

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.