

Freedom to Choose?

**Report on the Consultative Forum on
International Security Policy (2023)**



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Freedom to Choose?

The title of our response recalls that of Tánaiste Micheál Martin's well-regarded book *Freedom to Choose: Cork & Party Politics in Ireland, 1918–1932* (2009) on the emergence of nonviolent politics in Cork after the Civil War. In his Conclusion he emphasises 'the importance and integrity with which men and women in democratic societies can, in honour and freedom, express an opinion on the issues of the day... This essential liberty that whatever the issue, the people of Ireland can choose their destiny by democratic means is one which I hold very dear.' This vital commitment, spelt out in Article 6 of Bunreacht na hÉireann, has been absent from the recent development of our Foreign and Defence policies, as seen most recently in the reality of the Government's 'Consultative Forum'.

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Consultative Forum on International Security Policy YouTube Links

Day 1 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (Cork, 22 June 2023)

Morning Session

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60xcFPQALUg>

Afternoon Session

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLcSUKedbtQ>

Day 2 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (Galway, 23 June 2023)

Morning Session

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqY7W584Wlc>

Afternoon Session

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndrPWWsROno>

Day 3 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (Dublin, 26 June 2023)

Morning Session

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMXsHYLXFiw>

Afternoon Session

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK8UpO5aVG8>

Day 4 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (Dublin, 27 June 2023)

Morning Session

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FnM05ibwwY>

Afternoon Session

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiXvwzTowSM>

INTRODUCTION

Freedom to Choose? A Response to the Tánaiste's Forum

Can the Tánaiste's recommendations, following the 'Consultative Forum' in June, be taken as solid conclusions from sound debates, guiding our foreign and defence policies in troubled times? The doubts, expressed most prominently by President Higgins, have sadly not been dispelled.

The remit, the personnel and the structure of the 'Consultative Forum' proved, as we feared, partial and inadequate. Despite these doubts, we as groups and individuals engaged as far as possible with the Forum, so as to lose no chance of confronting the crisis of our foreign and defence policies. We attended the sessions, raising questions as far as the format allowed, and noting the issues, assumptions and perspectives left unexplored.

We are publishing online critical responses to each day of the Forum, prepared by individual members of our groups. These do not replace the video or text record, but they convey a flavour of what happened, of what was said and left unsaid, on each day. Here, we wish to convey our initial response to the exercise, and to indicate the profound policy crisis which the Government's latest initiative has failed to address or resolve.

Governments for decades have told us that nothing significant was changing in our policies; then overnight we were told that everything had changed. We the people had allegedly not been paying attention: our consistent support for Neutrality was now out of date or at best required urgent revision.

Under *Bunreacht na hÉireann* we the people have 'the right... in final appeal, to decide all questions of public policy' (Article 6). How then could we be 'out of touch' with our own policies on such a vital, and lethal, matter? How have we been so badly served by successive governments, all of whose authority the people designate under that same Article?

Would the Tánaiste's Forum address this crisis by finally listening to the sovereign people? No, the format was a *dilution* of the 'Citizens' Assembly' floated by the Tánaiste last year. Though a Citizens' Assembly has no legislative authority, Government is obliged at least to consider its verdict.

There is no such requirement with the 'Consultative Forum'. The Tánaiste told us its aim was 'to build a deeper political understanding and public understanding', echoing last year's Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces: a 'grounded debate... developing people's awareness and understanding of the role of the Defence Forces' (p. 132).

There was no question of realigning our foreign and defence policies with our democratic, republican constitution. We are instructed to 'catch up' with what our delegated public representatives have already done – *and* set in place for the future – without informing, let alone consulting, us.

This distortion of our policies comes at a time when our planet faces the crisis of global warming. We have yet to apply, even to create, the tools to address the 'Climate Emergency' unanimously declared by Dáil Éireann in May 2019. But we already have the tools in hand to address the related challenge of global *warring*, and to help 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war' (UN Charter).

Our membership of the UN has long been dear to the hearts of the Irish people. It is a profound expression of the lessons we have learnt from our own troubled history, highlighted in the Decade of Commemoration now drawing to a close. A key stage in that history was the emergence of Saorstát Éireann in 1922. That outcome was also a *beginning*, of Ireland's commitment to international fellowship and International Law. Indeed, our quest for League of Nations membership predated, and was a vital step towards, our emergence as a State.

We were admitted a century ago, on 10 September 1923. In 1935 De Valera warned the League's Assembly that if the sovereignty of any State could be unjustly taken away 'the whole foundation of the League would crumble into dust'. If security was not universal then it would be better to revert to 'the old system of alliances'. De Valera's prophetic warning, which the Tánaiste brazenly quoted at the Forum, now reads like a gameplan for NATO's undermining, sidelining and scapegoating of the UN.

A decade ago, the Green Paper on Defence embraced NATO, our 'sophisticated security partner', as 'the standard setting organisation' of the 'military world' (pp. 7,8). NATO's disastrous aggressions, for example in Afghanistan and (clearly illegally) in Iraq, and its neocolonial meddling in Africa, are airbrushed away.

Official Ireland is an eager facilitator of such reckless projects, not least through the shameful abuse of Shannon Airport. The many Forum panellists who derided our support for Neutrality as 'holier than thou' might well reflect on the 'sophisticated standards' registered in this squalid race to the bottom. They might also question the tacit assumption that war 'works', and that peace is to be pursued through crushing military defeat.

Such a mindset is far removed from the commitments of Article 29 of our Constitution to 'the pacific settlement of international disputes...[and] the generally recognised principles of international law'. These contradictions are hard even to grasp, let alone convey in words, as is the mind-numbing shock of the Government's casual announcement, as we started to reflect on the Forum proceedings, of actual weapons training as part of our allegedly 'non-lethal' aid to Ukraine. Too often they say things, and they do things, and never the twain shall meet.

Article 29, a hard-won lesson from our struggle for independence and our bitter civil war, informed our approach to another legacy of that period, in the Northern Ireland Peace Process. Is it holier-than-thou, a mere debating point, to recall the rejection by all parties in that process, including the Irish and British Governments, of 'any use or threat of force'? Are such declarations for domestic consumption only; are we an 'Island of Peace' or merely a region of suspended war?

From our UN admission in 1955, we expressed our identity through a modest and creative support for decolonisation and disarmament, and through genuine UN-*directed* peacekeeping with huge public endorsement. That is what Neutrality meant to us and to Frank Aiken then: a practical and moral commitment needing to be retrieved and fulfilled, rather than glibly disparaged, today.

Our leaders have lost sight of our past, and of the realities of today's planet: global conflicts causing massive displacement, aggravating extreme poverty and the climate crisis, and undermining the chances of a truly global response to this global challenge. Just as our policies have been taken away from us here, 'We, the peoples of the United Nations' have been displaced from our vital global forum.

Irish governments have regarded membership of the EEC/EU as requiring furtive acquiescence in the 'rules-based international order' crafted and controlled by 'the EU/NATO strategic partnership'. As this neo-colonial project has usurped the United Nations, Ireland has joined in

the empty, patronising promise merely to act ‘in accordance with the principles’ of the Charter – as interpreted, and enforced, by ‘the West’.

Ireland, the first neutral member state of the EU, over decades failed even to name let alone articulate our identity and commitments. Now the Tánaiste’s forum brings speakers from the ‘former neutrals’ we failed to work with to tell us we might as well give up the game as well. Over that same period Ireland, a country well placed to promote UN reform, has instead chosen to present the UN as simply an obstacle.

Dismantling the UN lever of the ‘Triple Lock’, rather than engaging with the General Assembly to demand radical UN reform, might well be the most immediate aim and proposed outcome of the Forum process. That would set the seal on our furtive and disastrous liaison with NATO. It would mean turning our backs, perhaps definitively, on what the Tánaiste bizarrely told the Forum was still ‘our strongest protection and our most important global security asset’.

Day 1 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (Cork, 22 June 2023)

John Maguire

1. **Global security environment**
2. **European security post-Ukraine and implications for Ireland**
3. **New and emerging threats: Cyber security**
4. **New and emerging threats: Maritime security**

Professor ANDREW COTTEY, Jean Monnet Chair UCC, introduced UCC President JOHN O'HALLORAN for a welcome address.

When an Tánaiste, MICHEÁL MARTIN TD, was introduced, members of Connolly Youth unfurled a red banner reading 'NATO WARS: MILLIONS DEAD' and began to criticise the proceedings as an extension of militarism. MICHEÁL MARTIN continued to speak, reproving them for trying to close down discussion, wanting 'debate only on your terms'. Before these protesters had departed, some being firmly escorted by Gardaí, a gentleman in the audience loudly questioned 'Where do they get these figures – millions dead?' The banner had thus provoked questioning. Its wielders could well have referred to Brown University's careful studies, the most recent of which indeed documents millions of deaths resulting from wars, including those waged by NATO and/or its leading members, since 2001.*

Meanwhile, separately, supporters of the Cork Neutrality League tried to raise points of order on the defects of the entire forum process. These points had previously been published, but were ignored, despite their proponents' best efforts. University College Cork's (UCC) motto is 'Where Finbarr taught let Munster learn'; Munster clearly did some teaching too, through both the banner and the Points of Order. A veteran of Cork's peace movement called the events 'a very Cork occasion', bringing a reminder of voices and perspectives absent from or inadequately represented within the hall.

The Tánaiste announced the Government's intentions to create public awareness and understanding of the international security environment (ISE) and Ireland's role within it. This innocuous-seeming formula is crucial, coming from a minister who recently mused that Ireland could join NATO without a referendum. The direction, made clear from the Commission on the Defence Forces (CDF) report onwards, is onto a one-way street; the people need to 'catch up' with what has been done, despite denials, over years, and with plans already well advanced such as the post-Forum announcement on weapons training for Ukrainian troops.

The key notion ushering us along this deceptively simplistic pathway is, bizarrely, '**complexity**'. It resounds through all the proceedings, invoked three times in the Tánaiste's opening remarks, most notably in his final comment, after a sketch of his own family history: 'the point being, life is complex'. (27.49.00) This brought relieved applause from most attendees: thank heavens, 'we' were back on track!

What was the intention of this unscripted peroration? The dictionaries tell us that something 'complex' has many parts – and is difficult to understand. The message, in this instance, was quite explicit: no point in waving banners or raising 'points of order' about something which

* <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2023/IndirectDeaths#:~:text=This%20report%20reviews%20the%20latest,Iraq%2C%20Syria%2C%20and%20Yemen.>

you need us to tell you about – and which even then you’ll find hard to grasp. The irony is that those protesting inside and outside the hall, and for example INNATE (Irish Nonviolent Network for Action, Training and Education) with its detailed criticism of the panel selections, were also invoking **complexity**: there is a rich and diverse world in here, *and* a diverse and too-often poor world out there, and Official Ireland is determined, despite Article 29, that never the twain shall meet except on its restrictive terms.

Any worthwhile assessment of the Forum proceedings, and any hope of restoring Irish foreign and defence policies to their proper foundations, will require clarity on **complexity** – on what we mean by it and where it truly resides. Even a ‘conventional’ high-powered rifle has many parts, but few human products are more destructively simple, as Henry Reed’s 1942 poem ‘Naming of Parts’ strikingly conveys. The ‘military world’ embraced by Official Ireland has also many parts, and is far from easy to map, but it is, perversely, narrowly focused on reducing, threatening, even annihilating, the messy, rich complexity of human living together.

The Tánaiste’s address gave a now-familiar account of the many aspects of Irish foreign policy: Global Ireland contributing on issues of poverty, development, climate change etc., including the Good Friday Agreement and our peace process. All this, including our recent UN Security Council (UNSC) stint, took place within 50 years of EU membership, membership of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and ‘nearly 25 years of engagement’ with NATO through Partnership for Peace (PfP) (15.30.00...). This was allegedly multilateralism ‘with the UN Charter at its heart’ (16.06.00).

He quoted De Valera’s famous warning to the League of Nations Assembly in 1935: ‘Make no mistake, if on any pretext whatever we were to permit the sovereignty of even the weakest State amongst us to be unjustly taken away, the whole foundation of the League would crumble into dust. If the pledge of security is not universal, if it is not to apply to all impartially... if one aggressor is to be given a free hand while another is restrained, then it is far better that the old system of alliances should return and that each nation should do what it can to prepare for its own defence’. (17:19)

No mention of, for example, the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003. This oversight is central to the day’s, perhaps the whole Forum’s, proceedings: was ‘the rules-based international order’ (RBO) basically intact up to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine; does it now require to be reasserted/defended/redefined by ‘the West’ or, as NEIL MELVIN of Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) dubbed it, ‘the Euro-Atlantic community’ (41.09...)? Was the Tánaiste right to affirm ‘Ireland’s commitment to the UN Charter, to the rules-based multilateral order’ (14.53.00...) as though these were identical, or even compatible, entities?

He concluded by repeating that what we need is ‘facts, and evidence’; he hoped that these topics would be discussed not just in the four sessions but also in the homes and kitchens and – a weather-inspired Churchillian moment – on the beaches and in the parks. He then invited Professor Dame Louise Richardson, whose credentials he spelt out, to take the chair.

When she did so, there were renewed interventions from the floor, one protester denouncing the proceedings as shameful. She expressed how glad she was to be there, and how all this was ‘participatory democracy... in action’ (32.39.00...), a glib remark unworthy of a self-respecting academic. She invoked the saying ‘Audi alteram partem’ – ‘Hear the other side’ – having singularly failed to do so... She told us how the optimism around 1990 had been undone by fragmentation, the attacks on the Twin Towers, etc. We in Ireland, who in our early decades had ‘looked inward’ (though not De Valera at the League, or Frank Aiken at the UN?), had ‘opened up’ through Whitaker and especially EEC membership, and had a basically global outlook.

1. Global Security Environment

Moderator: LOUISE RICHARDSON, Forum Chair

NEIL MELVIN, Director, International Security, RUSI

BRIGID LAFFAN, Emeritus Professor, European University Institute

RENATA DWAN, Senior Consulting Fellow, Chatham House

RÉISEAL NÍ CHÉILEACHAIR, Head of International Advocacy, Concern

NEIL MELVIN, Director, International Security, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), said the Ukraine war was transforming European security (41.09.00...), with dangers to the RBO from the increasing emphasis on deterrence, nuclear weapons and the ‘constant’ Russian threat.

BRIGID LAFFAN, Emeritus Professor, European University Institute, stressed how ‘a power has invaded another country’, breaching a fundamental norm of the RBO (43.28.00...). The disruption of Ukraine as the ‘breadbasket’ had worsened world poverty. European security was now world security, and Ireland had one and only one anchor in this new setting, the EU (46.24.00).

RENATA DWAN, Senior Consulting Fellow, Chatham House, tactfully introduced some nuance: African and Asian security, e.g., were world security too (46.55.00...); we needed a global as well as a Eurocentric outlook. From that perspective, though the Ukraine war is ‘critical’ (47.57.00), ‘it’s important that we don’t start from Ukraine as a ground zero and that we don’t limit [our thinking] to a narrow security debate.’ (50.00.00) Fragmentation was not new, and the present situation was *revealing*, rather than newly creating, fractures (48.16.00...). Did we reflect that we were China’s second EU trading partner after Germany, and on our profile as one of the most significant global data centres outside the US? As the portal to Europe for most large US companies, ‘we need to think about how that shapes ourselves both as a target as well as what we can bring to the world’. (49.42) This entire intervention, coming as it does from a senior member of Chatham House, is worth reading in detail.

RÉISEAL NÍ CHÉILEACHAIR, Head of International Advocacy, Concern, (50.11.00...), endorsed RENATA DWAN’s broader lens on ‘a very interconnected but deeply unequal world’. The pandemic had thrown 77 million more people into extreme poverty; Mike Ryan of the World Health Organisation (WHO) spoke of a triumph for science and a failure in equity (50.34.00). She neatly sidestepped any impression of her work as a niche activity: ‘conflict is the main driver of humanitarian need, and twenty-five percent of the world currently is living in conflict-affected contexts... There are 108 million people displaced...that’s one in every 74 people in the world’. LR had stressed the need for us to be adaptable to survive; nobody was more adaptable than a migrant. She was hopeful that themes such as humanitarian law, reaching civilians and keeping them safe, would be addressed over the Forum sessions (51.24.00...)

QUESTIONS: An online question from Flora: Why this talk of ‘the RBO’: what’s wrong with the UN Charter plus International Law? (51.48.00) NEIL MELVIN described the RBO as (1) The UN and an unspecified ‘set of regional security that sort of pivot around that’; (2) The Bretton Woods financial system of International Monetary Fund (IMF) etc., and (3) the US (52.38.00...). The US and its allies faced challenges, e.g. ‘keeping shipping lanes open’ in the South China Sea. This response merely redescribed the ‘RBO’, without answering the question about the framework of UNC+IL, which it had replaced with ‘**complexity**’ – i.e., broken.

ONLINE QUESTIONER: How to *prevent* conflict? RÉISEAL NÍ CHÉILEACHAIR: No handy answer, but Ireland’s own experience of Famine is the basis for an approach of listening and empathy, holding the conversations.

BRIGID LAFFAN (1.04.24) stressed our obligation of loyal cooperation with the EU. On the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation - PESCO's training medics for conflict zones, how could any Irish person object to anything that could be good for our defence forces? BRIGID LAFFAN supports expansion of our defence forces; their voices are not enough heard in society; good we now have ex-Permanent Defence Forces (PDF) people in Oireachtas. NATO was 'the only game in town' as regards hard defence (1.06.00...). The only difference between Ukraine and Poland is NATO membership.

ONLINE QUESTION: Do we need a National Security Strategy? RENATA DWAN agrees a NSS good, making matters transparent – articulating and prioritising threats – and more democratic (1.14.00). NEIL MELVIN: Germany undergoing *Zeitenwende*, 'historic turning point'; EU must 'step up' not only on Russian threat but also e.g. Sahel, migration, etc. (1.15.32)

MATT CARTHY TD (Sinn Féin spokesperson): (1.18...): said that the 'crucially important... starting point of all of these conversations is that Ireland's legacy in terms of neutrality and having an independent foreign policy [is] something that we should be very proud of'. The basis for policy is our legacy of 'very longstanding military neutrality' and, having been colonised rather than colonising, 'which is relatively unique in Western European terms'. The Health Service Executive (HSE) cyber-attack, and Russian vessels off our shores, show that we haven't invested in cyber, or the navy. The PDF (permanent defence forces) were not fit for purpose. But conflict and instability were *not* inevitable. Our strengths were Neutrality, independence, and work such as Concern's: a foreign policy to end and prevent rather than participate in conflict.

ONLINE Question: Should we develop ties with e.g. Spain, Portugal, France...? (1.21.33...) NEIL MELVIN: The 'Euro/Atlantic Community' places increased emphasis on NATO *and* such 'minilateralism' – lower-level arrangements between small groups of countries. UK has some such, 'below NATO' – able to respond before NATO Article 5 kicks in. The OSCE is 'on its knees'; what would best replace it? Why not the EU's 'European Political Community'? He seemed unworried that such 'minilateral' arrangements 'below NATO' are further insulated from the reach of International Law and the UN.

RÉADA CRONIN TD (SF Junior Spokesperson): The greatest threat is *inequality*. Either we work for equality and decency or we build more and higher walls. Why hadn't we been working, like Turkey, for diplomacy in the period before the Ukraine war? (1.24.40...)

BRIGID LAFFAN: France and Germany made huge efforts, and got nowhere. Easy to see ourselves as virtuous – and moreover redistributive equality happens only rarely within countries, never between them. (1:29:39...) 'I think we are fooling ourselves if we think there can be something like a global social contract', which argument is at odds with the UN Charter's commitment 'to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples'. RENATA DWAN would like to see Ireland engaging on the IMF, debt, climate crisis – rethinking our development strategy. This is significant: that strategy is usually invoked merely as a backdrop-cum-fig-leaf for our military policies, but RENATA DWAN is suggesting scrutinising it as well. However, she warns, don't conflate Neutrality/Defence and development policies; she doesn't elaborate. (1.31.00...)

RÉISEAL NÍ CHÉILEACHAIR: We need *consistency* about world hunger and peacekeeping. One of the Sustainable Development Goals references peace and justice; impacts of conflict on civilians are fundamental.

NEIL MELVIN: Once-central questions of inequality etc. are being eclipsed by new great-power conflict, e.g. China's rise. Deterrence and defence might be the best way to achieve peace... (1.33.00...) Russia is not open to dialogue; nobody can break the deadlock.

EDWARD HORGAN (from floor): As a former peacekeeper, deplores the more than three million troop movements through Shannon; incompatible with Neutrality – on which we’re being lied to. We have capacity for peacekeeping, not for being a military power. NATO’s record in Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq etc. includes one million children dead since first Gulf War. NATO is ‘a criminal enforcer of a protection racket’. The Chair chooses to describe this as ‘a statement rather than a question’; i.e., nothing needing a response...

DECLAN POWER (ex-army): (1.38.00...) As also a peacekeeper, his question is always ‘how to get there’. During a UN mission in Darfur, people saw the superior capacities of an EU mission, and asked why the UN was so ineffective. Isn’t PESCO an example of ‘minilateralism’ at work; why not use NATO’s available ‘heavy lifting’? This intervention reveals the crux: it is as if decades of moral and material degradation of the UN never happened; we simply happen to live in a ‘complex’ world...

CLARE DALY MEP (1.40.43): The Ukraine war has not *created* the path, but rather accelerated us along it. This chimes with RENATA DWAN’s point that it revealed, rather than created, fractures (48.16.00...). The 2008 NATO decision on expansion is central. Minsk was not implemented. Mr Zelenskyy was elected on a peace-deal platform, but wasn’t supported back then. You can’t combine diplomacy and militarism. We can all see how proliferation of guns in the US leads to killings. De Valera was correct about small countries in Great Wars. We have Article 29, and President Higgins is quite right.

NEIL MELVIN (1.44.00): Has *seen* Russia disengaging from the post-Cold War arrangements. Clare Daly is wrong to speak of ‘civil war’ in Ukraine: it was an invasion. Their ‘peace proposals’ were deceptions: see Mr Putin’s speech about Ukraine’s not being a real country. Yes, 2008 decision on expansion was wrong, but NATO enlargement was driven by applicant countries, not USA; Ukraine wants into NATO, while Washington is hesitant. NEIL MELVIN here ignores NATO’s devious choreography since 1989, the fact that NATO decides on new memberships, and the effective US influence on any such decision.

RENATA DWAN (1.48.00): Aspects of fluidity of EU arrangements haven’t helped. Breakdown of talks has decreased predictability of actions, in which all have an interest. However, be wary of Russia’s ‘defensive’ image: in her former UN role she saw many Russian vetoes, even in areas not vital to Russia: they regard themselves as challenging an entire US-dominated set-up. See events in Mali, Central African Republic etc. as well.

BRIGID LAFFAN: (1.51.00...): Talk of ‘militarism’ and ‘militarisation’ disrespects our partners. The European Defence Agency is ‘a good thing’; it and the EU Military Committee are there to ensure cooperation. No rational, sane person would ever want war. Avoid the lazy opt-out of terms such as ‘militarism’. We’re not morally superior – we’ve just been lucky.

RÉISEAL NÍ CHÉILEACHAIR (invited by Chair to have last word) (1.54.00...): We in Concern commit to bringing the voices of people we work with ‘into conversations like this’. For example, we asked young people in Dem Rep Congo, Haiti and Somalia what was needed for food security and sustainability: they named safety, education, employment, recreational spaces, reconstruction and durable solutions to displacement, along with positive global leadership for hope, accountability and an alternative to violence and conflict. Sustainable development and peace-and-security are each impossible without the other.

2. European Security Post-Russian Invasion of Ukraine and Implications for Ireland

Moderator: SUZANNE LYNCH, Chief Brussels Correspondent, Politico Europe

PATRICIA LEWIS, Research Director, International Security, Chatham House

ANDREW COTTEY, Jean Monnet Chair, UCC

KATE FEARON, Deputy Director (Policy Support) of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre

GARY MURPHY, Professor, School of Law and Government, DCU

MODERATOR: SUZANNE LYNCH, Chief Brussels Correspondent, Politico, says Irish people know ‘so much’ about EU and NATO, but the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is less well known. She asks Kate Fearon to describe the OSCE to us. (2.29.00...)

KATE FEARON, Deputy Director (Policy Support) of the OSCE’s Conflict Prevention Centre (2.31.00...): The largest such body, with 57 member states: EU 27, plus many other European and Asian states, plus UK, US and Russian Federation. Covers political, economic/environmental, and human rights etc. Tackling proliferation of weapons, large or small, is also ‘a core part’ of the work (3.27.28...) Her perspective is more positive than Neil Melvin’s ‘on its knees’ depiction (Panel One, 1.24.08). Yes, the Russian presence is very difficult, but it is essential. At the organisation’s weekly platform in Vienna, Russia is regularly confronted by the concerns and criticisms of other members. (2.48.00) KATE FEARON’S experience in the Irish peace process underlines the vital need to maintain links: (2:37:18...) ‘the day will come when there will be a reduction of hostilities... that day will come... and we need to keep this platform alive for when that happens’.

The question whether Russia’s presence, in an organisation operating by consensus, confers undeserved legitimacy and hinders the work, comes up again. KATE FEARON stresses that Russia is regularly confronted (2.48.30...): ‘the reason why it’s important is that so much of the time people are speaking to their own echo chambers and they’re choosing which narrative to hear, so actually... these are very difficult debates... it’s something that they don’t hear every day’ (2:49:28). KATE FEARON widens the focus to include the OSCE’s work with the Central Asian Five (often patronised as ‘the Stans’). Placed on the crucial trade routes between Russia and China (2.49.35...), ‘they can be caught in the middle... but they are very much part of the OSCE family’. The OSCE is working there on connectivity, economic development, climate change and water management, particularly on the Afghan border. (2.34.07...) OSCE also works on confidence building, e.g. in the Georgian crisis, the Minsk process and Armenia/Azerbaijan. She mentioned (3:28:25...) OSCE’s increasing focus on economic, environmental and human security, and gave an example of work in Bosnia-Herzegovina with two ethnically distinct municipalities for ‘economic empowerment, including for rural women – and that... helps to prevent further conflict’.

PATRICIA LEWIS, Research Director, International Security, Chatham House, confirms (2.51.07...) that Russia is confronted within the UN as well, and has to hear others’ concerns there. It is vital to maintain such connections.

Asked about nuclear weapons, she says we have become lazy-minded about them, and about unexamined notions of ‘deterrence’; the UK now calls its nuclear weapons simply ‘*The Deterrent*’ (2.41...) We lose sight of other elements of deterrence – and of conflict *prevention* too. Ireland gained huge standing through its work on nuclear weapons from the 1960s, and is now engaged with the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This treaty is very controversial; NATO won’t admit signatories.

SUZANNE LYNCH asks Patricia Lewis about withdrawals by Russia and the US from various arms-control treaties (3.09.40...). 'I actually begin with the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty; the US pulled out of it in 2001' as well as from the biological weapons process; 'this was a major problem for Russia and this set in train I think a whole set of actions from Russia'. There then was a 'pulling away from ... the intermediate range of nuclear forces treaty' and 'now... we've had a withdrawal from the conventional forces in Europe treaty... Russia pulling out of ... Open Skies, Russia and the United States pulled out... now we're seeing the US pull out of the new ... strategic arms reduction treaty and this is again a big blow'. She says that arms control has since then been seen as part of the strategic relationship between the United States and Russia. This chimes with NEIL MELVIN'S observation about 'a return to great power confrontation' (Panel One, 1:33:43...).

COLETTE CUNNINGHAM, Lecturer, School of Public Health, UCC, from floor (3.15.40...): Why no mention of public-health implications of nuclear weapons, 'the greatest global health threat, that far exceeds ... any threat of pandemic or any disease in the future'.

PATRICIA LEWIS agreed that nuclear weapons are a very great danger to human health. (3.25.00...) Asked (3.40.00...) by a Ukrainian postdoctoral researcher about threats to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, she said that Russian forces were 'using it, it seems, as... a different type of nuclear threat'. She was clear that any nuclear plant explosion was less devastating than a nuclear bomb, and that Zaporizhzhia would not be another Chernobyl – but reports that weapons and explosives were being brought into the building meant 'a potential environmental disaster... [;] it beggars belief [and] is extraordinarily irresponsible'.

There was frequent discussion of the events preceding the war in Ukraine. ANDREW COTTEY, Monnet Professor, UCC, said NATO enlargement was indeed part of the picture, but so also was Russia's neo-imperial attitude to post-Soviet states. You need a difficult combination of conflict *and* back-channels to keep some links alive (2.44.00...). There seems an implication here that, given the fact of conflict, discreetly managed back channels were some consolation, perhaps the most we could hope for. A very far cry from Article 29, Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, etc.

ANDREW COTTEY (2.53.00...) illustrated the **complexity** of today's world: our work to secure humanitarian access to Syria was 'somewhere where the UN is the appropriate vehicle'. Then, Ireland is part of the EU sanctions on Russia 'and for me that's both morally and strategically the right place to be', and thirdly, for example, Irish participants have been applauded for their role in NATO's KFOR in Kosovo.

MICK WALLACE MEP, from floor (3.19.30...) Kate Fearon speaks sanity about the OSCE. Why not hold talks *now*? Only working-class people die on either side in war. Eighty per cent of the world are not backing sanctions; we're tying ourselves into an old framework, and isolating ourselves. People are pro-peace, *not* pro-Russia. China hasn't any ships in the Gulf of Mexico, but is demonised while the US thrives on war.

SUZANNE LYNCH (3.29.00...) takes up some of Mick Wallace's points, agreeing that even countries such as Serbia and Turkey – let alone the 'Global South' – refused to back sanctions,. She poses the question are we too Eurocentric, not active enough in the UN, here – and what about the charge of demonising China? Andrew Cottey heads straight for China, an increasingly repressive state, escalating tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

JUDY PEDDLE, Peace & Neutrality Alliance (PANA), from floor (3.37.52...) returned to the points raised by Mick Wallace: many in the Global South condemn Russia's actions but do not support sanctions; they note double standards in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and on treatment of

certain refugees; they suspect the West's agenda, and Ireland, as a former colony, has far more affinity with the Global South.

The Ukrainian postdoctoral researcher who raised the Zaporizhzhia issue also argued that support, even with weapons, for those whose human rights were attacked did not damage Irish neutrality (3.34.41...). Andrew Cottey (3.05) had questioned the meaning of neutrality – allegedly a slippery concept, which we should not put in the Constitution.

GARY MURPHY, Professor, School of Law and Government, DCU (3.00.48...) asked did neutrality mean we could not take a side; could we be 'neutral' on e.g. Israel/Palestine? There seemed little grasp of the difference between our emotional and other commitments on a conflict and an urge to engage in rather than try to resolve/transform it: 'Most of us are not neutral in feeling, but, as human beings, we have to remember that, if the issues between East and West are to be decided in any manner that can give any possible satisfaction to anybody, whether Communist or anti-Communist, whether Asian or European or American, whether White or Black, then these issues must not be decided by war. We should wish this to be understood, both in the East and in the West.' (<https://ahf.nuclearmuseum.org/ahf/key-documents/russell-einstein-manifesto/>) Whatever elements of neutrality we still operate have enabled, rather than hindered, such independent line as we've taken on Palestine.

QUESTION ONLINE: Shouldn't the People decide questions such as neutrality in a democratic country? (2.58.28...) GARY MURPHY answered this question, which focused directly on Article 6, by saying we have *representative* government, which we can dismiss at elections. This bland response hardly addressed the experience of repeat referendums, etc., over recent decades.

GERRY WHITE, retired soldier, from floor (3.19.00...): 6 of the 32 counties are already in NATO; what implications for us now and in the future? KATE FEARON (3.29.30...) briefly discarded her 'OSCE hat': we might well be talking about 'A New Ireland', raising questions of integrating economies, education, health systems and indeed foreign and defence policies, including the experience of NATO membership.

Address by David Giles

The afternoon panels were preceded/introduced by an address from DAVID GILES, a UCC graduate who had been selected as one of Ireland's two Youth Delegates to the UN. He outlined their attendance at events and bodies in New York and Rome (Food Programme). He suggested we were going through a 'Zeitenwende', a historic turning point, raising the meaning of Neutrality – which could not mean 'passivity' vis-à-vis defence (6.39.00). He instanced cyber security and the Nord Stream explosion as examples of threats, along with climate change, which could be both a multiplier and a cause of conflict, but did not mention the ecological impact of the military. The central problem here was that, through no fault of the speaker's, we had a largely 'feelgood' occasion rather than a range or clash of perspectives.

3. New and emerging threats: Cyber security

Moderator: RICHARD BROWNE, Director of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)

ROBERT McCARDLE, Director at Trend Micro

RICHARD PARKER, Vice President, Cyber Security, Dell

CAITRÍONA HEINL, Executive Director, Azure Forum

Brigadier General SEÁN WHITE, Director, Cyber Defence, EU Military Staff

MODERATOR, RICHARD BROWNE, Director of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), gave a broad picture of the pervasiveness of cybercrime, with a range of threat actors and types. The NCSC works to detect and deter such threats and to build resilience against them. It's a 'team sport', involving national bodies such as the PDF and Garda, cooperation with Industry, and international work, diplomacy etc.

ROBERT McCARDLE, a Director of multinational company Trend Micro, outlined a spectrum of cyber threats (20.46...), including state espionage, hybrid warfare, disruption and online terrorism.

RICHARD PARKER, Vice President, Cyber Security, Dell, endorsed ROBERT McCARDLE's account, instancing the attack on the HSE here, and then focused on how we live and work with the existence of such threats: designing and updating systems adequately, fitting patches, and preparing resilient recovery. With 'the Internet of Things', all our devices are linked, interacting on the Cloud with people and bodies that may have inadequate systems, and where third parties gain access to our data and systems. How secure are our supply chains?

CAITRÍONA HEINL, Executive Director, Azure Forum, focused on the state and interstate level, where a consensus is emerging, e.g. in the UN First Committee, on defining and countering cyber threats. With cyber now interacting with artificial intelligence (AI), we have old *and* new threats, and an increase in their scale, severity and sophistication. States are using covert interventions to destabilise other states, as well as targeting critical infrastructure – and emerging technologies are a major challenge to 'our understanding of where we're going in the next five to ten years'. A further issue is growing inequality of such resources *between* states (31.27...34...).

Brigadier General SEÁN WHITE, Director, Cyber Defence, EU Military Staff, described the work of our PDF with EU and NATO structures (18.46-19.51...). He also later described EU/NATO developments, including collaboration with NATO at the staff-to-staff level, 'and this week there are members of my staff... in the Joint Forces Training Centre in Poland working on an exercise called Coalition Warrior Interoperability Exercise'. Senator Craughwell's insistence that we can maintain Neutrality alongside this degree of incorporation with NATO (1.30.20) strains credulity.

SEÁN WHITE also put internet-of-things threats in a military context, given the increasing dependence of the military on civilian, especially digital, infrastructures. With cyber-attacks, can we even trust our own 'information'? '[Y]ou look at your fridge in a social room, if it's connected to a network, is that giving off a geolocation device, is it going to compromise your troops on the ground?' Is storage of nation-state data secure? (36.42.00...) The 'key lesson' is to segregate civilian and military infrastructure; however, the interdependency of physical and digital means the EU is seeking greater civil/military *cooperation*...

RICHARD BROWNE: Absolutely: the military depend on civilian infrastructure 'to project power and to defend their citizens'; a rather definite 'steer' from a MODERATOR? (39.00...). He asks Chris Johnson how things are going with e.g. 'wiper' attacks.

CHRIS JOHNSON, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Engineering Faculty QUB, UK Cyber Advisory Board, answers it's too early to say; it'll go on for years. He won't 'pick a fight with a general', but insulation of civilian and military is impossible; what about e.g. Ireland's road-management system? China and Russia see *everything* as 'dual-use'. In building for future generations, making massive investments, *all* must ensure cyber security (42.00....) He stresses the risks that quantum computing can unlock current encryptions (51.07), and the chaos from a grid blackout in Italy (52.40).

Speakers diverge on the implications of **dual use**, which turns out appropriately to have a dual meaning. The first is our normal one: something which could be used for either civil or military purposes, and this already reveals **complexity** and divergent views. CAITRÍONA HEINL insists that we need more regulation, not just of exports but also for example of who is investing in strategic infrastructure etc. (1.27.41...).

This brings out the curious position of the 'Moderator', RICHARD BROWNE. Time and again he 'just quickly' answers points from speakers, for example here dismissing 'any suggestion we're going to weaken our export-control regulations' (1.29.45). He clearly feels the need to do so: isn't he the Director of the National Cyber Security Centre?! This is a weakness of the whole Forum process: the NCSC Director could hardly be left off such a panel, but equally he should not have been running it, let alone as actively as here.

The discussion of **dual use** is focused when EDWARD DIXON asks from the floor: given that Ireland is one of only three countries making the advanced processors required for weapons systems, and that Russia for example wants them, are we careful enough about where they end up? (1.16.19) CHRIS JOHNSON endorses this concern, but adds: 'Rejoice that you're in that position; these chips are Dual Purpose... but you [must ask] difficult questions... about regulation and morality and about industrial policy in a country that I'm not a citizen of and so these are debates that everybody in this room has to have, not me...'

Once again, RICHARD BROWNE is quick to 'moderate' such concerns: 'I can answer that actually specifically... We have a very robust export control regime it's administered by our colleagues in the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and the usual complaint we get is that it's overly onerous and it doesn't allow people export'. (1:16:30) At this point, some might react 'I can't let him get away with this!' – *and CHRIS JOHNSON voices that very thought!* Maybe this forum really *is* addressing the hard questions? But no: CHRIS JOHNSON's genial complaint, spelt out amidst jovial chuckles, is how difficult it is to *import* items for *non-military* purposes; dealing with the controls there 'is the absolute devil's work' – an oddly rare appearance for Old Nick... Once again, the MODERATOR addresses the record: 'the complaint we get from third parties is we're overly restrictive, so that's the balance I suppose...' (1.15.48 – 1:17:43)

Attendee KEVIN referred back to Renata Dwan's question (Panel One, 49.16.00...) about our numerous data centres: if they were a drain on our energy, and we couldn't defend them, and all this threatened our neutrality, why have them? (1:23:46...). This goes to the heart of an economic strategy which underlies our decades-long attitudes to EU/NATO. RICHARD PARKER defended Dell's footprint as smaller than Amazon's, and suggested the problems could be solved by technology, including solar and wind (1.24.19...). The MODERATOR again stepped in: 'the overall number of data centres is not that large... they are significant assets... a fundamental part of the digital economy...' (1:25:32)

Many aspects of AI were raised, including a strong warning from a retired Maths and IT teacher about the disruptive potential of AI for political life and for employment, and the need to prepare young people for its challenges (1.17.49...) CHRIS JOHNSON raised the ethical

problems of AI-enabled weapons systems. How can they discriminate between combatants and noncombatants (including surrendering soldiers)? ‘I see both safety and security as sub-components of ethics... and I do think that the military around the world need to radically rethink what the future of warfare and foreign policy will be like’ (1.03.00...). CAITRÍONA HEINL emphasises ‘the **complexity** arising from that’: the impact on diplomacy for example, and the need to rethink legal and other rules about peacetime and wartime (45.45.00...)

This raises the second, and less familiar, aspect of *dual use*. We normally think that it concerns objects which are directed down *either* the civil *or* the military path – but a major theme of this panel was the degree of overlap and competition, and the shifting boundary, between civil and military use *of the very same resource*, such as road transport, digital networks etc. Some speakers thought the two worlds could be insulated, whilst some doubted this, but there was a shared sense that military needs must trump others. SEÁN WHITE talked about ‘military mobility’: ‘a cyber-attack on a switching system in Frankfurt or Hamburg or in Rotterdam port or somewhere like that could have major consequences for getting military equipment to a particular location in time...’ (58.56.00...)

The MODERATOR concluded that ‘the key point here is, if nothing else works the military has to work, yeah that’s the key question.’ (1.02.03) That this initially seems self-evident in the context brings out the unexplored assumptions of the entire session; even CHRIS JOHNSON’s raising the ethics of AI weaponry, like CAITRÍONA HEINL’s reflections on implications for laws of warfare, did not address the ethical and practical challenges, or the opportunity costs, of war and war preparations as such. That this in turn might even *appear* to lie beyond the scope of a panel on cyber security merely drives the point deeper. When CHRIS JOHNSON hopes for ‘the very best minds to be working in this area’ (51:31.00), we might recall President Eisenhower’s warning of seventy years ago: ‘This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.’* Of course we want good minds working in all good areas, including appropriate and necessary defence. But the real ‘key question’ for all our minds, posed in 1955 by Einstein and Russell, is how to transform, and emerge from, the material and mental arms race that now threatens human life and the planet itself. In this panel, there seemed to be at best a resigned acceptance that cyber would remain another ‘front’ in a future world of indefinite, if not forever, warfare. SEÁN WHITE: ‘in this conflict, and most likely future conflicts, cyber-attacks will become a ubiquitous and routine feature and could potentially lead to further unintended consequences.’ (36.55- 37:01)

Within the ‘military world’ and the ‘defence sector’ these discussions, even when difficult, are assumed to be grounded in safe and solid premisses. It all looks very different from the broader human and social perspective mentioned in a question from Rosarii Griffin, Director of UCC’s Centre for Global Development (1.32.51...) and introduced with all too little time and space by Réiseal Ni Chéileachair of Concern, Kate Fearon of the OSCE, and Renata Dwan of Chatham House, all in Panel One. We are talking about a *colonisation* of the human lifeworld by the military-industrial system. It colonises the world ‘in here’ on our ‘Island of Peace’, and the majority world ‘out there’ beyond. Like all colonial systems, it claims a salvific mission, assuring us that all the sacrifices demanded are for our own good, with an implied question hanging over our capacity for independent living.

* <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-chance-for-peace-delivered-before-the-american-society-newspaper-editors>

4. New and Emerging Threats: Maritime Security and Critical Infrastructure

Moderator: CAITRÍONA HEINL, Executive Director, Azure Forum For Contemporary Security Strategy [We might consider how many individuals, as here, had two or even more bites at the cherry, e.g. as successively panellist and moderator, in an allegedly tightly-packed lineup with no room for INNATE and so many others...]

BRENDAN FLYNN, School of Political Science and Sociology, University of Galway

ROBERT MCCABE, Assistant Professor and Director, Maritime Security Programme at the Institute for Peace and Security, Coventry University

CHRISTIAN BUEGER, Professor of International Relations, University of Copenhagen, and Director, Safeseas network on Maritime security

LAURA BRIEN, incoming CEO, Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA)

CAITRÍONA HEINL explicitly ‘framed’ the session with ‘the threat landscape and the role of the state’ (2.08.20). Significant to start out, as usual, from *‘the’* threats, rather than for example where they come from and/or the values and perceptions which designate and prioritise them as threats. She turned first to

She turned first to CHRISTIAN BUEGER, Professor of International Relations, University of Copenhagen, & Director, Safeseas Network on Maritime Security. He mentioned our island’s sea-dependence and our ambitious offshore green-energy projects, as reasons to ‘upscale our game’. (2.09.56).

ROBERT McCABE, Assistant Professor and Director, Maritime Security Programme, Institute for Peace and Security, Coventry University, noted that, with a maritime territory eight to ten times our landmass, we’re belatedly overcoming our historic ‘seablindness’ (1.12-04...). Our highly capable navy lacked capacity for proper vigilance on or beneath the surface or in the air; large vessels, or technology, were options.

LAURA BRIEN, CEO, Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA), is incoming CEO in a newly established body under the recent Marine Area Planning Act (2.14.09...). Its remit: assessing ‘mainly private infrastructure’ projects seeking seabed access for wind turbines, digital, electrical transmission etc. Though the role of the state is a headline topic, the current disposition of public and private is not questioned in this session. MARA has to ensure ‘a stable investment environment’ for private investors, and there are more than financial and technological risks involved. CAITRÍONA HEINL asks her (2.25.46) how our new infrastructure can be protected. LAURA BRIEN details a lot of existing and planned projects for our goal of 5,000 megawatts of renewable energy by 2030, with a potential later of up to 30 gigawatts, much of which will be exported. With so many turbines and cables, we will depend for security on other countries and vice versa: ‘we can’t do it ourselves; it’s going to need to be at a minimum on a bilateral basis’, and ‘working within the European context as well’ (...2:29:30).

BRENDAN FORDE, School of Sociology and Political Science, University of Galway, instanced former President Dmitry Medvedev’s recent claim that Russia would now be justified in attacking subsea cables. That such a ‘horizontal escalation’ is even possible raises the threat level by ‘an order of magnitude’ (2.10.20...). A questioner from the floor (2.35.26...) pointed out that Mr Medvedev spoke in the aftermath of the Nord Stream explosion; he recalled CHRISTIAN BUEGER’s puzzlement (2.20.34...) as to the facts, and mentioned President Biden’s previous threats. All the facts should be on the table: whilst we should address the issue of safety, ‘it should not be used as a reason for dragging Ireland into... giving up our neutrality... I don’t think that we should selectively quote facts that suit a particular agenda [...] we should put all of the evidence on the table and then sit back and look and see where it leads us’.

BRENDAN FORDE stressed that his view of Russian threats did not depend on the Medvedev quote: the ‘buzzing’ of Norwegian oil platforms, the invasion of Ukraine, and threats of tactical use of nuclear weapons were evidence of ‘a hostile dangerous unpredictable actor’, which ‘changes our risk profile as a country.’ This in turn raises deep questions which the session did not explore. In a country so proud of our peace process and the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, are we wise to take this or the Moderator’s ‘threat landscape’ (2.08.20) as a given, self-explanatory entity?

BRENDAN FORDE focused (2.17.11...) on ports, arguing that our maritime gas infrastructure could not currently be protected: the plan was good, but we lacked enough ‘boots on deck’ for our vessels. A ‘very important task force... brings the EU and NATO together’. This ‘absolutely critical task force... sounds military’ but is ‘actually a bunch of senior civil servants and emergency planners... in Brussels... working with industry and with coastguards and navies and with energy stakeholders... and Ireland’s in that and that’s a great thing’. No doubt those deskbound landlubbers keep their sou’westers at the ready...

CHRISTIAN BUEGER (2.20.32...) agrees with Brendan Forde: ‘we also need eyes in the sky... especially drones and satellites’. We are still ‘struggling’ to find out what happened to Nord Stream, in the heavily surveilled Baltic sea. We need collaboration with industry’s resources – but also ‘a military deterrent in the background, because after all... we’re looking towards Russia, [who] will not go without a heavy military deterrent’. Shareholders will have to pay part of the cost, but offshore should not be disadvantaged vis-à-vis onshore. We all have to work together – with UK, US and Canada on data cables, and with France, Spain and Portugal on energy.

ROBERT McCABE (2.24.24...): we need a focal point for industry, government and other actors, as is done elsewhere – perhaps a new agency or focal point, perhaps in the Department of Defence.

CHRISTIAN BUEGER (2.29.43) describes ‘quite a set-up of fancy European Union institutions’ which are costly so we should use them well, such as the European Fisheries Control Agency and ‘Frontex, the coastguard agency’ (2.30.38). These need to be better organised, perhaps by the ‘super-fancy... European Maritime Security Strategy’. This will focus on critical infrastructure surveillance, and on biodiversity and climate change, the latter posing additional risks with a rising sea level. As for how efforts should be integrated, there are unique issues, including legal problems, with maritime space – Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), international waters etc., and a ‘purely national approach’ coordinated from Brussels might not address these (2.34.23).

Dr SCOTT FITZSIMMONS of UL (2.38.06) asked, given our present and planned infrastructure projects, what protective measures we should adopt, whether through PESCO or otherwise. BRENDAN FORDE focused simply on PESCO, which is ‘a sort of a club where countries pool together as they want’; he sees it therefore as ‘perfect for Ireland’. He went on to discuss a too-often neglected aspect of EU/NATO developments: besides actual projects, PESCO also develops ‘capabilities in terms of understanding and learning and doctrine and tactics and techniques’.

This is highly significant. The EU/NATO ‘security architecture’ *reconfigures* the forces operating with it: the degree of ‘interoperability’ already embarked on reduces any alternative options for our defence forces. This is in a context where NATO has an expanding profile as ‘the standard setting organisation’ of the ‘military world’ (Defence Green Paper, 2013, pp. 7,8). How do we locate ourselves in, or vis-à-vis, that ‘world’ – and what impact has it on the ‘non-military world’?

Those of us who challenged the benign-sounding ‘European Political Cooperation’ of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1986/87 were dismissed as uninformed alarmists. Now, the lexicon of

Euphemism yields this year's 'European Political Community' – and allegedly we remain just as stubbornly uninformed, inattentive and alarmist; our only consolation is that we are now apparently joined in two of these defects by the sovereign Irish people.

We were right, as was President Higgins, to raise doubts about the merits of the Forum. Equally however, close attention shows up the unwisdom of our leaders' flirtation with genuine democratic policymaking. They are sorcerers' apprentices, vainly juggling the fragments of our broken policies and troubled Constitution. Those fragments can be retrieved and reconfigured only through something much deeper and wider than this costive 'consultation'.

Policymaking here is in itself a 'threat landscape' where the mere citizen might be wise not to venture. The danger lies in even attempting to make sense of what is being said, to assess how it relates to the 'facts, and evidence' called for by the Tánaiste's opening address. We have spent an entire day on security and defence, focusing finally on maritime security – and after it all one of our expert panel blithely tells us (3.13.16...) that 'the term maritime security means different things to different people, depending [on] who you ask and the context, so there's a lot to unpack there I think'.

The non-expert is inclined to concur.

Dare we even mention a concluding remark from CHRISTIAN BUEGER? Having earlier warned us (2:54:30...) 'not to become an easy target' he later tells us (3.13.50...) *en passant* that 'Ireland is actually relatively fine... Ireland is pretty safe'. This reassurance about undersea cables recalls an observation from last year's CDF Report, in turn quoting the 2015 White Paper as 'stressing that the risk of a conventional military attack on Ireland remains low'. Whether these two judgements are correct or not, the CDF notes that the White Paper 'highlights the instability on Europe's Southern and South-Eastern flank as a cause for concern and Ireland as a potential target due to its profile as an EU Member State and active participant in multi-national peace support operations'. (pp. 5, and 30).

Would it be irresponsible, inattentive or alarmist to suggest that all this might demonstrate the need to assess the *actual* environment we live in, to see what are *real* threats and where they come from, and to prepare to address them in the light of our identity and values? We hardly need to be Eurosceptics to note how much of the 'threat landscape' invoked by our Panel, and the CDF, relates to Ireland's participation in a version of the EU with ambitions to assert itself as a major Western global power.

Need this concern Ireland as such? Clearly so, given that our panellists' vision spans the globe. CHRISTIAN BUEGER extols the 'super-fancy... European Maritime Security Strategy' as 'a super-important vehicle for coordinating activities across Europe'. Its 'very extensive action plan' has three focus areas: 'the first one is strategic competition, so there's a lot of stuff on the Atlantic and in the Pacific.' Nobody seemed puzzled that a discussion of infrastructure protection around Ireland, even 'activities across Europe', should seamlessly segue through 'choke points... *around Egypt* and the British Channel' (3.13.40... emphasis added) and arrive at 'stuff... in the Pacific'.

This has to do with projection of EU power on a global scale, for example vis-à-vis China. Will Ireland just leave 'all that' to the others – but how many of *them* have a Pacific coastline? We might regard this far-flung 'strategic focus' as an optional add-on, but it is clearly seen as at the heart of the EU's identity, and our panellists seem cheerfully on board – including BRENDAN FORDE (2:57:34...): 'I was speaking to a German naval officer about this... and his punchline was to me: 'I would love to have some of your Irish Naval people to come and collaborate, because your people are outstanding; why aren't they here?' and I said I don't know.' Will

our ‘Rangers Wing’, apparently to be reconfigured shortly as ‘IRLSOF’ (Ireland’s Special Operations Force), who have already been active in Afghanistan, West Africa and elsewhere, soon have ‘Ireland’s Seals’ on deck with them?

It is curious that Neutrality is regularly isolated as a ‘slippery’ concept – unlike such notions as Justice, Equality, Freedom and the like, on which more or less robust debates have ranged over millennia. It is also curious that *this* ‘slipperiness’ is regarded as a problem, whereas the unclarity of ‘Maritime Security’ is insouciantly remarked on. It is, finally, extremely strange that, though our Panellists profess to find the concept so baffling, they are quite clear that Neutrality is utterly compatible with a bizarre array of ventures.

BRENDAN FORDE tells us (2:19:18...) that ‘our neutrality position...would...need to be flexible so that we can participate in partnerships... Other neutral countries like Austria and Malta have extensive collaboration with NATO and it’s unproblematic and it doesn’t seem to cause some kind of concern that their neutrality is disappearing or anything like that’. Such arguments overlook the fact that Ireland, *the first Neutral member-state in the EEC*, failed for decades even to name, let alone articulate, our policy. We are now being instructed upon the consequences of our own failures, as though they were the epitome of reason and virtue...

BRENDAN FORDE’s account here is relatively calm compared to the boosterism of a later fugue where he declares (2.56.22...) that Neutrality is ‘completely consistent with being an active and ambitious and a pragmatic partner’ with EU states – then he adds PESCO, then NATO itself. We get a litany: Austria, Switzerland, Moldova, Cyprus, Serbia: ‘everyone has a partnership with NATO, practically, they have 31 members and 38 partnership arrangements’, which leaves well over 100 UN members out in the cold. But if Ireland wants to be ‘a dynamic and credible neutral I think it also means you have to be not isolationist’. Indeed ‘to be a player... you need to be able to collaborate where the new technologies, the new techniques and procedures are being developed – for instance all of this new drone technology, it’s changing every 18 months...’

Fairness demands that we note a middle step in BRENDAN FORDE’s argument: ‘you need to invest in your Navy, you need to guard your own waters and your own fish’. Here he is agreeing with the remarks from the floor of THOMAS GOULD, Sinn Féin TD for Cork North-Central, who highlights how vessels lacked staff to put to sea on 39 days this year, and strongly supports investment in our defence forces, particularly the navy (2.50.11...). DEPUTY GOULD also emphatically defends our Neutrality: ‘the Irish people want it’. However, he is equally emphatic that ‘Neutrality and all these questions should come up [in] citizens’ assemblies... and then we should have a referendum’. The people do not want Neutrality to be diluted by talk of external threats: ‘if we look after our own Defence Forces I think that’s where we need to start for us’. A similar point was later raised by a speaker, ‘Declan’ (?) from the floor (3.08.56...).

ROBERT McCABE, like BRENDAN FORDE, strongly supports the call for investment, but reassures him (2:54:05...) that there is ‘a consensus’ about having ‘a well-formed capable Defence Force and being neutral... there shouldn’t be a tension there, in fact it should be quite the opposite, the two... mutually kind of feed into each other’. There is no danger that they will emulate the Kilkenny Cats and devour each other: Neutrality is clearly the designated Cheshire Cat of these deliberations, destined to fade eventually to a smug isolationist grin, while the weapon footprint of the EU/NATO ‘security architecture’ will pervade the ‘military world’.

This panel has, however unintentionally, laid bare the dense tangles at the heart of Irish defence policymaking. Where are we to seek means of defence, other than from NATO, which Official Ireland has long endorsed as ‘the standard setting organisation of the military world’, where ‘the new technologies, the new techniques and procedures are being developed... changing

every 18 months'? Where and how, indeed, are we even going to define 'defence' – and how do wars ever happen if so many countries have only a *defence* industry and *defence* forces?

LISA LEE, a graduate student in UCC, asked about the 'securitisation and criminalisation of refugee flows predominantly in the Mediterranean, and even the criminalisation of aid workers' (3.06.01). We should consider 'the human issues at the heart of security threats... I would like Ireland... as a member of the European Union to actually stand up for the migrants'. Could some of the funding for maritime surveillance address 'some of the very complex issues that cause these refugee flows'? EU countries should coordinate 'an EU-wide approach, but also one centred on the human lives being lost and not just our own individual security issues'.

This intervention stood out from all others in the session. Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, had actually been name-checked in passing (2:30:03...) with no reference to ethical or other issues. ROBERT McCABE (3.12.39...) admits to not having answers, but the Irish Naval service 'has been active there... punching above their weight'. BRENDAN FORDE professes total agreement with Ms Lee: 'if it was down to me I would want the EU to be... engaged in active rescue but unfortunately the EU is... a diverse collection of nations'. He says Malta – with the irrelevant sideswipe 'which is a neutral country' – and Italy objected to earlier rescue operations.

These are hugely selective observations on the failure of the EU to implement a comprehensive and truly 'humanitarian' response. BRENDAN FORDE, astonishingly, argues (3.16.02...) that 'the European response... has been much more humanitarian in comparative terms compared with Australia or compared with the United States' – a (tragically literal) race to the moral and maritime bottom. He tells Ms Lee he is 'hugely sympathetic to where you're coming from but it's a very complex, as [ROBERT McCABE] said, it's a very complex set of problems'. Given that she has herself called them 'complex', this must be of little help to Ms Lee.

The complacency about complexity does not end there. The MODERATOR announces (3:13:27...) that 'we have one minute before we conclude', and CHRISTIAN BUEGER in his closing remarks manages to squeeze in a lot. He now tells us that EEZ's (Exclusive Economic Zones) are in fact 'really, really tricky legally' – after a 90-minute discussion which never even mentioned the elephants outside the hall: the UN and its specialist agency the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). Surely *those* forums are essential for seeking the 'comprehensive' approach invoked by ROBERT McCABE (3:12:15...): 'it's not just about one single security threat; everything is interlinked from the bottom up... and kind of top down'. Clearly 'the kind of top' does not reach as far as the UN and IMO – but we needn't worry; tomorrow we're off to Galway where 'all that kind of thing' can come up.

The agenda of 'things to unpack' is summarised by LAURA BRIEN, incoming head of a totally new agency (3.11.40...): 'we will need to... have a think and see... how does that impact on what we do already; do we need to sort of change practices or build, so I think that would be really... where I would conclude'. Quite so: the day's end, as Eliot tells us, is a mere beginning, and we are left with *questions*, and endless invocations of **complexity**.

It takes an effort to remind oneself that this Forum was set up to impart to us, the sovereign people, *an already available clear analysis of problems, and clear guidelines for solving them*. What we got was a truly 'complex' assortment – at times a mishmash – of partial accounts of often distorted and disordered policies and practices. This offering came largely from the very people responsible for them and/or for clarifying them in universities and thinktanks. We no longer meekly accept that 'the financial world' or 'the medical world' are 'complex' and then just leave them to it. We have equally many reasons not to let 'the military world' mark its own homework.

Galway Alliance Against War (GAAW) Peace Event and Intervention

In anticipation of day two of the Government's Consultative Forum, the Galway Alliance Against War (GAAW) organised a peace event similar to those held in Cork, Dublin and Limerick.

The GAAW peace event, 'Neutrality Not NATO', was originally intended to take place in the Menlo Park Hotel on Thursday 22 June 2023, the eve of the Government's forum. At the end of May an orchestrated campaign of intimidation – phone calls, emails and social media comments – frightened the hotel management into cancelling the GAAW booking.

In the end the 'Neutrality Not NATO' event was held at Spanish Arch. Speakers on the night were MEPs Clare Daly and Mick Wallace, two Galway TDs, the Leas Ceann Comhraile Catherine Connolly and Sinn Féin's Mairéad Farrell, and Dr Karen Devine an expert on the EU from DCU.

Traditional music by Eugene Lambe on the Uilleann pipes and Bríd Kivneen on the fiddle opened the proceedings. It was made clear from the outset that the meeting had nothing to do with foreign conflicts, but with Ireland and our neutral status. This was taken up by the first speaker Mairéad Farrell, who argued: 'Our neutrality is our strength. It's not a weakness.'

Dr Devine underlined Irish people's support for this view: 'Since the 1990s successive polling shows that over eighty per cent of the electorate want neutrality. The numbers don't lie.' But not everyone is happy she explained, 'The EU have said Ireland's neutrality is a 'problem'.' Mick Wallace in his contribution highlighted how '€8 Billion of the European tax payers' money is going on military defence' and Clare Daly backed that up 'the EU's defence policies are interwoven with NATO...it's all a money making racket, instead of spending money on housing, health, they tell us that we need to spend money on arms. Why? They tell us we are under threat. It's threat inflation and it's utter nonsense.'

Catherine Connolly highlighted one of the significant turning points in the development of the EU: 'The Lisbon treaty copper fastened the militarisation of Europe and neoliberal agendas.' And rhetorically she asked: 'how did we get to the point where peace is a dirty and unacceptable word?'

According to the *Irish Times* report there were three hundred people at the 'Neutrality Not NATO' event. A number of these – including former MEP Patricia McKenna – also made short contributions supporting the pro-neutrality message.

So far as the official Forum event was concerned, day two in Galway began with two peace activists, Margaretta D'Arcy and Niall Farrell, mounting the forum stage carrying two signs which read 'Citizens Assembly Now' and 'FFG Fear Public Opinion'. The Gardaí were called when the two protesters refused to leave the platform. While forum organisers negotiated with the frail, 89 year old Ms D'Arcy, three Gardaí dragged Mr Farrell from the stage.* Ms D'Arcy was permitted to make a brief statement asking why a citizens' assembly had not been held in advance of a national forum, which would have been much more representative of the Irish public than the current 'stitch-up'. She also mentioned the doubts cast by President Michael D Higgins on the forum. There was some applause before she was escorted off stage and the forum formally began.**

However, that was not the end of the protests. Two other members of Galway Alliance Against War, Dette McLoughlin and James Duggan maintained a silent protest throughout the day – standing facing the speakers on the platform with placards which read 'NO confidence in govm't's sham public forums' and 'FFG FEAR PUBLIC OPINION'.***

* <https://www.flickr.com/photos/innateireland/52996900432/in/dateposted/>

** <https://www.flickr.com/photos/innateireland/52997503146/in/dateposted/>

*** <https://www.flickr.com/photos/innateireland/52997648054/in/dateposted/>

Day 2 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (Galway, 23 June 2023)

Niamh Ní Bhriain

- 1. Ireland as a global actor: Lessons from Ireland’s UN Security Council membership**
- 2. Ireland as a global actor: UN peacekeeping and the ‘Triple Lock’**
- 3. Ireland as a global actor: Conflict resolution, peacebuilding, international law and accountability**
- 4. Irish research and innovation in security and defence**

An Tánaiste Micheál Martin in conversation with Louise Richardson DBE

Chairperson of the forum, Dame Louise Richardson, invited Tánaiste Micheál Martin to reflect on day one. He praised Ireland’s role in nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and peacekeeping, as well as the diplomatic efforts in opening humanitarian corridors in Syria and Ethiopia. He mentioned Ireland’s work on climate and security, and women and conflict. The Tánaiste praised diplomatic efforts and affirmed his believe in multilateralism but he speculated that the UN may never again sanction a peace mission. He failed to spell out what exactly he was referring to. He mentioned Ireland’s collaboration with EU and NATO led ‘peace’ missions naming Mali in particular where he said ‘Wagner is replacing European states’. Regarding cyber-security and maritime affairs he said that in the future we will be much more dependent on the sea for energy with a greater need to increase inter-connectedness. He also mentioned undersea internet traffic and speculated about the risks posed and how we might secure this infrastructure, again nothing was referenced to substantiate the alleged risks.

Mr Martin’s comments reflect the normalisation of a securitised political agenda, which permeated throughout the Forum. There was virtually no critical commentary from panelists that reflected a bigger picture analysis or that called into question the trajectory towards more militarism and war. Specifically in connection with the Tánaiste’s opening remarks summarised above, there was no discussion on the normalisation of European and NATO troops conducting overseas missions and whether their deployment has been conducive to building peace or whether it has in fact meant a furtherance of war and conflict.

1. Ireland as a global actor: Lessons from Ireland’s UN Security Council membership

Moderator: SONJA HYLAND, Deputy Secretary General and Political Director, Department of Foreign Affairs

SHANE RYAN, First Secretary Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN

EDWARD BURKE, Assistant Professor, History of Warfare, University College Dublin

RENATA DWAN, Senior Consulting Fellow, Chatham House

RENATA DWAN, Senior Consulting Fellow, Chatham House: The opening round of interventions focused on the role of the UN Security Council (UNSC), its mandate of

maintaining peace and security, the origins in the post World War II era, the power dynamics of that time, the evolution of discussions on women in conflict and the protection of civilians, the dynamics between permanent member states and how they have deteriorated since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. With regard to Ireland, panelists spoke at length on our role in opening humanitarian corridors in Ethiopia and Syria.

Panelists discussed the P5 veto power speculating that although all permanent members have publicly supported reform it is not likely to happen any time soon and we might instead look at what can be achieved through the General Assembly (GA). Examples were given where war and conflict around the world has been raised at various UN levels by Ireland through relationships cultivated with African states. Panelists spoke of the UN 'court of public opinion' where P5 members must explain their vetoes to the GA, an initiative led by Lichtenstein that raises the political cost of a veto.

There were reflections on Ireland's role at the UNSC in relation to climate and security, mentioning a resolution that was vetoed by Russia. While panelists made the point that more work needs to be done on highlighting the linkages between climate, peace and security, they failed to raise the direct and indirect impact of the military as a significant contributor to climate breakdown, both in terms of emissions, but also in the provision of militarised security to protect the interests and operations of the fossil fuel industry.

[Lelia Doolan took to the stage and made an unscheduled input; see below]

Q. Slido (edited): Does Ireland lack the necessary understanding of security outside of the humanitarian aid context? Why would others take our view seriously when we don't take security seriously?

Response: Ireland works closely with other UN peacekeeping countries and takes advice from others, but we also have our own ability to analyse and collect information.

Q. SENATOR CRAUGHWELL, Independent (edited): Regarding Shannon Airport, why has the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) never addressed the obligations on Ireland under the UN Charter?

Q. Deputy MATT CARTHY, Sinn Féin (edited): It was our longstanding military neutrality and independent foreign policy that allowed us to have a place on the UNSC. The UN has significant failings but it's the best we have in terms of multilateralism. There is a difference between UN vetoes on resolutions and UN vetoes on peacekeeping. The Triple Lock refers to the second only. We should be critical of those who block progress at the UN, including those who breach resolutions already adopted including resolutions related to Israel and Palestine. Our independent foreign policy gives Ireland its moral authority.

Q. Senator LISA CHAMBERS Fianna Fáil (edited): Where do we go to next on the climate agenda?

Responses:

The question on Shannon airport was not addressed.

On UN reform, RENATA DWAN said she believes that it was not Ireland's neutrality that got us on the UNSC, but empathy, partnership, hard work, honesty. Neutrality might have enabled that but it wasn't because of that. It would be erroneous to see international relations in terms of the UN versus regional arrangements. There is no dispute between the UN and regional arrangements.

EDWARD BURKE made the point that Norway got a seat on the UNSC and it is not neutral but a NATO member state. On regionalism, we are in a good position to build new coalitions and alliances. He suggested that Ireland is content not to involve itself in Chapter VII peace-keeping missions, though he later clarifies that we have in fact involved ourselves, we shouldn't subcontract 'hard work' to others. We need to ask ourselves whether we are willing to do things in future without a UNSC resolution. The moderator interjects to ask about a Russian threat to veto a peacekeeping mission in the Balkans, which wasn't realised. Both the interjection itself and the response are confusing as they divert from the questions posed from the audience. The response references NATO and the EU but the point is fudged and impossible to make out.

Q. From the floor (edited): The EU has become incredibly corrupt, how can we rectify that? On Africa many of the countries we are investing in are dictatorships, should we shift focus to other regions?

Q. MICHAEL HIGGINS, former UN employee (edited): Neutrality was essential to getting us elected to UNSC. Ireland is perceived as not having a hidden agenda. We assured other nations that we wouldn't be pressured by the P3 (France, UK, US). There was trust. Our efforts would not have been possible if we were part of NATO. Africa's indelible memory is of NATO in the 60s and 70s supporting military dictatorship Salazar to crush independence movements. Ireland has a great record in Africa in contrast. We drafted the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one of our single most important contributions. They form a road-map for how countries can work together. More broadly, the forum is taking place in a fractious and distrustful environment, there is a glaring omission of peace, an alarmist tone. Why not strike a tone of calm? Ireland is one of the least threatened countries in the world. Our security is much better served by phone-calls rather than fighter jets.

Q. DONNA O'SHEA (edited): Discuss cyber security and how the UNSC will deal with this.

Responses, closing remarks

RENATA DWAN in response to MICHAEL HIGGINS makes the distinction that while there is a centrality of neutrality for Irish people is not necessarily what outsiders see. Panelist SHANE RYAN clarifies in agreement with MICHAEL HIGGINS that neutrality was indeed a factor in the campaign of us getting on the UNSC. It is of note that on the question of neutrality, the responses from the panelists to both rounds of interventions undermined the importance of neutrality. It was only following the intervention by Mr. Higgins, who spoke about his direct experience at the UN, that one panelist acknowledged the role of Ireland's in foreign policy at the UN.

Further comments were made on SDGs, development aid, and cyber security that are not elaborated on further for the purposes of this report.

2. Ireland as a global actor: UN peacekeeping and the 'Triple Lock'

Moderator: RENATA DWAN, Senior Consulting Fellow, Chatham House

KIERAN BRENNAN, Major General (Retd)

RAY MURPHY, Professor, Irish Centre for Human Rights, University of Galway

DECLAN POWER, Defence Analyst

SHAMALA KANDIAH THOMPSON, Chief Operating Officer, Security Council Report

The MODERATOR opens by recalling Ireland's commitment to UN peace-keeping and invites Prof. RAY MURPHY to introduce peace-keeping and what it means today. He mentions

Lebanon, the Golan Heights, the DRC, and the former Yugoslavia, the protection of human rights and civilians. He briefly discusses the complexity and at times the contradiction of authorising a peace mission that is simultaneously authorised to use force. MAJOR GENERAL BRENNAN distinguishes between the political and operational dimensions in peace-keeping. He speaks about the training of troops and prioritising their safety and security, and the marked difference between UN and regional missions.

The moderator mentions training and equipment for troops and asks DECLAN POWER to expand on this, which he does by referencing EU training missions. He says EU training was pivotal to ‘give the Somalians their own organised regular army’. Ireland participated in these training missions through the EU, which ‘wouldn’t have been possible in the same way through the UN’. He says these ‘African boots on the ground were at the coal face ... and didn’t have much basic military training’. He explains his role as ‘embedding human rights awareness humanitarian support awareness into the combat leaders because it’s not enough to do it with a whiteboard and a chart, you’ve got to get out there, get your boots dirty and hold their hands’.

This intervention suggests that Africa is a dirty and backward place and that Africans need Europeans to train them on human rights and humanitarianism, as well as on militarism. It also implies that the entire African continent is a homogeneous place devoid of diversity. His tone was arrogant and patronising with a blatant disregard for the colonialist relationship and uneven power dynamics that exist between Europe and Africa. There was no reflection on Europe’s direct role in causing, enabling, prolonging and benefiting from instability across the African continent. To underscore this point, he uses the word dirty four times with reference to Africa in his first intervention. He ends by saying ‘we should not box ourselves into corners to keep anyone happy, we should retain the right to independence.’ This is connected to later comments where he implies that the Triple Lock restricts Ireland from acting as an independent state.

There are various interventions from SHAMALA KANDIAH THOMPSON on the UNSC with technical information that is beyond the scope of this report.

The discussion moves on to the Triple Lock and PROF. MURPHY explained how it evolved and what it entails: Irish troops deployed overseas on peacekeeping missions must have 1. government approval, 2. Dáil approval, 3. a mandate from the UNSC or GA. Only once has a UN mandate been blocked such that Ireland could not participate in a peace-keeping mission. This involved China blocking a mission to Macedonia in the 1990s, before the Triple Lock was in place.

MAJOR GENERAL BRENNAN said he believes that a UN approved mandate and resolution gives great credibility, legitimacy and guidance to a mission.

RAY MURPHY made the point that the Tánaiste says he believes in multilateralism and ‘the essence of multilateralism is the UN. If we act outside the UN framework we are weakening the very organisation that we say we are committed to strengthening’. He praised Ireland’s role in peacekeeping and disarmament and warned against supporting something outside the current framework. He also refers to the possibility of approving mandates within the GA.

Connecting with his earlier comments on independence, DECLAN POWER says that ‘as an Irish citizen I can’t stand over the idea that we would abrogate our responsibilities to a foreign power and that’s what the triple lock does’. He falsely claimed that the Triple Lock gives power to totalitarian states to influence and dictate ‘what we do and where we go’. This statement is factually inaccurate and misleading. The Triple Lock as outlined by Prof. Murphy obliges us to act within the UN framework. It does not hand over power to any particular state, totalitarian or otherwise, it obligates us to comply with the requisites set out in the UN as a multilateral system. DECLAN POWER goes on to suggest that the Triple Lock raises more questions than

answers – ‘Ireland is restricting itself in the kinds of contributions it can make because of the triple lock’. Surely though, when deploying highly equipped armed forces overseas to a complex and volatile conflict region mandated to keep the peace, it is precisely the kinds of checks and balances that are built in to the Triple Lock mechanism that are required in order to ensure that Ireland does not become embroiled in external conflicts that may contravene our neutrality or negatively impact efforts to build peace? MAJOR GENERAL BRENNAN then intervenes with a hypothetical scenario that might unfold if we wanted to participate in a mission on humanitarian grounds where a UN mandate may not exist while PROF. MURPHY made a final point emphasising the importance of multilateralism and that without it P5 members may use competing and alternative spaces to advance their own foreign policy agendas.

Q. RÉADA CRONIN, Sinn Féin junior spokesperson on defence (edited): What missions, if any did Ireland want to join that they were precluded from because of the Triple Lock? What implications might it have for Irish peacekeeping troops going on a mission if there isn’t a UN mandate?

Q. From the floor (edited): Explain the difference of chapters 6, 7, 8. What other country would hand over its sovereignty? Why limit the Triple Lock with such small numbers of troops?

Retired BRIGADIER GENERAL GER AHERN (edited): Long intervention on peacekeeping and logistical and operational challenges.

Q. From the floor (edited): Intervention on the Triple Lock, how obsolete it is and how it should be discontinued. This should go through the Dáil and not involve broader public debate.

Responses: Ireland has not been precluded from participating in any missions because of the Triple Lock.

Regarding missions, the EU missions are different in that they have a gender component, robust decision making processes. The model of EU planning includes civilian and military components working together.

DECLAN POWER clarifies that while he ‘gets the whole multilateralism aspect’ we need other devices because ‘UN missions can become supportive of questionable regimes’. He omits to mention that the EU has in fact signed various bilateral agreements with questionable regimes that include the provision of military training and equipment, among other forms of support. He goes on to say, in reference to the missions, that doctrines might be in place but they might not necessarily trickle down to ground level. He then makes reference in vague terms to a UN mission where there was ‘a major screw-up and a lot of civilians got killed’ and claims that such a situation would not have happened on an EU or NATO led mission. Could DECLAN POWER really be unaware of the many millions of civilians killed by NATO led missions, or did he cynically decide to only raise the civilian deaths that supported his line of argumentation while choosing to ignore the many millions of others? It is incredibly dangerous that the Irish government would place on a panel a man with such a biased agenda and give him a platform to spread inaccurate and partial information, and worse, that it would look to him for advice on security matters. DECLAN POWER ends by saying he believes the Triple Lock should be understood as a short-term tool that isn’t suitable.

RAY MURPHY provided a technical explanation of the legal framework that underpins the Triple Lock and ended by pointing to its origin and purpose, which stem from a promise made to the Irish people on the basis of European integration. He believes that to renege on this would be a betrayal. He is critical of the artificial bind that the government has invoked when sending small numbers of troops overseas on short term deployment missions that have nothing to do with peace-keeping (eg. evacuations).

Q. FIONN DEMPSEY online via Slido: Some EU Common Security and Defence Policy missions involved training of African forces to police migration of Africans across Africa and to prevent them from reaching EU external borders. Is this peacekeeping or EU border policy and why should Ireland be involved?

Responses: MAJOR GENERAL BRENNAN said that troops in Mali who were involved in building capacity, conventional military training, empowering leaders to deliver outputs and not in managing migration. DECLAN POWER addresses the ‘substance of the point’. It is worth quoting his intervention in full. He says: ‘Border policing accompanied by appropriate aid packages and development of civil society within those troubled countries is essential because the people leaving are the brightest, the best, the bravest, they’re at considerable risk, and policing in order to prevent them ending up as bodies being fished out lifeless from the Mediterranean is a step in the right direction because the uncontrolled migration we’re seeing is in nobody’s interests and it’s certainly not in theirs. Landing them in countries like ours where up until recently we had appalling situations ... we want to see Africa get on its feet and haemorrhaging its best and brightest and losing their lives ... we can’t ignore that.’

Like his previous comments, this intervention from DECLAN POWER was also deeply problematic on various levels. In many ways it exemplifies so much of what was so fundamentally wrong with this Forum. Taken together with his earlier comments, he condones the colonialist deployment of European military troops to Africa, and by favouring a European intervention in the policing of African borders, he appears to legitimise an erosion of African states’ sovereignty and undermine the capacity of African leaders to make decisions on what’s best for them, their peoples and their states. It is entirely devoid of any acknowledgment that Europe has and continues to contribute to so many of the root causes that are driving Africans from their homes in search of safety in the first place. It shows absolutely no regard whatsoever for the daily struggles and realities that so many Africans face and the enormity of what it means to be forced to flee war, conflict, economic and other forms of violence, to migrate to survive, to move in search of a better life for themselves and their families. It suggests that by sending European troops to Africa to police Africans and restrict their right to move freely within their own continent we are, in fact, perversely, doing them a favour. These comments are all the more infuriating when placed against the backdrop of what had taken place in the Mediterranean the week before the Forum – a boat carrying over 700 refugees departed from North Africa and capsized in Greek waters, at least 600 were killed. Moreover on the day of the Forum while DECLAN POWER sat on stage in Galway and made these ignorant remarks, another at least 40 people were killed while attempting to reach the Canary Islands from Morocco. Indeed the Forum coincided with the first anniversary of the Melilla Massacre, a joint border policing operation between Spanish and Moroccan troops in which 23 Sudanese nationals were killed and the whereabouts of at least 70 others remains unknown a year later. The kind of border policing that DECLAN POWER favours has already been operational for many years and this is the result – thousands of people being killed by EU border policies along migration routes. Border policing has led to more not less deaths. He has entirely missed the point or he has chosen to ignore it. People won’t stop fleeing for survival, they will continue to do so but will be forced to take deadlier, more treacherous migration routes. Against the mounting evidence that the EU’s externalisation of border control to Africa is causing thousands of deaths along migration routes each year, it is utterly unacceptable that DECLAN POWER could make such comments without being challenged by the moderator or being requested to retract them. Finally, it is worth recalling that DECLAN POWER described in his earlier intervention that his role in Africa involved, among other things ‘embedding human rights’ though it is difficult to see, based on this commentary, that he has any knowledge at all of International Human Rights Law, International Refugee Law or other relevant international legal treaties and principles.

Q. An audience member calls out the colonialist nature of the intervention and speaks critically of white supremacy, colonialism, extractivism, the need for some historical perspective.

Failing to put this comment back to the panel, the MODERATOR instead moves the discussion along and bizarrely decided to pose a hypothetical question about what Ireland would do if there was a peace-keeping mission to Ukraine that was vetoed by Russia.

Q. Speaker from University of Limerick (edited): What methods have been used by regional organisations on controlling the use of troops?

MAJOR BRIGADIER BRENNAN gives a technical response on this and mentions an example from Chad.

Q. Senator PAULINE O'REILLY, Chair of the Green Party, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (edited): Multilateralism is key for world peace. We have to retain it. With or without the Triple Lock do we need to reform multilateral institutions?

Q. An audience member who has met with various non-state armed groups makes the point that they respect Ireland because of the Triple Lock. We've not had terrorist attacks unlike other countries in Europe. Removing the Triple Lock has implications for Ireland's internal security.

Regarding Africa, there is generally speaking a preference for EU missions because they play a more robust fighting role particularly with regards to counter-terrorism.

RAY MURPHY reminds us that consent is a fundamental principle but in reality its incredibly complex, if you invoke Chapter VII that authorises the UN to deploy without the consent of the state. Even a request from a host state does not bring legitimacy in and of itself. It is much more complex than that.

Q. Slido (edited): Has the triple lock been incorrectly or erroneously applied ... surely the presence or absence of a UN mandate is immaterial when bringing citizens safely home from conflict zones?

Q. Slido (edited): Should investment in troops and equipment come before we discuss the triple lock?

Q. Slido (edited): Should we revisit the troops numbers involved in triple lock deployments?

Q. Eamon Cusack, audience (edited): Comments critical of neutrality, lack of funding for forces, the statement made by the President, Sinn Féin, and in support of Ireland's involvement in EU missions and joining NATO.

Closing remarks included Prof. Murphy clarifying that there is no constitutional restriction on the president speaking out as he did on the forum, DECLAN POWER asking that we not get fixated on the Triple Lock as an instrument of oversight because it isn't and MAJOR GENERAL BRENNAN stating that 'notwithstanding negative publicity that has been put out about the defence forces it is still a wonderful organisation'. It is unclear what publicity the Major was referring to but the forum took place against a backdrop of media attention on the Women of Honour – women who suffered sexual harassment, violence, and rape, perpetrated against them by their male colleagues while serving in the Irish defence forces. Their calls for a full, public tribunal of inquiry and a proper investigation into the allegations were, at the time of the forum, without a satisfactory response from Tánaiste Micheal Martin.

3. Ireland as a global actor: Conflict resolution, peacebuilding, international law and accountability

Moderator: SIOBHAN MULLALY, Professor of Human Rights Law, University of Galway

MÁIRE BRANIFF, Senior Lecturer in Politics, Ulster University

ROGER MAC GINTY, Professor in Defence, Development and Diplomacy, Durham University

BRIGADIER GENERAL DAVID DIGNAM (Retd)

MAJOR GENERAL (RETD) MICHAEL BEARY, Head of Mission for the United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement

FIONA NIC DHONNACHA, Ireland's Ambassador to Colombia

This session looked at conflict resolution, peacebuilding, international law, and accountability. There is a brief overview given but a more thorough analysis is beyond the scope of this report, which is focused on neutrality and the triple lock.

Speakers discussed the role Ireland might play in multilateralism going forward within the different pillars of foreign policy. Irish ambassador, FIONA NIC DHONNACHA mentions Ireland's 'human rights-based approach and the focus on international law' while also mentioning at times the need for a 'strong rules-based international order and friendly relations with other countries in order for us to succeed and thrive'. She spoke of multilateralism within the UN and our EU engagement.

On neutrality Dr MÁIRE BRANIFF said that neutrality means different things to different people on this island. Neutrality in the north has been more ambiguous than on the rest of the island and there are people who would question the role of Irish neutrality, particularly in the north. ROGER MAC GINTY mentioned the moment of great global uncertainty, and the need to inject the word peace in to international discussions, not just security and stability. Other speakers mentioned the various dimensions to conflict and how we must be aware of these when building peace, the philosophical questions about what peace is and the role Ireland can play with soft power and professional foreign service, particularly as a small country. Some points were made on women, peace, security, LGBTQ people, reproductive rights.

Q. MAIRÉAD FARRELL, Sinn Féin TD (edited): Comment on applying rules based order equally. International law has been undermined by the wilful disregard of Israel, the failure of the international community to impose penalties. Should Ireland be showing leadership by withdrawing support for companies operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories?

Q. MARY WHELAN audience member (edited): Elaborate further on neutrality and the north of Ireland. Address the question of accountability and the ICC. Ireland is a member of the EU but we have not spoken about how we leverage our membership, we need to reflect on how we've treated women in our own defence forces.

Q. From the floor: Ireland's attitude of not questioning US imperialism around the world, particularly in Latin America.

Q. FIONA CORVINN, peace building organisation, Derry (edited): As co-guarantor, to what extent can Ireland intervene in the Legacy Bill?

Q. Slido (edited): Discuss EU support in Africa being conditional on human rights promotion and the support China and Russia are offering without such caveats.

Q. Slido (edited): What does Ireland need to do to continue its peace-keeping work?

Q. DAVID GILES, UN Youth Delegate, Ireland (edited): How do we involve young people more in peace processes?

Some points from the responses:

On accountability there are national and international levels. Colombia has faced challenges in its peace process with domestic structures and international mechanisms.

On Palestine, we must be mindful of the safety of Irish soldiers in the Middle East when we speak about Israel and Palestine.

On the Women of Honour, we need a 'happy, safe' working environment for everyone.

On neutrality, the lived experience in the north is very different, post Brexit this has taken on a new dimension, we're picking up now an aspect of the conversation that was parked in 1998. The conversations on the shared Ireland haven't included foreign policy, this is connected to neutrality. Peace is about justice, participation, equality, feeling valued. The Legacy Bill is opposed across the board. When we speak about neutrality there are statements from the Irish government questioning the Legacy Bill, what is the Irish government doing about the legacy bill and questions regarding Dublin and Monaghan and border families. What does Irish neutrality mean for people living in the north?

On aid, all aid is conditional.

On how we can better support our defence forces, we need to work with the structures within the EU (PESCO, EDA, training missions).

On youth, we need participation of youth, there are children and youth are involved in other spaces beyond the forum, climate spaces for example, online spaces. There's a hunger for information.

4. Irish research and innovation in security and defence

***Moderator:* BERNIE MAGUIRE, Assistant Secretary General and Defence Policy Director, Department of Defence**

LOKESH JOSHI, Stokes Professor of GlycoSciences at University of Galway

CARLO WEBSTER, Tyndall National Institute

STEPHEN O'DRISCOLL, SFI Challenge Research Team

MARIE GLEESON, Simply Blue Group (Former Lieutenant Commander, Irish Naval Service)

The final panel of day two addressed the various funding opportunities for the research and development of security and defence technology with a specific focus on EU programmes and funding. The panelists used a lot of technical jargon and overall the discussion was at a tangent to the earlier discussions and no real attempt was made to bridge the technical dimension with broader questions. There was a total failure to address how problematic the projects are, the gaps that exist with regard to how they are approved, the ethical void, and the absolute lack of transparency on how these projects are reviewed and approved at EU level. The discussion was held in a vacuum devoid of a political dimension.

Q. MICHAEL MULQUEEN, University of Central Lancashire (edited): Comment on growing a defence related industry in Ireland in light of its neutrality and related questions on Irish defence policy, military culture.

Q. From the floor (edited): Without a properly constituted security clearance regime, how can Ireland participate in the European Defence Fund?

Q. (edited): Comment on the brain drain and the defence forces.

Q. (edited): Expand on the role of humanities in relation to innovation.

Q. JACINDA BYRNE, former UN diplomat (edited): Is there a body in Ireland that is looking at this in a more holistic way? What do we need in terms of research for a domestic and international agenda?

Q. (edited): Technical question on underwater submersible drones. Who owns the intellectual property on what is produced from the EU funded projects? Do you have ethical advisors on innovation?

Q. BECKY WAY, University of Galway (edited): We must look at international security in a broad way, poverty, lack of resources, tyranny, destabilisation, food security, distribution. Where does humanities and social science research belong here? What role can academics play allowing them space and autonomy?

Q. Slido (edited): How can we expand our use of drones?

Q. Slido (edited): Ireland buys most of its defence material from neutral countries. Can a country remain neutral when it is incapable of arming itself in times of war?

Q. From the floor (edited): Is there a willingness in Ireland to support not just academic but NGO and think-tank research?

Responses: The responses were very technical and beyond the scope of this report, with the exception of the intervention of the moderator in response to the question on the EDF. The moderator described the lack of a clearance regime as an ‘obstacle for industry and academia to fully take advantage of the opportunities that are out there’ – the priorities are crystal clear. Ireland seems content to participate in research and development projects that involve the research and development of lethal weaponry though no regard has been given to the implications of our participation in such projects beyond what they may mean for us economically. There was a total gap in terms of addressing the deadly impact of these new technologies going forward.

Intervention by Lelia Doolan (Day 2, Galway, 23 June 2023)

Text provided by Lelia Doolan

I am not a specialist in the matters raised here. I am a specialist in being an Irish citizen.

And like most citizens of most countries, our insights run ahead of those of most politicians. Many years ago, I decided to live my life here. For most of that quite long life, I have lived among artists, – theatre and film people, painters, writers, scholars, musicians, architects, people on the margins of Irish society, people with little except their visions and imaginations. There's plenty of mayhem in these realms, plenty of jealousy and rage and pain but also a real understanding that fair play and peaceful making-up takes inventiveness and brains – and that ordinary Irish people have plenty of both.

Peace is a human need, necessary for maintaining life, like eating your greens. So is independence, and telling the truth.

War is a catastrophic issue, especially for women. Women don't start wars. Women lose their partners, fathers, sons. Women are raped and murdered as a regular instrument of war.

We are a rich country. Even though we have become more of a capitalist democracy than a republic of equals, there are many things we could do for ourselves, in co-operation with others. Joining military alliances and promoting the arms industry is not one of them. Being impartial peace-keepers, offering that gift to others as an actively neutral small nation is definitely one of them.

A few ideas are already under way:

1. Reform the Irish defence forces so that they are, unlike today, a safe place for women; with soldiers who are properly trained, paid and resourced. Such forces to be offered to the UN for peace-keeping, as of old
2. Reconsider the role of the Irish naval service. Why send the WB Yeats to Libya when she could save lives in the Mediterranean, as we once did, and work here at home to protect the livelihoods of our inshore fishermen?
3. Agree that our air service is primarily a life-saving rescue service and continue to accept the neighbouring RAF as a custodian of our airspace. Neighbours watch out for one another, why not?
4. Accept the triple lock as an essential safety catch, but double the number involved. We need to strengthen the often embattled United Nations.
5. Instead of continuing with our dependence on US corporations to provide valuable employment and to fill our corporate tax coffers, spend these billions on seriously, energetically resourcing all our poorly financed and run public services – and beyond that, for the future, aid Irish enterprise; our cyber, Internet, agricultural/environmental/engineering, scientific, pharma, and publishing SMEs with major startup investment and ongoing support.
6. Our strength as a country is in our growing appetite for justice and equality, in our good nature, generosity and humour. Our weakness is in our not yet being quite grown up as a nation of adults, in our propensity to duck and dive and pull the forelock. Why else accept

US warplanes at Shannon? Do we think we're not good enough to say no and still remain friends? It's time we grew up. Announce our intention to examine all suspect aircraft – and do it!

7. Ireland as global actor... Strengthen arts and film support bodies which assist in the making of Irish film stories in the Irish and English language – driven by artistic excellence instead of simply by markets – and develop further links and co-operation with European, African, Asian and similar agencies worldwide.
8. So, what about our not completely thought through neutrality? Shall we give up the possibility of being peace brokers along with other small states, calling for areas of disarmament, creating mediators, as we did in days of old at the United Nations? It would be an active resource for peace, not a withdrawal into fearful isolation. As a nation that suffered a colonial past, famine and sorrow, but never attempted to rule another nation anywhere, let us revive, clarify and renew our neutrality, insert it into our Constitution along with Article 29., and announce it to the world.
9. Sadly missing from the deliberations of this academic assembly is that hugely important element of Irish foreign policy: our commitment for decades to the peaceful development of poor peoples and nations worldwide. This policy, this finance and this work has made us partners with many nations around the globe, and beloved as a friend of the hungry and the poor and oppressed. Its absence here in these deliberations flies in the face of a proper consideration of our International Foreign Policy.
10. Teach conflict resolution and peace studies to all pre-school and primary school children. And arrange seminars to teach politicians that Irish citizens who desire peace and non-alignment with a warlike NATO or EU forces, are their masters, not their subjects
11. Finally, commit to publishing the report on these meetings so that it may serve as the blueprint for a proper citizen's assembly.

Leila Doolan

Day 3 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (Dublin, 26 June 2023)

Carol Fox

- 1. Working with partners: An introduction to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)**
- 2. Working with partners: Ireland's role in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)**
- 3. Ireland's engagement with NATO through Partnership for Peace**
- 4. Lessons from neighbours (Part 1): Norway and Switzerland**
- 5. Lessons from neighbours (Part 2): Finland and Sweden**

The morning session of Day 3 in Dublin was concerned with neutral Ireland's increasing defence and security cooperation with the EU via its evolving Common Security and Defence Policy and with NATO via the Partnership for Peace. How does this cooperation benefit Ireland? What are the implications for Ireland's neutrality? Does neutrality even matter?

The last question wasn't expressed in the descriptive paragraphs introducing each session but it was certainly addressed in the presentations and discussion.

Apart from the balance or otherwise of the panellists addressing the forum, there is a general issue with the format used. Roughly half of the 90-minute sessions was given over to the panellists and half to general Questions and Answers, hardly adequate to deal with such complex and controversial topics. The general 'chat' format could only elicit limited information and impressions, whereas delivering a well-argued statement by each panellists on a particular topic would have provided more solid information for discussion. The 'chatty' format was very much a bits and pieces approach.

Of the three morning sessions, only the second had any kind of balance, with two of the four contributors expressing concerns regarding increased militarisation and speaking positively about Ireland's neutrality.

Another issue was the attendance at the Forum. Having been told that it had been booked out, the room was only half to two-thirds full. The impression was that many of these suited gentlemen and women were civil servants.

1. Working with partners: An introduction to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

Moderator: RORY MONTGOMERY, Honorary Professor, Mitchell Institute for International Peace, Justice and Security, Queens University Belfast

STIJN MOLLS, Head of Division, Security and Defence Policy, EEAS

MAURA O'SULLIVAN, Chief of Staff, EU Advisory Mission Ukraine

KEN MCDONAGH, Associate Professor of International Relations, DCU]

The panel in the first session included two EU officials – one involved with the EU's Advisory Mission in Ukraine and one representing the European External Action Service (EEAS) which

is connected with the European Defence Agency (EDA) and PESCO, two controversial defence elements in the EU. The third panellist, an Academic from DCU, expressed wholehearted support for the EU Battlegroups and the EDA and spoke reassuringly about the mutual defence clause in the EU Treaties. Each gave a quick – and supportive – summary of progress in different areas: the European Peace Facility, EDA, civilian missions, etc. There was no questioning of the need for the EDA, the development of weapons etc, the role of PESCO or the Battlegroups. The Triple Lock, which requires a UN mandate, was stated to be inhibiting Irish peacekeeping efforts because of Security Council vetoes stopping UN missions, but the only example cited was Macedonia in 1999, nearly 25 years ago. It was also stated that the rescue mission of our citizens from Sudan was inhibited by the Triple Lock but this has previously been contradicted by the Tánaiste, Defence and Foreign Affairs Minister Micheál Martin.

Questions from the floor included the Triple Lock and for more evidence as to why it had to be changed ; NATO war crimes; the inextricable links between NATO and the EU, particularly since the Ukraine War; the implications for Ireland of the new EU Rapid Reaction Force; concerns that the EDA and the Peace Facility will feed the arms trade and human rights violations; EU increased militarisation rather than more monies being put into conflict prevention and peace building.

There was also a question about citizen’s participation in the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy. That was the only question of all those raised above that was answered – at length. The session than ran out of time.

Address by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar

The Taoiseach addressed the Forum, following some protests from the audience. He stressed that Ireland would not be joining NATO, but that we were only militarily neutral, not politically. He said that Ireland’s colonial past had helped us in our dealings with the Global South. Being neutral certainly helped in securing our UN Security Council seat. But we must be equipped to stand up to security threats, cybersecurity, disinformation. He expressed support for Ukraine and support for EU ‘security’ developments including the Peace Facility which Ireland helped to set up.

2. Working with partners: Ireland’s role in the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

Moderator: NAOMI O’LEARY, Europe Correspondent *Irish Times*

JOHN O’BRENNAN, Professor, Director, Maynooth Centre for European and Eurasian Studies;

MARTIN HARRINGTON, Senior Strategic Advisor, EU Advisory Mission Iraq

CÁIT MORAN, Ireland’s Ambassador to the Political and Security Committee of the European Union

MARTIN BUTCHER, Policy Advisor on Arms and Conflict, Oxfam International]

The second session, however, was much more balanced and conducive to debate and discussion. Both the Maynooth Academic and Ireland’s Ambassador to the EU’s Political and Security Committee (PSC) were supporters of EU military developments and the Ambassador explained the workings of the PSC while the Maynooth Professor described the underinvestment in Ireland’s armed forces and the benefits of PESCO membership for getting our defence forces

‘up to speed’. (The Professor had a week earlier called for the resignation of President Higgins for speaking out against the Forum). The member of the EU Advisory Mission to Iraq was very honest about the difficulties of the Mission and the efforts to improve democracy and human rights in a very unstable political situation. He felt the work was valuable but admitted they were not always welcome and had to travel around in armoured cars. He added later however that being Irish had aided his work in different negotiations. The Oxfam representative stated that human security needs must be looked after and that 40 years of military interventions had created much of the terrorist mess we are now witnessing. He was upset by the EU’s militarisation of its response to migrants and said this ran counter to the EU’s peaceful origins of bringing peoples together to avoid conflict. He believed that Ireland had a good reputation with poor countries but asked if it had been compromised by EU missions that are securitising migration. He also questioned the EU missions in Mali.

Questions from the floor touched again on EU/NATO ties; the impact of a Trump presidency on EU security issues; Criticism that Opposition politicians were not on any panel and that panel selection should have been more open (Sen TOM CLONAN, a security analyst and former captain in the Irish defence forces said he would have liked to have been a panellist); SEN CLONAN also argued that being Irish did help on UN missions, that the Irish diaspora did incredible humanitarian work abroad and Ireland should play to its strengths, echoing views of the representative from Oxfam; A Brigadier General called for better funding of UN missions.

The Ambassador reassured us that an EU Army was not being created but just a rapid deployment force, and that it would be voluntary. If there is a Trump Presidency and NATO is weakened then the EU will have to think seriously about common defence. The Professor attacked the ‘holier than thou’/sanctimonious ideas around neutrality, reminding us that NATO does the heavy lifting on peacekeeping and humanitarian missions (statements for which he got great applause from the floor). He didn’t believe neutrality helped Ireland in international fora and pointed to Norway, a NATO member, winning a seat on the Security Council the same time Ireland did. The man from the EU Iraqi mission and the Oxfam speaker disagreed, with the Oxfam man citing Security Council negotiations between Ireland and Russia which helped to secure humanitarian aid into Syria, Ireland’s disarmament efforts and recent Irish work on international humanitarian law and the effects of explosive weapons on civilians.

3. Ireland’s engagement with NATO through Partnership for Peace

***Moderator:* KEN MCDONAGH, Associate Professor of International Relations, DCU**

JAMES MACKEY, Director of Security Policy and Partnerships, NATO

ANDREW COTTEY, Professor, Jean Monnet Chair, UCC

COMMANDER ROBERTA O’BRIEN, Irish Naval Service (currently on secondment to NATO Defence Capacity Building unit)]

Session Three on the Partnership for Peace (PfP) was back to form. The three panellists and the Moderator of the session were supporters of PfP, including an Irish naval commander serving on secondment to a NATO Defence Capacity Building Unit, a NATO official, and a UCC Professor who described NATO as a defensive democratic alliance which Ireland should be happy to cooperate with. The Professor had also been a NATO research fellow (according to the *Phoenix*, June 30, 2023) The Irish naval commander spoke about working in Tunisia and Jordan and her efforts to promote women’s participation in those societies and driving a women’s peace and security agenda. The NATO official assured us that Irish membership of NATO had never

been discussed in NATO HQ. NATO could be of great assistance in cybersecurity, combatting narcotics, etc.

Questions from the floor: Some of the questioning was highly critical of NATO, saying it was being portrayed as a Boy Scout organisation and some questioned the appropriateness of NATO being officially represented at the Forum. The history of NATO interventions was cited. There was also questioning about the method of the Forum in choosing which questions to answer: queries were submitted either orally from the floor (for those chosen) or from written queries on an ‘audience interactive’ Slido overhead screen, which could be voted up the table for answering by the audience voting for them. Some of the audience didn’t have mobile phones, others didn’t understand how to vote questions up the priority ladder. There was also criticism of NATO pressurising African countries to support Ukraine.

Again, none of these issues were properly addressed by the panellists.

Dublin afternoon session

The two afternoon sessions featured small states like Ireland and how they perceive their security needs. What lessons could Ireland learn from the highly regarded NATO member Norway, the long-time Neutral Switzerland, and the two former Neutrals, Sweden and Finland, who – as a result of the Ukraine war – have decided to abandon neutrality and join NATO? On the two panels there were no dissenting voices about the decision to join NATO with even the Swiss indicating that their Neutrality is now up for reconsideration...or redefinition. So we were treated to bit of a Pep Talk about team-playing with NATO United.

4. Lessons from neighbours (Part 1): Norway and Switzerland

Moderator: SONJA HYLAND, Deputy Secretary General and Political Director, Department of Foreign Affairs

Norway: INE ERIKSEN SØREIDE, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence at the Storting (Norwegian Parliament)

DAG NYLANDER, Director of the Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution Switzerland: Joachim Adler, Head of Defence Policy and Operations at the Federal Department for Defence

LAURENT GOETSCHER, Professor of Political Science at the University of Basel and Director of Swisspeace]

The panellists for Norway included a former Minister of Foreign Affairs (and previously Minister of Defence) and a Director of the Centre for Conflict Resolution (which works closely with the Norwegian Department of Foreign Affairs) and the Swiss panellists included head of the Government’s Defence Policy and Operations as well a Professor/ Director of Swisspeace.

The Norwegians outlined the extensive mediation/conflict resolution work they have been engaged in, (e.g. Colombia, Cuba, Libya, Taliban talks), with the Director of the Conflict Resolution Centre explaining that although Norway is a founder member of NATO, it’s known for being ‘impartial’ on international issues and its negotiating efforts are seen as inclusive and embracing humanitarianism. Norway has a ‘values based’ foreign policy. There is still a big conflict resolution role for small States and Norway has worked closely with Neutrals, including recently with Ireland on the UN Security Council. Ukraine has solidified political

support for NATO (Socialists – long time critics – now support). The Professor from Swisspeace outlined differences in political opinion on Switzerland's Neutrality. Ukraine has raised issues for Swiss Neutrality (e.g. debates over allowing re-export of Swiss-made weapons to Ukraine) and a major discussion on Swiss security policy has just been announced. Swiss Neutrality is very different than Ireland's. Switzerland has a large arms production and exports industry, has military conscription (as does Norway, who conscript both men and women), and both Switzerland and Norway have large military reserve forces. Switzerland is known for its work on international humanitarian law and transitional justice, has been active in UN mandated NATO-led missions and is a member of the Partnership for Peace.

Questions from the floor: Complaint that too much time has been given to Panel and not enough to questions; Nordic Northeast being portrayed as 'peacekeepers' but are also arms producers and arms exporters; Can Norway give advice to Ireland on how to protect our airspace and territorial waters?; Did Norway assist in blowing up Nordstream gasline?; Could both countries elaborate on their UN peacekeeping?

Norway replied it didn't blow up Nordstream!: NATO membership hasn't inhibited its UN peacekeeping work. The Swiss Government official said he personally believed NATO helped Swiss security without Swiss membership and felt that UN peacekeeping was a way for Swiss to give something back to world security. Switzerland not politically neutral, but adheres to the Hague Convention on Neutrality. When the Director of Swisspeace asked if he felt the use of Shannon by US troops was in violation of Hague Convention definition of Neutrality, he responded that sometimes you have to 'make compromises'. He then proceeded to give the favourite quote for the Dublin Forum sessions: 'Neutrality is not a religion', which was met with great applause from the audience. Neutrality is a 'foreign and security policy concept'.

The issue of arms production and exports was not adequately addressed.

5. Lessons from neighbours (Part 2): Finland and Sweden

***Moderator:* SHONA MURRAY, Europe Correspondent, Euronews Finland**

MATTI PESU, Researcher in the Finnish Foreign Policy, Northern European Security, and NATO research programme at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs

HANNA OJANEN, Jean Monnet Professor at the University of Tampere, Finland

JOHANNA SUMUVUORI, State Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2019-2023 Sweden

MAGNUS CHRISTIANSSON, Senior Lecturer at the Swedish Defence University

ANNA SUNDSTRÖM, Secretary General, Olof Palme International Center

In explaining the decision to join NATO, the former Finnish Government official from the Green Party, explained she was in Government when the decision was taken. Like most Finns, she never thought she would support such a move but Ukraine changed everything. However, she emphasised that, since EU membership, Finland regarded itself as not 'neutral', and she mentioned the EU mutual defence and solidarity clauses. Finland has always been close to NATO – as close as one could be without being in it – and in the PfP since 1994. So it wasn't such a big jump to join. The Finnish security researcher connected to NATO cited the shared borders with Russia. The Finns didn't have a referendum because people trusted the leadership and wanted to join. Finland has very well equipped army. The Finnish Professor agreed with her colleagues.

The Swedish defence lecturer said Sweden was not really neutral. It had agreed to solidarity

with EU partners which is the opposite of neutrality. Sweden had been already working well with NATO in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Libya and in Pfp. Ukraine brought the realisation that interstate war in Europe was back. Article 5 of the NATO treaty promising collective security is the reason both Finland and Sweden joined NATO. If Finland was in NATO and not Sweden it would be ridiculous for Baltic security. He believes Ukraine should join NATO. However, the secretary general of the Olaf Palme Centre said there should have been a debate like we are having in our Forum (!), that the initial decision to join was taken around a small elite (trade unions and some Social Democrats were not happy) but the war in Ukraine made a decision urgent. The Swedes now broadly back NATO membership and the General Election showed this. All the panellists agreed that it was sensible for both countries to join NATO. The Finnish former state secretary added that NATO must look at other issues impacting on its core work of security, including climate change.

Questions from floor: Speakers seem to be pitting neutrality vs solidarity, which is false: e.g. Irish naval services rescued many from the Mediterranean; What impact will NATO membership have on Finland and Sweden's humanitarian work?; Not convinced that your countries shouldn't have had referenda on joining. Believe Ireland will need one; Can the speakers give advice on how Ireland can improve its defence? Does the Baltic States long-time security cooperation offer a model?; And the MODERATOR asked the panel if Ireland should join NATO!

The Finns argued that they had a referendum to join the EU but NATO is different because it doesn't take away sovereignty. Also they were afraid of outside influences on a referendum. Once NATO membership settled, it's necessary to focus on humanitarian work and other ways of enhancing security. The secretary general of the Olaf Palme Centre expressed concern that too much money is going into defence and that the UN and overseas aid should be getting more resources. There was agreement that there were so many security threats – and responses to them so expensive – that defence cooperation was necessary. However, on the MODERATOR's question about Ireland joining NATO, the panellists demurred....

Louis Richardson wrap-up: It is obvious that neutrality means different things to different countries and that it has evolved in many different ways. The issue of referendums on NATO membership is an interesting one.

Conclusion

The above summaries illustrate the pro-NATO/more defence spending bias of nearly every panellist – heavily influenced by the ongoing war in Ukraine. The concept of nuclear weapons was never discussed, nor the NATO policy of First Use of nuclear weapons. The arms industry was not challenged and the ongoing 'security/defence' dimension of the EU was supported. Basically, the five sessions will be pointed to by the Government as showing Neutrality is a very 'flexible' thing and that Everybody likes to cooperate with/partner/or join NATO—(despite nuclear weapons and despite past NATO interventionist behaviour, which won't be mentioned). The fact that there might be a moral dimension to not joining a military alliance with policies that could destroy all life on Earth would be dismissed as treating Neutrality like a 'religion', something the Swisspeace Director firmly rejected ...to great acclaim. The Government will take heart from this.

Day 4 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (Dublin, 27 June 2023)

Eamon Rafter

- 1. Challenges to global peace and security: Considerations for the future**
- 2. New and emerging threats: Hybrid threats and the rise of disinformation**
- 3. Defence Forces capability development**
- 4. Ireland's military neutrality: a historical perspective**
- 5. Neutrality: definitions, options and implications**

1. Challenges to global peace and security: Considerations for the future

Moderator: LOUISE RICHARDSON, Forum Chair

MICHELE GRIFFIN, Executive Office of the UNSG

DR SERGEY UTKIN, University of Southern Denmark

DAN SMITH, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

DR ADAM EBERHARDT, Director, Centre for Eastern Studies, Warsaw

GRIFFIN stresses the age of deep interconnectedness and the erosion of trust. Challenge is to restore trust and increase equality globally. Highlights UN New Agenda for Peace Summit 2024. How can we trust governments who do not tell us the truth?

SMITH from SIPRI talks about environmental and human security as well as national security and references increased levels of militarism. Speaks about climate change as a driver of insecurity. When asked from the floor why he does not mention militarism as a driver of climate change he says the Pentagon is making great progress with greening their activities. He also says it's important to distinguish between militarism as an ideology and legitimate military defence spending. This suggests that 'our' defence spending is good but 'theirs' (the bad guys) is ideological and therefore problematic.

EBERHARDT comments on militarism that 'flowers won't do it'. Not clear who or what he is responding to here as no-one has suggested that. During the talk about the challenges we face, militarism remarkably is not represented as one of those challenges.

Comments are made from the floor about the bias of panelists and lack of diverse opinions presented. Government representatives have a platform but opposition political voices are not allotted time.

2. New and emerging threats: Hybrid threats and the rise of disinformation

Moderator: SINEAD O’CARROLL, Editor, The Journal

JANE SUITER, Professor, School of Communications, DCU

DR VIKTORIJA RUSINAITÉ, Director, Research and Analysis Hybrid Centre of Excellence, Helsinki

ART O’LEARY, CEO, Electoral Commission of Ireland

ROSS FRENNETT, CEO, Moonshot

The panelists here offer their opinions on the perceived threats to security from misinformation and disinformation. The theme is framed in defining acceptable information and unsuitable types of information. Some data is presented by JANE SUITER who also talks about providing people with tools to recognise disinformation. ROSS FRENNETT talks about the ‘right to be repugnant’ which he distinguishes from misinformation, but mostly a binary good v bad emphasis is referenced. We are told that we need to protect ourselves against bias and untruth. Power elites presumably define what is acceptable and if it suits them use disinformation themselves. The need to heighten our awareness and use more sophisticated analysis to protect ourselves is emphasised. Why is it assumed that disinformation is the preserve of extremists or ‘our enemies’. Former MEP PATRICIA MCKENNA from the floor points out that disinformation can also come from the state and says she has been the target of disinformation (Day Four, Morning, 1hr 51 mins)

Isn’t the exclusion of information also a form of disinformation? The question from Green Party TD NEASA HOURIGAN from the audience sums up this panel. She asks whether the Forum ‘is becoming an engine of disinformation’. and comments on how many easily disproved statements have gone unchallenged. (Day Four, Morning 1 hr 53 mins.) Arguably this forum is an exercise in disinformation since dissident opinions from the stage have largely been excluded. There is no real discussion on media accountability or public service remit. Do our commercial media produce misinformation? If so, who benefits from this? How to hold media to account? How to compensate for significant omissions in media agenda and coverage? Who can decide what gets attention and how does political agenda influence this. Current coverage of Ukraine War largely unaddressed. Questions are taken in batches from the floor which means speakers are allowed to pick what they want to answer and avoid any difficult questions.

3. Defence Forces Capability Development

Moderator: EAMONN MURTAGH, Assistant Secretary, Department of Defence

BRIGADIER GENERAL ROSSA MULCAHY, Assistant Chief of State, Defence Forces

AILEEN NOLAN, Director Emergency, Operations and Infrastructure Oversight, Department of Defence

CONOR KIRWAN, Capability Directorate, European Defence Agency

DR RORY FINEGAN, Assistant Professor in Military History & Strategic Studies, Maynooth University

The session starts with a comment from the floor from PATRICIA MCKENNA about how the Slido system favours the stacked audience as dominant questions go to the top and there is an unfairness about this which makes it difficult to hear the less represented views. This point was taken by the chair but nothing changed in relation to Slido. (Day Four, Morning, 3 hours 5 minutes)

AILEEN NOLAN talks about capability needs i.e. what the government wants the Defence Forces to be able to do based on threat assessment and defined policy. Capability development is a long-term process, she says. It is based on policy goals and objectives according to CONOR KIRWAN. What capabilities and how they can be developed is the focus. FINNEGAN says discussion on capability development should be agnostic to neutrality or alliances and beyond political or ideological issues. He reiterates that ‘abrogating our neutrality is not on the table’. (Day Four, Morning 3 hours, 12 minutes, 14 seconds)

Capability is discussed in terms of weapons and hardware but also of co-operation and interoperability, a constant refrain in relation to Irish troops overseas. Also references to threat-based analysis and assessment of vulnerabilities for short term, medium term and long-term and concept of ‘wicked threats’ is introduced. KIRWAN talks about EU military staff and common defence policy and ‘lessons learnt from Ukraine’, He references ‘opportunities for co-operation’ without clarifying what this implies for Irish neutrality. The current ‘New Strategic Defence Review’ is mentioned by AILEEN NOLAN. It is interesting to note that according to BRIG. MULCAHY, the Irish Government would take guidance from the NATO Vilnius Summit in July in terms of horizon scanning. (Day Four, Morning, 3 hours, 24 minutes, 5 secs.) The use of language like ‘level of ambition’ and ‘platforms’ clearly shows Ireland’s engagement with NATO to be advanced and highly important element in developing capability. ‘Strategic compass’ referenced by CONOR KIRWAN in relation to response to threats at EU level from European Defence Agency (EDA) perspective which is clearly aligned with NATO. He lists the EDA preoccupations regarding future warfare priorities that do not seem to align with Ireland’s Neutrality. Finnegan acknowledges that military activities contribute to climate change and says that the ‘disaster security paradigm’ needs to be factored in in relation to global role of Irish troops. He mentions reducing military carbon emissions in Irish Defence Forces and says ‘there’s a lot more to do’. (Day Four, Morning, 3 hours, 33 minutes, 31 seconds) Shortage of personnel and need to resource our Defence Forces is constantly referenced. Comments about pivoting to greater interoperability with EU Battlegroups in coming years are worrying to say the least. ‘Interoperability is the key goal’ according to BRIG. MULCAHY (Day Four, Morning 3 hours, 42 minutes, 29 seconds) A consistent message. Ireland bringing a unique perspective to peacekeeping because we do not have imperialist baggage is also referenced a few times, not always with agreement. Would this be affected by weakened neutrality? This is not addressed.

SINEAD MCMAHON asked from the floor about the treatment of women in the Irish Defence Forces. In relation to the implementation of the recommendations in the Women of Honour report, she wondered how this related to capability development. (Day Four, Morning, 3 hours, 51 minutes, 2 sec.) BRIG. MULCAHY replied that these are not separate and he referenced key role of leadership, training and personnel in improving the role of women in the Defence Forces and rebuilding trust. (Day Four, Morning, 3 hours 59 mins, 40 secs) Again the Slido questions presented did not present a challenge to the panel. This is clearly a key mechanism to frame the conversation in a way that conforms with Government priorities.

Address by Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications and Minister for Transport Eamonn Ryan

Minister Ryan stresses the need for an open conversation on security. Ironically the background of speakers at the Forum seems very narrow. (Day Four, Afternoon, 6 mins 23 Secs) There is no mention or acknowledgement of Peoples Forums. He says there are four legs in Green Party thinking. Stabilizing and restoring the natural world and the need to bring social justice at the same time. The belief in participative democracy. He also includes pacifist perspective. (Day Four, Afternoon 9mins 22 seconds) It is unclear how use of Shannon airport by U.S. Military squares with pacifist values.

Minister Ryan says neutrality is at the heart of the Green Party and they remain opposed to NATO membership.(Day Four, Afternoon, 10mins 53 secs.) He says this does not mean we pursue a policy of strict impartiality or preclude resourcing defence capacity. He says he continues to believe in the Triple Lock, but not one that leaves us at the mercy of the U.N. Security Council veto system. The Green Party, he says, believes in a new, more flexible Triple Lock. This favours replacing the U.N. provision in the Triple Lock with a ‘more flexible, regional arrangement’ (Day Four, Afternoon, 14 Mins 15 secs) Would the African Union or the EU be an improvement? Would this even be viable or a real guarantee of our neutrality? How this would work he doesn’t say.

The Minister talks about risks and threats to security such as strengthening cyber security. He goes on to discuss access to sustainable energy as a key security issue. ‘We will never go to war over renewable energy’. He says the biggest security risk we face is the impact on climate caused by the burning of fossil fuels. (Day Four, Afternoon, 18 mins 23 secs.) He mentions other hybrid threats, the destabilising potential of digital media and need to invest in high quality journalism. This needs to be done collaboratively, he says, referencing the EU & PESCO. References strength of our neutrality and peacekeeping work and the need to stick to it. Some contradictory messaging on the commitment to neutrality coming through here. The minister is challenged by PATRICIA MCKENNA as he leaves the stage but does not engage with her.

4. Ireland's military neutrality: a historical perspective

Moderator: CONOR GALLAGHER (*Irish Times*)

MICHAEL KENNEDY, RIA Executive Editor Irish Foreign Policy

DAVID MURPHY, Lecturer, Maynooth University

DR CAOIMHE NIC DHÁIBHÉID, Senior Lecturer in Modern Irish History, University of Sheffield

This session was a historical discussion on Irish Neutrality in terms of its origins and its survival through the Second World War when we were 'neutral until invaded'. It was generally agreed that our neutrality was a means to an end, to survive the war and that it was a risk that we got away with. It was a rational choice and the only choice possible and the alternative was probably civil war. NIC DHÁIBHÉID alludes to Casement and Connolly as people who laid out the argument for Ireland's neutrality, while 'making common cause with allies in Europe' She says there 'wasn't a hard and fast cleavage to neutrality during the fight for independence' (Day Four, Afternoon. 34 mins 30 secs – 36mins 33 secs.)

MURPHY says we were too close to Britain in the 1920s and 30's to define ourselves as a neutral nation and British naval bases in Ireland were still a reality (Day Four, Afternoon, 38 mins 17 secs.) MICHAEL KENNEDY does suggest that there was a greater aspiration to neutrality in the 1920's, despite the realpolitik of the time. De Valera articulated this in mid-1930's and we were a 'lucky neutral'. (Day Four, Afternoon, 40minutes. 52 secs) He references 'the diplomacy of survival.' MURPHY defines what is expected from a neutral state as 'actions and utterances' and it was taken for granted that you had the capacity to defend yourself. (Day Four, Afternoon, 52 mins 35 secs) He says that NATO is not the way to go and 'we can remain neutral but not undefended'. (53 mins 55 sec.) He also says that being neutral, historically does not make you safe from invasion.

There is an implication in this panel that we need to spend more on armed defence and an argument for a greater embrace of militarism. Frank Aitken was mentioned briefly in the question session, but it would have been good to hear more about his attempts to build active neutrality. Also, the role of partition in relation to neutrality was referenced but needed to be explored in more detail. Trading off an end of partition for NATO membership was mentioned and this could still be an issue we need to think more about. The key point of not wanting to be used by the great powers due to our history as a principle that should remain, was also taken up from the floor. An interesting question was also raised about Ireland's neutrality with a promise not to side with Germany in the Second World War, which was very much a support for Britain. NIC DHÁIBHÉID'S opinion that military v political neutrality is a 'bit of a cop-out' since war is an expression of political decision making, is an interesting point which might have been developed. Who in fact are 'we' and is there a hypocritical approach in how we define ourselves today? (Day Four, Afternoon, 1 hour, 20 minutes, 21secs.)

5. Neutrality: definitions, options, implications

Moderator: LOUISE RICHARDSON

ROGER COLE, founder and chairman of the Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA)

BRIGID LAFFAN, Emeritus Professor, European University Institute

DAN O'BRIEN, Chief Economist, Irish Institute of International and European Affairs

The make-up of this important final panel sums up this Forum. The chair was by no means an impartial moderator having publicly expressed her support for U.S. and NATO foreign policy. DAN O'BRIEN has clearly stated that Ireland should join NATO and give up its neutrality. BRIGID LAFFAN is a trustee of the Hertie School in Berlin which hosts pro NATO events and is best known as an expert on Brexit. In what sense could these speakers be seen as experts on Irish neutrality? That left ROGER COLE of PANA, the only representative of the twelve Irish peace organisations who had declared the Forum 'anti-democratic'. In fact, he was the only such person on stage in the four days of the Forum, despite many requests from others to speak. This panel had a focus on Irish neutrality and its possible futures and yet a real expert such as Karen Devine was not present to provide the detailed analysis needed to balance the strong bias towards European militarism and NATO. The hall was by no means full and yet many people had been refused entry. So much for the 'consultative' process.

ROGER COLE opts for the use of the word 'neutrality' rather than the more recent invention 'military neutrality' and strongly asserts that neutrality remains extremely popular with Irish people. BRIGID LAFFAN reasserts that 'neutrality is not a religion, it's a concept that has to do with foreign policy, defence and security'. (Day Four, Afternoon, 1 Hour 37 mins 42 seconds) This 'teaching moment' remains puzzling as nobody had declared neutrality to be a religion as ROGER COLE reminds us. She alludes to 'our responsibility as an EU member state, as a partner and as a neighbour'. The suggestion appears to be that because Ireland was supported by the EU over Brexit, we should somehow reciprocate. Does this suggest giving up our 'military neutrality' as a 'good neighbour'? DAN O'BRIEN speaks about the 'twin pillars' of peace and security for Europeans as EU and NATO. He is an unabashed supporter of both. 'Are they all wrong and we are right', he asks (Day Four, Afternoon, 1 hour 42 mins 20 secs) Thankfully ROGER COLE reminds us that Europe is not the world and the Global South is no longer ready to fall in with the binary option of with us or against us. Europe constitutes 9% of the world and U.S. 4%. COLE says that being Irish and being neutral are one and the same for Irish people and our history is strongly linked up to our neutrality. (Day Four, Afternoon, 1 hour 27 minutes 48 sec.)

DAME RICHARDSON reminds us that the Global South is not represented on the U.N. Security Council, but neglects to mention that there is no representation in the four days of the Forum either. LAFFAN declares that the EU will become a more serious 'security player' over the next decade because of the war in Ukraine. Presumably this is a reference to the hyper-militarisation and support for NATO currently taking place and she seems fine with this. 'We're already doing it in PESCO and we should do more of it' she says. (Day Four, Afternoon, 1 hour 51 mins.) The EU and Partnership for Peace are seen as the context we should work with. DAN O'BRIEN expresses doubts about the Irish popular support for neutrality and opposition to NATO and says we are fundamentally a pro U.S. country as we are returning to a Cold War situation. (Day Four, Afternoon, 1 hour 55 minutes 23 secs) No surprise that he also talks up the 'Chinese threat'. The whole conversation is framed as a European, rational, defensive security consensus of multiple threats and never examines the arms industry or the huge cost of intensive militarisation, in human, environmental and financial terms. COLE tries to bring in the issue of global climate crisis as the greatest threat, but this does not shift this framing. The constant reiteration of how little Ireland spends on defence is telling in this and the notion that joining NATO would save

us money is simply not true. This framing never allows the conversation to move into a critical discussion of militarism or the potential of active neutrality.

United Ireland and NATO is raised in a question in terms of what kind of state we might have, but again the conversation doesn't develop. It was interesting that the chair went straight to Slido questions rather than the floor. MATT CARTHY of Sinn Féin asks about possible reasons for abandoning the Triple Lock and implications for getting it wrong. Only ROGER COLE takes this up with reference to PANA support for the Triple Lock and he suggests Irish people continue to favour this. It is pointed out from the floor that neutrality and the Triple Lock are two different things, however, it is not said that any effort to abandon the Triple Lock would weaken Irish neutrality further. LAFFAN suggests that the neutrality issue was not key to Irish vote on Lisbon. DAME RICHARDSON says that threat of veto in Security Council is more important than actual veto, pertinent as examples of veto on Irish deployment are hard to find. The question of justifying neutrality after Ukraine is highlighted by the chair who says 17 people asked this question. Again, this re-emphasis indicates the inherent bias in this Forum. Meanwhile a good question about the legal status of Ireland's neutrality in relation to Hague Convention (V) was not dealt with by the panel, possibly due to their lack of expertise on the matter as LAFFAN points out. On the Triple Lock LAFFAN also mentions that she trusts an Irish Government to make good decisions on sending Irish troops into combat situations and that we must be flexible (Day Four, Afternoon, 2 hours 49 mins 44 secs.) She finds Eamonn Ryan idea about a more flexible Triple Lock, involving for example the African Union 'interesting'.

There was some discussion on whether neutrality was a central issue for Irish people, but general agreement that it could not be a requirement for citizenship. DAN O'BRIEN stated that supporting neutrality should not be taken as a morally superior position as the discussion needs to be about how to protect ourselves.

MICHEÁL MARTIN returned to conclude the event. He announced that he had just spent €230 million on a C295 maritime surveillance aircraft, the largest amount ever spent on a single item in this country. Would he have been so pleased to announce this if the theme of the conference had been the cost of living? He referenced how much we all care about the security of the country and 'the core values we hold as a people'. He told us the debate is just starting and our regional and global interconnectedness was stressed as nobody supported isolationism. Again, the commitment to international law, the U.N. Charter, multilateralism, the 'rules based international order' and a baseline of facts and evidence were also named as central. It remains unclear what particular facts and evidence are being referenced. Prof. Richardson closed the event thanking voices of opposition for their engagement and said we were the only country to hold a security debate of this nature. Her chairing role had ensured that no real space was given to a serious critique of the direction of Irish security policy and the framing of the discussion did not accommodate this.

CONCLUSION

Forum Biased in Intent, Design and Implementation

We will defer undertaking analysis of Dame Louise Richardson's report on the 'Consultative Forum on International Security' until we have had a chance to study it. These conclusions are firstly about the Forum and then what is needed in relation to Irish international security and neutrality.

1. Based on our careful analysis of the content of the four days of the 'Consultative Forum' to say it justifies policy changes, e.g. regarding the 'triple lock' on deployment of Irish troops overseas, would be a sham and a travesty of democracy. Watering down the triple lock could lead to Ireland being involved in future wars at the behest of EU or NATO with no say by the people of Ireland.
2. The Forum was biased in intent, design and implementation. It was chosen as a model so that the Minister could control the content and contributions in a way that would have been impossible with a Citizens' Assembly, for example. While clearly some learning is possible from the discussions, any definite conclusions emanating from it would be null and void.
3. While called a 'Forum' it was not such an entity in terms of the dictionary definition of a forum being 'a public meeting place for open discussion' <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/forum>; it was a place for discussion by those chosen by the Minister on topics chosen by the Minister.
4. The Forum was not open. Offers to contribute were fobbed off by excuses such as that it was 'too late' to be included even when it was well before details were announced. To our knowledge, only those directly invited by the Department for Foreign Affairs were included. Some experts who any reasonable person would have expected to be included were either not invited or felt it impossible to participate given the inherent bias in the Forum.
5. Given this bias, it was ironic that some of those associated with the Forum sought to portray protesters as seeking to 'close down' debate – when in fact it was the organisers of the Forum who had already done that (restricted debate) and protesters actually wanted to open up the debate. Those attending were prevented by Forum officials from sharing relevant printed materials with others.
6. There are many questions about those chosen to be part of panels, and the moderators of same. Whether it is justifiable to include serving armed forces officers is highly debatable. While many academics who were involved contributed their views admirably, the fact that there was a pro-EU, pro-NATO bias in who was chosen to participate did not make it a 'level playing field'.
7. The style of a 'fireside chat' with questions from a moderator was actually woefully lacking in detailed discussion of the issues concerned. Some discussions were rather better than others but in no instances could any of the panels be called detailed or adequate explorations of the issues being explored. And many important issues were not discussed or, when raised from the floor, ignored.
8. While we await detailed analysis of Dame Richardson's report, we are also clear that it was very unwise to entrust the writing of the Forum report to one individual. This is a general point and not one specifically about Dame Richardson, who is obviously a very capable

woman, although it is also clear that she was chosen by the minister as a ‘safe pair of hands’ who was generally pro-NATO.

9. The leaders of the three Government parties were also afforded opportunities to address the Forum as part of the programme, an opportunity denied to the leaders of opposition parties. This was blatant bias unworthy of any body purporting to be a national ‘Forum’.
10. Discussion of ‘Irish neutrality’ seemed to be tagged on at the end as an afterthought, the relevant panels were biased, and this discussion should have come at the start. In addition, there was no discussion whatsoever about how Irish neutrality, supported by a considerable majority of citizens as shown by successive opinion polls, could be built on and extended as a force for peace in the world. This is an incredible lapse in any discussion of Irish international security; the assumption by the organisers was that the only direction of travel possible was away from neutrality.
11. The Forum failed to address key issues concerning Ireland’s future security and the root causes of global instability. The Forum offered no opportunity to unpack the bigger political picture – divisive geopolitical alliances, entrenched patriarchy, capitalism, racism and inequality, a unipolar world order designed to fuel rather than dissolve conflict. There is a direct correlation between increased global military spending, more war and conflict, and record numbers of forcibly displaced persons, yet no linkages were made between these phenomena. Moreover, the voices of the many millions of victims and survivors of violence, war and conflict around the world, in particular from the global majority, were absent from the Forum. War and conflict will never be resolved militarily – it is only through dialogue and diplomacy that complex political questions can be tackled.
12. What would also contribute to Irish security would be adhering to the understood international norms of neutrality, e.g. by not allowing its territory such as Shannon Airport to be used by the military forces of other countries. This makes Ireland a potential target in a way it would otherwise not be; likewise increasingly getting involved in the war in Ukraine as opposed to working for peace there, for example developing possibilities for ceasefires and negotiations. None of the issues involved in this were explored in the Forum from the stage.
13. The state put considerable resources of time and money into the Consultative Forum on International Security. There was the opportunity to make it comprehensive and inclusive but it was neither of these things, as our analysis shows, which makes it very wasteful in a number of senses. The People’s Forum meetings organised by civil society in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Dublin were important in dealing with some of the issues ignored in the state events but they were not a substitute for an adequate and inclusive state process.
14. There should be a further exploration, based on a ‘level-playing field’, of how Irish neutrality could be built on and extended to contribute to the commitment in Article 29 of Bunreacht na hÉireann, namely to work for ‘ the pacific settlement of international disputes’. This was nowhere addressed in the Forum. There is an incredible amount more which Ireland could, and should, be doing in the international field. Such work would also contribute significantly to Irish security. It could be argued that the Forum’s omissions in terms of content are more significant than what it actually covered.

Above we have outlined the democratic shortcomings of the Government's Forum structures. It is therefore not surprising that the Forum failed to address or answer key issues or questions concerning Ireland's future security and defence needs, such as:

- a) **Shannon Airport:** The existence of a US military airport at Shannon is Ground Zero for Ireland, the biggest strategic target in this country. The Forum inexplicably totally ignored this fact when dealing with security threats to the country. The provision of Shannon to the US military also totally undermines Ireland's neutrality and violates the Hague Convention

With the USA now providing (internationally illegal) cluster weapons to Ukraine, there is the possibility that these transit through Shannon by plane. As no checks have ever been undertaken of US military or contracted planes using Shannon there is no way the state can know whether these, or other weapons, are passing through Ireland. This is highly contradictory given strong Irish support for, and involvement in, the UN treaty banning cluster munitions (adopted in Dublin in 2008) aside from issues of neutrality.
- b) **There is a devastating bias and lack of impartiality shown by the Irish government in relation to warfare undertaken by other countries:** Ireland's response to the war in Ukraine and its support for the US military machine in Shannon are severe departures from the constitutional declaration of support for peaceful solutions, and neutrality. Analysis by Brown University <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2023/IndirectDeaths> documents millions of deaths resulting from wars, including those waged by NATO and/or its leading members, since 2001 – and Ireland provides facilities to the US military at Shannon Airport. In relation to Ukraine, Ireland initially stated it was providing 'non-lethal' aid, but this was since discovered to include mine clearance (which can be offensive or defensive) and *weapons training, i.e. training soldiers in killing. Both policies, in relation to the USA and Ukraine, totally breach any concept of Irish neutrality.*
- c) **NATO and nuclear weapons:** NATO's adherence to nuclear weapons, and a first-use policy with those weapons, was never dealt with when discussing Ireland's growing alignment with NATO, both through the Partnership for Peace and through the evolving EU military policy which is inextricably linked with NATO. One would have thought that with Ireland's reputation as a champion of nuclear disarmament that this military cooperation with a nuclear-armed bloc would have been an issue raised by the speakers at the Forum.
- d) **The United Nations:** Undoubtedly the United Nations needs reform to wrest away the control exercised in the UN Security Council by the most powerful states. This needs careful consideration and much work. However undermining the UN and, for example, taking away the UN element of the 'triple lock' on deployment of Irish troops overseas, is not an answer to anything. The world has to work together to address our grave common problems and developing how the UN can be of service in relation to these is a key issue.
- e) **Arms production and the arms trade:** Ireland has boosted its involvement in arms production and trade, with over 500 Irish companies now involved in the 'defence' industry in the Republic and a growing trade in arms exports (aside from considerable involvement in arms production in Northern Ireland). The arms industry must not be understood as a good business opportunity. It is an ever-expansive death industry and it is highly inappropriate that Irish industrial development should seek to participate in it.

No attempt at all was made in the Forum to address the necessary question of who profits from war and militarism or to interrogate the role of the arms lobby in driving tension, instability, war and conflict and subsequently benefiting from it. The discussion on the second afternoon on research and development of technologies was loaded with technical

jargon and business speak designed to obfuscate and alienate the audience and paid no regard whatsoever to the risks associated with, or the deadly consequences of, developing what may eventually become lethal weapons, or components thereof.

The irony of a country or island which has recently gone through a small scale war, the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland, contributing to conflict internationally through the arms trade is literally incredible. The arms trade is not only inherently corrupt and wasteful, and dependent on national and supranational (e.g. EU) subventions, it is also extremely poor value for money in terms of job creation. (For EU involvement in promoting a new arms race see *Fanning the Flames*, <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/fanning-the-flames>)

- f) **There is, to put it politely, a gross mismatch between what the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) says and what it does.** It says, for example, 'Ireland is committed to working to achieve a more peaceful, secure and prosperous world. We recognise that the spread of weapons of all kinds fuels conflict, contributes to human rights abuses, and hinders development. Promoting disarmament, therefore, is one of five signature foreign policies for Ireland and builds upon Ireland's historic legacy in this area' <https://www.dfa.ie/our-role-policies/international-priorities/peace-and-security/disarmament/> – and then DFA promotes the arms trade and Irish involvement in it. It says 'Achieving a world free of nuclear weapons and promoting disarmament of conventional weapons and arms control are priorities for Ireland' – and then gets extensively involved with NATO, a nuclear-armed military alliance committed to the first use of nuclear weapons.
- g) **The right not to be implicated in support for war:** We consider it the right of citizens who do not support war not to be implicated in it. This is not only the right not to be called up to an army but also not to contribute financially to warfare through taxation. This is an issue which needs debated particularly as the EU develops its own army and arms industry.
- h) **Gender aspects:** The gender aspects of war and violence need great consideration. While it may be men who do most fighting in war, it is children and women who suffer most. There are profound questions to be asked about the gendered nature of war and support for war (as well as violence in general), and resultant answers which need work. Even in relation to the Irish army and defence forces there are considerable questions about gender which have not been answered, cf Women of Honour. And there are more general questions about the culture of violence within armies, affecting men as well as women, which are seen to be justified or are hidden because of what armies do.
- i) **Peace education:** If we want peace, prepare for peace. Lelia Doolan stated in the Galway Forum that we should 'Teach conflict resolution and peace studies to all pre-school and primary school children' and of course this can be done in an age-appropriate way. But there is a general ignorance about the possibilities of nonviolence and its efficacy (see e.g. Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan's 'Why Civil Resistance Works – The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict', Columbia University Press, 2011) at home and abroad in all age categories. And while mediation and mediative processes are now broadly accepted in Irish society this awareness has not been extended to the international arena where war is still often accepted as a means to an end.
- j) **Irish neutrality:** Irish neutrality is precious to Irish people and is an opportunity to be positively engaged with the world and not an obstacle to be overcome as recent Irish governments have, unimaginatively, tended to see it. Building constructively on neutrality is the best defence which Ireland can have and is also the best way to be able to contribute to world justice and peace.

Recommended Publications (free pdf downloads)



A Force For Good? Reflections On Irish Neutrality

Afri (Action from Ireland)
<https://www.afri.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Irish-Neutrality-WEB.pdf>



At What Cost? Funding the EU's Security, Defence and Border Policies 2021-2027

Transnational Institute
<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/at-what-cost-EU-security>



Neutrality, NATO and the Attack on Ireland's Triple Lock

Peace & Neutrality Alliance
<https://www.pana.ie/posts/neutrality-nato-and-the-attack-on-irelands-triple-lock>



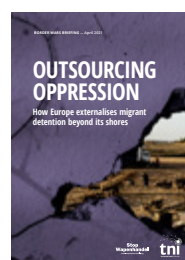
Smoking Guns: How European Arms Exports Are Forcing Millions from Their Homes

Transnational Institute
<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/smoking-guns>



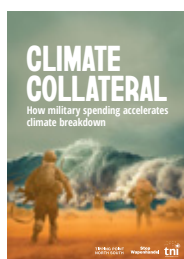
Smokescreen: How States Are Using the War in Ukraine to Drive a New Arms Race

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<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/outourcing-oppression>



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<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/climate-collateral>



Global Climate Wall: How the World's Wealthiest Nations Prioritise Borders Over Climate Action

Transnational Institute
<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/global-climate-wall>



Fanning the Flames: How the European Union is Fuelling a New Arms Race

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<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/fanning-the-flames>



Expanding the Fortress: The policies, the Profiteers and the People Shaped by EU's Border Externalisation Programme

Transnational Institute
<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/expanding-the-fortress>