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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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Master's Thesis

2024

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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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**Reassessing Irish neutrality in the context of the Russian
attack against Ukraine**

Master's thesis

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Study programme: Geopolitical Studies

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Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on the 31st of July, 2024

Conor Long

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Conor Long', written in a cursive style.

References

LONG, Conor. *Reassessing Irish neutrality in the context of the Russian attack against Ukraine*. Praha, 2024. 80 Pages. Master's thesis (Mgr.). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies. Department of Political Science. Supervisor doc. Martin Riegl, Ph.D.

Length of the thesis: 146,956 characters including spaces.

Abstract

This thesis critically examines the concept of Irish neutrality in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, analysing both historical foregoings and modern geopolitical circumstances. In light of renewed Russian aggression, many European states have been forced to reconsider their defence policies, security strategies, and military expenditures, including Ireland, as its coveted foreign policy tradition has been put into question. Ireland's neutral stance reflected its wish to maintain a foreign policy free from external military entanglements, however, the conflict in Ukraine challenges this, raising doubts on the suitability of such a stance, in the face of contemporary geopolitical threats. Therefore, this study explores the evolution of Irish neutrality, its legal underpinnings, and the socio-political factors influencing public and governmental attitudes. Many aspects of Irish international relations, including defence, multilateralism, collective security, and their response to the Russian invasion will be compared with Switzerland, which is widely perceived as the most ideal neutral. By analysing Ireland's changes and responses to the conflict in comparison to Switzerland's, this thesis investigates the implications of adopting a neutral stance in an increasingly interconnected, volatile and polarising international system. This project also considers both the pro and anti-neutrality debates, including the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining neutrality instead of opting into military alliances. The findings aim to answer the question of whether the state should uphold its most sacred foreign policy, or if it should break away from this tradition and embrace a collective security arrangement like NATO.

Abstrakt

Tato práce kriticky zkoumá koncept irské neutrality v kontextu ruské invaze na Ukrajinu a analyzuje jak historické předěly, tak moderní geopolitické souvislosti. Ve světle obnovené ruské agrese bylo mnoho evropských států nuceno přehodnotit svou obrannou politiku, bezpečnostní strategie a vojenské výdaje, včetně Irska, neboť jeho kýžená zahraničněpolitická tradice byla zpochybněna. Neutrální postoj Irska odrážel jeho přání udržovat zahraniční politiku nezávislou na vnějších vojenských vazbách, avšak konflikt na Ukrajině toto zpochybnil a vyvolává pochybnosti o vhodnosti takového postoje tváří v tvář současným geopolitickým hrozbám. Tato studie proto zkoumá vývoj irské neutrality, její právní základy a sociálně-politické faktory ovlivňující postoje veřejnosti a vlády. Několik

aspektů irské zahraniční a obranné politiky Irska, včetně jeho přístupu k multilateralismu a kolektivní bezpečnosti, stejně jako reakce na ruskou invazi, bude srovnáváno se Švýcarskem, které je všeobecně vnímáno jako “idel” neutrálního státu. Na základě analýzy proměn a reakcí Irska na konflikt ve srovnání se Švýcarskem tato práce zkoumá důsledky neutrálního přístupu ve stále více propojeném, nestabilním a polarizujícím se mezinárodním systému. Práce se rovněž zabývá argumenty pro neutralitu i proti ní, včetně výhod a nevýhod spojených se zachováním neutrality ve srovnání s členstvím ve vojenské alianci. Závěrem se práce snaží odpovědět na otázku, zda by stát měl zachovat podstatu své zahraniční politiky nebo se od ní odpoutat a usilovat o členství v organizaci kolektivní bezpečnosti jakou je NATO.

Keywords

Neutrality, Defence, Multilateralism, Ireland, Switzerland, Russia, Ukraine, NATO, EU

Klíčová slova

Neutralita, obrana, multilateralismus, Irsko, Švýcarsko, Rusko, Ukrajina, NATO, EU

Název práce

Přehodnocení irské neutrality v souvislosti s ruským útokem na Ukrajinu

Acknowledgements

Completing this thesis would not have been possible without the help from many people, therefore I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who helped me along the way. I would like to thank my supervisor Doc. Martin Riegl. Over the last number of months, he has provided so much to this thesis, by reading drafts, answering countless questions and emails, and generally offering guidance throughout the process. Without him, this thesis and the ideas it explores would not have come to fruition.

I would like to thank the academic staff at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University.

I would also like to thank my classmates in Geopolitical Studies, with whom I have shared the experience of studying at Charles University.

I would also like to thank Nerea Muñoz, my personal coffee maker, who has supported me throughout the last two years.

To my extended family, and my brother Jack, thank you for your continuous support.

Finally, to my parents, who have been proud believers in the value of education and have supported me throughout my academic career and university life. For that I am eternally grateful.

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Introduction:

Attitudes towards neutrality:

The concept of neutrality in international relations is a complicated, contested term. Many academics, policymakers, politicians, and the public have highly opinionated viewpoints on the subject. One thing is for certain, neutrality does not prevent the occurrence of war, it merely limits the negative effects a neutral country may experience that arise from war. Nonetheless, there are many who believe that “neutrality seems politically disingenuous at best, and more like by standing, self-preservation and moral cowardice at worst” (Slim, 2023). During the 14th century, Italian writer Dante Alighieri spoke of neutral souls in his poem, ‘The Divine Comedy’. In this, he “identified their doom as the loss of the good of intellect: neutrals are unworthy of heaven, and even hell despises them” (Murphy, 2022). Moving closer to today, disastrous, blood-soaked conflicts since the 20th century have “led to an intolerance for impartiality and an aversion to neutrality as classically understood” (Liechtenstein, 2022). This was not always the case though, as Rivasseau suggests that until recently, “the idea of neutrality was therefore very positively considered in Europe; it was associated with values such as benevolence, nonviolence and mediation” (Rivasseau, 2022). However, the return of conventional warfare to Europe in the form of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has “revealed some intrinsic weaknesses of the concept of neutrality” (Rivasseau, 2022). This can be seen in the case of Sweden and Finland, who “went from neutral to NATO” (Chatterjee, 2023) following a reawakening of the Russian threat not seen since the Cold War. Furthermore, there are some that do not even ‘believe’ in the idea that a state can really be neutral, with Noriaka Iwasa writing on ‘The Impossibility of Political Neutrality’. The assumption of the existence of neutrality “has defied overly narrow delineations of international relations” (Joenniemi, 1993; p. 300). This statement is ever more relevant today. Following increased polarisation and militarisation in Europe, and to a larger extent, the world, neutral states seem to be perceived more as a geopolitical anomaly than the ‘norm’, as “the policy and practice of neutrality has become unfashionable” (Simpson, 2018; p.1). Assuming the possibility that neutral states can indeed exist, there are many forms of neutrality for a state to adopt. Each form provides varying definitions as to what constitutes as neutrality, with differing criteria for what it means to be a neutral state. It is in this confused, complicated context in which this thesis must re-access Irish neutrality following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Before doing this, it is imperative to gain an understanding

on origins of neutrality, its many forms, and the terminology before framing the reassessment of Irish neutrality.

History of Neutrality:

Etymologically speaking, the word ‘neutrality’ is “derived from the Latin term *neuter*, meaning ‘of neither side’” (Plüss, 2023; p.16). The idea itself has existed since ancient times. Written in 431 BC, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides includes the famous ‘Melian dialogue’, which acknowledges the neutral stance taken by the island of Melos during the Peloponnesian War between Greek city-states Sparta and Athens “that lasted for approximately 30 years from 431-404 BC” (Simpson, 2018; p.2). However, neutrality didn’t become legally codified until much more recently. The signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 was a crucial turning point in the evolution of political neutrality. The treaty laid the groundwork for the idea of a sovereign nation state that could choose to remain neutral if desired. The history of neutrality in early modern Europe is intrinsically linked to maritime trade, making it no surprise that many European neutrals at the time, “such as the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden” (Gallagher, 2023; p.11), were seafaring states. These countries, who engaged heavily in maritime trade, became tired of losing their vessels to other warring actors. Thus, “Empress Catherine the Great of Russia established the League of Armed Neutrality in 1780” (Gallagher, 2023; p.11), founded as a multinational organisation in which member states' vessels at sea would be protected by one another, should the neutrality of fellow member-states be challenged. Thirteen years later, in 1793, the Proclamation of Neutrality by the US was introduced by George Washington (Gallagher, 2023; p.11). Leos Müller refers to the 19th century as ‘the Golden Age of Neutrality’, largely because the period between the Napoleonic wars and the First World War allowed for the growth and development of international law, beginning with the Congress of Vienna in 1814 and 1815, in which all parties agreed “to recognise the permanent neutrality of all 22 cantons of Switzerland” (Gallagher, 2023; p.12). In this instance, it was the great powers of the international system that granted Switzerland the status of permanent neutrality. It wasn’t until the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 that it became possible for a small European state to declare itself as neutral.

The first of the Hague Conventions broadly outlined the rules of war. The Second Hague Convention, however, codified the law of neutrality for the first time ever, as it declared the ‘rights and duties of neutral powers’, stating in Hague Convention V that “the territory of

neutral powers is inviolable” (Riaz, 2023). Similarly, the Hague Convention XIII demands that “belligerents are bound to respect the sovereign rights of neutral powers and to abstain, in neutral territory or neutral waters, from any act which would if knowingly permitted by any power, constitute a violation of neutrality” (Riaz, 2023). Notably, Article 6 of Convention XIII helps define what a neutral state can and cannot do, declaring that neutral state cannot “supply, directly or indirectly, warships, ammunition, or war material of any kind. Supplying this material constitutes a violation of a neutral duty, even if provided to belligerents on an equal basis” (Riaz, 2023). During the subsequent two World Wars, the law of neutrality was largely ignored. The establishment of a UN Charter following WWII would impact the laws of neutrality outlined in the 1907 Hague Convention in numerous ways. Firstly, the enforcement of the UN charter meant that “the neutral status of a country can be overridden when an enforcement measure is taken by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter” (Riaz, 2023). Furthermore, unlike in the 19th-century, “states are no longer free to move between belligerent and neutral status” and finally, “the recognition of neutrality by a belligerent is no longer relevant” (Riaz, 2023), following the signing of the UN Charter. Evidently, the law of neutrality has undergone many changes over the centuries, and it remains a relevant facet of international relations, despite the perceived negative elements it may have for some. Now that we are aware of the history of neutrality and how it came to be as both a concept and a law, it is noteworthy to understand the different types and forms of neutrality that exist today, if this thesis is to correctly reassess Irish neutrality and suggest a viable foreign policy option for the state.

Types of Neutrality:

Neutrality, in its most elementary form is “a legal condition through which a state declares non-involvement in a conflict or war and indicates its intention to refrain from supporting or aiding either side” (Heywood, 2015; p.144). There are three main categories of neutrality. Firstly, ‘ad hoc’ or ‘temporary’ neutrality, which “refers to a state wishing to keep out of a particular war as it chooses” (Ogley, 1970; p.2-4), for example, Francoist Spain during WWII. Theoretically speaking, “realists recognise this form of neutrality as an expression of national interests and foreign policy” (Simpson, 2018; p.4), choosing to enter wars on a case-by-case basis as the political elite see fit. Secondly, ‘De Jure’ neutrality, is neutrality that has been recognised by international law, with two distinct subcategories: “neutralisation, meaning an international agreement has been reached which determines the neutrality of a

state; and permanent neutrality, in which the state has voluntarily become neutral” (Simpson, 2018; p.4). Thus, neutralisation occurs when neutral status is imposed upon a country from an external source, however, this doesn’t technically mean that it is against the will of the state neutrality has been imposed upon. On the other hand, permanent, often referred to as traditional neutrality, affiliated with voluntary the adoption of the status of neutrality, implies that the state will observe the regulations of its neutral condition for a significantly long period of time, dissimilar to that of ‘ad hoc’ neutrality. Finally, ‘de facto’ neutrality arises when a state adopts a neutral stance, “without recourse to international law” (Simpson, 2018; p.4). In this sense, Ireland is a de facto neutral state, as it exercises neutrality, to what extent will be analysed later, without formally enshrining its stance in the constitution. Despite this, other states recognise Ireland as officially neutral.

Besides the aforementioned three main categories, neutrality comes in various forms, including political, military, armed, active and qualified neutrality. Political neutrality is a stance characterized by non-partisanship and impartiality in international affairs and political disputes, allowing the country to avoid getting involved in external political disagreements, which usually allows it to take on the role of a mediator. On the other hand, military neutrality, broadly defined as ‘non-involvement in wars’, refers to refraining from armed conflict, juxtaposed to political conflicts, and is often linked to Ireland, however, this will be contested later. Armed neutrality consists of neutral states that do not partake in conflicts but maintain a strong military for the purpose of self-defence. Certainly, Ireland does not meet the criteria to be considered as a country that has adopted armed neutrality, while Switzerland does. As one of the last western European states with mandatory military service, Switzerland has a military force of approximately 140,000 personnel, with a further 1.5 million available in case of emergency (Gallagher, 2023; p. 215), and is much more capable of protecting its sovereignty than Ireland. Another variation is that of active neutrality, originating from Sweden’s Cold War ‘active policy of neutrality’, in which it used its “neutral position to moderate the confrontation between the east-west blocs; while aligning itself clearly with support for democracy, human rights and liberal market systems” (Greene, 2022). Today active neutrality is more broadly understood as “promoting international peace and security through diplomacy, cooperative security arrangements and international organisations” (Greene, 2022). Qualified neutrality is similar to active neutrality. Supporters of qualified neutrality suggest that “neutrality rules need not be applied impartially when there is clear-cut aggression, as is the case of Russia’s unjustified

armed attack on Ukraine” (Schmitt, 2023). Ireland also adheres to the concept of qualified neutrality and aims to side with states who are the victims of aggression, as we will see in the analysis of their response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Qualified neutrality sits somewhat opposite to strict neutrality, which maintains “the equal application of neutrality rules to the belligerents except when the United Nations has acted” (Schmitt, 2023).

Moving away from a more standardised form of neutrality, non-alignment “is a diluted form of neutrality that emerged during the Cold War” (Simpson, 2018; p. 4). Non-aligned states during the Cold War remained neutral, with regards to the US and the Soviet Union but didn’t refrain from other conflicts outside of the realm of the Cold War. Interestingly, despite not siding with either side during the Cold war, Ireland was never a member of the Non-Aligned Movement. A term that more accurately reflects Ireland’s stance during the Cold War would be that of non-belligerency, “where neutrality means non-participation and impartiality, non-belligerency means a state is not involved in a conflict, but favours one side over another” (Raymond, 1997; p. 125). Indeed, that may still ring true today with regards to the Russo-Ukraine conflict.

Justification for the study:

Having examined the attitudes, history and types of neutrality, it is now appropriate to convey the need for a comprehensive reassessment of Irish neutrality. Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022, many European countries have been forced to re-evaluate their foreign policies, security strategies and defence budgets. “Russia’s invasion of Ukraine sparked a defence boom” (Cooban, 2024), a paradigm shift that may continue well after the war itself. With defence being a top priority for all states, the return of war to Europe has led many to reassess their alliances, and attitudes toward collective security initiatives. ‘Nordic Neutrality’ has crumbled, with the induction of Finland into NATO in April 2023, and Sweden joining the alliance in March 2024, after Hungary’s parliament voted to approve its membership (Rauhala, 2024). The return of great-power competition has meant that the principle of neutrality has become an increasingly significant factor in state’s foreign policy, particularly in Ireland.

The concept is a hot topic of debate in both public and political spheres in Ireland since February 2022. Many advocate for the protection of Irish neutrality, a result of what many perceive to be the slow erosion of Irish neutrality through increased participation in regional security agreements over the years. Ireland’s decision in March 2023 to withdraw its defence

forces from a UN led mission in Syria to partake in a new EU battlegroup was “a further step in eroding Irish neutrality, according to Sinn Féin's Defence spokesperson” (Cunnigham, 2023). Others, however, push for greater Irish integration into defensive organisations such as NATO, as “the context for Ireland’s historic neutrality has vanished” (Luce, 2023). Such a debate has proven to be quite controversial, due to Ireland’s longstanding tradition of neutrality. However, if neutrality appears to be a hindrance to the country in the face of a rapidly changing global landscape, it is quite possible that Ireland may change its stance.

Therefore, this thesis titled "Reassessing Irish Neutrality Following the Russia Invasion of Ukraine" will explore the intricate and evolving dynamics of Irish neutrality against the backdrop of Europe’s latest conflict. Through a comprehensive examination of many aspects regarding Irish neutrality and defence, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities confronting Irish neutrality in a post-Ukraine invasion world. By the end of the thesis, I hope to be able to determine whether or not Ireland’s stance on neutrality should evolve, and decipher what Ireland's role is, in an international system where great-power rivalry promotes polarising collective security arrangements. Ideally, this study will further contribute to the broader discourse on the relevance and effectiveness of neutrality in contemporary international affairs.

1. Methodology:

1.1. Research Questions:

The research questions for this thesis are 1. Is the abandonment of Irish neutrality likely in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine? and 2. would it subsequently lead to NATO membership?

1.2. Hypotheses:

For this thesis, two hypotheses have been formulated. Firstly, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused a paradigm shift of the strategic environment, leading to a revitalised need for Ireland to reassess its policy of neutrality and reevaluate the country's defensive alliances. Secondly, regardless of whether the stance on neutrality changes, Ireland needs to invest more in its defence in order to protect its own security interests and decrease reliance on the US and UK.

1.3. Research design:

A comparative case study approach will be used as the methodological basis in which the aforementioned research questions will be answered. Comparative analysis “has often been understood as that branch of political science concerned with comparing nations” (Verba, 1991; p.199). It can be defined as “a research methodology in which aspects of social science or life are examined across different cultures or countries” (Shahrokh, 2019; p1). This comparative analysis will compare Ireland’s response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, with strict European neutral Switzerland. There are two main types of comparative analysis, “variable-oriented studies, mainly aimed at establishing generalized relationships between variables, while case-oriented research seeks to understand complex units” (della Porta, 2008; p198), thus, this analysis will be case-oriented. Each country's contributions to aiding the Ukrainian war effort across economic, military and political variables will be examined. It will also compare how Swiss relations with NATO and the EU have evolved following the outbreak of the Russo-Ukraine war, and how they compare with the development of Irish-NATO/EU relations. The decisions, policy changes, statements and contributions to EU defence initiatives will also be analysed. Before carrying out this comparative case study analysis, a comprehensive literature review will be carried

out, which will help bring the reader up to date with pre-existing academic works surrounding Irish neutrality as well as giving a nuanced summary on the history of the topic.

1.4. Theoretical Framework:

Regarding the theoretical framework, the research question will be answered through a social constructivist perspective. Social constructivism, challenges “the ontology of positivist IR theory by pointing to the importance of social factors such as ideas, norms, shared meanings, collective knowledge, culture, language and texts for the explanation of outcomes in international politics” (Spindler, 2013; p.198). Social constructivism is a suitable theoretical framework for the reassessment of Irish neutrality for many reasons. Most notably, it emphasises the impact norms and values have on state behaviour; therefore, it can be used to understand Irish society’s perceptions towards neutrality, and how they may have changed following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Furthermore, it highlights the role of identity in shaping international relations. Neutrality remains a significant aspect of Irish identity and culture, hence, social constructivism is a suitable tool to explain how identity informs Irish foreign policy traditions. Constructivism adheres to the belief that actors interpret developments in international politics differently depending on their social context. This theoretical framework can inform how Irish society has interpreted the resurgence of the Ukrainian Crisis, how it perceives potential security threats, which ultimately impacts views towards neutrality and national defence. Finally, social constructivism suggests that public opinion and discourse also plays a role in shaping behaviour. Therefore, different public narratives, debates and discourses regarding Irish neutrality that have emerged after the Russian invasion in 2022 must be analysed to carry out such a reassessment. For these reasons, using social constructivism as a theoretical framework for this study can provide a nuanced analysis that goes beyond traditional realist or liberal attitudes, highlighting the importance of social and immaterial factors in shaping Irish foreign policy decisions.

2. Literature Review:

The purpose of this literature review is to outline and analyse notable works regarding the research topic, Irish neutrality. This chapter focuses mainly on historical aspects of Irish neutrality, giving readers a foundation and context of the concept in the Irish sense, before delving into the empirical chapters, which will largely focus on the neutrality of the modern Irish state. Literature surrounding it can be divided into two categories, those that support the 'unneutral Ireland' thesis, and those supporting the 'Irish neutrality' thesis. Such supporters of the 'unneutral' thesis include authors such as Conor Gallagher, who wrote 'The Many Myths of Irish Neutrality', former Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Garret Fitzgerald, and Trevor C. Salmon. Supporters of the Irish Neutrality thesis include Karen Devine, McSweeney and Mervyn O'Driscoll. The 'unneutral Ireland' thesis "claims that Irish neutrality is a 'myth', while the subjugated 'Irish neutrality' thesis embodies the opposing claim that Irish neutrality exists" (Devine, 2009). This literature review will analyse various works of literature that focus on the concept of Irish neutrality, in chronological order with regards to historical development. I will first begin by reviewing Thomas Hackey's 'The Rhetoric and Reality of Irish Neutrality' (2002), which provides a detailed account of the history of Irish Neutrality. To complement, Garret Fitzgerald's "The Origins, Development, and Present Status of Neutrality" (1998), will also be discussed, which also provides an account of the history of Irish neutrality through the eyes of a former statesman. In 'Security, Defence and Neutrality', Ben Tonra explores the Irish defence, and provides a comprehensive summary of Irish involvement in peacekeeping. Following on from this, we look to the future, examining Cornelia-Adrian Baciu's "Security Transformation and Multilateralism: The Future of Irish Defence and Foreign Policy". Finally, Karen Devine's 'The Myth of 'the Myth of Irish neutrality'' deconstructs concepts of Irish Neutrality using international relations theories which provides a theory-focused approach to the study of Irish Neutrality.

In 'The Rhetoric and Reality of Irish Neutrality', Hackey is quick to note that "there is often no clear consensus on what the nation's neutral posture ought to be, or on what neutrality actually means in the Irish context" (Hackey, 2002; p.27). This is imperative to understand before delving into the concept of Irish neutrality. The origins of Irish neutrality are rooted in its independence movement from Britain, first mentioned by Theobald Wolfe Tone, the father of Irish Republicanism. His pamphlet, "'The Spanish War', was published in 1790 and argued for Irish neutrality and non-involvement in Britain's wars" (MacDonagh, 2009).

However, Hackey's historical analysis of Irish Neutrality begins prior to WWI, when "Irish nationalists were motivated by anti-British sentiment" (Hackey, 2002; p.27) and feared conscription into the Great War. However, Hackey notes that "very few of them would have had any commitment to a specific concept of neutrality" (Hackey, 2002; p.27), as neutrality was seen as more of a tool to achieve independence and stay out of the British Empires continental wars and less as a desirable goal to achieve. This was reflected in the early days of the Irish Free State, established in 1922 following the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty, "at a time when the traditional view of neutrality was being seriously challenged" (Hackey, 2002; p.28). Under the conditions of the Treaty, partition was imposed upon the island, and Britain retained control over three strategically important ports in the Free State. These ports: Berehaven, Cobh and Lough Swilly, essentially ruled out the possibility of the Irish Free State being neutral, due to the presence of British bases on its territory. Regarding partition, Hackey states that the Irish President, Eamon De Valera, "was prepared to enter a defensive military alliance with Great Britain if a resolution could be reached on the partition issue" (Hackey, 2002; p.29). As Hackey states, "neutrality, after all, was not an end in itself, but a means to an end" (Hackey, 2002; p.30). Irish Historian Ronan Fanning agrees with Hackey in this regard, believing that "neither de Valera nor his colleagues of the revolutionary period were ideologically committed to any theory or doctrine of neutrality, the Irish commitment was to the ideology of independence" (Fanning, 1982; p.121). Furthermore, Hackey notes that as a result of Ireland's participation in the newly established League of Nations, which "had given rise to a new concept which was predicated upon the principle of collective security" (Hackey, 2002; p. 28), "the Irish Free State could make no claim to neutrality given that its collective security obligations as a member of the League could have involved it in a war to punish an aggressor state" (Hackey, 2002; p.29). However, following the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1936, and the League of Nations failure to act, de Valera relinquished support for the League and affirmed to Dail Eireann: "we want to be neutral" (Hackey, 2022; p.29). The return of the 'Treaty Ports' following the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1938, which also converted the Irish Free State into a Republic, provided Ireland with the opportunity of truly establishing a neutral stance. However, despite the developments in the late 1930's regarding the relinquishing of Irish support for the League of Nations and the regaining of the Treaty Ports, Hackey insists that "neutrality was not, before World War II, a time-honoured and commonly accepted dogma of Irish nationalism as has been sometimes suggested" (Hackey, 2002; p.30).

Garret Fitzgerald's 'The Origin's, Development, and Present Status of Irish 'Neutrality'', in similar fashion to Hackey's article, focuses largely on the historical development of Irish neutrality. As a firm believer in the 'unneutral Ireland' thesis, the former Taoiseach states that during WWII, "it is at least questionable whether Ireland can properly be described as having been 'neutral', because of the scale of assistance given secretly to Britain was scarcely compatible with neutrality under international law" (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.13). Despite Hackey's notion that neutrality was 'a means to end', whether to achieve independence or end partition, Fitzgerald mentions how in July 1940, de Valera "refused a conditional British offer of Irish unity [...] in return for either an Irish declaration of war on Germany or Irish agreement to British troops being stationed in Ireland in preparation for a possible German attack" (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.14). Fitzgerald proceeds to outline the reasons for de Valera's refusal of the offer and the retention of Ireland's neutral stance during WWII. First and foremost, Fitzgerald believed that "neutrality represented an assertion of sovereignty by a new state" (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.14). This statement aligns with the viewpoints of many Irish historians regarding the matter. The second factor for the retention of Irish neutrality related to the "fear of the consequences of involvement in the conflict, and in particular, of aerial bombardment" (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.14). Finally, the third factor, which is also widely agreed upon by Irish historians and academics, related to the fact that "there was a deep-seated, but for obvious reasons never publicly expressed, fear that voluntary involvement in the war on the Allied side could lead to a recrudescence of the Civil War" (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.14). Following WWII, Fitzgerald believed that the perceived 'successes' of Irish wartime neutrality, "led to the conversion of the pragmatic decision to remain a belligerent into a myth of traditional neutrality" (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.15). This differs from Conor Gallagher's opinions regarding neutrality, as he "finds it hard to explain at what point neutrality became a sacred cow" (Canavan, 2023).

In the aftermath of WWII, Ireland was once again willing to abandon neutrality to end partition. When approached by the US, Ireland agreed to join the Atlantic Pact on the grounds that re-unification occurred, as "no Irish government could participate with Britain in a military alliance while this situation continues, without running counter to the national sentiment of the Irish people" (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.15). The plan failed, as both the US and UK were "unwilling to force Northern Ireland into the Irish State against the wishes of its people as a quid pro quo for securing bases in Ireland" (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.15). Fitzgerald is quick to note that "at no stage in the prolonged discussions on participation in the Alliance

was it ever argued by the Irish government that neutrality prevented it joining the Atlantic pact” (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.15). The issue of partition seemed to be Ireland’s biggest obstacle to joining NATO according to Fitzgerald. The following year, Minister for External Affairs Sean McBride proposed an Irish American bilateral defence agreement, however this was rejected because of “British pressure against such a pact, which the British government feared might be used by the Irish government as a means of rallying American support on the issue of partition” (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.15). Later, Fitzgerald references Anglo-Irish discussions in 1980, in which Taoiseach Charles Haughey made proposals regarding British-Irish defence pacts, stating “despite Ireland's purported commitment to neutrality, at two quite different points in time since the establishment of the North Atlantic Alliance, approaches have been made on behalf of Ireland to the US and British governments, respectively, proposing bi-lateral defence arrangements-and on both occasions such arrangements were rejected by the governments involved” (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.16). Fitzgerald finds it interesting that both Irish politicians who made these bilateral defence proposals were “most strongly identified in the public mind with traditional nationalist attitudes” (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.16).

Fitzgerald considers the mid-1980’s as a key turning point, as “there was a certain evolution in Irish public opinion on the issue of neutrality, arising from a growing acceptance of the desirability of political union and economic and monetary union within the [European] Community” (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.17). Towards the end of his article, the former Taoiseach provides his own opinions on the matter, noting that “Irish neutrality does not conform to classic definitions of neutrality” (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.18). He finds the Irish dilemma unique to other European neutrals including Switzerland, Austria and Sweden, who “have had much more clear-cut concepts of neutrality than Ireland has demonstrated since the state was founded” (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.18). For Fitzgerald, confusion about neutrality in Ireland stems from a divided public “an important section of which remains strongly influenced by a desire to remain detached from anything that can be represented as involving a military commitment outside the compass of the United Nations” (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.18). These issues are still prevalent today. He continues to criticise Irish attitudes towards defence, pointing out Ireland's reliance on NATO for defence and deterrence during the Cold War, “we have differed notably from states such as Finland and Sweden, countries less fortunate in their near neighbours than we have” (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.19). Adding his own opinion to the matter, as a former statesman he “deplored this Irish form of dependent neutralism...I

could never regard our decision to opt out of Western European defence and to depend for our defence exclusively on a combination of other states, in the formulation of whose policy we have no say, as being in accordance with our dignity as a state, or with our with moral responsibilities" (Fitzgerald, 1998; p.19). His opinions on Irish defence and neutrality are quite evident from this statement alone.

In Ben Tonra's analysis of Irish military tradition in 'Security, defence, and Neutrality: The Irish dilemma', he states that "Ireland has been both cursed and blessed" (Tonra, 2012). He notes that throughout history, Ireland was not always geographically blessed, due to its proximity to the heart of the British Empire. Today however, "in core traditional military security terms Ireland enjoys, perhaps for the first time in its history, an almost wholly benign local security environment" (Tonra, 2012) Like Fitzgerald, he believes Ireland lacks any serious approach to defence because of its geographical location. As a result, "the aesthetic of military tradition holds little sway over the public imagination" (Tonra, 2012). To secure its western flank, assuming control of Ireland became critical for Britain, and thus Ireland became the 'blueprint' for its colonial ventures further abroad. Ireland's subsequent rebellions and attempts for sovereignty were carried out through non-traditional military means. Tonra states that independence "was achieved through the creation of an underground guerrilla army where success was defined by the acts of small armed groups or individuals rather than by a grand national army" (Tonra, 2012). Thus, Ireland lacks a military tradition in this regard. Following independence, Tonra suggests that "the development of a strong martial tradition would have been a priority for the new state," however this was not the case, "at least in part a function of the bitter civil war which followed independence and the contested legitimacy of the new Irish State which followed for some decades" (Tonra, 2012). Tonra quotes 'the architect of Irish neutrality', Eamon de Valera, stating "it would be fatal for the small nations, including ourselves, who have any hope of collective security, to think that they can in the end dodge their obligations" (Tonra, 2012). Focusing on neutrality, he references the 1996 White Paper on Irish foreign policy, which suggested that neutrality had "taken on a significance for Irish people over and above the essentially practical considerations on which it was originally based" (Tonra, 2012), a viewpoint similar to that of Fitzgerald. For Tonra, neutrality is understood as being a good international citizen, with positive and ethical foreign policies. However, the government defines the concept as "being a non-member of a military alliance" (Tonra, 2012). For the

author, this definition in the Irish context “has little or nothing to do with the legal concept” (Tonra, 2012).

Cornelia-Adrian Baciu’s “Security Transformation and Multilateralism: The Future of Irish Defence and Foreign Policy, focuses mainly on Irish multilateralism and collective defence. Immediately, Baciu agrees with Fitzgerald, in that “after WW2, the pragmatic policy of neutrality gradually became a principle of neutrality, and a core element of foreign policy” (Baciu, 2019). She is also quick to note that neutrality doesn’t necessarily mean isolationism, “as the newly independent Irish state made clear its willingness to deploy troops on behalf of the League of Nations” (Baciu, 2018), an early indication of Ireland’s support for multilateralism.

In ‘The Myth of ‘the Myth of Irish neutrality’, Karen Devine analyses concepts of Irish neutrality using various international relations theories. Like previous authors, she too outlines the ‘confused’ understanding of neutrality by the public compared to the attitudes of the political elite. She implies that, “public opinion is ‘non-rational’ according to academic standards”, and that “academic discourse claiming that Ireland’s neutrality is a myth does not reflect ‘rational’ public opinion” (Devine, 2006; p.117). Devine suggests that such implications can be “reconciled through a supposition that each is based on a different IR theoretical worldview and a correspondingly different concept of neutrality” (Devine, 2006; p.117). Devine refers to the differences regarding the differences of the ‘Unneutral’ and ‘Irish Neutrality’ theses. She suggests that “the ‘unneutral thesis’ contrives an essentialist concept of neutrality using positivist methods” (Devine, 2006; p.130), which contrasts with the more ‘fluid’ idea of ‘active’ neutrality as suggested by the Irish neutrality thesis. In this sense, the Irish Neutrality thesis takes on a more constructivist approach, “if people perceive things as real then they are real in their consequences” (Devine, 2006; p.131). This approach means that this viewpoint accounts for neutrality as an important aspect of Irish state identity, arguing neutrality as “an element of a people’s identity, however inconsistent it may be with the reality of foreign policy” (Devine, 2006; p.136). For Devine, neither thesis “can claim the sole, logical ‘truth’ about Irish neutrality, in the sense that each thesis on Irish neutrality is theory-dependent, each is equally ‘true’ and equally contingent” (Devine, 2006; p.120). Thus, highlighting the need for an analysis of Irish neutrality using both positivist and post-positivist approaches. Devine takes a social constructivist stance when examining Irish neutrality in her paper, believing it to be “more relevant and appropriate for the purposes of understanding the dynamics of public opinion on Irish neutrality compared to the neo-realist

‘unneutral’ discourse” (Devine, 2006; p.120). She notes how the ‘unneutral thesis’ has been popular in academic literature throughout the decades, naming notable works supporting the thesis, including the aforementioned Garret Fitzgerald, despite how it “appears to go against the grain of public opinion on neutrality” (Devine, 2006; p.122). This leads Devine to ask, “is neo-realism deliberately chosen as a worldview by European and Irish elites in order to de-legitimate neutrality?” (Devine, 2006; p.137), suggesting that “neutrality is by its nature a challenge to the principal theories of international relations, because it derives from the possibility that the use of force in international relations can be restricted” (Devine, 2006; p.138). This article highlights that “different IR theoretical worldviews deliver different meanings of the concept of Irish neutrality” (Devine, 2006; p.137). She insists that, to truly understand the notion of Irish neutrality and public opinion, researchers must make use of non-realist theories, “instead of residing in the ‘rationalist’ hegemony of the (neo)realism” (Devine, 2006; p.139).

To conclude, literature surrounding Irish neutrality can be polarising and divisive, so much so that academic works may be divided into two categories, those supporting the ‘unneutral Ireland’ thesis and those that advocate for the ‘Irish neutrality’ thesis. As Devine pointed out, the ‘unneutral Ireland’ thesis is the most prominent stance in academic circles and the political elite, adverse to the opinions of the vast majority of the public. Such supporters of the unneutral Ireland thesis include Hachey and Fitzgerald, contrast to Devine and Baciu, backing the Irish neutrality thesis. In this regard, Tonra remains fairly balanced in his assessment of Irish neutrality.

3. Comparative case study - Ireland:

3.1. Introduction to Modern Irish Neutrality:

Neutrality has been a cornerstone of Irish foreign policy “for over 80 years” (Andrews, 2022). Today, Irish neutrality consists of “a set of norms which define Ireland’s approach to the wider world” (Tonra, 2012). This set of norms includes “the peaceful resolution of disputes, human rights, nuclear non-proliferation, arms control, the rights of small nations and global socioeconomic development” (Tonra, 2012). While neutrality is codified in international law, it is not specifically codified in Ireland’s “constitution or laws, nor in any international treaty” (Andrews, 2022). It is simply a governmental policy that has consistently been reevaluated and adopted by every successive government since WWII. However, neutrality is indirectly mentioned in several articles of the Constitution. The first indirect mention in the constitution is in Article 28.3.1, stating “war shall not be declared, and the State shall not participate in any war save with the assent of Dáil Éireann ” (Andrews, 2022). The second being in Article 29.2, stating “Ireland affirms its adherence to the principle of the pacific settlement of international disputes by international arbitration or judicial determination” (Andrews, 2022), insinuating that Ireland doesn’t support resolving conflicts through armed means. There are other articles that indirectly reference neutrality and collective security; however, these will be mentioned later. Therefore, Irish neutrality is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, despite some indirect references. Consequently, a public referendum to change Ireland’s position on neutrality is not legally necessary, as it doesn’t alter the state’s constitution, however, it would be highly recommended so as not to cause public outrage. Despite not being legislated in Irish law, Ireland's policy of neutrality in the EU is “codified in the Protocol attached to the Lisbon Treaty” (gov.ie, n.d.). Today, Irish neutrality is understood as an “active approach towards peace support operations and crisis management, contributions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, work for human rights and development, and efforts to promote disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction” (gov.ie, n.d.). This allows Ireland “to engage more effectively in efforts to promote peace and development through the United Nations, the European Union and our own bilateral actions” (gov.ie, n.d.), but not outside of these frameworks, unless approved by the UN.

3.2. Irish Collective Security and Multilateralism:

3.2.1. Introduction:

As of 2018, “Ireland is party to 1,286 international or bilateral treaties and programmes” (Baciu, 2018). There is a legal basis for such an affinity to multilateralism, as Article 29.1. of the Irish Constitution states that “Ireland affirms its devotion to the ideal of peace and friendly cooperation amongst nations founded on international justice and morality” (Andrews, 2022). Besides legal reasons, there are also logical reasons for Ireland's approach to neutrality, because, in absence of a strong military tradition “the Irish state has relied heavily upon the force of law, rather than the law of force, to secure its own security interests” (Tonra, 2012). This approach means that Ireland is heavily committed to multilateralism, and “analysts have pointed to an abiding Irish profile in the development of formal, legal institutions and precedent as the means by which Irish policy makers seek to embed their security in a wider multilateral framework” (Tonra, 2012). Ireland is a member of multilateral organisations including the UN, EU, Council of Europe, World Trade Organisation, World Bank, World Health Organisation, and the International Criminal Court to name but a few. Interestingly, despite being a neutral nation, Ireland is not a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and never applied for membership. NAM’s beliefs of anti-colonialism and neutrality during the Cold War was seemingly a perfect fit for Ireland, however, member states of NAM viewed Ireland as a clearly western aligned nation during the Cold War. Thus, Ireland wasn’t accepted into the organisation, and in return, never pursued taking part. The words of then Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Gromyko, convey the puzzling stance of Ireland at the time, and maybe even still today, “I don’t understand Ireland, you are not aligned, and you are not aligned with the non-aligned” (Gallagher, 2023; p.115).

3.2.2. International Treaties:

Ireland has signed arms control treaties including the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Ireland was heavily involved in the creation of the NPT, as “in 1958, led by then Minister Frank Aiken, Ireland introduced the first of what became known as the ‘Irish Resolutions’ at the UN which eventually led to the NPT” (DFA, n.d.). As a result of the state's pioneering efforts, “Ireland was the first country invited to sign the NPT in 1968”

(DFA, n.d.). Furthermore, Ireland was heavily involved in banning cluster munitions, hosting the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Dublin in 2008, “with 110 countries signing up” (Gallagher, 2023; p.161). However, “unfortunately, and unsurprisingly, these do not include the US, Russia, China or Israel, the very states most likely to use cluster bombs” (Gallagher, 2023; p.161), thereby greatly reducing the effect of such a treaty.

3.2.3. Collective Security:

The majority of the public fearing the erosion of Irish neutrality are not so much opposed to the country’s involvement in such international organisations, but rather the organisations individual collective security arrangements. For the majority of the Irish public, “almost any multilateral engagement on foreign, security and defence issues can threaten their normatively framed understanding of a progressive and positive ‘neutrality’”, and as a result, successive governments consistently “found themselves defensively insisting that nothing agreed within the EU or agreed with NATO, the OSCE or the UN has compromised their narrowly framed definition of ‘traditional neutrality’” (Tonra, 2012). Despite its commitment to military neutrality, Ireland is a member of many common defence arrangements, including the EU’s policy tool Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and NATO’s ‘Partnership for Peace’(PFP). Irish involvement in these groups will be further discussed in the following chapter. While not a traditional collective security arrangement per se, Ireland is also a member of many UN peacekeeping operations, which does have a militaristic element to it. Ireland’s commitments to the EU’s common defence frameworks have drawn criticism from both the public and politicians alike, and there is a legal basis for this argument. Article 29.4.9., which was “added to the Irish constitution following the 2nd referendum on the Nice Treaty in 2002”, states that “the State shall not adopt a decision taken by the European Council to establish a common defence pursuant to Article 42 of the Treaty on European Union where that common defence would include the State” (Andrews, 2022). As a result, any EU common defence treaties signed by Ireland have assured that “Ireland’s traditional military neutrality is in no way threatened by its EU membership” (Tonra, 2012). Despite this reassurance, many perceived that Ireland’s admittance into PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) in 2017 “would erode the principle of neutrality and Article 29.9 of the Irish Constitution” (Baciu, 2018).

3.2.4. Irish Multilateralism in literature:

Irish attitudes on multilateralism are based upon the assumption that “the interests of smaller and less powerful states are best defended within legitimate, strong, credible and effective multilateral institutions” (Tonra, 2012). Irish engagement in multilateralism is often construed as an alternative to engaging in great power politics, as “a multilateral international system can act as a balancing mechanism against a hegemon-dominated security order and could be associated with greater decision-making power than in the scenario of band-wagoning to a hegemon” (Baciu, 2018). Baciu compares Irish neutrality to that of other European neutral states, emphasising that multilateralism doesn’t impact its neutral status. Tonra defends Ireland’s stance on neutrality and multilateralism, believing that “there is legitimate doubt as to whether Ireland’s existing profile in United Nations peacekeeping and its pursuit of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation would exist had Ireland been an unambitious, small and peripheral member of NATO” (Tonra, 2012).

Multilateralism and neutrality have often been perceived as not being in a “zero-sum relationship”, because “while Irish neutrality means staying out of wars and alliances. It also means an engagement to cooperate fully with other like-minded countries in the international system to advance the values we hold and to help to build a fairer, more just and more peaceful world” (Baciu, 2018). Through the lens of social constructivism, “neutrality and membership in different international alliances constitute a ‘source of identity’ and can co-exist in a *modus vivendi* or ‘multiple identities’ model” (Baciu, 2018). Thus, in the future, it is possible that “support for a rules-based international system and multilateral instruments will continue to be a core element of Irish foreign policy”, however, “in times of uncertainty in transatlantic relations and weakening multilateralism, Ireland is likely to support a European ‘pole’” (Baciu, 2018). From a legal point of view, “membership in different alliances and multilateral organisations suggests that Ireland has never been politically neutral, as membership in alliances can be interpreted as preferences for and commitment to a certain set of policies and values” (Baciu, 2018).

3.3. Irish Military and Defence:

3.3.1. Introduction:

There are four key dimensions that must be considered when analysing Irish defence, that is, “Ireland’s geopolitical position, the absence of a strong martial tradition, a commitment to collective security and international law and a tradition of military non-alignment or neutrality” (Tonra, 2012). As we have seen, Irish commitment to multilateralism and collective security has allowed it to be somewhat relaxed towards defence, however, it doesn’t justify the subpar condition of its military. A neutral stance isn’t an excuse either, as neutral nations have a legal obligation to defend such neutrality under the 1907 Hague Convention agreements. Regarding defence, the country is referred to as “Europe’s weakest link” (Drea, 2022). In 2023, the Irish defence budget was “€1.17 billion in 2023, an extra €67 million on the last budget” (Gallagher, 2022), amounting to 0.23% of the overall budget. Being one of Europe’s richer countries, it should have a larger defensive budget. For 2024, the government has allocated €1.23 billion on defence (Gov.ie, 2023), just 0.6% of the GDP. However, there are plans underway to improve the defensive capabilities of the state, under a programme named ‘Building for the Future – Change from Within’. As part of this programme, the government has approved “to commit the State to move to Level of Ambition 2, with a commensurate increase of the defence budget from €1.1 billion to €1.5 billion by 2028”, as well as employing an “additional 2,000 full time personnel” (Gov.ie, n.d.). The Defence Forces are comprised of the Army, Naval Service, Air Corp and Reserve Defence Force (RDF). The Permanent Defence Force (PDF) also has an intelligence branch known as the Directorate of Military Intelligence, or J2. The total manpower of the PDF is 7,671 (Strategic Framework, 2023). Recruitment is voluntary, with initial recruit training being “17 weeks followed by a further 12 weeks training respectively” (Military.ie, 2018). Generally speaking, while small in size and underfunded, the Irish PDF are respected internationally for their involvement in peacekeeping operations and EU training missions.

3.3.2. Historical Impacts:

There may be historical reasons that are attributed to Ireland’s small military. The events of the Irish Civil War and subsequent Army Mutiny, possibly link to the sociological concept of ‘collective trauma’, which influenced the evolution of future Irish military affairs. Hirschberger defines collective trauma “as the psychological reactions to a traumatic event

that affect an entire society; it does not merely reflect an historical fact, the recollection of a terrible event that happened to a group of people” (Hirschberger, 2018; p.1.). Collective trauma “may give rise to a chosen trauma dynamic that weaves the connection between trauma, memory and ontological security” (Volkan, 1997; p.39). It is interesting to see the link Volkan has formed between the concept of collective trauma and ontological security, and how the former can influence the latter, as this is particularly the case between the Irish Civil War and the current state of the Defence Forces.

The Civil War (1922-1923), which broke out immediately after Independence, occurred out of disagreement as to whether the newly formed Free State should accept partition (pro-treaty), or continue the fight for the entire independence of the island of Ireland (anti-treaty). Suddenly, people who fought alongside each other during the War of Independence, now found themselves fighting each other. Communities, families, and friendships were fractured. Ferriter notes that silence was a large component of the Irish Civil War legacy, as “some were reluctant to speak of it for fear of reopening old wounds or because they did not want the passions and prejudices of 1922-3 to be inherited by subsequent generations” (Ferriter, 2023). The deep divisions carved within Irish society highlighted the danger of militarisation and conflict, fostering a distrust of large national armies which could cause instability. Immediately following the Civil War, “there could no longer be any justification for an army of over 50,000 men” (Hopkinson, 2004). Furthermore, “governmental control had to be firmly established, and the army rid of political influences” (Hopkinson, 2004), and so the process of demobilisation was underway. Other reforms included placing the army under direct civilian control, as “the Free State government was constantly worried about a potential coup by National Army officers who were angry over large scale demobilisations” (Gallagher, 2024).

These fears were justified as demobilisation paved the way to the Army Mutiny of 1924. Many of those who were in the Irish army for years facing demobilisation were unhappy, believing that “veterans of the War of Independence such as themselves were being passed over for promotion or retention in favour of former British Army officers or men who had not seen action in the War of Independence” (McElhatton, 2024). Therefore, “a group of officers issued the government with an ultimatum to end demobilisation, which ended with the detention of the mutineers, the forced resignation of the Army’s general staff and a determination within government that civilian control of the military would never again be questioned” (Gallagher, 2024). Thus, the Ministers and Secretaries Act 1924 was signed,

removing the power from the general staff. Any decisions made by the Irish military had to be justified to elected officials.

This has remained the case until now. A report from the Commission of the Defence Forces in 2022 suggested that a complete overhaul was necessary. In July 2024, the government began the process of restructuring the Defence Forces and its chain of command. The military remains under the power of the government, however “the chain of command will now include the Chief of Staff, whose new powers will be reflected in a new title, Chief of Defence” (Gallagher, 2024). Furthermore, “the three branches of the Defence Forces will also be placed on an equal footing” (Gallagher, 2024). Before then, the Air Corp and Naval Service were only mere offshoots of the Army. Moreover, the Naval Service and Air Corp will be renamed as the Irish Navy and the Irish Air Force. These measures are made not just to elevate spirits with the military, but also to “lead to less siloed decision making and a more responsive Defence Force” (Gallagher, 2024).

3.3.3. Alliances:

As a neutral state, Ireland is not a part of any official military alliance. However, there is an unofficial agreement between Ireland and the UK regarding the defence of its airspace. The RAF “launches Typhoon fighter jets to intercept unidentified aircraft in the Irish ‘Flight Information Region’ for air policing duties because Ireland is incapable of doing so itself” (Allison, 2020). Recently, the Irish Government have been pressed to clarify such a ‘secret deal’ exists, as such a motion has not been passed through parliament, but to no avail. Nonetheless, for now, the closest Ireland has to a fighter jet is a propeller- powered Pilatus PC-9.

Ireland also relies on British support for defence not only in the aerial domain, but the maritime domain also. Due to the country’s position in the North Atlantic, Ireland is situated along a “vast network of undersea fibre-optic cables, carrying about 97 per cent of the world’s communications and internet traffic” (Allison, 2023), most of which passes through Irish waters. This network consists of “550 cables spanning 1.4 million kilometres and a staggering ten trillion euros in financial transactions pulsating through them daily” (Allison, 2023). The underwhelming capability of the Irish Naval Service means that they cannot effectively protect these cables, which are vital not only to Ireland, but to global communications. Therefore, Ireland cooperates with the British Royal Navy “to secure

subsea cables in the North Atlantic using the new RFA Proteus, including areas within Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone", thereby undermining the nations abilities at "independently securing its maritime assets and its reliance on its neighbour" (Allison, 2023). This alliance proved useful as recently as December 2023, when "a Russian submarine, positioned near vital cables off Cork Harbour, was countered by British forces due to Ireland's lack of capability in underwater surveillance" (Allison, 2023). In June 2024, the government agreed to join an EU military initiative to defend their vital underwater infrastructure. Furthermore, Ireland and Britain share information and coordinate policies together regarding security issues in Northern Ireland, however, in this scenario, it is a much more equal partnership.

3.3.4. Irish Defence through Collective Security:

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Irish military does engage in collective defence initiatives, many sponsored by the EU, as well as participating in NATO's Partnership for Peace. The possibility of Ireland having to engage in EU collective security initiatives was always considered in the past by its statesmen. In 1962, then Taoiseach Sean Lemass stated "we recognise that a military commitment will be a consequence of our joining the Common Market and ultimately we are prepared to yield even the technical label of neutrality" (Gallagher, 2023; p.222). Today, Ireland now partakes in the CSDP and PESCO, a tool of the CSDP, and the OSCE. Following the signing of the Lisbon treaty of 2009, Ireland is an active member of the EU's CSDP framework. According to a 'Renew Europe' document, 'Irish neutrality in a changing Europe', prepared by MEP Barry Andrews, the CSDP "provides the EU with the capacity to undertake peacekeeping and conflict prevention missions and to strengthen international security" (Andrews, 2022). Ireland currently participates in three EU CSDP missions, Operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUMAM Ukraine, and Operation Irini (Oireachtas.ie, 2023). To protect its status of military neutrality, it serves non-combat roles such as crisis management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian aid. Furthermore, as part of Ireland's commitment to the CSDP, on 12th January 2023, the government "approved the participation by the Defence Forces in a German-led EU Battlegroup in 2024/2025" (Gov.ie, n.d.). Regarding PESCO, Ireland has been a member since its inception in 2017, as it resides under the framework of the CSDP.

Again, to protect Ireland status of military neutrality, the nation's participation is limited to non-combat roles including peacekeeping, logistics and medical support.

Ireland is also a heavy participant in UN peacekeeping missions. In 2024, there are currently 503 personnel from the Defence Forces involved in UN led missions, although this is a steep reduction compared to the 1531 personnel involved in 2023 (Oireachtas, 2024). The majority of which are deployed in Lebanon, including other places such as Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, and the Golan Heights. Irish military personnel are considered a valuable asset to UN peacekeeping missions due to their "lack of colonial baggage" which means they are "typically viewed as uncontroversial" in many regions such as the Middle East. Furthermore, "it has often been said that peacekeeping was also the saviour of the Defence Forces" (Gallagher, 2023; p.116), as it gives them a sense of purpose. Linking the UN to Irish neutrality, Gallagher states that "the UN was, in many ways, where the modern Irish conception of neutrality was forged; where it defined itself as a country happy to get involved in another nation's affairs, but only if sanctioned by a higher power" (Gallagher, 2023; p.123). Regarding NATO, as a member of the Partnership for Peace programme, Ireland participates with the organisation in various fields, including peacekeeping and training missions focusing on working "to develop military capabilities and improve the interoperability of the Irish armed forces with allies and other partners' armed forces in NATO, EU and UN-led missions" (NATO, 2022). Regarding military development, Ireland is a member of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, and the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. Ireland also avails of useful NATO services, including paying "over €100,000 a year for access to NATO's battlefield intelligence system, as well as using "NATO's Malware Information Sharing Platform " (Gallagher, 2023; p.136). Therefore, "the suspicion among pro-neutrality campaigners that Ireland is on an inexorable path to full NATO membership is understandable" (Gallagher, 2023; p.137).

3.3.5. Triple Lock:

An important aspect of Irish defence and its military is the 'triple lock mechanism'. The 'triple lock mechanism' originates from the "Defence Amendment Act of 1960, but it wasn't until the early 2000's that the mechanism started becoming known as the triple lock" (Gallagher, 2023; p.121). It is a system that ensures the deployment of over twelve Irish

troops may not occur without the consent of the Government, Dáil, and the UN. This is a controversial aspect of Irish foreign policy, as it gives the UN power over Irish foreign policymaking, through the veto rights of the Security Council's permanent members. An example of this occurring was in 2003, when Ireland wished to send peacekeepers to the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, however, this action was vetoed by China, prohibiting Ireland from doing so. Thus, permanent members of the UN Security Council have direct control over certain areas of Irish foreign policy. There are those in the Irish public that support the triple lock, as it severely limits the potential for military deployments overseas, thereby protecting neutrality. However, it has also "long been viewed with disdain by Irish diplomats who consider it a danger to Irish freedom of action" (Gallagher, 2023; p.122). Recently, politicians have been seeking alternatives to the triple lock, a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which will be discussed later.

3.4. The Irish Debate:

3.4.1. The Public:

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has sparked heated public debate in Ireland over whether or not the nation's stance on neutrality should evolve. Historically, the Irish public have always been staunch supporters of neutrality, regardless of the actions and foreign policy decisions of the government. In the first rounds of both the Lisbon and Nice treaty referendums, the public adamantly voted no, citing the protection of neutrality as their reasoning for doing so. When the state and EU ensured that Irish neutrality would be in no way affected, the treaties passed in the second round. Despite the overwhelming support from the public, it has diminished somewhat over the years. In 2013, a poll showed that "almost four out of five respondents (78%) said Ireland should maintain a policy of neutrality" (Doyle, 2022). Furthermore, in 2016 polls "found that 57% of Irish people wanted neutrality enshrined in Ireland's constitution" (Doyle, 2022). In 2023, a year after the Russian invasion, support for neutrality weakened somewhat, but remained strong generally. When opinion polls asked the public whether they agree with a change to the nations model of military neutrality, "61 per cent of voters said they favoured the current model, while just more than a quarter (26 per cent) said they would like to see it change"

(Fox, 2023), with 13 percent of respondents not giving an opinion on the matter. It is also worth noting, younger people are among the most supportive of neutrality (80%) (Fox, 2023).

3.4.2. Public Action:

The majority of the public have always made efforts to protect Irish neutrality, however, following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine these efforts ramped up significantly. For example, in June 2023, “a public debate on Ireland's international security policy, including its long-standing military neutrality, was disrupted by an anti-NATO demonstration” (Paton, 2023). During the protest, the public cried “‘No to NATO’ and unfurled a red banner reading ‘NATO wars - millions dead’ moments before an address by foreign minister Micheal Martin at University College Cork” (Paton, 2023). On the other hand, public forums have been established to foster healthy discussions on the matter, including the ‘People’s Forums on Ireland’s Neutrality’. The event was held on June 17th, 2023, by members of the public who believed that neutrality was under attack. They organised the occasion “in response to repeated suggestions by government ministers that changes will be made to Ireland’s position of military neutrality” (Jaques, 2023).

In reaction to the Irish government's perceived threatening of neutrality, the public have taken it upon themselves to set up Non Governmental Organisations (NGOS) to counter this, advocating for the protection of the country's most sacred policy, among other pacifist beliefs. These include the Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA), The Irish Anti-War Movement (IAWM), World Beyond War (WBW) Ireland, and the Irish Neutrality League. PANA was established in 1996 with the intention to “advocate an independent Irish foreign policy, maintain Irish neutrality and promote a transformed United Nations as the organisation through which Ireland should pursue its security concerns” (McShane, 2023). WBW was established in 2014, believing that “just as there is no such thing as ‘good’ or necessary slavery, there is no such thing as a ‘good’ or necessary war” (WBW, n.d.). The lobby group was established in order to “create a global movement to abolish the institution of war itself, not just the ‘war of the day’” (WBW, n.d.). While many of these organisations advocate not only for Irish neutrality, but also fight for ideals such as fostering peace and preventing global wars, the Irish Neutrality League, simply advocates for the protection and strengthening of the nation’s policy of neutrality.

3.4.3. Political Parties:

While the majority of the public tend to agree on the policy of neutrality, there is quite a difference of opinion between the public and the government, and between the different political parties. Historically speaking, Fine Gael have “been more questioning of the policy; the Greens strongly supportive, as are most in Fianna Fáil” (Harrison, 2022). On the other hand, “supporters of left-wing parties including Sinn Féin, the main opposition party, overwhelmingly support neutrality” (Harrison, 2022). Both Sinn Féin and the Green Party suggest that neutrality allows the state to have a moral standing in the international system, contrary to more militaristic states, which in turn allows it to take on the role as an impartial mediator. Furthermore, they believe that neutrality does not necessarily mean passivity, outlining Ireland's active role in humanitarian missions and peacekeeping. However, despite their historical support of neutrality, being two of the parties in the majority government, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have drawn criticism for slowly eroding Irish neutrality, as they call for a reevaluation of the state’s primary foreign policy tradition. Many politicians that align themselves with these centrist parties suggest that Ireland must engage deeply with European security initiatives in light of an increasingly volatile international arena, which has drawn criticism from much of the public.

3.4.4. Political Action:

The government has also carried out their own debates regarding the position of neutrality. From June 22nd-27th 2023, the government ran the ‘Consultative Forum on International Security Policy’, with the intention “to build public understanding and generate discussions on our foreign, security, and defence policies” (Gov.ie, 2023), including neutrality and the Triple Lock. However, despite the forum being portrayed as a positive event that benefits all, it was met with some criticism from both the public and the President, Michael D Higgins. President Higgins believed that the government was “playing with fire for opening debate on military neutrality” stating that “the government risks burying the country in other people’s agendas amid ‘drift’ towards NATO” (Carroll, 2023). On the other hand, opposition party People Before Profit called on the public to oppose the forum, labelling it as a ‘stitch-up’ due to the lack of pro-neutrality advocates speaking at the event. They stated, “a solitary speaker from the anti-war movement is ranged against dozens of representatives from

NATO, EU defence agencies, non-neutral countries and Irish military personnel that have served with NATO overseas” (PBP, 2023).

Parliamentary debates have also occurred to address the ongoing conversation regarding neutrality. On Wednesday, 25th Oct 2023, members of Dáil Éireann spoke on the motion of enshrining neutrality in the constitution. Opposition member Deputy Catherine Connolly called on the Government to “affirm and reiterate our steadfast commitment to neutrality” and “work to raise awareness of the importance of neutrality and its contribution to global peace” (Oireachtas, 2023). Furthermore, Deputy Thomas Pringle stated that he “wholeheartedly supports the motion and particularly its call for the Government to hold a referendum to enshrine neutrality in our Constitution” (Oireachtas, 2023). In response, Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin reaffirmed the government’s commitment to neutrality, but followed it up by stating, that “it goes without saying that military neutrality does not mean we either wish to, or can, isolate ourselves from the challenging security environment we find ourselves in today” (Oireachtas, 2023). These calls to enshrine neutrality in the Irish Constitution stem from the rejected Thirty-Ninth Amendment of the Constitution (Neutrality) Bill 2022, which was rejected by parliamentary vote on 23rd March 2022. The bill proposed to “insert Irish neutrality and a policy of non-membership of military alliances into the Constitution” (Oireachtas, 2022). However, it was rejected by the parliament, with 53 members approving of the bill, 67 rejecting the bill, and none abstaining. The debate that took place on 25th October 2023 aimed to re-address the issue, however, as of now, it seems to have been unsuccessful, and no such bill has been approved as of yet.

3.5. Irish Response and effects of Invasion of Ukraine:

3.5.1. Assistance:

Ireland was one of the first countries to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with “An Taoiseach announcing a significant Irish Aid package on the first day of the invasion that has since increased to €20 million” (Gov.ie, 2024). In line with military neutrality, this aid was strictly non-lethal. By the end of 2022, Ireland spent €1 billion assisting people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine. In 2023, the Irish budget for Ukrainian assistance was €2 billion. This year, the government has set aside an estimated €2.5 billion for Ukraine (Keena, 2023). Aside from financial aid, the state is providing Ukraine with political and humanitarian

support, as well as providing non-lethal materials, thus keeping Ireland's policy of military neutrality intact. In terms of political assistance, the government has stated it supports Ukraine's position as an EU candidate and they "supported the expulsion of Russia from the Council of Europe in Strasbourg" (Gov.ie, 2024). Between May and November of 2022, Ireland held the role of Presidency in the Council of Europe. During this time, the state worked on the Ukraine Action Plan, which aimed to help rebuild the war-torn country of Ukraine, as well as making "a €1 million contribution to a specially established Ukraine Donor Fund in the Council of Europe's Development Bank" (Gov.ie, 2024). Regarding humanitarian assistance, the country has taken in upwards of 104,315 Ukrainian refugees. (Statista, 2024). In terms of the provision of non-military materials and assistance, Ireland has been heavily involved in security measures towards Ukraine. There are currently three Irish civilian experts, which are seconded to civilian CSDP missions in Ukraine (DFA, 2023). In February 2023, following the establishment of EU Military Assistance Mission in Support of Ukraine (EUMAM), Ireland approved the participation of up to 30 Defence forces personnel to EUMAM, proving its willingness to aid Ukrainian security (Gov.ie, 2023). Following the success of numerous Irish-led training missions for Ukrainian soldiers in previous months, on the 23rd of July 2023 "Tánaiste and Minister for Defence Micheál Martin announced the approval for the Defence Forces' proposed training engagement with EUMAM" (Gov.ie, 2023), including Counter-IED, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, combat medical and engineering training. In this sense, Ireland does technically provide support for the Ukrainian military, which could endanger its military neutrality, however, it does not provide arms, ammunition or combatants. Regarding Irish voting patterns at the UN General Assembly on resolutions regarding Ukraine, Ireland voted in favour consistently. These resolutions include ES-11/1: Aggression against Ukraine, ES-11/2: Humanitarian Consequences of the Aggression against Ukraine, ES-11/3: Suspension of Russia from the Human Rights Council, ES-11/4: Further Humanitarian Consequences and Accountability and finally ES-11/5: Principles of the Charter of the United Nations (UN Digital Library, 2022). Consistent Irish approval of UN resolutions against Russia highlights not only its support for Ukraine, but also the support for multilateral institutions such as the UN. Irish support for Ukraine was welcomed, as it was seen as 'the right thing to do', as a Western EU country. However, there is also a financial incentive to this. While Ireland is free from NATO influence as a non-member state, it was "the number one choice for US tech companies in 2021, and the US remains the biggest source of Foreign Direct Investment in Ireland"

(Bruton, 2022). Therefore, it is in the state's best interests to support Ukraine and side with the West, if the US is to continue to provide FDI to Ireland.

3.5.2. Internal changes following invasion:

Following the invasion of Ukraine, the Irish government has drawn criticism for its lack of defence spending. The event showed that European wars have not been banished to the history books. Renewed Russian aggression has shown that geography alone can no longer protect Ireland, as Russia ramped up its hybrid warfare tactics. Aforementioned Russian meddling in Irish waters near critical seabed infrastructure highlights this, as well as the cyberattack on Ireland's healthcare system by Russian hackers, which occurred in 2021. Such attacks, including the invasion of Ukraine, resulted in the government committing to increasing its defensive capabilities.

In May 2023, it was reported that "Ireland has the fifth-highest number of Ukrainians by population size" (McGee, 2023) and that by the end of March 2023, Ireland had 76,175 Ukrainian refugees "the tenth highest number overall in the EU" (McGee, 2023), a large amount for such a small country. Now that that figure has increased to over 100,000 Ukrainian refugees in 2024, it is possible that this ratio of refugees to population size is much higher also. This has resulted in the growth of the far right and anti-immigration sentiment across the country. Prior to the invasion of Ukraine, "immigration was practically off the radar of Irish political discourse" (McGee, 2024). Now, polls show that "immigration has shot up to become the most pressing issue for Irish" (McGee, 2024). This is also reflected in the growing popularity of far-right parties. Furthermore, "three more right-wing parties have emerged in the past six months" (McGee, 2024). While the Irish response to the Ukrainian crisis was of course positive, good-natured, and necessary, it could have adverse negative effects for the country, such as the growth of far-right rhetoric, a problem Switzerland hasn't had to deal with to the same extent.

3.6. Irish Neutrality contradictions – Shannon Airport:

3.6.1. Historical Context:

Ireland has not always been the strictest adherer of its own neutrality, having ‘certain considerations’ for its nearest neighbour and closest allies. The country has always had close ties with the US, stemming from its long history of emigration, many emigrants of which went to the US, which explains why so many there identify as ‘Irish American’. Ireland is one of the few countries guaranteed to have an annual meeting with the US President, which takes place every year on St. Patrick's Day. Therefore, it is no surprise that Ireland closely aligns itself with the US on many issues, even if it is at the detriment of its neutrality policy. In 1979, Ireland signed sanctions on Iran following the “hostage-taking of US diplomats following the Islamic revolution”. Furthermore, “Ireland also joined in America-led sanctions against the Soviet Union after it invaded Afghanistan” (Gallagher, 2023; p.126). However, the support of these sanctions was relatively morally sound, aligning with the states view of ‘distinguishing the oppressed from the oppressor’. Nonetheless, the same cannot be said for other scenarios.

The 1907 Hague Convention, which outlines the principles which neutral countries must adhere to, states that neutral powers must not allow belligerent troops to transit through their territory (Gallagher, 2024; p.166). However, Ireland does exactly this, and doesn’t qualify as a neutral nation according to the 1907 convention. It is true that Ireland did not sign the 1907 Hague Convention, having not gained Independence until 1921, however it still provides a good basis upon which to compare Irish neutrality to. Ireland has granted the US military access to one of its airports, Shannon, due to its strategic trans-Atlantic location, for decades. Such access was first granted to the US, albeit on a limited basis, after WWII, and in 1958, “it was granted blanket permission to overfly Ireland to save fuel as it transported troops and cargo to European bases” (Gallagher, 2024; p.166). Nevertheless, this agreement was based on the understanding that such privileges could only be redeemed during peacetime, or when the international system was somewhat stable. This in itself was not contradictory to the Hague Convention, as during peacetime, the US military couldn’t be considered a belligerent army. That would soon change though.

3.6.2. Use of Shannon during War:

In 1990, during the First Gulf War, the US availed the use of Shannon Airport. There was some slight public opposition to American use of the airport, but not nearly to the same extent as we will see later. Then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gerry Collins, noted that “neutral Austria was also providing refuelling facilities” (Gallagher, 2023; p.167) at the time. Later in the decade, “the US continued to use the airport during the bombing of Kosovo by NATO forces in 1999” (Gallagher, 2023; p.167). Again, this did not spur much controversy amongst the public. Following 9/11, Ireland was quick to sympathise with the US, and Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time, Brian Cowen, “quickly offered the US the use of Shannon Airport to assist in the build-up of military forces for the invasion of Afghanistan” (Gallagher, 2023; p. 167). This was the last time the majority of the Irish public accepted US use of Shannon.

In 2003, the Second Persian Gulf War commenced. In response, previously aforementioned PANA, organised one of the biggest protests in the history of the state, as “some 100,000 Irish people protested on 15 February 2003 to oppose the invasion” (Murphy, 2016), in Dublin. Despite a lack of public support, American use of the airport throughout the war continued, even when neutral Austria “ruled out US landings or over-flights connected with the Iraq war in absence of a UN mandate” (Gallagher, 2023; p.169). Other neutrals, such as Sweden and Finland, reacted similarly. Remarkably, Slovenia, a non-neutral country, “which at the time was about to join NATO, requested that the US not use its airspace” (Gallagher, 2023; p.169).

The US used Shannon airport not only for the transport of troops and munitions, but also extraordinary rendition. Extraordinary rendition is “the practice of transporting terrorist suspects to non-US territory, beyond the protection of US law, where they can be tortured and interrogated” (Gallagher, 2023; p.173). In 2006, Amnesty International published a report, “which stated CIA aircraft known to be involved in extraordinary rendition had repeatedly used Shannon” (Gallagher, 2023; p.173). This report was supported by other NGOs such as the Rendition Project and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. The Rendition Project “identified 27 aircraft used by the CIA in its rendition programme which they claim landed more than 200 times at Irish airports on global circuits” (Carswell, 2014). Furthermore, a report by the Council of Europe found that “Ireland was one of 14 European states colluding in the practice” (Gallagher, 2023; p.173). This practice was allowed to continue as Irish authorities did not, and still do not, inspect US military planes

landing in its airports, allowing Ireland, a neutral state, to be complicit in breaching international law.

3.6.3. Financial Incentives:

Despite its neutrality, unequivocal Irish support for the US is incentivised by economic gain. It has been previously mentioned that Ireland's rich economy is due to FDI, the majority of which comes from the US. A change in Irish foreign policy that doesn't align with the US would be detrimental to the economy. As stated by former Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald, "foreign policy was about the interests of the state rather than ideals or values" (Gallagher, 2023; p.175), which explains why the Irish government continued to allow US landings in Shannon throughout the Iraq war. At the outbreak of the invasion, James Kenny, the US Ambassador to Ireland, warned "that closing the airport to the US would not end the Iraq war but would end thousands of Irish jobs". He was right, because "by 2005, the stopovers were generating 37 million a year for the airport, and when the recession hit in 2009, the US military became vital to the airport's continued survival". (Gallagher, 2023; p.170). To support this, in 2005, former Minister for Transport Martin Cullen stated that "the US use of Shannon is good for business" (Gallagher, 2023; p.175).

Financial incentives do not justify disregard for Irish neutrality, even 'qualified neutrality' which Ireland claims to practise, as "there is no version of neutrality that permits countries to abandon it over economic concerns" (Gallagher, 2023; p.175). James Connolly, a prominent Irish revolutionary, who was executed by the British Army in 1916, seems to have predicted the impact a lack of Irish economic independence would have on its overall sovereignty, despite being killed over 100 years ago. In 1897, while commenting on if Ireland were to gain independence, he stated "England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country" (Connolly, 1945; p.25). Over a century later, this quote still rings true, albeit for a different foreign power, regarding the limitation of Irish foreign policy freedoms through American FDI, which keeps the country economically afloat.

3.6.4. Continued use of the airport:

The US military continues to use Shannon airport today, and “since 2001, around three million US troops have passed through the airport” (Gallagher, 2023; p.172). This goes against the wishes of most of the public, as “polls continue to show that nearly six out of every 10 Irish citizens oppose the US military co-opting Shannon Airport, a de facto American military base” (Irish Examiner, 2019). Controversies surrounding the airport have surged again, as numerous protests have occurred between 2023 and 2024 urging that no US weapons were to be transported to Israel via Shannon, given the ongoing hostilities. However, on the 27th of June 2024, during a parliamentary debate, Tánaiste Micheál Martin stated that “there is absolutely no evidence that any airport in Ireland or any Irish sovereign airspace is being used to transport weapons to the conflict in the Middle East” (Oireachtas.ie, 2024). In response, Deputy Violet-Anne Wynne pointed out that “there is also nothing to point to the contrary” (Oireachtas, 2024), as the government still doesn’t carry out inspections on US military aircraft. Looking to the future, Sinn Féin, the largest defenders of Irish neutrality, also the most popular opposition party in Ireland, has promised to end US military use of Shannon Airport if it gets into power.

4. Comparative case study - Switzerland:

4.1. Introduction to Modern Swiss Neutrality:

Similar to Ireland, neutrality is a key element of Swiss foreign policy and their national identity. However, while Ireland associates mostly with ‘military neutrality’, Switzerland has adopted ‘permanent neutrality’. Unlike Ireland, the Swiss concept of neutrality is clearly understood by the public. Irish neutrality was a decision taken by its statesmen, however, despite popular belief, neutrality was imposed upon Switzerland by more powerful countries, most notably imperial Russia, to “isolate France in the wake of the revolutionary wars which had rocked the continent” (Meuwly 2015). Some suggest that Swiss neutrality arose from “the Battle of Marignano in 1515 because following the defeat, Switzerland pulled back from large European military engagements” (Meuwly, 2015). However, prominent historian Olivier Meuwly suggests that following the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, “recognition of Switzerland as an entity and more or less neutral began sometime around then” (Meuwly, 2015). To be more precise, “Switzerland did not claim neutrality in 1815” (Meuwly, 2015), following the Congress of Vienna. While Irish neutrality is not specifically mentioned in its constitution, the Swiss constitution “provides that the Federal Council and the Federal Assembly must take measures to safeguard Switzerland’s neutrality” (EDA, 2023). While neutrality is specifically mentioned in the Swiss constitution, it is not governed by law. Instead, it is the responsibility of “a combination of all the measures a neutral state takes of its own accord to ensure the clarity and credibility of its permanent neutrality” (EDA, 2023). Initially, Ireland’s neutrality was ‘a means to an end’ to assert sovereignty and gain independence, similarly, Swiss “neutrality is not designated as a purpose of the confederation or as a foreign policy principle, it is represented as a means to an end” (EDA, 2023). For Switzerland, it attributes its neutral stance to “humanitarian and peaceful inclination, in keeping with its tradition of providing good offices and humanitarian aid” (EDA, 2023), similar to Ireland. Switzerland and Ireland alike both consider neutrality as malleable, with Ireland considering its neutral stance as “ambivalent and highly flexible” (Gallagher, 2023), while Switzerland “has never taken neutrality to be a rigid statute of foreign and security policy but uses it as a flexible instrument to safeguard the independence, security and welfare of our country” (Swiss Confederation n.d.), despite its commitment to ‘permanent neutrality’. Both countries may slightly alter their stance and affiliation based on ongoing current affairs and the state of the international system.

4.2. Swiss Collective Security and Multilateralism:

4.2.1. Introduction:

Switzerland has been much more cautious of joining international organisations and protecting the strictest form of neutrality compared to Ireland, however it has relaxed its approach somewhat in recent decades. It “has hosted international organisations for more than 150 years” and is now a member of “40 such organisations” (EDA, n.d.). Furthermore, it “is the depositary state for 79 international agreements” (EDA, n.d.), both figures being significantly less than Ireland. Switzerland joined the UN in 2002. The state’s initial reluctance to join the UN despite being a member of the League of Nations, is often referred to as the ‘Swiss Paradox’. It was discouraged “by the failure of the League of Nations and viewed its successor, the UN, as a kind of ‘winners club’” (Mombelli, 2012). However, the majority of opposition regarding UN membership was “linked above all to safeguarding Switzerland’s cherished neutrality” (Mombelli, 2012). It is also not a member of the EU, as “in a 1992 referendum, the Swiss rejected EU membership” (de Gruyter, 2021). However, it is a member of some international organisations such as the Council of Europe, International Monetary Fund, International Committee of the Red Cross, WTO, UN, WHO, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which Ireland is not a member of. Regarding collective security arrangements, “Switzerland has been represented by a delegation at the OSCE in Vienna since 1993” (EDA, 2024) and is seated at “the UN Security Council for the 2023-24 period” (EDA, 2022). Not being a member of NATO, “Switzerland joined the Partnership for Peace (PFP) programme in 1996 and became a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in 1997” (NATO, n.d.). Switzerland also participates in U.N. peacekeeping missions, although not to the same extent as Ireland.

4.2.2. International Treaties:

Switzerland is also a signatory of non-proliferation and arms control treaties including the NPT, Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Treaty, the same as Ireland. However, while Ireland “has signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)” (ICAN, n.d.), which has been in force since 2021, Switzerland has not

yet done so, threatening its identity as a humanitarian actor and advocate for nuclear non-proliferation.

4.2.3. Recent Multilateralism:

In 2022, Switzerland celebrated twenty years being a UN member, reflecting its “strong commitment towards multilateralism” (UN, 2022). Evidently, prior to 2002, the Swiss public were somewhat wary of multilateral engagements, with the decision to join the UN being highly contested. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, “questioning Swiss neutrality is no longer taboo in public discourse” (Plüss, 2023; p.10). As we will see later, the resurgence of this conflict has forced the country to engage with other Western countries to resolve the issue. Former Swiss President, Ignazio Cassais believes that “the adjustment to a multilateral reality had become necessary out of international and national interests” (Plüss, 2023; p.27), indicating Switzerland’s evolving attitudes towards multilateralism. In 2022, he “called for strengthening multilateral policies and described Geneva as the ‘capital of global governance’” (Swissinfo.ch, 2022). Following the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, Switzerland is “eager to expand its extensive relations with the 27 member countries” (de Gruyter, 2021), hinting at further multilateral engagement. The biggest opposition to Swiss international engagement is a right-wing party, the SVP, who suggest multilateralism and involvement in international organisations erode Swiss neutrality and sovereignty. In Switzerland’s latest general election in October 2023, “the SVP took 29% of the vote in elections to the lower house of parliament” (Le Monde, 2023). Despite this, the public’s relatively high trust and support in multilateral institutions such as the UN, suggests that Swiss commitment to multilateralism is unlikely to change anytime soon.

4.3. Swiss Military and Defence:

4.3.1. Introduction:

The Swiss armed forces are somewhat unique, being organised as a form of ‘militia’. Militias differ from traditional armies, as they are considered a ‘citizen army’, “the citizen-soldier who stands up to protect his country and not a warrior who serves for a living characterizes the Swiss military system” (Eberle, 2023). The Swiss defence budget for 2023 was

“estimated at \$8.9 billion” (Global Data, 2023), or 0.7% of the GDP (CIA, 2024). However, they have experienced similar budgeting issues to Ireland, as the defence budget had gradually reduced in recent decades prior to the invasion of 2022. The Swiss armed forces are comprised of approximately 100,000 personnel (CIA, 2024). It is one of the few European countries with conscription, with “18-20,000 conscripts brought in each year for training” (CIA, 2024). However, this can be easily avoided for those that wish to do so, as “those who do not want to serve in the army can circumvent this constitutionally prescribed duty with the simplest of arguments and perform either civilian service or civil protection” (Eberle, 2023). The armed forces are composed of an army, air force, and a navy, despite being a landlocked country, which is used to patrol the Swiss lakes. Furthermore, it has special forces units including the Kommando Spezialkräfte/Special Forces Command (KSK) and the Swiss Grenadiers. Evidently, the Swiss armed forces are significantly more effective at defending the state than the Irish Defence Forces. However, it also faces some problems similar to Ireland. Following the end of the Cold War, “the Swiss dismantled critical parts of their unique national defence system” (Eberle, 2023), significantly depleting their capabilities. Since 1995, “a series of army reforms have cut the force size from 600,000 troops to 100,000 by drastically reducing the length of service from 30 years to barely 10 years” (Eberle, 2023). This scenario is caused by numerous factors, namely, “1) the general development of institutionalized international cooperation; 2) the evolving nature of the threats Switzerland faces; and 3) political efforts to “securitize” issues not hitherto considered as security problems” (DeVore, et al. 2011; p.1). Following the resurgence of the Russo-Ukraine conflict, the Swiss have been looking East warily, and may be regretting such reforms.

4.3.2. Origins:

Historically, Switzerland offered some of Europe’s effective mercenaries, which is no surprise given their centrality in a continent ravaged by wars over the centuries. Their location made sure a competent army was necessary, which cannot be said in the case of Ireland. Following the dissolution of the Swiss Confederation in 1798, a centralised military system started to be put in place, however, it wasn’t quite official until “the mandate of the Swiss Armed Forces was formalized after the Congress of Vienna in 1815” (Eberle, 2023). A federal army was formed following a short-lived civil war in 1847, with their first major

involvement in a conflict being the “the Franco-Prussian War, when France’s exhausted army under General Charles-Denis Bourbaki fled to Switzerland and had to be disarmed and interned” (Eberle, 2023). During WWI, while avoiding direct invasion from either side of the conflict, the Swiss army stood at 450,000 personnel. By WWII, this number had almost doubled to 800,000 troops (Gallagher, 2023; p.207), with its military shooting down both axis and allied aircraft that ventured into Swiss airspace. Against all odds, the mountainous country maintained its neutrality and sovereignty during both World Wars.

4.3.3. Alliances:

Similar to Ireland, while being a neutral nation, Switzerland engages in bilateral defence agreements with its closest neighbours, however it is not reliant on them to the same extent as Ireland. Cross-border cooperation occurs between Switzerland with Germany, France, Italy, and Austria, in areas such as crisis management and policing. In 2004, they signed the Agreement with Europol, followed in 2019 with the signing of “the Agreement on the participation in the area of police cooperation”, known as the Prüm Decision (EDA, 2024). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Switzerland is also a member of numerous collective security arrangements. During the Cold War, Switzerland joined the “Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, later the OSCE) in 1975, which was its first engagement with international security institutions since the League of Nations” (DeVore, 2011; p.8).

Even before officially joining NATO PFP, Switzerland did collaborate with NATO in secret. During the Cold War, “it started to expand its airfields so it could accommodate NATO aircraft. As Gallagher puts it, “for Switzerland, ensuring it was perceived as neutral was sometimes more important than actually being neutral” (Gallagher, 2023; p.210). Legally speaking, neutral countries do have the right to request external assistance, however “it is difficult to claim neutrality if detailed defence plans are already in place prior to invasion” (Gallagher, 2023; p.211). Switzerland eventually joined NATO PFP three years before Ireland, in 1996, increasing interoperability and taking part in similar training exercises to the Irish. Since then, they have taken part in peacekeeping missions under NATO, OSCE, and the UN, in countries such as Bosnia and Kosovo. It is noteworthy that “Switzerland’s major peacekeeping missions have taken almost entirely under NATO rather than a UN banner” (Gallagher, 2023; p.213). However, when compared with other European neutrals,

Swiss involvement in NATO is relatively small. Furthermore, despite the Russian invasion of Ukraine, only 27% of the Swiss population favours joining NATO (Gallagher, 2023; p.215), meaning full NATO membership is highly unlikely anytime soon, despite increased volatility in the international system.

Regarding European defence agreements, as previously mentioned, Switzerland participates in CSDP and subsequently, PESCO, despite not being a member of the EU. In 2012, it signed the Agreement on the European Defence Agency (EDA, 2024). Currently, it is a part of the civilian mission EUCAP Sahel Mali since 2016, the civilian mission EULEX Kosovo since 2008, and the military mission EUFOR ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2004 (EDA, 2023).

4.3.4. Swiss Weapons Manufacturing:

While Switzerland may be famous for its chocolate and watches, it has a much larger, more profitable industry, that of weapons manufacturing. In fact, many of the Irish military's weaponry and vehicles are Swiss made. Their weapons manufacturing industry also attempted to incorporate the creation of nuclear weapons, at one point, as the state sought a nuclear deterrent to prevent a possible Soviet invasion. However, no such weapon was developed in the end. As mentioned previously, unlike Ireland, Switzerland has yet to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, allowing them to potentially acquire such weapons in the future, should the need arise. As Gallagher puts it, "Switzerland's large arms industry and historical pursuit of weapons of mass destruction sit uneasily alongside its image as the world's quintessential neutral country" (Gallagher, 2023; p.205). However, in 2022, the Irish government pondered the idea of a potential Irish arms industry, "holding a seminar in the Aviva Stadium (Dublin) to discuss how Irish small and medium sized enterprises could better access the European armaments market, where Irish institutes and universities were encouraged to pursue defence and military related research" (Doyle, 2022). While not a credible possibility in the near future, it is possible that Ireland could take steps reflective of Switzerland's arms industry in the long run.

In 2024, "the market size of the Weapon & Ammunition Manufacturing industry in Switzerland is €815.6m" (IBIS, 2024), with over 3,000 employees in the sector. The largest weapons manufacturing companies in Switzerland are "Thales SA and Rostec State Corporation" (IBIS, 2024). The biggest customers of Swiss arms and ammunition include

“Qatar, Denmark, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and the US, according to the State Secretariat, and the main exports were armoured vehicles (26.5%), and ammunition and ammunition components (24.8%)” (Kirez, 2023). In 2022, with many countries’ economies still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, Switzerland carried on, with record levels of arms exports. However, in 2023, “Swiss weapons exports fell 27%” (Revill, 2024). Furthermore, the “global sales of Swiss-made war materiel fell 27% last year despite a war raging in Europe” (Allen, 2024). This is due to a ban on the re-export of weapons to Ukraine, a move made to protect neutrality. The ban has “blocked Germany, Spain and Denmark from sending Swiss-made arms to Ukraine” (swissinfo, 2024). It is expected that Switzerland will uplift the ban, as in June 2024, “the Security Policy Committee of the National Council of Switzerland proposed to change the law on arms exports” (military, 2024). Evidently, Switzerland will have to navigate these troublesome times cautiously if it is to uphold its policy of neutrality.

4.4. The Swiss Debate:

4.4.1. The Public:

Swiss Neutrality has been a topic of debate in both public and political spheres following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, although maybe not to the same extent as in Ireland, especially amongst the public. Unlike in Ireland, there is not a large difference in opinion on neutrality between the public and the government, and the Swiss population largely have faith in their representatives to protect their neutrality, especially since it is codified in Swiss law. Nonetheless, opinions on Swiss neutrality and NATO involvement have changed somewhat since February 2022. The Swiss Military Academy at the ETH Zurich carried out opinion polls on such topics in January 2023. Regarding neutrality, respondents overwhelmingly support neutrality with a 91% approval rate, however, this approval rate is down six percentage points since the same time the previous year, prior to the outbreak of Europe’s latest war (ETH, 2023). Furthermore, the approval of numerous functions of neutrality including identity, mediation and conflict avoidance lower significantly. Moreover, support for Swiss integration into defensive arrangements remained relatively low, at 35%, nevertheless, this figure is up a staggering twelve percentage points since January 2021 (ETH, 2023). Pertaining to NATO membership, 55% approved of fostering

closer ties with NATO, up ten percentage points from January 2021 (ETH, 2023). Saying that, “joining NATO is still only supported by a third of those surveyed” (ETH, 2023). In sum, while Swiss support for neutrality remains even higher than Ireland, some members of the population no longer see it as a viable option for the country given ongoing global tensions, and overall support has diminished somewhat. On the other hand, there is growing support for aligning the state with NATO, but that doesn’t necessarily mean full membership, nor is it even likely to occur in the future. The difference between Ireland and Switzerland in this case is that, generally speaking, those that support increased Irish involvement with NATO and collective security agreements do so because they believe it is their duty as a prosperous Western European nation. Whereas Swiss advocates for NATO and EU security rapprochement do so due to perceived or potential aggression from Russia.

4.4.2. Public Action:

The Swiss public have taken to the streets since the Russian invasion to demand that strict Swiss neutrality remains intact, albeit to a lesser extent than the Irish. Controversial actions taken by the government in their response to Russia’s fully-fledged military aggression have drawn criticism from its citizens. In March of 2023, “an estimated 3,000 demonstrators in the Swiss capital, Bern, came out against the exports of Swiss war materiel and economic sanctions in the Russian invasion of Ukraine” (Anex, 2023). Yet this figure pales in comparison to the tens of thousands who took to the streets protesting the invasion of Ukraine. While those in the Irish public participating in discussions on neutrality largely do so for the protection of the policy, those that engage in neutrality discourse in Switzerland either do so for the protection, or abolition of the policy. For example, on January 13th, 2024, 15,000 “pro-Palestinian activists bashed the country’s neutrality” on the streets of Basel, believing their traditional foreign policy allowed the state to be “complicit in genocide” (Carbonaro, 2024). On the other hand, Irish pro-Palestinian activists wish to protect their neutrality, believing it allows the state to act as a healthy mediator that can call for a ceasefire. They suggest that the abolishment of neutrality would prevent them from taking positive action in the conflict, as being under the thumb of the US, the biggest military ally of Israel (Siddiqui et.al, 2021), would hinder them from doing so. Both states recognise the plight of the Palestinian people, however, their opinions differ on how neutrality can be either a tool, or a hindrance towards assisting the Palestinian cause.

Like Ireland, the Swiss public has established numerous NGOs regarding neutrality, however, some advocate for the protection of the policy, while others are more sceptical. The largest Pro-neutrality NGO is Pro Switzerland, formerly the ‘Campaign for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland (AUNS)’. On October 15th, 2022, the AUNS merged with EU-NÖ, becoming Pro Switzerland (auns.ch, 2022). Aside from being a staunch defender of Swiss neutrality, it is also a Eurosceptic organisation. According to the group’s website, AUNS “is committed to Switzerland's independence, neutrality and security”, supports European cooperation without EU diktat and humanitarian aid, but doesn’t support EU and NATO accession, and the involvement of its military abroad. (auns.ch, 2022). Mere hours after AUNS and EU-NÖ amalgamated to form Pro-Switzerland, “it launched the popular initiative "Preservation of Swiss neutrality" (auns.ch, 2022), which aims to achieve exactly what the initiative is named after. In their words, “Switzerland needs its neutrality, and the world needs a neutral Switzerland” (auns.ch, n.d.). At the other end of the spectrum, NGOs sceptical about neutrality include Progresuisse and Foraus (Forum Aussenpolitik), although neither group are solely concerned about altering the state of Swiss neutrality. Progresuisse advocates for “a future-oriented Switzerland that is networked with the EU” (Progresuisse, n.d.) that fosters deeper bilateral cooperation. It also supports Bilateral Agreements III which includes “the update of the five existing and the conclusion of two new single market agreements, as well as cooperation in research, education and health” (economiesuisse, 2023) with the EU. However, Progresuisse doesn’t explicitly state that it supports the abolition of neutrality. In fact, the group outlines how the Bilateral Agreements III actually agree to and respect Switzerland’s primary foreign policy. However, their support of policies that open up Switzerland to the EU and other institutions may threaten the country's strict adherence to neutrality. Like Progresuisse, Swiss think tank Foraus does not explicitly advocate for the prohibition of neutrality. Instead, it understands Switzerland is a continuously evolving country, and thereby “supports a timely understanding of Swiss neutrality” (Foraus, 2017). In this sense, it is open to the revaluation of Switzerland’s esteemed foreign policy tradition.

4.4.3. Political Parties:

Like Ireland, Swiss political parties have varying stances on neutrality. Undoubtedly, the biggest defender of neutrality is the Swiss People’s Party (SVP). SVP is a right-wing populist

party, gaining the most seats in the House of Representatives in the latest Swiss federal elections in October 2023 (Swissinfo, 2023). SVP suggests that “neutrality and foreign policy might be altered to prioritise international interests over national ones” (Plüss, 2023; p.34). They view Swiss engagement in bilateral or multilateral arrangements and organisations as potentially destructive not only to their neutrality, but their sovereignty too. They adhere to a stricter form of neutrality than other political parties, “instead of promoting ‘active’ or ‘cooperative neutrality’, the SVP argues, the Federal Council should re-embrace a permanently armed, perpetual and comprehensive understanding of neutrality (Plüss, 2023; p.34). This aligns more with integral or absolute neutrality rather than differential neutrality. While the nation has practised strict absolute neutrality for the majority of its history, “since Switzerland joined the UN 20 years ago, it has returned to a type of differential neutrality”. (Jorio, 2022). Like Ireland, Switzerland does not have the innate capabilities to become a great power. Therefore, the SVP asserts that involvement “in the struggle for power and prestige on the international stage would only be detrimental to a small state like Switzerland” (Plüss, 2023; p.34). Similar to Irish pro-neutrality parties, the SVP is sceptical that “both the government and the foreign ministry are no longer maintaining a neutral stance.” (Plüss, 2023; p.33).

Since the invasion of Ukraine, the SVP have found an unlikely ally in the Swiss Green Party, which advocates for conflict mediation and disarmament. According to their website, the Greens believe that “as a neutral country, Switzerland should mediate conflicts and not feed wars with arms exports” (Greune.ch, n.d.). Therefore, when debates over the re-export of Swiss-made arms to Ukraine erupted in May 2023, SVP and the Greens found themselves in agreement with one another. Suddenly, the Greens were “in the boat with the right” (Pfaff, 2023). It is worth noting a major difference between Switzerland and Ireland regarding pro-neutrality political parties. In Ireland, the biggest defenders of neutrality, Sinn Féin, are left wing, whereas in Switzerland the biggest defenders of neutrality, SVP, are right wing.

4.4.4. Political Action:

In 2024, the SVP launched the campaign ‘Safeguarding Swiss Neutrality’ or the ‘Swiss Neutrality Initiative’, in response to Switzerland imposing sanctions on Russia. While neutrality is already codified in the Swiss Constitution, the aim of the initiative is to update the wording via referendum, “to enshrine the position of permanent, armed neutrality in the

constitution”. If this referendum passes, it would obstruct the nation from joining military alliances, and also “block participation in non-military coercive measures, which would include sanctions” (O’Brien, 2024) After reaching the required number of signatures in April, the SVP “submitted its petition, backed by more than 130,000 signatures” (O’Brien, 2024). A referendum date hasn’t been set, nor will it take place anytime soon, however, a ‘yes’ outcome will undoubtedly impact the future of Swiss foreign policy.

4.5. Swiss Response and Effects of Invasion of Ukraine:

4.5.1. Assistance:

Despite its historically strict form of neutrality, Switzerland’s response to the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2022 has been significant. After initially refusing to impose EU sanctions on Russia immediately following the invasion, which received widespread criticism, Switzerland backtracked on its decision soon after. By the end of February 2022, Switzerland “blocked with immediate effect the assets of 363 individuals and four corporate entities” (Allen et al, 2022), and closed its airspace for Russian flights. Upon imposing the sanctions, then-President Ignazio Cassis stated that “playing into the hands of an aggressor is not neutral” (Allen et al, 2022). Like Ireland, to protect its military neutrality, Switzerland is only sending financial, humanitarian and material support to Ukraine. However, as discussed previously, it looks like Switzerland is set to lift the ban on the re-export of Swiss arms, which may result in countries that have bought Swiss weaponry dispatching them to the Ukrainian battlefield. This could harm Swiss neutrality indirectly. Regarding financial assistance, according to a governmental report, as of the 15th of January 2024, Switzerland has donated approximately “CHF 400 million in international cooperation to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries since the 24th of February 2022” (admin.ch, 2024). Furthermore, “around CHF 1.5 billion has been earmarked up to 2028 for international cooperation in Ukraine, including reconstruction” (admin.ch, 2024). Regarding Ukrainian refugees, as of May 2024, “over 65 thousand reached Switzerland, 65,827 individuals with Status S” (Ruedin, 2024; p.7). This number is significantly less than Ireland, despite Switzerland having a larger population. It is the first time in the Alpine state’s history that it has granted ‘S’ status to its refugees. This status “is intended for large refugee movements resulting from acute war situations” (Hirschi, 2024). Recipients of this status “do not go through an asylum

process, instead, they are temporarily admitted, are allowed to work, and are entitled to social assistance” (Hirschi, 2024).

Switzerland is also heavily involved in humanitarian demining in Ukraine. The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) is a leading figure in demining across the globe. In April 2024, thanks to the co-organisation by the GICHD, “representatives from more than 50 countries and organisations gathered at an international workshop in Kyiv to discuss measures for identifying and clearing mines” (EDA, 2024). The Swiss government has also allocated “CHF 100 million dedicated solely to mine action in Ukraine” (EDA, 2024), which will be available for use from 2024 to 2027. Interestingly, Switzerland’s history of war material production has also had a benign humanitarian influence in Ukraine, despite the current ban on arms re-exports. Swiss company ‘Global Clearance Solutions’ (GCS), produces remote-controlled demining machines that clear mines without the direct involvement of humans, which are currently being used in Ukraine. Switzerland has also hosted conferences regarding the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. In 2022, Switzerland held the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lugano. Furthermore, On the 15th and 16th of June 2024, Switzerland hosted the ‘Summit on Peace in Ukraine’ conference in Bürgenstock, with “to develop a common understanding of a path towards a just and lasting peace in Ukraine” (EDA, 2024). The Alpine state “invited over 160 delegations at head of state or government”, however, “no formal invitation was issued to Russia” (EDA, 2024), which greatly reduced the effectiveness of the summit. Despite this, these conferences hosted by Switzerland highlight the country's commitment to conflict resolution and international cooperation. While on the topic of multilateral conferences, it is worth noting that Switzerland, like Ireland, has also voted in favour of all UN General Assembly resolutions against Russia. Despite being a relative latecomer to the UN, the Swiss are not afraid to use their voting power at the institution to condemn Russian aggression.

4.5.2. Internal changes following invasion:

As we have seen, the invasion of Ukraine has sparked heated debates regarding neutrality in both Ireland and Switzerland. However, Switzerland has experienced changes other than intensified opinions on neutrality. Like Ireland, Switzerland has had to address its defensive capabilities, in light of a depleting security situation in Europe and further afield. The Swiss government has promised to increase defence expenditure “by up to 19% over the next four

years”, thus raising its total defence spending “to 25.8 billion Swiss francs (€27 billion) between 2025 and 2028, up from 21.7 billion francs in the previous four-year period” (EuroNews, 2024). Such funding is expected to be spent “to develop and upgrade radar systems, short-range missile defence, its tank fleet, missiles used by ground forces and cyberattack defence capabilities” (EuroNews, 2024), and much more.

Like the majority of Europe, both Switzerland and Ireland suffered from rising energy costs spurred by the invasion of Ukraine, leading to discussions on the future of energy security. Switzerland was reliant on Russia for much of its energy sources, as “gas makes up roughly 15 percent of Switzerland’s total energy consumption, of which about half came from Russia” (ASF, n.d.). As a result, “Switzerland set a voluntary gas-savings target of 15 percent for the winter, and the Swiss public began to buy emergency power generators” (ASF, n.d.). The energy security concerns caused by the Russo-Ukrainian war came at an inconvenient time, as “in May 2017 Switzerland voted to start phasing out the country’s nuclear plants, which provide around one-third of its electricity” (Dalton, 2022), despite much of the Swiss population supporting nuclear energy.

4.6 Swiss Neutrality contradictions - WWII:

4.6.1. Swiss Banks:

Like Ireland, Switzerland have also had instances that contravene their neutrality, despite being the strictest adherer to the concept. However, these instances may not be to the same extreme as Ireland’s disregard to neutrality through US use of Shannon airport. Similar to Ireland, as a small state, Switzerland had to show ‘certain considerations’ to its nearest neighbours during WWII. However, while Ireland was positioned next to an allied nation in the UK, Switzerland was not so lucky, neighbouring Nazi Germany. During WWII, their military “shot down Axis and Allied aircraft that strayed into Swiss airspace” (Gallagher, 2023; p.207), allowing it to maintain some semblance of neutrality. However, “it is undoubtable that Swiss economic policies favoured Nazi Germany far more than the Allies” (Gallagher, 2023; p.208). As a country that was encapsulated entirely by Axis powers, this preferentiality can be somewhat excused on the grounds of unfortunate geographic positioning, however, “some of it was motivated entirely by greed” (Gallagher, 2023; p.208). Many Swiss corporations made vast amounts of wealth by the time WWII concluded. During

the war, Swiss banks bought large amounts of gold from Nazi Germany, most of which was stolen from occupied countries or Holocaust victims (PBS, 1996). In turn, profits from the sale of gold to Switzerland were used to fuel the Nazi war machine. Furthermore, the World Jewish Congress “identified more than 20,000 bank accounts as belonging to Jews who had moved their money to Swiss private banks for safekeeping” (US Dept. of State, n.d.). Such finances were not repaid to them or their descendants. Therefore, in 1998, “class action lawyers and the World Jewish Restitution Organization reached a \$1.25 billion settlement with defendant Swiss private banks” (US Dept of State, n.d.). In 2002, findings from the Bergier Commission, which was set up to investigate the retention of possessions owned by Holocaust victims, was published by the Swiss government. The report stated that “among the few neutral countries, Switzerland made the greatest contribution towards the German war effort” and that “Swiss companies based in Germany availed of slave labour” (Gallagher, 2023; p.208).

4.6.2. Jewish Refugees:

Swiss support for Nazi Germany was not restricted to financial and material assistance. Switzerland also replicated many of Germany’s policies towards the Jewish community. It made strong attempts to prevent the entry of Jewish refugees into the country. In 1938 “Bern requested that Berlin mark the passports of Jews with a "J", so that German Jews could be instantly distinguished from German gentiles” (World Jewish Congress, 1996), so they could be refused entry. During WWII, the Swiss accepted hundreds of thousands of refugees, out of these, “around 30,000 were Jews but an estimated 24,500 mainly Jewish civilians, however, were turned away” (US Dept of State, n.d.). Of those that were turned away, many of these later died in concentration camps.

4.6.3. Redemption and Results:

In recent years, the Swiss have made efforts to redeem themselves. Aside from paying \$1.25 billion settlement to the families of holocaust victims, they persist “to dedicate resources and implement programs toward the goals it endorsed in the Terezin Declaration, as well as promote Holocaust education and remembrance” (US Dept of State, n.d.), through the creation of Holocaust memorials. Like Ireland, such actions taken by the Swiss during wartime may be construed as ‘certain considerations’ for its neighbours to prevent invasion.

Furthermore, these actions may not be directly linked to the concept of neutrality, nonetheless, it is undoubtable that “the status of Swiss neutrality took a beating after the war in light of its preferential treatment of Germany” (Gallagher, 2023; p.209). The Swiss saw their actions as a means to an end, survival. Nevertheless, “what the rest of the world saw was Switzerland’s wartime dealings with Nazi Germany” (Mombelli, 2012). In turn, this negatively affected Swiss’s image as the protector of the purest form of neutrality, thus, “this false neutrality served to lessen Switzerland’s prestige in the eyes of not only the United States, but also Britain and Russia, they saw Swiss neutrality as a sham.” (Mombelli, 2012).

4.6.4. Differences:

Both Switzerland and Ireland have had instances that contradict their neutrality, especially during WWII. The war proved to be a watershed moment for determining whether Swiss and Irish neutrality would survive. In the end, both did, but not unscathed. The key difference between Ireland and Switzerland regarding contradicting their neutrality is, while Swiss contraventions have largely been historical, under extreme conditions, Ireland’s have been much more recent, suggesting that the erosion of Irish neutrality may be underway. Of course, both have had to reassess their neutrality recently following the return of war to Europe. Their actions in the future will determine to what extent they can realistically cling to their most coveted foreign policy tradition. Despite some similarities regarding their contradictions to this tradition, “if neutrality is a spectrum, Switzerland is much closer to the ideal than Ireland”, however, “it is still far from a pure neutral” (Gallagher, 2023; p. 217).

5. Findings from Comparative case study:

After extensively comparing many elements of Irish and Swiss foreign policy, the findings will now be summarised. As we have observed, neutrality remains to be a key element of the foreign policy, and national identity, of both countries. However, there are many vital differences regarding various elements that impact their approach to international engagement.

Historically, Switzerland was surrounded by European powers in what appeared to be perpetual conflict, justifying the need for a strong army capable of maintaining Swiss sovereignty. Today however, the Swiss find themselves surrounded by EU and NATO forces that are bound to each other by economic and military commitments. Therefore, they are well protected, despite not being a member of either organisation, on top of being a nation situated in the Alpine region, increasing the difficulty of a successful invasion. Evidently, Switzerland is protected by both political and physical geography. Ireland, on the other hand, despite being further away from a belligerent such as Russia, is not as fortunate. As an island nation, it is somewhat distanced from EU and NATO participants, and not entirely encapsulated by allies. The UK's departure from the EU has exacerbated this situation. As previously discussed, the existence of critical underwater infrastructure in Irish seas has also made Ireland increasingly vulnerable. Furthermore, the rise in the use of hybrid warfare tactics means that the relevance of geographic distance has reduced. While Switzerland was

more vulnerable in the past, it is now Ireland that may in fact be more at risk, as distance, while not a completely irrelevant factor, accounts for less and less in the 21st century. However, any historical link to a country such as Russia, has also been negated due to Ireland's location, unlike the former 'Nordic neutrals' in Finland and Sweden.

As we have seen, the defensive situation for both countries is also remarkably different. While both countries are considered small European neutral states, based upon the findings from the comparative case study, it appears Switzerland's military is far more effective at protecting the state's sovereignty than Ireland. Previously discussed historical reasons, including the Civil War and 1924's army mutiny, may help explain Ireland's lack of a grand national army. However, while both states are members of NATO PFP, Ireland has the added benefit of being a member of the EU. While the EU is not a military alliance, nor does it have a collective security framework similar to that of NATO, it does have defensive arrangements such as the CSDP, which includes numerous missions aimed at maintaining the EU's peace and security.

Ireland's involvement in the CSDP spans numerous operations, as explored earlier, including EUMAM Ukraine (European Union Military Assistance Mission) and EUAM Ukraine (European Union Advisory Mission). Ireland's involvement in EUMAM involves the training of the Ukrainian military by the Irish Defence Forces, but as a militarily neutral state, it cannot provide weapons or troops to aid Ukraine directly in the conflict. On the other hand, EUAM is strictly civilian, in which Ireland has sent numerous experts to help Ukraine strategically navigate the position it now finds itself in. Furthermore, Ireland's maximum contribution to the European Peace Facility (EPF) from 2024 to 2027, "is currently calculated at approximately €219 million" (Oireachtas.ie, 2024). In line with its stance on military neutrality, "while 90% of the EPF involves lethal military aid, 10% of the fund is for non-lethal aid, which Ireland contributes towards" (O'Keeffe, 2022). This highlights Ireland's not only Ireland's commitment to the maintenance of European security, but also its commitment to be militarily neutral. Regarding UN General Assembly resolutions for Ukraine, as outlined in the comparative case study, both Ireland and Switzerland voted in favour of all resolutions against Russia. These resolutions include ES-11/1, ES-11/2, ES-11/3, ES-11/4, and ES-11/5, which condemn Russian aggression, suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council, and call for humanitarian assistance amongst other actions. Evidently, Ireland and Switzerland are on the same page when it comes to condemning the actions of Russia.

Both Ireland and Switzerland have intensified debates on neutrality in public and political spheres following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Nevertheless, while Switzerland's neutrality is protected by constitutional law, Ireland's is not. Furthermore, while much of the population in both countries support their most sacred foreign policy, Ireland is slightly more divided in this regard, making the debate all the more topical across Europe. Recent contradictions to Ireland's policy of neutrality in the last two decades have also enhanced the credibility of the 'erosion of Irish neutrality', thus elevating the debate to new heights. However, much of the Irish public are unaware of the difference between political and military neutrality, although that is understandable given Ireland's unique approach to the concept, hence why such a debate in Ireland has been so heated. Ireland has never been politically neutral, and likely never will be, however it is militarily neutral. Many see Ireland's assistance to Ukraine, particularly under EUMAM training exercises, as a contravention of its military neutrality. Nevertheless, under international law, if Ireland refrains from directly supplying weapons, ammunition and troops to the Ukrainian resistance, which it does, then it can still hold the title of a military neutrality, despite its indirect support of Ukrainian forces. Nevertheless, some of the Irish public do not see it this way, hence why the next chapter will explore both sides of the debate and what Ireland should do next.

6. Conclusion:

6.1. Neutrality or NATO?

Looking to the future, Ireland has various options; it could retain its neutrality, abandon it in favour of joining NATO, or abandon it and not join any military alliance. The latter option is highly unlikely however, as it would leave the country exposed, with no defensive alliance or policy of neutrality to provide some level of protection from external threats. This section will explore both former options.

6.1.2. Pro-neutrality Argument:

As demonstrated, the Irish policy of neutrality is still favoured by the majority of the country. People argue, just like how neutrality was used as a tool to achieve Irish independence in the past, today, neutrality allows Ireland to have an independent foreign policy. The stance has, so far, kept the state out of militaristic supranational organisations such as NATO, whereby Ireland would be subjugated to the US and would be obliged to act even when it may not want to. In this sense, neutrality provides Ireland with the ability to chart its own course in the international system. However, the Triple Lock system largely negates this, placing the option for Irish Defence forces to be placed into the hands of Security Council members such as China and Russia. Many supporters of Irish neutrality are suspicious of military alliances, particularly NATO. For them, “the world does not need more militarist states, it does not need more states spending vast sums on weapons of war while they cannot provide decent healthcare or housing or jobs to their people” (Doyle, 2022). This is particularly true in Ireland's case, as despite having a strong economy, the country is suffering from a struggling healthcare system and a housing crisis. In the words of Paulie Doyle, “joining a

military alliance isn't growing up, it's an act of regression, real responsibility involves paving the difficult path towards peace" (Doyle, 2022).

Even though Ireland's current stance has its contradictions, as explored earlier, advocates of Irish neutrality also provide justifications. Regarding the use of Shannon airport by the US military, Rory Montgomery, former political director of the DFA, stated that "we developed this rather contorted logic that the essence of Irish neutrality was being able to make your own decisions, and this was us making our own decisions" (Gallagher, 2023; p.169). Former Taoiseach Brian Cowen also stated something similar, "the core of our neutrality [...] lies in the independence of judgement, in being able to make up our own minds about what is right for Ireland" (Gallagher, 2023; p.169). Evidently, the Irish version of neutrality is quite unique, albeit moderately contradictory. On the other hand, supporters of the policy also outline the contradictions to Irish foreign policy that would arise out of abandoning neutrality to join NATO, stating that the world "does not need more countries prepared to dance to the American tune in international affairs, one which might rightly express outrage over Ukraine yet falls entirely silent when it comes to the crimes committed by Saudi Arabia, Israel or NATO itself" (Doyle, 2022). For them, neutrality allows the state to be critical of all countries, whether they are Western allies or not.

6.1.3. Pro-NATO argument:

Two years after the invasion, Ireland is still considering its approach to international relations, and is in a vastly different scenario now than before 2022. It is no secret that Ireland aligns itself with the West, however "how is it possible to remain neutral and at the same time implicitly side with Western Europe?" (Plüss, 2023; p.10). Hence, for some, joining NATO seems to be the logical next step for Ireland. It is true that Switzerland, the closest we have to an ideal neutral, also aligns itself with Western values, although they have a financial incentive to do so, through its extensive international banking system. Impartiality and neutrality are advantageous for them as it allows them to maintain their vast financial infrastructure. This is not the case for Ireland, and some suggest that joining a military alliance such as NATO provides many practical benefits for the country, particularly in the realm of defence. In fact, NATO would provide vital defence for key Irish energy and financial infrastructures including previously discussed critical undersea cables and extensive offshore windfarms. From NATO's perspective, Ireland would be a welcome

addition, but is not overtly needed. The alliance already has bases and access to the island via Northern Ireland. However, while not likely anytime soon, the reunification of Ireland in years to come may put pressure on the state to join NATO, if such an event were ever to occur.

It is true that Ireland's military does not currently meet the minimum standards required to join NATO, and the state's defence spending is far below NATO's required amount of 2% per annum. However, Ireland needs to address its lacklustre defensive capabilities, and joining NATO would help achieve this. Otherwise, it might be possible, due to Ireland's strategic location in the Atlantic, that maybe the country could play a role in NATO similar to that of Iceland. Iceland does not have a standing military, thereby not meeting NATO's traditional defensive requirements. Despite this, it is still a NATO member due to its strategic positioning, facilitating transatlantic stopovers. Could Ireland gain a similar exemption if it were to join the alliance?

Critics of Irish neutrality argue that the state has never really been neutral. Since its foundation, legally speaking, Ireland has been neutral "simply because the matter didn't arise" However, "the couple of times it did arise, it failed the test" (Gallagher, 2023; p.26). As noted earlier, Ireland has contradicted its neutral stance on numerous occasions. Thus, "when taking the country and its history as a whole, it's reasonable to conclude that Ireland is not neutral" (Gallagher, 2023; p.266). However, Irish historian Patrick Keatinge, while being critical of the policy, is somewhat more lenient, believing "that Irish neutrality does exist, but that it comes with many caveats" (Gallagher, 2023; p.267). Just as the invasion of Ukraine sparked a fire within the belly of pro-neutrality supporters, so too has it for the opposite side. In an opinion piece written in the 'Irish Times', Seamus Murphy declared that the "war in Ukraine glaringly reveals why Irish neutrality is morally degenerate" (Murphy, 2022). Furthermore, in another opinion article in the 'Irish Independent', Frank Coughlan outlined how "neutrality served us well but we're grown-ups now" (Coughlan, 2022), insinuating that to abandon such a policy, is to evolve.

6.2. What next?

Based upon these findings, the research questions will be answered. Before that, the initial hypotheses formed at the beginning of the thesis will be addressed. The first hypothesis formulated was 'the Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused a paradigm shift of the strategic

environment, leading to a revitalised need for Ireland to reassess its policy of neutrality and reevaluate the country's defensive alliances'. This hypothesis has been supported by the analysis undertaken throughout this thesis regarding public and political discourse surrounding Irish neutrality. Opinion polls following the invasion of Ukraine points to a shift in public sentiment on the matter. In March 2022, one month after the invasion, Red C polls "found that 48 percent now want to join NATO" (Pogatchnik, 2022). This is a stark contrast to January 2022, one month prior to the invasion, where "only 34 percent support for joining the transatlantic military alliance" (Pogatchnik, 2022). While not a clear majority, support for Irish involvement in NATO is now at a record high, indicating that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has indeed caused a paradigm shift of the strategic environment. The media has also been heavily involved in the discourse surrounding Irish neutrality. Many outlets, including the 'Irish Independent' and the 'Irish Times' have increasingly framed dialogue surrounding neutrality in the context of national defence and security. Other mainstream outlets continuously disregard neutrality. For example, in the previous subchapter it was outlined that the 'Irish Times' headlined an article titled "war in Ukraine glaringly reveals why Irish neutrality is morally degenerate" (Murphy, 2022). Furthermore, the Government has also shifted its attention towards a security framework that reflects the current volatile international system. In April 2022, 'Renew Europe' published a document titled 'Irish Neutrality in a Changing Europe', prepared by Barry Andrews MEP, which reassesses Ireland's current defensive situation and explores its options. Andrews admits in his executive summary that "Ireland finds itself at a crossroads" (Andrews, 2022). Despite stating that Ireland should say 'No to NATO', he suggests that Ireland should revise its Triple Lock system, increase involvement with the CSDP, and increase spending on the Defence Forces. Despite insisting on staying out of the alliance, Andrews pushes for increased Irish involvement in European security projects. This articulates the need for a renewed defence strategy, reflecting concerns about regional security, hence supporting the initial hypothesis that 'the Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused a paradigm shift of the strategic environment, leading to a revitalised need for Ireland to reassess its policy of neutrality and reevaluate the country's defensive alliances'

The second hypothesis, 'regardless of whether the stance on neutrality changes, Ireland needs to invest more in its defence in order to protect its own security interests and decrease reliance on the US and UK'. In the analysis of the Irish military and defence, it was stated

that Ireland allocates just 0.6% of the GDP (Gov.ie, 2023) on defence, far below NATO's standard of 2%. Nevertheless, in response to a changing security landscape post-invasion, the government announced a project called 'Building for the Future – Change from Within', in which the government has committed "the State to move to Level of Ambition 2, with a commensurate increase of the defence budget from €1.1 billion to €1.5 billion by 2028" (Gov.ie, n.d.). Furthermore, it promises to increase the Defence forces manpower by an extra 2,000 full time personnel (Gov.ie, n.d.). Evidently, those in the Irish government seem to agree with the hypothesis that the state does need to invest more in defence. This increased investment will enhance the capabilities of the Defence Forces; however, it was well needed regardless of a deterioration in European security, and only reduces the gap between the Irish Defence Forces and other European militaries. Despite increased investment, the Defence Forces still face numerous challenges including low personnel numbers that are ill-equipped. Operational readiness is a huge concern and their ability to effectively defend the state is questionable. Ireland cannot state that neutrality keeps its sovereignty and autonomy intact while simultaneously disregarding its defensive capabilities that would protect such sovereignty. A greatly enhanced Irish military is not only necessary for national defence, but also for reducing its dependence on the UK and US for security, which in turn would increase the states own autonomy. Retaining a modern effective military goes hand in hand with retaining neutrality. Therefore, the second hypothesis, 'regardless of whether the stance on neutrality changes, Ireland needs to invest more in its defence in order to protect its own security interests and decrease reliance on the US and UK' is also true.

To answer the first research question; 'is the abandonment of Irish neutrality likely in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine', the answer is no. That is to say, an immediate abandonment of Irish neutrality as a direct result of the Russian invasion, is not likely to occur. It is true that the invasion has resurged public debate about the topic, however it is noteworthy that Ireland has maintained its neutral stance for over a century, ever since the country gained independence. As previously mentioned, in 2023, 61 per cent of voters still favour the current model of Irish neutrality (Fox, 2023), despite a war ravaging in Europe. If Ireland has not abandoned the policy thus far, two years after the invasion, it is plausible to suggest that the 2022 invasion will not be the sole catalyst for a vast divergence from traditional Irish foreign policy. However, it is quite possible that in the future, Ireland may have to adjust with the times and abandon such a policy, if the international system gets

increasingly volatile. As stated by historian Jacques Freymond, “isolation in the twenty-first century is not only a crime, but a political blunder” (Plüss, 2023; p.16). Historically neutral countries such as Sweden and Finland, have reevaluated their defensive strategies and joined NATO as a result of Russian aggression. This may have set a trend that Ireland may follow, however Ireland is in a vastly different geographical setting than Sweden and Finland. In sum, currently, it is unlikely Ireland would abandon neutrality because of the invasion of Ukraine, but if the security landscape, particularly in Europe, continues to deteriorate, then Ireland may have to reassess its long-held policy.

To answer the second research question, “would the abandonment of Irish neutrality subsequently lead to NATO membership”, the answer is yes. In fact, it is justifiable to say that the only circumstance in which Ireland abandons its neutrality, however unlikely that may be, would be to join NATO. The state's policy has shaped national identity for decades; however, we find ourselves in a dramatically different geopolitical environment now. While most of the Irish public supports the current stance on neutrality, contradictorily, support for NATO membership has significantly increased post-invasion. As discussed, when addressing the first hypothesis, opinion polls show that in March 2022 “48 percent now want to join NATO” (Pogatchnik, 2022), compared to January 2022, where “only 34 percent support for joining the transatlantic military alliance” (Pogatchnik, 2022). Growing interest in rapprochement with NATO reflects Ireland’s need for enhanced security measures in a turbulent international system. Political discourse has also evolved. Former Taoiseach Leo Varadkar stated in 2023 that “Ireland is ‘interested’ in NATO or EU defence co-operation to protect its infrastructure” (O’Leary, 2023), while former Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney in 2022 called for closer EU ties with NATO (Mahon, 2022), which would include Ireland of course. However, Coveney has gone on record stating that Ireland would not be joining the alliance “anytime soon” (McGreevy, 2022). Nonetheless, the Irish government is aware of the benefits and opportunities that membership with NATO will bring. Again, while the abandonment of neutrality is currently unlikely, Ireland does not have the defensive capabilities that Switzerland has, therefore, if Ireland is to depart from its traditional stance, pursuing NATO membership would provide the state with a means of ensuring national security. Hence, in the dubious event that Ireland does abandon neutrality, it is reasonable to assume that Ireland would join NATO.

6.3. Final word:

Evidently, traditional Irish foreign policy has been put into question now more than ever. The State and its people must make a tough choice on whether to continue with their beloved, time-honoured policy, or follow in the footsteps of many Western countries pertaining to NATO. Regardless of the decision that is made, Ireland needs to increase its defensive capabilities, especially if it decides to remain neutral. Ireland is not as protected by geography like it once was, and neutrality is not something that can uphold sovereignty alone. If Ireland wishes to remain autonomous, it needs an effective military to maintain this autonomy.

As we have seen, Irish neutrality is a very unique, and somewhat contradictory approach to the concept. In some ways, it lies in a completely different category to that of other traditional definitions. If the nation decides not to abandon its neutrality and not join NATO, then maybe it should attempt to adhere to a stricter form of neutrality, for the sake of coming across as a fair and impartial mediator on the global stage. Then again, neutrality allows the state to chart its own course in the international system, and Ireland seems to be doing just that. Maybe it is more accurate to refer to Ireland as a non-belligerent rather than a traditional neutral. Nonetheless, when viewing neutrality on a spectrum, Ireland is more neutral than the majority of the world's nations, however, the State remains in a grey area between being neutral and non-neutral. In the words of Conor Gallagher, "the Irish people just need to decide if that's somewhere they're happy to be" (Gallagher, 2023; p.269).

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