we don't feel we should be compromising on core principles which come from from from UN General Assembly and from the UN Security Council resolutions in respect to how this conflict is seen.

Yes. Okay. So moving on to some questions about recognition. Are you aware of any sort of guiding principles or regulations or standards that guide Irish recognition policy?

In terms of recognition of Palestine?

In general, and then also, if you can think of them in relation to Palestine as well?

Okay. So I mean, I think what I mean, I think like every other member state, you I mean, you recognise countries when countries are internationally recognised. So the vast majority of countries there's no, there's not really an issue one way or the other, because, because they are recognised as as countries . And so it's not, you know, so there's nothing really to it. There's nothing to recognise or unrecognise, let's say, in general, borders are fixed, post-Second World War. So then you have a small number of countries, obviously, Kosovo is one, Palestine would be another, where you have a situation where a country like Ireland has to make a decision absent of international consensus, let's say. So in relation to Kosovo, obviously, there was discussions at EU level, detailed discussions at EU level back in 2009 2000...

2008

Exactly, yeah, there was detailed discussions at EU level on that, and, and there was no consensus of the EU level. But we made the decision at the time to recognise Kosovo based on a variety of, of, I suppose considerations and sort of political and legal considerations. In relation to Palestine, there's quite detailed, there's a quite detailed outline in the current programme for government in relation to what the conditions would be in order for Ireland to make a decision to recognise Palestine. And those are those have been similar if you look back through previous programmes for government, they sort of reflect what we've said for quite a long time in terms of in terms of successive governments. So the so the current programme for government, which was which was agreed in 2020, June 2020 essentially says, you know, we would want to we want to recognise Palestine as part of a comprehensive two state solution. And then also says, But absent that, the government would take a decision to recognise Palestine, if they felt that it would be enough, you'd have to look at the precise language, but it's in the programme for government, but essentially if we feel that it would be useful or helpful in getting to a comprehensive two state solution or in supporting a two state solution. So that's the sort of formal government policy in relation to recognition of Palestine. And again, if you look back, if you look on the Oireachtas website, you'll see multiple parliamentary questions about this going back over the last couple of years, it's it's asked almost every single time and again we the government reiterates each time what the parameters are in relation to recognition of Palestine And so that's essentially the framing of which which we're working. So from a government point of view, it means that obviously there isn't a comprehensive two state solution. So that's out. So then I suppose are what we need to what we would need, what we need to work continually want to try and analyse and decide is whether whether the conditions that we set out for ourselves have been met. So in other words, whether it is at a particular moment, the right moment to recognise Palestine, absent absent of a comprehensive

solution, because we think it would contribute to maintaining, you know, the prospect of a two state solution alive and would contribute towards that aim.

Um, you mentioned sort of with Kosovo, they were kind of a certain standard type things, would they be related to the sort of standards that are set out in the Montevideo convention sort of to do with territorial integrity, governance, population? Or would they be more influenced by the EU because there are certain regulations like the European Community Guidelines that were released around the time of the breakup of Yugoslavia. But at the same time, all of these conventions are quite vague, and it's all quite ad hoc. So if you know about that at all,

I actually don't but I can check and I can get back to you on it. I can send you stuff on it, I actually, I don't know if we took into account the Montevideo convention at that time, but I will check and get back to you.

Because I've asked like a few people about this. And I think it's kind of indicative of it... Perhaps also, it's not a very common issue that you deal with, there are only so many states, but they sort of standards, I asked her a minister who's actually in the Fianna Fail about it, and they weren't aware of this. So I think that kind of in itself is, is perhaps an answer. But anyway, moving on. So we,

I think, again, it would be it would have come from the department, we would have made the recommendation based on certain conventions and the minister at the time would have brought it to government. So it wouldn't be that surprising that the minister in the government even same government or different government wouldn't be necessarily aware of the full details of what came from the department in terms of the recommendations. But anyway, I probably should be, but I'm not. But I will certainly look it up...

Don't worry, I've seen your brief you have a lot of responsibilities.

And it doesn't come up very often, except for Palestine..

And then you mentioned as well, that there's certain conditions, you know, I think to do with like the peace process, and whether this is advancing towards a two state solution. Would that be a judgement that then the Department of Foreign Affairs or some Irish body is making or would it be guided by like the UN or something?

Yeah. I mean, I think I think on recognition of Palestine, it would really be a judgement made by by Ireland, by the Department of Foreign Affairs in the in the first instance, but of course, with lots of input from from others. And certainly, of course, discussing with other with other EU member states and with other with other member states. I mean, on Palestine, what's interesting is to remember is that the vast majority of UN member states have already recognised Palestine.... i think 138, including rather, ironically, most of the EU Member States, who are now most... who are who are maybe less less faithful ... so this is sort of a slightly peculiar position there. So I think in terms of if Ireland were to take the decision to recognise it would be very much based on our own analysis of the situation, our own and our, I mean, sorry, this is absent of a negotiated solution, it would be very much based on our own analysis of the situation and our own analysis of whether a decision to recognise could contribute or not to maintain the possibility of a two state solution. So they wouldn't, I don't think and again, it's fundamentally a political decision rather than a legal decision. So it doesn't, it doesn't really depend on Yeah, it depends on a political decision in Ireland based on a comprehensive analysis of the situation on the ground and the situation in respect of, you know, where, where, where, where the issue of a two state solution and the vindication of success of UN Security Council resolutions are in reality. Conversation with EU partners as well. I mean, it would be something that we would definitely

talk about with EU partners, and it is talked about, you know, reasonably regularly with with like minded partners.

Yes. You're good at this, you keep sort of opening the next question. So with Palestine, but also the Kosovo decision. How important is the influence of of allies like in the EU in the US and making this decision? What would you say?

Yeah, I think it's important in the sense of understanding and knowing what others where others are. I mean, you would never... and I think that's any foreign policy decision. You never make a foreign policy decision ignorant of what's happening with your partners. It's, that's a slightly different thing than saying you wouldn't, you know, you'll only make a decision on foreign policy if everybody else is making it or if a large majority of other people are making it. So any decision on foreign policy and something like recognition, which would be quite a change, and you would obviously take into account, you would obviously, first of all, try and understand in depth, and in a lot of detail whether, for instance, other partners in the EU were having a similar conversation, whether they might want to make that decision as well, what the what the sort of political and and analytical drivers of that decision would be in other EU member states, for instance, and where they were terms of whether they were or weren't going to make that decision. What would guide [audio cut out] I'm here.

Yeah, sorry. First of all, I think we still got the audio. So glad you're still here.

All right.

So with the US, again, it would it would also, you know, again, you would take into account I think US thinking in relation to to ISRAEL PALESTINE there. I mean, like it or not, they're sort of they are the lead on this. Their influences is outsized on this conflict. So again, if you were going to take a decision like that, you'd want to understand how that would be, how that would be understood and framed in Washington, and you certainly want to have conversations with people in Washington around the issue. I don't think but but having said that, I think ultimately, like any foreign policy decision, it's an autonomous decision by a sovereign government and say, you may well decide to take a decision, absent a consensus or even absent other people taking the same decision, but you certainly wouldn't do so blind.

Yes. Okay. Brilliant. Thank you. Do you think the salience of Palestinian recognition for the Irish government over the the since 2014 has changed? And also, do you ever notice, a change of the attitude towards recognition or the whole Israeli Palestinian conflict, when, for example, there are a big flare ups of violence and so on? Have you noticed the pattern or anything?

Yeah, I mean, I think, again, there's, you know, there's, there's, it's a balance, I mean, what again, because what we want to do is recognise Palestine as part of a comprehensive solution. And that's what everybody you know, that's because everybody wants a comprehensive solution. So in a way, recognition is something that is not... recognition isn't a standalone thing. It's a thing that's part of our wider engagement with Israel and Palestine, and with the Israeli Palestinian conflict, and so what we what we want is a pathway towards negotiations that will lead to a comprehensive solution. I think, you know, and then I think, where the, where the issue of recognition, absent that comes in, is where you see a situation on the ground, that is getting further and further away from that. That's a so I think, and I think it's probably fair to say that that's, I don't know if it's an absolutely linear trajectory, but but certainly between now between 2014 and now, we're much further... we're a good bit further away from that now than we were in 2014. And the situation has largely deteriorated, largely in a linear way, although not entirely linear way since then, so that definitely does does come into the equation, because it brings up it brings more to the fore the idea of recognition, absent a two state solution and

negotiated solution. And as you say, when things flare up, and when there's when there's violence, and particularly when you see actions from the Israeli government that are, you know, that are clearly in contrary to their obligations as an occupying power, that are clearly in contravention of IHL. You know, of course, it's I think that's certainly politically in Ireland, that brings up a lot of interest in the issue from from the opposition parties, it brings up a lot more sort of explicit and robust questioning about about it. So it's certainly it's certainly also, you know, its certainly also a part of thinking from the government side as to is this, you know, it.. are the conditions in place that would lead us to make a decision to do so without a comprehensive solution? And again, at the moment, we haven't, that's not a conclusion that we have reached.

Yes. Based on on some some interviews with with certain politicians, I won't mention them explicitly, that they had the idea that, particularly with the fallout from the Ukraine war, but sort of there's been a general trend towards actually the Irish government placing less focus on this issue, and it's becoming a slightly less important and they're playing less of an active role. With your insight into sort of behind the scenes diplomacy and so on. How would you respond to that comment?

Yeah, I don't think we're putting less emphasis on it. To be honest. I mean, I think that every EU member states Ukraine has been equal consuming, so, you know, certainly in terms of the time, you know, time in department Foreign Affairs here that's spent on Ukraine now versus the time that was spent on the issue of Ukraine two years ago, you know, we definitely, far more time, far more resources, far more thinking far more engagement. So, you know, so if you think a foreign policy is a zero sum game, where, you know, if one issue goes up, the others have to go down. But but you know, foreign policy isn't a zero sum game. So you know, so Israel, Palestine is an issue that is definitely sort of consistently something that we engage on. We, you know, at the moment, for instance, it's being it's being raised at the Foreign Affairs Council, was last month, it will be again this month at the instigation of Ireland and Belgium. So from me, you know, within an EU context, you know, it's ourselves Belgium and Luxembourg, essentially, who are the who are the countries that keep trying to put keep trying to make sure that this is still at the top of the agenda, push the EU to do more, push the EU to be more vocal, push the EU to be more involved. And, you know, our previous minister, Minister Coveney, who was foreign minister, two terms in a row, he visited Israel Palestine six or seven times, so more than he visited anywhere else other than Washington, London and Brussels. So, you know, so I wouldn't I don't really agree with that. Actually, I don't think that's a that's an accurate reflection. Again, I think I think Ukraine has become a big issue. And so we talk about Ukraine, in the rafters and the public in foreign affairs, you know, across the government system, much more than we used to, but I wouldn't I don't think that's been at the expense of ISRAEL PALESTINE. I think internationally and at EU level, that probably is the case that there's definitely less focus internationally on MEPP and, and at the EU level. But to be honest, there was less focus on the MEPP internationally and at EU level, you know, before Ukraine, you know, 2019 2020 2021. You know, it wasn't exactly top of the agenda, I think there is there was definitely a sort of a sense of MEPP fatigue a little bit. And around the EU table, there was increasingly divergent views. And so it was discussed less because it was less, you know, we just couldn't get consensus on issues. But from an Irish perspective, I think we are we are constantly, we're constantly banging that drum.

And then we have four minutes left, and I have a few questions. So perhaps I could we could kind of treat this as a relatively quick fire round, everything you're saying is great, but I want to cover all these bases. The government has said that it wants to kind of have an EU response, or work with more EU countries to recognise Palestine. That's their reason. But what do you think kind of justifies their decision for choosing that or explains the reasons for saying we want to wait for the EU? What is the sort of benefit of that for Ireland?

Yeah, well, yeah, no, yeah, just to clarify that it's not so much that we want to wait for the... So recognition, I would just put separately as engagement. So. So our sense is that the EU is not as present as it could be, should be, or was in the wider discussions around trying to get a two state solution, trying to get the parties to the table to agree a two state solution and just engaging, you know, in detail on the issue. So that's totally separate from recognition, that's an issue that we just feel the EU needs to be more present, more engaged. We're providing huge amounts of funding for the Palestinian authority, we have a detailed and comprehensive relationship with Israel. So we should be more in the discussions, let's say I think in relation to all of these issues, that's a separate thing from recognition. In terms of recognition. Again, it's not so much the government has said that we want lots of EU member states to recognise together, it's more of that what we want in terms of recognition is to recognise as part of a two state solution. Absent that we would look at whether we thought that it would be it would you know, that that recognition by Ireland would be useful and important in trying to in trying to get to that aim. So within that, then I think you would look at what other EU member states are doing simply because it's just more impactful. So let's say if you let's say if the government decided at a particular juncture that actually this is the time where we feel recognition would be helpful, and would contribute towards a two state solution, just just by virtue of relevance and impact and influence, you would probably, ideally, that would be something that a group of member states would do together, because it would just be more impactful. It doesn't mean that you wouldn't necessarily make decisions that you wouldn't do it. If you knew that others were going not going to do it. But you know, you'd have you do have to ask yourself the question of how impactful and influential and relevant it would be. So if Ireland recognised Palestine in the morning, does that actually make a difference? Does that actually make it more likely that there is then pressure on the parties to come to the table and negotiate a two state solution? Or is it more likely that, you know, if you have five or six member states recognising that that might be more influential? So those would be the those would be your that would be where your thinking would be.

Yes. How does Ireland's relationship with the US and Israel factor into this process? If at all?

Yeah, yeah. I mean, absolutely, it would. I mean, and we have regular conversations with the Israelis about all sorts of issues. Obviously, we disagree quite fundamentally, with Israel on many issues. The Israeli sides would openly say to us, you know, if you're thinking of doing anything like recognition, you should be aware that that will have a very negative effect on our bilateral relationship. So, you know, that's, that would obviously be something that we would need to factor in again, were we to do this separate from a two state solution. Similarly, with the US, I mean, you know, the US obviously, and Ireland would take quite a different view on the Middle East peace process, although, you know, in fairness, I think we have, you know, we're coming from the same angle, certainly from with this administration, but maybe with a different emphasis. So of course, if we again, decided to recognise Palestine, absent a wider solution, of course, we would need to discuss and take into account thinking in Washington on that.

Yes. And you mentioned that Ireland, it's a popular issue in Ireland, and it also had the sort of cross party support in the Dail with with the motion and so on, but then Ireland still didn't [recognise]. How did they justify it during this? Was it more because it hasn't fulfilled the sort of path to the two state solution? Or how would the government reconcile that decision with the public support?

yeah. Yeah. I mean, again, I think it's very much it's very much outlined in the in the programme for governments. You know, at the moment, we don't judge at the moment that the conditions that the government has outlined under which they would recognise Palestine absent, a two state solution have been have been met, and I think in terms of sort of the the motion of the Oireachtas, again, you would have often Dail motions or Seanad motions calling on the government to do certain things

across foreign policy. You know, it reflects normally, of course, it reflects sort of, you know, the interests and the engagement of of Parliament. But it's not the case that if if the parliament has, you know, approves a motion that calls on the government to do ABCD and E, the government immediately do ABCD and E. And that's the case in all domestic and foreign policy issues. Of course, it's an important issue. And of course, it's an important element that you take into account in policymaking. But it's not an automatic that if the parliament calls for x, then the government immediately does X.

Yes. Okay. So previously, back in 1988, the Irish government did say that Palestine didn't meet these criteria referencing the Montevideo and so on. But you you're saying that it's, it's primarily just because they're not a it's not working towards a two state solution, which is why it can't go now sort of to sum up that argument. Why it can't be recognised now?

Yeah, I mean, again, yeah, we're not coming at it from we can't recognise Palestine for that. So there hasn't been a country that has recognised Palestine since 2014. Sweden recognised in 2014. So the issue is really whether....Is there is there are we convinced do we analyse that enough is happening to convince us of a there is no, because I think also to recognise absent a two state solution, you'd have to be fairly clear that you have no hope that there's going to be in the period ahead, any movement towards negotiations that might ultimately result in a two state solution. So you'd have to make that criteria determination. And then you'd have to make the determination that recognising despite that would would add to or would contribute to the situation where you would work where you would get, you know, get get there and would help in getting, again, made that determination.

Okay, I've left a one minute left. So I leave somebody. So just to say that you said we've basically there's been no progress in this path to a two state solution. Do you think it's likely that the government will act to recognise it in the coming months or years... its speculative?

Don't know