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24

REALIGNING NEUTRALITY?
Irish defence policy and the EU

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THE INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY STUDIES
WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

43 AVE DU PRESIDENT WILSON, 75775 PARIS CEDEX 16

March 2001

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REALIGNING NEUTRALITY?

Irish defence policy and the EU

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This paper was written while the author was a visiting fellow at the WEU Institute for Security Studies from October to December 2000. He wishes to thank the Institute for the opportunity to use its facilities and the research fellows for many fruitful discussions. The author wishes to add that this paper benefited greatly from the comments of Dr Julian Lindley-French of the Institute, and that the author alone is responsible for the views expressed and any errors within.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

Daniel Keohane explores the changing context of Irish defence policy in light of the rapid development of the Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP). In so doing he touches on policy considerations germane to all EU member-states with a tradition of neutrality who are having to adjust to a new role in a changing world. Keohane also uses defence policy as a metaphor for the changing internal debate at a time when a strong and polemical discourse is underway about Ireland's role in the wider world. Many, particularly on the Left, hark back to the days when Ireland's traditional neutrality was a feasible option in a world made up of competing blocks. Keohane argues that in such a changed strategic environment neutrality no longer affords the luxury of non-engagement and that Ireland has to be seen to be an active and effective member of a broad Western security community. At the same time, he points out that Ireland not only has a strong record of UN peacekeeping world-wide but that its commitment of up to 850 troops to the European Rapid Reaction Force represents tangible evidence of how far Ireland has come in realigning its neutrality. However, in a tight budgetary environment, without any major external threats and with the situation in Northern Ireland reasonably stable the Irish Defence Force will have to compete with other demands upon the national treasury if it is to improve its capabilities so that its stated will can be matched by relevant and effective military forces. Keohane concludes that whilst Ireland is no longer a neutral state it remains non-aligned, with NATO membership out of the question for the foreseeable future. That said, the CESDP will continue to condition Irish defence policy and promote a pro-active role for Ireland in promoting European peace and security.

CHAPTER ONE: A CHANGING IRISH DEFENCE POLICY?

'The hottest place in hell is for those who are neutral'
Dante Alighieri

Whether or not Dante was right, the new post-Cold War world has created new challenges for Ireland, as it did for every State in Europe. While Ireland is still officially a 'militarily neutral' State just as it was during the Cold War, it would be wrong to assume that Irish defence policy has not changed since the end of the Cold War. This chapter attempts to show the changes that have taken place in Irish defence policy since the end of the Cold War, beginning with the common challenges faced by the EU neutrals[1] in adapting their neutrality to the new European security environment. It continues with the changing nature of how UN peacekeeping operations are carried out and its affect on Irish defence policy; then assesses the emergence of the EU as a security actor in recent years and the new role it offers Ireland. Ireland's external and domestic security situation is also considered, with particular reference to affect of the peace process in Northern Ireland on Irish security and defence policy.

I.1 The changing security environment and the EU 'neutrals'

The case of the EU 'neutrals' is a peculiar one in that their neutrality, the pivot of their respective security policies, is challenged more by peacetime than war, cold or hot. As Katsumi Ishizuka points out:

> 'The post Cold-War era has witnessed a more equal distribution of opportunities for states to contribute to peacekeeping operations, but it has also reduced the status of middle and neutral powers like Sweden, Finland and Ireland. Middle and neutral powers have also been faced with a situation that has forced them to reconsider the maintenance of their military status of neutrality in the current unipolar system of international politics.'[2]

Military neutrality in the Cold War period centred on non-membership of the collective defence alliances that prevailed in the bipolar Cold War system, and non-involvement in a possible major conflict. However, neutrality policies are in some ways relics of the Cold War. Firstly the international system is no longer bipolar but unipolar, with the US as the sole global superpower. Thus the chances of a major global or European military conflict are extremely remote. Secondly, increasing financial, social, political and economic interdependence among nation-states, commonly known as 'globalisation', has increased the importance of maintaining regional and global stability, particularly for the EU and the US. This, coupled with enhanced European economic and monetary integration, has led to an increasing convergence of strategic thought and the development of a common security outlook amongst the EU member states. Thirdly, the meaning of *security* and *defence* has changed since the end of the Cold War.

During the Cold War a state's *security* depended primarily on the *defence* of national territory. *Security* and *defence* were practically indivisible terms of meaning for most states. Today, a state's *security* is no longer defined solely in territorial defence terms. *Security* is

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1 'EU Neutrals' refers to Ireland, Sweden, Finland, and Austria.

2 Katsumi Ishizuka, 'Ireland and the Partnership for Peace', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 10 (1999).

now a broader concept, which requires military, civilian, and economic capabilities to resolve conflicts. This includes issues such as mass migration, environmental degradation, the danger of political and economic collapse, and trans-national crime. *Defence* still means the defence of national territory, and can still be enhanced through a *collective defence* alliance, such as NATO. On the other hand, a *defence policy*, meaning the use of military capabilities, is now only one component of a state's *security policy*.

This new security environment has also created new opportunities for the EU neutrals. An important idea for the neutrals has always been the broader concept of 'security', entailing a more holistic approach, including both military and civilian aspects, to security problems. This approach is in line with the priority given to upholding international law, and the primacy of the UN in international collective security. In turn this new security environment has caused the main collective security and defence institutions in Europe to redefine their roles and missions. In a sense the EU, the UN and NATO have been coming around to the neutrals traditional way of thinking. An example of this is the inclusion of the 'Petersberg Tasks'[3] in the Amsterdam treaty, which are now the primary operational focus of the CESDP. The 'global crisis management strategy'[4] described by the EU High Representative, Javier Solana, including both military and civilian elements, is very much in line with the international security aims of the EU neutrals. The EU is committed to undertaking only Petersberg Tasks. There are no mutual or collective defence agreements in the EU Treaty. Thus, the present situation causes no major constitutional difficulties for the EU neutrals to contribute militarily to the CESDP.

However, the Kosovo war presented an uncomfortable situation for the EU neutrals. None of them wished to breach their neutrality, and normally would not sanction a military operation without a UN mandate.[5] However, all realized that the humanitarian situation was grave and needed attention. Sweden and Finland did not state whether or not they condemned or supported NATO's action. While both governments admitted that NATO's action was not strictly in accordance with their interpretation of international law, they understood the political situation and that there was no other choice. Austria did condemn the bombings, and denied airspace to NATO planes travelling to Yugoslavia, stating that to do so would violate the Austrian constitution. However this did cause considerable debate in Austria with the minority coalition partner, the People's Party, which favours NATO membership for Austria, saying they would have supported the bombings if it were not for the Austrian constitution.

In many ways, Ireland proved the most interesting EU neutral case. The Irish government backed the EU-NATO members' statement, which explicitly endorsed the NATO action. Thus Ireland supported a military action without a UN mandate for the first time in its history. The *Irish Times* noted:

> 'For most, the decision is likely to be seen as a welcome response to a moral imperative in support of beleaguered Kosovars and a possibly regrettable, but necessary, break with neutrality in the face of UN impotence. Short of sending troops, the (Irish) Government could not nail its colours to the mast more clearly. For others, it will be another symbolic

[3] In the 1992 Western European Union Council of Ministers Petersberg Declaration, 'Petersberg Tasks' are defined as those military operations employed for humanitarian and rescue tasks; peacekeeping tasks; and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking.

[4] Javier Solana, 'Why Europe needs the military option', *Financial Times*, September 29 2000.

[5] This statement is reflecting one interpretation of the issue of NATO's right to act in the Kosovo crisis. It should be noted that NATO claimed a UN mandate on the basis of Resolution 1699.

> step, along with signing up for Partnership for Peace, on the slippery slope to the emergence of the much talked of 'European security identity' and a European defence role for Ireland.'[6]

It is significant that Ireland moved away from neutrality in this instance mainly because the Irish government viewed the UN Security Council as ineffective in dealing with this problem.[7] During the Bosnian conflict, Ireland urged the UN Security Council to take action against Milosevic and suggested that military force should be sanctioned if negotiations failed, but there was no question of Ireland acting outside the UN. Thus, it is fair to suggest that not only are EU security decisions now as important to Ireland as those of the UN, but also Ireland may be starting to move away from the traditionally strict interpretation of it's 'military neutrality'.

I.2 The changing role of the UN

Ireland's commitment to collective security has traditionally been pursued solely through the United Nations, which the Irish government White Paper on Defence of February 2000 says 'has the primary role to play in the maintenance of international peace and security'.[8] Ireland is rightly proud of the fact that it has contributed military personnel and units to UN peace support missions around the world since 1958, and at present provides 731 military personnel for UN missions out of an active force of 11,460.[9] This figure does not include another 50 personnel with SFOR in Bosnia, and 104 personnel with KFOR in Yugoslavia.[10] It is also interesting to note the most recent official figures for member state contributions to UN international peacekeeping missions (December 2000), not including the NATO-run missions in Bosnia and Yugoslavia. Of the EU States, Ireland made the third highest contribution with 703 troops on international UN peacekeeping duty. The Netherlands committed 881 troops, and Portugal 768 troops, while Finland is fourth with 659 troops, followed by Austria with 610. The UK contributed 316, France 260, Germany 14 and the US none.[11] Thus, even based solely on these figures, it is fair to say that UN peace-support missions are a significant component of Irish defence policy.

It is also clear that the UN is responding to an increasing number of conflicts since the end of the Cold War; so much so that it now encourages regional organizations to use their capabilities under a UN mandate to complete peace-support missions.[12] Obvious examples of this development in Europe are the NATO-led forces in Bosnia (SFOR) and Kosovo (KFOR),[13] in which Ireland is participating.[14] This is a significant change for Irish defence

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6 Patrick Smyth, 'Ireland has stepped off the neutrality fence', *The Irish Times*, April 14 1999.

7 This is interesting not least as Ireland is a non-permanent member of the same council since January 2001.

8 Government of Ireland, White Paper on Defence, February 2000, 3.2.4.

9 International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2000-2001*, pp.96-97.

10 Ibid., pp.96-97.

11 For a full list of the December 2000 personnel contributors to UN missions around the world, not including the NATO-run missions in Bosnia and Kosovo, see www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/dec.htm.

12 For a discussion of the new UN operation implementation see Michael Hirsh, 'Calling All Regio-Cops', *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2000.

13 For more on NATO as a crisis manager see Kori Schake, *Evaluating NATO's Efficiency in Crisis Management*, Les Notes de L'IFRI, No.21 (Paris, August 2000).

14 Indeed this trend is seen as significant enough to change the 1993 government approved roles of the Irish Defence Forces from 'to participate in United Nations missions in the cause of international peace' to 'to participate in multinational peace support, crisis management and humanitarian relief operations in support of

policy, as participation in NATO-led missions involves many new challenges for the Irish Defence Forces, including increasing interoperability and sustainability requirements, and the increasing scope of missions.

Another major change in Irish defence policy has been the readiness to perform new types of UN peace-support missions that were not previously undertaken. The first example of this was in 1993 when the then Irish government was prepared to contribute troops to the UN peace-enforcement operation in Somalia.[15] Ray Murphy describes this event as 'a fundamental change in policy', and explains that:

> 'Although the Irish commitment to the UN forces in Somalia (UNOSOM II) was quite small and numbered around 180 personnel, the decision to participate had significant political and military implications. It was the first time Irish soldiers participated in a Chapter VII enforcement operation of this kind and it set a precedent that helped pave the way for the current participation in the SFOR in the former Yugoslavia.' [16]

This changing UN mission environment was a major factor in the Irish government's desire to join the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme in 1999, which offers the opportunity to have access to NATO equipment, training and operational standards without, in Ireland's case, implying future membership. Thus, changes in the way UN peace support missions are run have led to changes in the way Ireland contributes to such missions. The fact that many of these missions occur in Europe has added significance.

I.3 The changing role of the EU

Ireland has been a member of the EU since 1973. Unlike the UN, the EU is a body which is involved in many aspects of daily Irish life and is important to Ireland socio-economically, culturally, and politically. Ireland, for its part, has been an active participant in European Political Cooperation (EPC), and its successor the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Just as the UN and NATO have changed their roles in the 1990s, so too has the EU aspired to be a more active security actor with the development of the Common European Security and Defence Policy.

The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 stated that the EU CFSP would include the 'progressive framing of a common defence policy….which might include a common defence, should the European Council so decide….in accordance with (Member States) respective constitutional requirements.'[17] This process was accelerated by both the St. Malo declaration by the British and French governments in 1998, which called for increased defence cooperation by the EU member states, and the Kosovo crisis in 1999, which revealed the lack of capabilities available in the EU when the deployment of military forces was necessary for European security. This led to the EU Helsinki summit declaration of December 1999, which committed

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the United Nations and under UN mandate, including regional security missions authorized by the UN', Government of Ireland, White Paper on Defence, February 2000, 3.3.1. & 3.3.3.

[15] It is worth noting that the government revised its roles for the Defence Forces in 1993 to allow Irish troops to participate in UNOSOM II in Somalia. It stated 'contributing to UN peace support missions', but it did not define what types of missions peace-support missions were, i.e. peacekeeping or peace-enforcement or both.

[16] Ray Murphy, 'Ireland, the United Nations and Peacekeeping Operations', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.5, No.1, Spring 1998, p.32.

[17] Treaty on European Union, Article17.

the CESDP to a headline goal creating a European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) of 50-60,000 troops by 2003, deployable within 60 days and sustainable for up to one year.

The remit of the ERRF is limited to military support of the 'Petersberg Tasks' (peace-support) operations. EU member states also agreed at Helsinki to draw up an action plan to better co-ordinate the EU's civilian crisis management capabilities. This led to the announcement at the Feira EU summit in June 2000 of a civilian crisis management headline goal of having 5000 policemen available, 1000 of whom could be deployed within 30 days and sustained for up to a year. A special EU Capabilities Commitment Conference was held in Brussels in November 2000, where the EU foreign and defence ministers finalized their contributions to the ERRF. Ireland will make up to 850 troops available to the ERRF, the same number that is presently available for UN missions.[18]

On the institutional side the Nice Intergovernmental Conference of December 2000 formalized the recent developments. This has included the setting up of new EU structures for the CESDP which are ultimately under the control of the national heads-of-state in the EU Council. These include:

- a Political and Security Committee (known by its French acronym COPS) comprised of senior level national representatives;
- a Military Committee comprised of member state Defence Chiefs of Staff;
- a Military Staff;
- a Civilian Crisis Management Committee.

These new structures have not yet required an amendment to the EU Treaty.

However, there are still some unresolved issues. The Western European Union (WEU), a collective defence alliance of 10 of the EU members[19] is no longer the agency through which the EU would direct military forces, as the EU is now developing the structures to direct military operations of its own. However, not all the issues of the EU/WEU merger have been resolved, in particular what to do with the WEU Article V mutual defence agreement in the modified Brussels Treaty of 1954. Another issue is the future of the WEU Parliamentary Assembly comprised of national parliament representatives, which links into the debate on parliamentary scrutiny of the CESDP.

Other unresolved issues include:

- the financing of the ERRF with the possibility of a separate funding mechanism from the main EU budget;
- developing further armaments and military technology cooperation;
- mechanisms for ensuring that member states meet the ERRF troop pledges agreed in November 2000.

[18] Government of Ireland, Department of Defence, *Speaking points for Minister for Defence*, delivered by Minister of State, Mr Seamus Brennan, Capabilities Commitment Conference, Brussels, November 20 2000. Available at www.irlgov.ie/defence/speech/intranet.htm. Ireland makes up to 850 personnel available for UN peace-support missions, see Government of Ireland, White Paper on Defence, February 2000, 4.4.2.

[19] The 10 WEU members are Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the UK. The 5 EU members who are not members of the WEU are Austria, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, and Sweden. It should be noted that Austria, Finland, Ireland, and Sweden are also not members of NATO; but Denmark, while not a member of the WEU, is a member of NATO.

There is also the issue of EU-NATO relations. It is recognized that the EU will require recourse to NATO military assets for most crisis management operations in the medium term. This is clear from the Kosovo campaign, which highlighted the lack of military capabilities available to the EU for effective military operations. Negotiations between the EU and NATO are under way to set up permanent arrangements in four areas. These include:

- secure exchanges of information;
- compatibility of the EU's military capabilities headline goal and NATO's Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI), launched in 1999 to improve NATO's military capabilities;
- EU access to NATO assets and capabilities;
- permanent arrangements for consultation procedures between the EU and NATO both in times of crisis and non-crisis.

The latter issue is also concerned with the role of non-EU NATO members, such as Turkey, Poland and Norway, and non-NATO members who are EU accession candidates, such as Estonia, Romania and Slovenia, in an EU crisis management operation which requires NATO military assets. These structures are expected to be in place by the time of the Laeken Summit during the Belgian Presidency of the EU in December 2001.[20]

The EU is described in the Irish government White Paper on Defence of February 2000 as having 'the capacity to promote peace, security and progress in Europe and the world.'[21] The Irish government is also quick to add that:

> 'The EU Treaties do not provide a mutual defence guarantee. It is clear, however, that the security interests of member states are increasingly interdependent. There is a security impact in terms of political solidarity between member states, reinforced by agreement on the progressive framing of a common defence policy which might lead to a common defence. The operational focus of the EU is on tasks of peacekeeping and crisis management in Europe (the Petersberg Tasks) as set out in the Treaty of Amsterdam.'[22]

The Irish government is keen to emphasize correctly that the EU Treaties at present do not include a mutual defence arrangement. The more important issue at present for the Irish government is the operational focus of the EU. There is no doubt that the 'Petersberg Tasks' definitions were a major influence on the revised description of the international role of the Irish Defence Forces in the 2000 White Paper on Defence, which allows the Irish Defence Forces to partake in 'multinational peace support, crisis management and humanitarian relief operations'.[23] The 1993 government approved role had been less specific, saying that the Irish Defence Forces could 'participate in United Nations missions in the cause of international peace.'[24] The revised 2000 description also allows Ireland to act via security bodies other than the UN, such as EU or NATO led peacekeeping missions, but only with a UN mandate.[25]

[20] For more on the EU-NATO relationship, and the developing CESDP institutional structures, see Gilles Andreani, Christoph Bertram, & Charles Grant, *Europe's Military Revolution*, Centre for European Reform, 2001.
[21] Government of Ireland, White Paper on Defence, February 2000, 2.2.4.
[22] Ibid., 2.2.4.
[23] Ibid., 3.3.3.
[24] Ibid., 3.3.1.
[25] Ibid., 3.3.3. & 3.2.9.

In other words Ireland sees the EU as another collective security actor under the UN umbrella; one that has the capabilities to act, and is able to act under the new UN peacekeeping subcontracting practice. The EU, for its part, aspires to 'preserve peace and strengthen international security, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.'[26] On the other hand, the Kosovo crisis showed that Ireland may sometimes be prepared to support a military action even without a UN mandate in extenuating circumstances. Most importantly for Ireland, its participation in the CESDP enables it to have a new decision-making role in any collective security action in its main geographical area of interest.

I.4 Ireland's external security environment

As the Irish government 2000 White Paper on Defence points out 'Ireland enjoys a very benign external security environment'. Indeed, so much so that 'Ireland faces virtually no risk of external military attack on its territory from another State and there is at present virtually no risk of externally instigated conflict in the immediate region. Any change in this position is likely to be preceded by a significant warning time of some years.'[27] This is quite a statement for any state to be able to make. Even more so when one considers the threat assessments of Ireland's neighbour, the UK, or even it's more distant neighbour, the US, regarding the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and possible attacks on their territories.[28] The reasons for this lack of threat may seem obvious due to the fact that Ireland is officially 'militarily neutral' and does not partake in mutual defence arrangements such as NATO. However on closer inspection, even compared with the other EU neutrals Ireland enjoys relative safety, which suggests that geographic location is a more important factor. Consider Austria's proximity to the Balkans, and Sweden and Finland's concerns in the Baltic area as well as the developing situations in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. Indeed one could even point out the irony that a geographic location which was the cause of much tumult in Irish history has now become a distinct advantage.

This is not to suggest that Ireland is unaware of the new European security environment. The White Paper adds that 'the new security environment in greater Europe, however, is marked by a lower degree of risk of large scale military conflict, but also by new challenges and uncertainties…..leading to humanitarian crises and refugee flows which have affected every country in the EU……these conflicts have resulted in substantial zones of instability on or close to the borders of the EU.'[29] While the White Paper is not specific on what conflicts and where, it demonstrates that Irish defence planners are thinking in EU security terms and not just in national security terms.

Indeed, the rest of the world is not forgotten either. On the wider global front, the dangers of weak political institutions in Africa, and confrontation in the Middle East and Asia are emphasized. New security threats such as drug trafficking, refugee flows, international crime, and environmental problems are all recognized as challenges with which Ireland has had some experience. The continuing global threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) gets

[26] Treaty on European Union, Article 11.
[27] Government of Ireland, White Paper on Defence, February 2000, 2.2.1.
[28] For the UK see the House of Lords sponsored Missile Proliferation Study Group Report, 'Coming Into Range: Britain's Growing Vulnerability To Missiles and Weapons of Mass Destruction,' Executive Summary, June 2000. For the US see 'Future Conflict' in the CIA report *Global Trends 2015*, prepared by the National Intelligence Council, December 2000.
[29] Government of Ireland, White Paper on Defence, February 2000, 2.2.2.

particular attention. This should come as no surprise considering Ireland's consistent nuclear disarmament stance.

Thus, the changing global security environment has not yet had a major adverse affect on Ireland's security. However, as discussed earlier, it has led to a changing of institutional roles for bodies of which Ireland is a member, such as the UN and the EU, and these changing institutional roles have in turn had a major impact on Irish defence policy.

I.5 The internal security situation in Ireland

No discussion on Irish defence policy can avoid the issue of on-island security and political developments in Northern Ireland. For an issue which has completely dominated the foreign and defence policy debate in Ireland since the foundation of the State, it is surprising to note how little attention it gets in the 2000 White Paper on Defence, indeed far less than Ireland's international peacekeeping role. This is based on a firm belief that the 'political and security situation in Northern Ireland has been transformed by the Good Friday Agreement.'[30] However, caution has not been (and should not be) thrown to the wind as the Irish government notes:

> 'While it is recognized that the current ceasefires have been sustained over a protracted period, organizations of this kind (dissident paramilitary groups) may pose security dangers for which a level of defence response continues to be required. However, the overall dangers to security are of a considerably lower order than was the case prior to the ceasefires and it is considered likely that the longer that this period of sustained peace continues, the less danger there is of a return to widespread violence.'[31]

Some have noted that this may be too optimistic an analysis of the situation. Indeed, the former Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Gerry McMahon, described it as 'hopelessly optimistic'.[32]

The (Conservative) British government declared in 1990 that it 'has no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland.'[33] This major change in British policy was mainly due to the new post-Cold War security environment and political developments in Northern Ireland. The recognition of shared European security interests and the development of a common security outlook between the UK, Ireland, and the other EU member-states, also helped bring about this change in British policy.[34] The more positive situation in Northern Ireland has in turn led to a major improvement in Anglo-Irish political relations. It is has also created a public space for the other aspects of Irish foreign policy to be given more attention. These other aspects have traditionally suffered from a lack of exposure due to the relative importance of the difficult situation in Northern Ireland for Ireland.

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[30] Ibid., 2.3.7.
[31] Ibid., 2.3.7.
[32] Lt.-Gen. Gerry McMahon, 'Battlefield strewn with victims', *The Irish Times*, March 1 2000. For a discussion on the prospects for the success of the Northern Irish peace process see Jonathan Stevenson, 'Irreversible Peace in Northern Ireland?', *Survival*, Vol. 42, No.3, Autumn 2000 pp.5-26.
[33] G. R. Sloan, *The Geopolitics of Anglo-Irish Relations in the 20th Century*, (London, 1997), pp. 278-279. He is quoting a speech made by the then British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Brooke, entitled 'The British Presence', November 9 1990.
[34] For a historical analysis of the Ireland-UK strategic relationship see G. R. Sloan, *The Geopolitics of Anglo-Irish Relations in the 20th Century*, (London, 1997).

This new situation in Northern Ireland has also 'liberated' the Irish Defence Forces to be able to focus on other issues. As the then Irish Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Stapleton, noted in the 1999 Annual Report of the Defence Forces:

> 'With the advent of the Good Friday Agreement and the subsequent easing of tensions in Northern Ireland, it is hoped that the situation will continue to improve to the extent that the Defence Forces will be permitted to withdraw from these ATCP (Aid to Civil Power) tasks and to be in a position to concentrate its efforts on the development of the core conventional military skills…..The Defence Forces have reached a watershed in its evolution. The 1999 review can be seen as not only marking the ending of the 20th century Defence Forces but also the commencement of a new approach, a new dynamism and a new focus for the 21st century Irish soldier, sailor and airperson. I believe our future lies in the European security context without compromising our undoubted commitment to the United Nations.'[35]

While one can never be sure of the future, developments are more encouraging than they have ever been in Northern Ireland. From an Irish security policy point of view this is *the* most significant change in recent years. This point cannot be over-emphasized. Ireland cannot expect to contribute significantly to any international body for peace support missions, regardless of its desire to do so, if there are significant security threats at home. This is particularly so since Ireland has a relatively small defence force. This point is certainly not lost on the British Ministry of Defence either who, even with superior resources, would much prefer to send their troops to Kosovo than Belfast, if faced with the choice. If for no other reason than the fact that the UK currently has some 8,600 troops in Northern Ireland at a time when it is facing increasing force over-stretch due to increasing, and increasingly lengthy, international deployments.[36] The Institute for International Strategic Studies in London describes the troop deployment situation in the following terms:

> 'The lengthy deployment (in Kosovo) is putting great stress on NATO forces, including those of countries with full regular forces like the UK and the US. Too many commitments for the available forces have been taken on in the past two years; as a result professional forces are having difficulty in retaining their personnel because of repeated overseas tours and separations from family.'[37]

Reducing the number of British troops in Northern Ireland would help ease this situation and assist in taking some of the pressure off British troops in Kosovo; added to the fact that, decreasing numbers of British troops in Northern Ireland would be one sign of a successful peace process there.

I.6 A changing Irish defence policy

Ireland remains officially a 'militarily neutral' state. However, Irish security and defence policy has changed in a quite a number of ways since the end of the Cold War. The new political and security environment in Europe changed and broadened the meaning of 'security' for the EU member-states. Europe is no longer in the middle of a possible nuclear

[35] Statement from the Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen Stapleton, Irish Defence Forces Annual Report 1999, available at the Irish Defence Forces website www.military.ie.
[36] For troop numbers see International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2000-2001*, p.82.
[37] International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2000-2001*, pp.36-37.

conflict, but new uncertainties and new types of conflicts have arisen. This in turn has created the need for a broader range of options to be made available to resolve these conflicts. The military option is no longer concerned with just territorial defence and conventional war-fighting, but must now also deal with lower scale escalations involving peace-enforcement and peacekeeping operations, which call for a different set of military skills and equipment. Added to this, post-conflict reconstruction (or 'peace-building') in Europe requires much greater and effective civilian crisis management capabilities. These civilian capabilities range from policemen to judges to city administrators and funding.

In response to the increasing number and types of conflicts, the UN has seen the nature of its peacekeeping operations change. It is now accepted practice that the UN can and will turn to regional organizations, such as NATO and the EU, to assist it in its crisis management operations, in particular, but not exclusively, for peace-enforcement operations. Ireland has long been a committed contributor to UN peace-support missions, and changes in the types of missions and the ways these operations are run has changed the international role of the Irish Defence Forces. It can now be expected that the Irish Defence Forces will participate in all types of peace-support missions, including peace-enforcement. It can now also be assumed that Ireland will interact with UN-mandated institutions, such as NATO or the EU, for peace-support missions. Irish membership of the NATO-PfP programme is intended to help meet the standards required to complete such missions.

The much improved situation in Northern Ireland has also been an extremely significant factor. So much so that the Irish Defence Forces expect to be able to concentrate more on developing the capabilities required for international missions, and less on dealing with security threats from internal dissident paramilitary groups. Finally, the evolution of the EU as a more active security actor means that Ireland is now an EU decision-maker with EU resources and responsibilities to resolve conflicts. This new decision-making role offers both opportunities and challenges for Irish foreign and defence policy planners. Certainly, Ireland is committed to the CESDP because, along with the other EU member states, it wishes to contribute more towards promoting European peace and security.

Irish security and defence policy has changed since the end of the Cold War. However, the question remains: With this new EU role in mind, is it still correct to describe Irish security and defence policy as 'militarily neutral'? An analysis of this is made in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER TWO: REALIGNING NEUTRALITY?

'Ireland pursues an independent course in foreign policy,
but it is not neutral between liberty and tyranny and never will be.'
John F. Kennedy

Charles Grant, in his pamphlet *EU 2010: An Optimistic Vision of the Future*, lays out many interesting scenarios for how the EU might function in 10 years time. One scenario he describes is in 2007, when the Irish and Austrians threaten to veto an EU military mission to Sierra Leone. The purpose of the mission is to end a long-running civil war. After the bigger countries threaten to use 'variable geometry' to go ahead with the mission, apparently the Irish and Austrians back down. It is also noted how, unlike the Swedes and the Finns, they had never joined NATO.[38]

To begin with, this is not a very encouraging vision of Ireland's future role in the CESDP. Nor does the evidence from Ireland's contributions to international peacekeeping operations, and planned commitments on the EU level, regardless of Ireland's neutral status, support this type of scenario. In light of Irish involvement in African affairs for many years, ranging from sending troops to the UN mission in the Congo in 1960, to planning to participate in the UN Somalia operation in 1993, and not forgetting the great work of many Irish non-governmental organizations in Africa, there is absolutely no reason why Ireland would not want to assist in helping end an African civil war, unless it was not UN mandated. Would the EU be likely to be there without a UN mandate? This would be both undesirable and unlikely, as Russia and China should have less of a political problem with supporting a crisis management operation in Sierra Leone than they did in Kosovo, while the EU would not want to carry out such an operation without a UN mandate.

However, such future scenarios are what Irish defence planners and politicians will have to confront in the coming years. In this respect, Charles Grant is correct. The Irish government must, therefore, reconsider the meaning of 'military neutrality.'

II.1 A nice treaty from Nice

During the Nice EU Treaty negotiations, the Irish government indicated that under 'no circumstances' would it agree to an EU mutual defence agreement like that in the Western European Union (WEU) and NATO treaties.[39] The Irish Foreign Minister, Brian Cowen, also indicated that there would not be a referendum on Irish participation in the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF), adding that he would not be put off by supporters of 'isolationism masquerading as advocates of neutrality.'[40]

The Treaty signed at Nice in December 2000 in some ways let the Irish government 'off the political hook', in that no EU Treaty changes relating to defence issues were made. EU treaty changes relating to defence will not happen until the next Inter-governmental Conference (IGC) in 2004 at the earliest. Thus, the Irish government should not have to worry about EU

[38] Charles Grant, *EU 2010: An Optimistic Vision of the Future*, Centre for European Reform, (London, 2000), pp. 47-48.
[39] 'Government to oppose mutual defence in treaty', *The Irish Times*, October 18 2000.
[40] 'Cowen defence line criticized', *The Irish Times*, July 4 2000.

defence being a major political issue until at least 2004. Interestingly, this new IGC will be convened during the next Irish Presidency of the EU Council. Moreover, the IGC may include a discussion on what to do with the WEU Brussels Treaty of 1954, including its mutual defence arrangement under Article V of that treaty, signed by 10 EU members.

However, the Irish government may still have to hold a referendum on the Nice Treaty during 2001. Despite no Treaty changes relating to defence, Irish participation in the European Rapid Reaction Force may be an issue in such a referendum campaign, which could create difficulties for the government. The present government will also require a successful campaign in light of a pending general election in 2002.

The more important issue is that the Irish government has an obligation to ensure that Irish participation in such a force has clear public backing and legitimacy. On the announcement of Irish participation in the ERRF, the *Irish Times* noted:

> 'Now that this State (Ireland) is participating (in the ERRF) it will be up to the (Irish) Government to explain clearly and firmly what is at stake……Rather than prevaricate on this question, the Government would be better advised to decide it will be necessary anyway for political reasons to hold a referendum.'[41]

Whether or not the Irish government does hold a separate referendum on Irish participation in the ERRF, and this is unlikely, a sense of a 'democratic deficit' should not be allowed to affect the Irish public's view of Irish participation in the ERRF. In addition, the general issue of Ireland's future role in EU defence will not go away and is too important to embark upon without clear public backing.

II.2 From neutrality to non-alignment

Ireland is clearly committed to the EU and it's security aims. It is conceivable to argue that Ireland realigned its neutrality by joining the EU in 1973, or even as far back as its first application to join the then EEC in 1961. The then Irish Taoiseach,[42] Sean Lemass (Fianna Fail), said in 1962:

> 'Political considerations, we know, played a considerable part in the motivation and the successful outcome of the negotiations for the Treaty and the aims of the European Economic Community go much beyond purely economic matters…..I desire to emphasize that the political aims of the Community are aims which the Irish government and people are ready to subscribe and in the realization of which they wish to play an active part…..while Ireland did not accede to the North Atlantic Treaty, we have always agreed with the general aim of that Treaty. The fact that we did not accede to it was due to special circumstances and does not qualify in any way our acceptance of the ideal of European unity and of the conception…..of the duties, obligations and responsibilities which European unity would impose.'[43]

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[41] 'Europe's rapid reaction force', Editorial, *The Irish Times*, November 1 2000.

[42] The *Taoiseach* is the Irish Prime Minister.

[43] Tony Brown, 'Defence, peace-keeping and arms control', in *A Vital National Interest – Ireland in Europe 1973-1998*, edited by Jim Dooge & Ruth Barrington, Institute of Public Administration, (Dublin, 1999), pp.158-159. He is quoting the statement by the Taoiseach (Sean Lemass) to the Council of Ministers on Ireland's application for membership of the European Economic Community, Brussels January 18 1962.

However, Ireland is still 'officially' militarily neutral. Is this a correct description of present day Irish security and defence policy?

On the announcement of Irish participation in the ERRF, the Minister for Defence, Michael Smith, asked:

> 'Are we totally neutral about what happens in the world? If something is fundamentally wrong and children are being killed and maimed, like in Bosnia, then are the Irish people neutral in these matters?'[44]

The biggest-selling newspaper in Ireland, the *Irish Independent* responded to Minister Smith's question that 'only those who can truly answer 'yes' to that question or who oppose our membership of the European Union should object to Ireland playing a role in this (ERRF) force.'[45]

As was argued in the previous chapter, neutrality policies in Europe are relics of the Cold War. Ireland's neutrality policy was a practical policy for Ireland to adopt during the Cold War period, and it served the Irish State well. Its popularity amongst the Irish public is a testimony to that. However, 'military neutrality' as was practised by Ireland during the Cold War is no longer a suitable policy in the Post-Cold War world. Nor is Ireland practising the same 'military neutrality' policy that it did during the Cold War period. Irish governments have recognized that Europe's security environment has changed, and that the concepts of *security* and *defence* have changed. Irish governments have also responded to those changes. Ireland, in line with its traditional foreign policy goals, is an active collective security actor, with a desire to promote both global and European peace and security. The present European security environment requires more *security* action than *defence* action.

Ireland may be 'militarily neutral' about *defence*, but it is not 'militarily neutral' about *security.* As Patrick Keatinge has succinctly pointed out 'where co-operative security is concerned, there is precious little to be neutral about. Nothing is achieved by abstention.'[46] Thus, a better description of Irish security and defence policy would be *non-alignment*, not *neutrality. Non-alignment* still means that Ireland is not a member of a collective or mutual defence alliance, such as NATO. But *non-alignment* does not imply, as *military neutrality* does, that Ireland is not prepared to use force or deploy its troops for collective security and crisis management operations.

Ireland has been, is, and will be prepared to deploy its troops to resolve conflicts in Europe and around the globe. Ireland's full participation in the ERRF and the CESDP is a reflection of this. The CESDP is a crisis management policy, not a mutual defence alliance. The ERRF is a military tool intended to help the EU better resolve the new types of lower-intensity conflicts that have occurred in Europe since the end of the Cold War, such as in Bosnia and Kosovo. Ireland is not neutral in these matters, nor should it be. Ireland should want to contribute more to help promote European peace and security, and Ireland clearly does want to do so. Ireland has no problem politically in contributing to the full range of 'Petersberg

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[44] 'EU Force', Editorial, *The Irish Independent*, November 21 2000.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Fine Gael Press Statement, *FG seeks referendum to move Ireland 'Beyond Neutrality' in European Defence & Security*, February 27 2000. Professor Patrick Keatinge, Trinity College Dublin, is quoted from evidence given to the Joint Oireachtas (Parliamentary) Committee on Foreign Affairs, July 1 1998. The Fine Gael press statement is available at www.finegael.ie/news/022700gay.htm.

Tasks' military operations, which are the operational focus for the ERRF. These range from high-intensity peace-enforcement operations, to peacekeeping operations, to lower-intensity humanitarian and disaster relief operations. The Irish government has been peacekeeping since 1958, and has been prepared to peace-enforce since the preparations for the UN peace-enforcement mission in Somalia in 1993. In analysing the political implications of the Irish contribution to the ERRF, the *Irish Times* noted:

> 'The (Irish) Government makes a convincing case that the formula adopted does not abrogate Ireland's military neutrality, since alliance commitments are not involved..….Opinion surveys have found consistently that solid majorities of Irish voters are willing to participate in such operations, but that they do not want to join a military alliance in which they would be more bound to them.'[47]

Thus, if Ireland is a non-aligned state, rather than a neutral one, willing to participate in Petersberg Task operations, what prevents Ireland from joining a mutual defence alliance such as NATO? If Ireland, despite its 'military neutrality', is prepared to use military force to resolve conflicts, are other concerns at play, such as worries over 'being bound' to military alliances?

II.3 From non-alignment to NATO?

The only issue in EU security and defence policy which would create major political problems for the Irish government would be a WEU Article V (mutual defence) agreement in the EU Treaty, or the line between *collective security* and *collective defence*. The issue of how the WEU Article V might be incorporated into the EU treaty has been left to the political wayside for the foreseeable future. Thus, a discussion of this issue is in some ways academic at present. However, by the time of the next InterGovernmental Conference in 2004, which will discuss amendments to the EU Treaty, the issue of incorporating such a mutual defence agreement may be on the agenda. In any case it is worth exploring the issues and options for Ireland regarding the general issue of mutual defence alliances in Europe, and how it plays out with Irish defence policy.

If Ireland is willing to use force for Petersberg Tasks, then the principle of non-use of force to resolve conflicts, an interpretation of 'military neutrality', should not prevent Ireland from being a defence alliance member. Perhaps a more important point for Ireland is to maintain the choice to participate in international military operations. This is already the case for Petersberg Tasks, whereby Irish participation has to receive parliamentary approval.

Ireland's policy of 'military neutrality' is only a policy, it is not a constitutional requirement for the state as is the case in Austria. Thus, any Irish government could in theory change that policy, but would (nor should) not do so without clear public backing. As it is, Irish 'military neutrality' has had 'flexible' interpretations over the years; Irish support of the EU declaration of support for NATO's actions in Kosovo is one example of this. It is also a reflection of the fact that 'military neutrality' as was practised during the Cold War, is not the same defence policy as that being practised now by Ireland. The global security environment has changed, and Irish defence policy has changed with it. Ireland is willing to be a security actor and use military resources if necessary. Thus, Ireland is non-aligned, but it is not 'militarily neutral'.

[47] 'Europe's Rapid Reaction Force', Editorial, *The Irish Times*, November 21 2000.

Neutrality remains a popular policy in Ireland, and it is a reflection of the success of that policy for the Irish state from its foundation up to the end of the Cold War. It was a practical option for the Irish state to adopt at a time when security was defined in national defence terms. A neutrality policy reflected the realities of Ireland's strategic environment and was considered the best option for Ireland achieve its policy aims. These policy aims included a resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict and a desire to enhance collective security and uphold international law.

Security now has a broader meaning than it did during the Cold War, and Ireland also has other policy aims. Northern Ireland is still a central issue, but the security situation has improved immeasurably since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. In addition, the Northern Ireland conflict has become 'domesticised', in that it is no longer seen as a conflict between the Irish and British states, but rather between the two communities in Northern Ireland. Ironically, this 'domesticisation' has been a result of an 'internationalisation' of the conflict during the 1990s, with the United States playing the role of broker between firstly the Irish and British states, and then between the two communities in Northern Ireland. At the same time, more collective security action, as opposed to collective defence action, is required now in Europe. This coupled with increasing EU socio-economic and political integration means that Ireland now takes EU security into account. This is a reflection of the fact that increasing socio-economic and political interdependence, means increasing security interdependence. Thus, Ireland wants to play its part in making the EU an effective security actor, which benefits both the EU and Ireland. This new security responsibility is why it is more correct to describe Ireland as non-aligned rather then 'militarily neutral'.

However, non-alignment still means that Ireland is not a member of a mutual defence alliance, such as NATO, nor is the Irish government advocating such a mutual defence agreement for the EU. What is interesting to note, is that no political party is advocating membership of such an alliance, nor even a debate on the issue where there is a clear choice between joining such an alliance or not doing so. This is a reflection of the political difficulties with raising the issue of collective defence in Ireland. It is also a reflection of the popularity of Ireland's 'military neutrality' policy, even if Ireland is prepared to use force for collective security actions. This suggests that the popularity of neutrality is more a function of identity, and demonstrates the importance of maintaining national sovereignty for the Irish public. Thus, in defence policy, neutrality is not the central issue, Ireland is non-aligned but not neutral. The more important issue is sovereignty.

Non-alignment does not mean that the Irish government would not respond in the case of an attack on an EU nation which required an EU defensive response. It would still have the choice of both politically and militarily supporting a fellow EU state which had been attacked. In light of the commitment Ireland has made to the EU in the past, and the Irish contribution to the ERRF, it is hard to believe that an Irish government would not at least politically support an EU defensive action. It is also worth considering what Ireland would do if an EU peace-support mission, in which Ireland was participating, became a defensive action meaning an EU state was attacked by one of the warring parties. What would Ireland's position be? Would Ireland decide to pull its troops out of the mission, and deny political support to an EU defensive action? The answer to that question should be a resounding 'No'. This would not be the political action of a 'militarily neutral' state. Nor should it be. An Irish government should support an EU defensive action if the EU was required to respond to an attack. The important point for an Irish government is that it would be an independent decision by Ireland to support such an EU defensive action.

Perhaps the more relevant point is that it is unlikely that the EU would be conducting a defensive action alone, and that defensive actions in the European theatre would be NATO, not solely EU, operations. This would mean that Ireland, while not a member of NATO and not participating militarily in a NATO operation, could still choose to politically support a NATO action as it did during the Kosovo war. On the other hand, if Ireland is committed to the EU and the CESDP, willing to use force for crisis management operations, and even politically support an EU or NATO defensive action, then the Irish government should reconsider why it is not able or prepared to commit to defending the EU.

What should the Irish government's position be on a possible future incorporation of the WEU Article V mutual defence guarantee into the EU Treaty? At present the Irish government firmly opposes such an agreement in the EU Treaty, again reflecting the domestic political difficulties with the issue. However, the 10 EU states who signed up to the WEU Treaty, may also require some sort of accommodation on the issue. One option would be to have the WEU Article V commitment as a protocol to the EU Treaty. The Irish government should have no problem agreeing to the WEU Article V as a protocol to the EU Treaty. It would have every problem with such a mutual defence agreement being included as an article in the EU Treaty. As a protocol the Irish government would not be bound to act. As an article the Irish government would have no choice but to act in defence of the EU.

Even if Ireland did choose to join such a mutual defence agreement in the EU, there would be other issues to consider. NATO is still the primary security and defence organisation in Europe for most EU states, and NATO depends most of all on the support of the United States. Thus, if Ireland wanted to join an EU defence alliance, but not NATO, this would cause difficulties both for Ireland-US relations, and for EU-US relations. If for no other reason, the US may see this as an attempt to gain defence 'autonomy' for the EU from NATO, meaning that the EU would develop an independent collective defence structure, which the non-NATO EU members, such as Ireland, would require. This would not only duplicate the work of NATO, but also compete with NATO to be the primary defence institution in Europe. It could also decouple the EU's security from that of the US, something which NATO is intended to prevent.

The EU is not trying to compete with NATO, and has no desire to decouple EU security from US security, added to the fact that the EU will remain dependent on NATO assets for military operations. This is why the EU has been careful to emphasize that the CESDP is about crisis management not collective defence. Javier Solana, the High Representative for the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), made this clear in a speech in Dublin when he said:

> 'All member States are agreed that the (European) Union is not in the business of creating a European army. That is quite clear. (C)ESDP is not about collective defence. The (European) Union has no ambition to take over or duplicate the work of NATO.'[48]

NATO remains the primary collective defence institution in Europe. Thus, if Ireland were to consider joining an EU mutual defence agreement, then joining NATO would have to be on the agenda as well.

[48] Javier Solana, 'The development of a Common Foreign and Security Policy and the role of the High Representative', Brian Lenihan Memorial Lecture, Institute of European Affairs, Dublin, March 30 2000. Speech available at www.iiea.com/keynotes/20000331-solana.html.

On the other hand, if the Irish government were to put the issue of membership of a mutual defence alliance to the Irish public, it would probably prove easier to convince the Irish public of its merits in an EU context, rather than a NATO one. If for no other reason than the popularity and importance of the EU for Ireland, and the relative lack of benign exposure of NATO in the Irish defence debate. For example, if NATO is mentioned at all in the Irish defence debate, it is often depicted as a US-dominated militaristic organisation, where Ireland would have little say on policy. This might seem surprising considering the closeness of Irish-US relations, but it is as much a reflection of the fact that there is no pro-NATO lobby in Ireland, than some type of 'anti-American-ness'. Added to this, the pro-neutrality (or anti-NATO) lobby is very active even if quite small. Also, the issue of NATO's access to nuclear weapons would cause political problems for any Irish government, in light of consistent Irish government support for the international nuclear disarmament movement. The EU, on the other hand, is generally seen to have been hugely beneficial for Ireland, and Irish people have more than solely a security stake in it. The irony is that the Irish government might have less of a problem with the NATO Treaty Article 5, as it does not assume an automatic defensive response as narrowly or as strictly as the WEU Article V.

As asserted previously, joining NATO or an EU defence alliance is not on the Irish political agenda, and it does not need to be for the time being. However, while one can speculate and never predict correctly, the issue may well arise again by the time of the next EU Treaty summit in 2004, or due to unforeseen circumstances. The main point in the present Irish debate on EU defence is maintaining the political independence to make a decision, whether supporting an EU defensive action, or participating in an EU peace-support mission. The point is no longer neutrality. Ireland has realigned its neutrality by contributing to the ERRF. The central issue for Ireland and EU defence is sovereignty.

II.4 Almost like talking dirty[49] *– the Irish defence policy discourse*

EU policy has become a more central and discussed issue in Irish politics in the last 10-15 years. This is partly a function of the fact that each EU Treaty amendment in 1986, 1991, and 1997 has required a national referendum in Ireland, and the Nice amendment of 2000 may also require such a referendum.[50] This increasing debate on Irish EU policy should also be set in the context of the relative improvement of the Northern Irish situation, the major socio-economic changes which have occurred in Ireland in the last 10 years, and increasing EU economic integration.

To give an indication of how the Irish defence policy debate is changing, in 2000, for the first time in the history of the Irish Republic, a political party called for a referendum on Ireland's neutrality policy so as to move 'beyond neutrality'. The party in question is the main opposition party, Fine Gael.[51] Fine Gael has a chance of getting into government during 2001-2002, as a general election is expected within the year. However before one starts expecting Ireland to join NATO by 2002, it is necessary to look closer at what the political parties actually say.

[49] I have borrowed this headline from the title of an article by Roger MacGinty, 'Almost like Talking Dirty: Irish Security Policy in Post-Cold War Europe', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 6 (1995).

[50] At the time of writing, the Irish government had not yet announced whether or not a referendum will be held to ratify the Nice Treaty. However, it does seem likely that such a referendum will be held, even if not legally required under the Irish constitution, for political reasons. For example see Alison O'Connor, 'There has to be a vote, Ahern told', *The Irish Times*, December 12 2000.

[51] *Fine Gael* is Gaelic for 'Tribe of the Gaels'.

Although Fine Gael have made the most radical recent statements, moving 'beyond neutrality' does not mean all it might at a first glance. Fine Gael has always been proud of its very pro-Europe credentials, and along with the Labour party, in government they produced the significant White Paper on Foreign Policy in 1996.[52] They wish to have an informed debate on the role Ireland should play in the evolving European security architecture, and in the developing EU defence entity. Their position is that Ireland cannot be militarily neutral in collective security terms. Thus, Ireland should advocate the following aims for the CESDP:

- adherence to the fundamental principles of the UN;
- a commitment to the vigorous pursuit of the goal of universal nuclear and biological disarmament and to a solemn undertaking by the European Defence Union acting as an entity not to use nuclear or biological weapons;
- a commitment to mutual defence and support among all EU Member States but based on Article V protocol opt-in arrangements for those states that do not want to make this an automatic provision;
- a commitment, as a priority, to the provision of resources to UN-mandated peace-keeping and peace-making operations and to the 'Petersberg Tasks' of the WEU (humanitarian aid, search and rescue, peace-keeping and peace enforcement, including tasks of combat forces on a case-by-case basis);
- respect for the right of other Member States, if they so wish, to be involved in other military alliances, such as NATO.[53]

Fine Gael is not advocating that Ireland join NATO or a WEU Article V arrangement in the EU, rather keeping it as a protocol to the EU Treaty. Fine Gael maintain that neutrality is not the issue, independence and maintaining the sovereign right for Ireland to make it's own decisions, rather than have them be automatically made for them by an EU Treaty obligation, is the central issue. Thus, Ireland could actually support an EU defensive action as long as Ireland decides to do so. Ireland, in advocating a 'European Defence Union' based on the above principles, may move 'beyond neutrality' but would not lose its sovereignty.

Fianna Fail,[54] both the biggest party and the major government coalition partner, also firmly supports Ireland participating in the ERRF. Indeed, there are no major policy differences between their stance and that of Fine Gael. However, Fianna Fail are more cautious. On the announcement of the Irish contribution to the ERRF, the Fianna Fail Minster of State for Defence, Seamus Brennan, was quick to emphasize that the establishment of a EU military capability was not the creation of a European army. He added:

> 'Ireland will consider participation in EU-led crisis management in every instance on a case-by-case basis; and the sovereign decision on whether to participate in any one mission remains with each member state in accordance with its own national legislation or parliamentary requirements. Ireland, for its part, has made it clear it will only participate in missions authorized by the UN.'[55]

[52] Fine Gael is Ireland's second largest political party. They are also members of the European People's Party (Christian Democrat) group in the European Parliament.

[53] These points were taken from the Fine Gael Foreign Policy Document *Beyond Neutrality – Ireland's Role in European Defence and Security*, available at www.finegael.ie.

[54] *Fianna Fail* is Gaelic for 'Soldiers of Destiny'. Fianna Fail are members of the Union for Europe of the Nations group in the European Parliament.

[55] 'EU states pledge 66,000 troops to rapid force', *The Irish Times*, November 21 2000.

Before they entered government in 1997, Fianna Fail did advocate holding a referendum on Irish accession to NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. When the Fianna Fail/Progressive Democrat government decided that Ireland should join the PfP in 1999, Fianna Fail decided against holding a referendum, as it did not infringe on Irish 'military neutrality', and there was no constitutional need for a referendum. Naturally, Fine Gael and the other parties tried to use this as political currency to show the hypocrisy of Fianna Fail in government. It was in this context that Fine Gael called for a referendum on moving 'beyond neutrality' in February 2000, although time will tell if and when this actually happens. However, it was Fianna Fail (along with the Progressive Democrats) who decided to back EU support for the NATO action in Kosovo, and indeed it was they (along with the Labour Party) who had planned for Irish participation in the peace enforcement operation in Somalia in 1993, thus setting two major new precedents in Irish defence policy.

What may prove a problem for Fianna Fail if they remain in government are some small indications of a certain amount of 'Euroscepticism' in the party. The best example of this was a speech made in Boston by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht[56] and the Islands, Sile de Valera (the granddaughter of the legendary founder-leader of Fianna Fail, Eamon de Valera), who said she favoured a 'more questioning attitude to the European Union….directives and regulations agreed in Brussels can often impinge on our identity, culture and traditions.'.[57] This was met with surprise even in her own party, as it disagrees with official government policy. However, it does represent a growing viewpoint in Ireland, which the declining 'Yes' votes in referenda on EU Treaty changes also indicate. This new Irish 'Euroscepticism' was greeted with surprise due to the traditionally enormous enthusiasm the EU enjoys in Ireland, in particular compared with Britain. De Valera added:

> 'While we must be diligent in protecting our own interests, the responsibility that accompanies our membership demands that we are diligent too in our attention to European Union business, such as the shaping of European Foreign Policy.'[58]

In reality what de Valera is advocating is not that different from Fine Gael's stance. Both want a better public debate on Ireland's role in the EU. Both see Irish sovereignty as the key issue. The difference is one of attitude, in that Fine Gael wants Ireland to be pro-active, not reactive in EU security policy, whereas de Valera and like-minded Fianna Failers are more cautious and more concerned with the protection of Irish interests.

Fianna Fail's coalition partner in government, the Progressive Democrats (PDs),[59] has also seen it's leader, the Tanaiste[60] Mary Harney, question increasing political and economic centralization by Brussels, again in a speech made in the US where she asserted that Ireland was 'spiritually closer to Boston than Berlin.'[61] Despite this claim, the PDs are not yet advocating that Ireland should consummate this 'spiritual' relationship with the US by joining NATO. On the other hand, one of the foremost advocates of Irish participation in the PfP and

[56] A *Gaeltacht* is a Gaelic speaking area in Ireland.
[57] Address by Minister Sile de Valera at Boston College, Massachusetts, US, Monday September 18 2000. Available from the *Irish Times*, on www.ireland.com.
[58] Ibid.
[59] The Progressive Democrats are members of the European Liberal Democrats group in the European Parliament.
[60] The *Tanaiste* is the Deputy Prime Minister.
[61] 'De Valera says directives impinge on our culture', *The Irish Times*, September 19 2000.

the ERRF has been Desmond O'Malley, the founder and former leader of the PDs, who also chairs the Joint Oireachtas[62] Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The Labour Party[63] is generally quite pro-Europe, and Dick Spring, the former party leader and Irish Foreign Minister, received much credit for his handling of the CFSP involvement in the Middle-East during the Irish Presidency of the EU in 1996. Labour is also a particularly strong supporter of the UN's role as a 'force for peace.' It does not believe, however, that the UN can completely fulfil this role if it is not reformed. Among the reforms Labour wants is for the UN Security Council to 'be made more globally representative', while 'the veto power of the 'Big Five' permanent members should be eliminated and substituted with a 'blocking minority' provision to protect the rights of smaller countries.' Other reforms include rebalancing the permanent membership on a regional basis 'with the intention of eliminating the right to permanent membership altogether', and allowing member states recourse to the International Court of Justice to test UN Security Council decisions with the UN Charter.[64] These reform ideas should be borne in mind as Labour has a very good chance of being the minor coalition partner after the next Irish general election, with either Fianna Fail or Fine Gael.

The remaining small parties, the Greens, Sinn Fein, and the Socialist Party have all joined a campaign, organized by the 'Peace and Neutrality Alliance', to enshrine the principle of neutrality in the Irish constitution. This alliance also includes at least one Labour Senator, Brendan Ryan. Another member of the group, Green Party TD[65] John Gormley, claimed that there was widespread public support for neutrality which was not reflected in the leadership stances of the larger parties, and the Labour Party in particular had 'behaved like blatant hypocrites on neutrality.'[66] More recently, on the confirmation of Irish participation in the ERRF, Mr.Gormley commented that:

> 'Our reputation as a neutral country has been severely undermined. This is a terrible blow, not just to Ireland's neutrality but to our well-earned reputation as UN peacekeepers. Just at a time when we win a seat on the UN Security Council, we are also undermining the UN by shifting our troops to a Rapid Reaction Force serving the EU.'[67]

Caoimghin O'Caolain of Sinn Fein has claimed that Fianna Fail and Fine Gael had combined under the banner of NATO and brought the state into the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, and since then the erosion of Irish neutrality had accelerated. He added:

> 'The militarisation of the EU, the creation of an EU army and the final betrayal of Irish neutrality with the complete abandonment of Irish foreign policy is well underway.' [68]

Sinn Fein's position on the dangers associated with an 'EU Army' has quite a lot in common with the Conservatives in Britain, but that particular irony might be lost on both of them.[69]

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[62] The *Oireachtas* is the Irish Parliament.
[63] Labour are members of the European Socialists group in the European Parliament.
[64] For more on this see the Labour Party Policy Document *The United Nations – A Force for Peace?* , May 1999, available at www.labour.ie.
[65] TD stands for *Teachta Dala* which is a member of the Irish parliament.
[66] 'Main Parties asked to back neutrality drive', *The Irish Times*, March 31 2000.
[67] 'Call for Irish referendum', *The Irish Times*, November 21 2000.
[68] 'Sinn Fein criticizes decision to join PfP', Breaking News on *The Irish Times On The Web*, April 9 2000, available at www.ireland.com.

In summary, the major political parties are not only in agreement regarding Ireland's participation in the ERRF but also maintaining Irish sovereignty, the main difference being one of style and attitude. The main opposition to Irish participation comes from the smallest parties on the left (and possibly some members of the larger parties), but despite their size these parties are noted for their activism on this issue. One should not forget that Ireland is entering an election year and Irish participation in the EU force, or 'the neutrality question' if one prefers, could become an important issue in this election. As is often said in the United States 'foreign policy doesn't win elections, but it can lose them.'

II.5 Realigning neutrality?

There is a need for more public debate on what 'neutrality' means for Ireland today. Is it still appropriate to describe Ireland as a 'neutral' country? Are Irish people 'neutral' when it comes to European security issues? The Irish government's desire to participate in the ERRF would suggest that they are not neutral when it comes to security issues, and are prepared to support the use force for crisis management operations, such as in Kosovo. Thus, it is more correct to describe Irish defence policy as *non-aligned* rather than *neutral*. In this sense, Ireland has realigned its neutrality.

The Irish public may not desire to join mutual defence alliances such as NATO, nor want to be party to such an agreement in the EU Treaty. But this is not the same thing as being 'militarily neutral', it simply means that the Ireland will remain non-aligned. On the other hand, in time the Irish public may decide that it does wish to be part of an EU defence alliance, or even NATO depending on circumstances, unlikely as this may seem in the present context. The real issue is to ensure an informed debate is held on Irish defence policy, and whether or not in the longer term Ireland should consider membership of an EU defence alliance and/or NATO. Interestingly, similar debates on redefining neutrality and possible NATO membership are already occurring in two other EU neutral states, Austria and Sweden, and such a public debate should be held in Ireland.[70]

In fact, the most important issue in an EU defence debate from an Irish point of view is sovereignty, not neutrality. The Irish public is not alone in giving priority to this issue. For example, this will most likely be the central issue in the British debate on joining the Euro. In some ways it is an even more acute issue for smaller EU states to avoid the perception of 'being led', rather than participating out of choice and on an equal political footing. One only has to consider the reasons why the Danish public rejected the Euro, with political sovereignty being central to that debate.[71] It has also made it politically impossible for Denmark to contribute troops to the ERRF, even though Denmark is a member of NATO.

[69] It is interesting to note the use of language by both Sinn Fein and the Conservative Party in Britain. An 'EU Army' has more negative connotations and suggests an army under centralized and illegitimate control by a distant Brussels bureaucracy. It is also worth considering how the Conservative Party does not describe the NATO Forces as a 'NATO Army', nor criticise the existence of such forces. An 'EU Force', the term used by the EU governments, does have a more benign connotation, meaning simply a force created, contributed to, and controlled by the member states of the EU, and it is also the correct description.

[70] For example. see Walt Kilroy, 'Austrians torn between neutrality and NATO', *The Irish Times*, April 16 1998, and Christopher Brown-Humes, 'Sweden's prime minister seeks an end to neutrality', *The Financial Times*, November 11 2000.

[71] Several polls conducted after the Danish referendum on the Euro during 2000 have shown that more voters were influenced by political arguments than economic ones, and the No voters focused less on the economy and more on political implications than the Yes voters did; for example see Clare McCarthy, 'Political concerns swayed Danish opinion', *The Financial Times*, February 17 2001.

Regardless of what the Irish government proposes for future Irish defence policy in the EU context, it will have to be reconciled with the issue of sovereignty to win Irish public support.

On the other hand, as things stand now in the EU context, Ireland's non-alignment does not prevent the Irish government from participating in the CESDP, nor from contributing troops to the European Rapid reaction Force (ERRF). In the Irish context, contributing to the ERRF, does not infringe on Ireland's defence policy of 'military neutrality'. Ireland's participation in any military operation will still have to be ratified by the Dail,[72] and must be UN-mandated. Thus, regardless of the debate over Irish neutrality, Ireland is participating in the CESDP. This in itself raises other more immediate issues. Ireland's participation in the CESDP, and planned contributions to the ERRF, create new challenges for the Irish Defence Forces, the departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs, and the Irish government. It is these challenges and opportunities that are addressed in Chapter 3.

[72] The *Dail* is the lower house of the Irish parliament.

CHAPTER THREE: IRELAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE CESDP – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

'A prince is further esteemed when he is a true friend or true enemy, when, that is, he declares himself without reserve in favour of some one or against another. This policy is always more useful than remaining neutral.'
Nicollo Machiavelli

Regardless of the debate over Ireland's neutral status, Ireland is contributing troops to the European Rapid Reaction Force. This creates challenges and opportunities for Ireland. But what can a neutral country like Ireland offer the CESDP? Could Ireland's policy of neutrality prove useful to the EU in a crisis? This is an important question for both Ireland and the EU, at the very least in the short-term, as Ireland is unlikely to change its 'military neutrality' stance in the very near future. Thus, it is worth asking what comparative advantages Ireland as a neutral country has, particularly if a crisis occurs which calls for the use of the ERRF.

III.1 What the EU 'neutrals' offer the CESDP

The same broad question can be asked of all the EU neutrals: what advantages do they offer the CESDP? Firstly, it is important to emphasize advantages because the EU neutrals tend to enjoy at best 'problem' status in many CESDP discussions. For example, one analyst when describing the challenges facing Javier Solana as the High Representative of the CFSP, claimed that the biggest problem would not necessarily be the EU-WEU merger and the situation of the non-EU NATO members, but 'coming from NATO, Mr. Solana is in fact far more likely to have problems in his new role with neutral EU members.'[1]

There is no denying that there are some issues to be addressed as a result of the neutrals' participation in the ERRF, particularly in the realm of EU-NATO relations. The neutrals would not want the ERRF to be a preserve of EU/NATO members, while NATO will probably require some reassurances on the exchange of information with non-NATO members. This also does not mean these issues are as difficult as they may seem. Firstly, the EU neutrals have some experience with NATO as all are members of the NATO Partnership-for-Peace (PfP) programme, and have contributed troops to the NATO-run peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. Secondly, as EU members who wish to contribute, the Petersberg Task operational focus of the CESDP does not cause constitutional crises for any of them. Thirdly, the 'neutrals' are not a caucus within the EU. There is no denying that they share some common interests, both in general foreign policy terms and in their desire to participate in the ERRF. On the other hand, each EU neutral, like every EU state, brings a different set of resources to the CESDP table.

For example, during the Kosovo war Austria was criticised for the fact that NATO could not fly through its airspace. However, many Austrians actually supported NATO's efforts, even if official political support was not possible. This has been cited as a typical example of the problems the EU neutrals can cause for operations. However, another neutral country, Finland, through their President, Marti Ahtisari, played a positive role in the resolution of the conflict. Ahtisari, acting as an EU negotiator, was praised all round for his competence and

[1] David Buchan, 'Solana hopes to 'add value' to EU foreign policy-making', *Financial Times*, September 15 1999.

skill in helping resolve the conflict by getting the Russians 'on board'. His legitimacy and credibility at the negotiating table had as much to do with his 'neutral nationality', as it had to do with his EU mandate, added to the fact that being Finnish he 'knew the Russians'. Clearly, a division of labour whereby the EU NATO members can supply the Rapid Reaction Forces, and the EU neutrals can supply what might be termed the 'Rapidly-Deployable Statesmen' is politically unsustainable. However, the Finnish role in resolving the Kosovo conflict is one example of the positive political role an EU neutral can play in a crisis, in a way that the non-neutral EU members cannot. In addition, Sweden, for its part, has played a leadership role in the development of the EU's civilian crisis management capabilities.[74]

It would be wrong to think that the neutrals would almost be more useful to the EU if they remain neutral, than if they became full members of NATO or joined a possible future EU mutual defence agreement. However, as long as they remain neutral, their neutrality does offer some advantages to the EU from which other security institutions, such as NATO, cannot benefit.

III.2 What the CESDP offers the EU 'neutrals'

What does the CESDP offer the EU neutrals? Firstly, the CESDP does not cause any serious political problems as yet. All the neutrals are contributing to the ERRF. The broad holistic security approach of the EU, including both military and civilian components, offers the EU neutrals new opportunities to take part in decision-making in a EU crisis management policy that fits in with their international security aims. Secondly, this new EU role also offers a much greater pool of resources to the EU neutral decision-makers to perform Petersberg Tasks. Thirdly, the CESDP will also expose their armed forces to increased levels of multinational training, planning, equipment and increased interoperability, in addition to their membership of the NATO-PfP programme.

Moreover, it is also politically expedient to be at the CESDP table. Aside from the appropriateness of the EU's operational focus, and a desire to contribute more to European security, in EU politics it tends to be better to be in than out. This tends to be the case even more so for smaller EU countries, who would prefer to influence policy at the EU table than allow the bigger countries shape the agenda and proceed as an avant-garde group. It would not be in the interests of the EU neutrals to allow the CESDP to remain solely a preserve of the EU/NATO members, and domestic politics also plays a role. For example, as Sweden is not in the Euro yet, the CESDP gives it a chance to play a leadership role in EU, particularly in civilian crisis management, something over which the Swedes have been at the forefront for many years. In this sense their position is not entirely dissimilar to that of Tony Blair in Britain.

The UK's leadership role in the development of an effective CESDP, allows Britain to be a 'leader in Europe', despite the fact that Britain is not yet a member of the Euro. This is important politically, not just at the EU table so as to have greater influence on the future direction of the EU, in contrast with previous British governments; but also domestically to show that the EU is good for Britain. In addition, leading the CESDP is appropriate not least because Britain has comparative advantages in military capabilities, which lend its position some political weight. However, the political costs of Britain's non-membership of the Euro is one of the main reasons Tony Blair wishes to join it. Austria, Finland and Ireland are all

[74] Nicholas George, 'Sweden sees bigger police role in EU force', *The Financial Times*, October 24 2000.

members of the Euro, but again as EU members they would prefer to be involved in the CESDP than not.

These are interesting times in the broader EU political landscape with institutional reform, including a big state verses small state debate, enlargement, increasing economic 'harmony', and now the CESDP. It would put an EU neutral in a difficult position if a non-EU member such as Hungary, Turkey, or Estonia contributed troops to the CESDP, and they, as EU members, did not. While not a determining policy factor, it is a consideration. However, ultimately the CESDP offers the neutrals, and the other EU member states, an opportunity to better contribute towards promoting European peace and security.

III.3 What Ireland offers the CESDP

Ireland's defence forces have over 40 years of UN peacekeeping experience in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Participation in such operations has become a significant part of Irish foreign policy. During the Cold War this UN peacekeeping role allowed Ireland enjoy a 'middle power peacekeeper' status, at a time when collective security was almost redundant. The present official contribution to UN missions is up to 850 troops, approximately 8.5% of the Irish forces.[75] In fact, the Irish forces are exceeding even their own limit at present, with 885 troops on UN missions.[76] According to some analysts, Ireland contributes more of its forces in percentage terms to UN international peacekeeping operations than any other country.[77]

Indeed, international peacekeeping has proven very popular with the Irish Defence Forces. In 1997 it was calculated that 65% of the present Irish Defence Forces had served abroad at some time or another.[78] Thus, one can expect that up to 65% of an Irish unit abroad has previous international peacekeeping experience. Most of this experience has been on UN missions, although Ireland has recently contributed troops to the NATO-led peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. The SFOR and KFOR experiences are a reflection not only of the changing nature of the way UN missions are being carried out, but also of the importance of PfP participation for countries like Ireland who wish to contribute to peacekeeping operations in Europe and meet basic NATO operational standards.

Lt.-Col. Oliver A. K. MacDonald lists five characteristics of the Irish forces which make them effective peacekeepers.[79] These include:

- professionalism – all Irish troops are full-time professionals and must have one year of training before being considered for a peacekeeping posting;
- volunteer status – meaning they are motivated to be there;
- experience – all officers posted to observer missions must have previous peacekeeping experience;

[75] Government of Ireland, White Paper on Defence, February 2000, 4.4.2. The total number of the Irish Defence Forces is 10,500 personnel.
[76] International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2000-2001*, pp.96-97. This number also includes those on duty with the NATO-led forces in Bosnia and Yugoslavia.
[77] 'EU force would require Irish personnel', *The Irish Times*, June 15 2000
[78] Macdonald, Lt.-Col. Oliver A.K., 'Peacekeeping Lessons Learned: An Irish Perspective', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Autumn 1997, p.94.
[79] Ibid., p.94.

- language – as operations are carried out through English this is not a problem;
- acceptability – this is a particular advantage for Irish troops due to an acknowledged impartiality and neutrality.

Added to this extensive peacekeeping experience, the primary domestic military function of the Irish Defence Forces has been civilian power assistance. The role of the Irish Defence Forces with regard to Northern Ireland has been primarily as border patrols on the Northern Irish border against dissident paramilitary groups, domestic *gendarmerie*-type experience that is ideal for peacekeeping operations. Another aspect has been the close cross-border cooperation between the Irish and British armies.[80] Thus, despite the political sensitivities involved, Irish (and British) troops have experience of how to work effectively with another country's armed forces in situations similar to what they experience on international peacekeeping missions.

Another positive factor in Ireland's military contribution to the ERRF is that its forces, unlike the EU/NATO members, are not 'double-hatted' forces, but are specifically available for use by the EU. The EU/NATO members forces are earmarked for both NATO and the EU, or in other words, the same set of troops is being 'double-hatted' for both NATO and the EU. Thus, Ireland should avoid some of the political problems that may arise, due to the earmarking by states of forces already committed to NATO for use by the EU.

Ireland does have forces on UN missions, and it is presumed that due to their experience these troops would be the best ones to send on an EU operation. The Irish government has insisted that Ireland sees military contributions to the EU as a voluntary action, as it already does with its contributions to UN forces. Due to the voluntary nature of UN mission contributions (unlike NATO) it is not a problem for Ireland to remove these troops once the mandate is fulfilled. (The opposite would be true if the mandate were not fulfilled.) Indeed, Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, has recommended a scaling down of the UN force in Lebanon, where Ireland has its biggest UN contingent of 660 troops.[81] The Irish government, in light of its new EU obligations, and the pending fulfilment of the mandate for its main UN contingent in Lebanon, is already planning to reduce its presence in this mission and earmark these troops for the ERRF. However, it is still not clear how much longer Irish troops will remain in Lebanon, although Ireland's commitment in Lebanon is expected to have ended by the beginning of 2003, the date set for the achievement of the ERRF.

Some critics see the Irish contribution to the ERRF as an indication of Ireland's decreasing commitment to the UN in favour of the EU. However, as the Irish government will not participate in EU operations without a UN mandate, and wishes to be involved in EU crisis management operations that are UN mandated, active involvement in the ERRF is a more effective way to meet UN obligations, due to the changing operational nature of UN peacekeeping missions. In theory, because the EU does not have a self-imposed geographical limit to its actions, those Irish troops may well find themselves back again in the Lebanon as part of an EU force under a UN mandate, doing much the same as they were doing before.

[80] For more on Ireland-UK cross-border security cooperation see Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland – The Irish State and Its Enemies Since 1922*, (Oxford 1999), pp. 329-339.
[81] 'Annan to scale down UN force in Lebanon', *Irish Times*, January 25 2001.

Ireland's civilian security contribution has included sending Gardai Siochana[82] to UN international peacekeeping operations since 1989. At the European level, Ireland's Justice Ministry has been a full participant in the Trevi Group, which has included European-wide cooperation in both intelligence and counter-operations against terrorism, drugs, and trans-national crime. In addition, since World War II the Gardai Suiochana have extensive experience of cross-border cooperation with the British security forces and both the FBI and the CIA.[83] Irish Non Governmental Organizations such as Gorta, Trocaire, and Goal, have a particularly high public profile in Ireland, and are involved in development projects worldwide, most notably in Africa.[84] Moreover, the Irish government Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme has been expanded significantly in recent years to reach the Irish government commitment of 0.45% of GNP by 2002, in order to make steady progress towards the UN goal of 0.7% of GNP by 2007.[85]

III.4 The challenges for the Irish Defence Forces

The Irish Defence Forces still lack some key military capabilities, such as transport or 'lift' and armoured mobility capabilities, to more effectively contribute to Petersberg Task operations. This is recognized by both the Irish forces and the government, and present procurement planning is designed to rectify these deficiencies so as to be better prepared to contribute to the ERRF by the time of its launch in 2003. For example, the light-arms infantry battalion that will be provided for the EU will have full armoured personnel transport protection with the acquisition of 40 Mowag Piranha armoured personnel carriers (APCs), which will be delivered by 2002.[86] There are also indications that the Irish government may take up the contract option to acquire another 40 APCs from Mowag.[87] Approximately 80 'light tactical infantry' or Humvee-type vehicles will also be acquired;[88] while medium-airlift capability is also being catered for, with the order of two transport helicopters.[89] A decision has yet to be made on the manufacturer, but due to the EU 'interoperability' requirements, it will almost definitely be a European or US made aircraft, as opposed to a Russian or Ukrainian made aircraft. Three search and rescue helicopters will also be bought, and the contract will go to one of the British-Italian EH101 Merlin, the French-German-Dutch Cougar, or the US Sikorsky S-92 Helibus.[90]

These equipment procurements account for approximately IEP£250 million.[91] Considering that Ireland's defence budget for 2000 was IEP£601 million, and that equipment procurement

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[82] *Gardai Siochana* is Gaelic for 'Guardians of the Peace', and is the official title of the Irish Police Force (unarmed).

[83] For more on the international security contribution and cooperation of the Irish Police Force see Ray Murphy, 'Ireland, the United Nations and Peacekeeping Operations', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.5 No.1, Spring 1998, p.22, & Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland – The Irish State and Its Enemies Since 1922*, (Oxford, 1999), pp. 225-237, 277-303, & 329-339.

[84] *Gorta* is Gaelic for 'Famine', and *Trocaire* is Gaelic for 'Mercy'.

[85] Government of Ireland, Department of Foreign Affairs, Development Cooperation Division, *Ireland Aid*, available at www.irlgov.ie/iveagh/irishaid/intro.asp.

[86] Government of Ireland, Department of Defence, Press Release, *First APCs Ready*, January 10 2001, available at www.irlgov.ie/defence/press/jnl96.htm.

[87] Jim Cusack, 'Army prepares for £250m upgrading', *The Irish Times*, January 18 2001.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Government of Ireland, Department of Defence, Press Release, *Smith Gives Go Ahead For New Helicopters For The Air Corps*, July 12 2000, available at www.irlgov.ie/defence/press/jn091.htm.

[90] 'Top six helicopter firms bid for $100m defence contract', *Irish Independent*, October 31 2000.

[91] Jim Cusack, 'Army prepares for $250m upgrading', *The Irish Times*, January 18 2001.

accounted for 6.6% of the 2000 defence budget, this new investment is a major increase in equipment procurement bearing in mind that the defence budget as a whole is not expected to increase.[92] On the Irish defence budget, the Irish government White Paper on Defence of 2000 stated that:

> 'Defence in Ireland is conducted within a modest level of resources. To increase this overall level would involve a departure in the approach to defence in this country and would necessarily involve a shift in public resources from other areas to defence. However, nothing has emerged in the course of this process to suggest that there is any need for substantial change in the overall level of resource allocation.'[93]

Moreover, the justification for this major new investment in equipment procurement is directly linked to preparations for participation in the ERRF.[94]

On the training and planning level, for which EU states must match NATO standards, due to their dependency on NATO assets, Ireland is benefiting from its membership of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. Training for low-intensity *peacekeeping* operations is not seen to be a problem. However, more time for training will be required for the Irish Defence Forces to reach the level whereby they can seamlessly fit a unit into a multinational high-intensity *peace-enforcement* force.[95]

Thus, there are two choices facing the Irish Defence Forces and its political masters:

- the Irish Defence Forces can seek to specialize in the lower end of 'Petersberg Tasks' – primarily peacekeeping operations similar in nature to the UN missions Ireland has been carrying out, leaving the higher end tasks to the bigger countries such as Britain, France, and Germany; or
- Ireland should seek to ensure it is a participant in the front line of a high intensity peace enforcement operation alongside British, French and German troops, but this will require more investment and preparation time.

The dilemma is similar to that dividing the EU-NATO member states and the US at present, regarding war fighting responsibilities and/or peace-support responsibilities. On the one hand, it may prove more sensible to specialize in lower end tasks, at least in the short term, but this may bring political costs on the EU level in the running of military operations, and not as many gains for the Irish Defence Forces. On the other hand if Ireland aims to be 'in the front line all the time', which benefits the Irish Defence Forces more, along with the political gains, this will require the Irish government to spend more on defence. Therefore, a key issue will be the static defence budget.

The static defence budget, whilst not an exclusively Irish problem, like its European partners, the fear amongst Irish military leaders is that the EU member states cannot achieve all they wish to do at present, even at the lower end of the Petersberg Tasks, unless more money is

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[92] For 2000 Irish defence budget figures see IISS, *Military Balance 2000-2001*, p.41, p. 96.
[93] Government of Ireland, White Paper on Defence, February 2000, 1.3.3.
[94] The fleet of APCs is seen as necessary for Ireland to meet its commitment of having a light arms infantry battalion ready for service in the ERRF in 2003. For example see Jim Cusack, 'Army prepares for £250m upgrading', *The Irish Times*, January 18 2001.
[95] Lt.-Gen. Gerry McMahon (Former Chief of Staff), 'Debate needed on role in EU defence', *The Irish Times*, June 21 2000.

spent on defence. This remains a significant challenge, particularly as relations between the Department of Defence and the Department of Finance are not always strong.[96] Ireland's defence budget in 1999 was only 0.9% of GDP,[97] half of the EU average, but the Department of Finance has made it clear that not only will defence spending not increase, rather cuts in personnel and the sale of military barracks would have to fund new equipment needs. One analyst described the influence of the Minister for Finance over the White Paper on Defence of 2000 in the following terms:

> '(The Minister for Finance) Charlie McCreevy's fingerprints were all over the White Paper. The Department of Finance had demanded, and received a serious amount of military flesh. It had managed to 'junk' government policy of 1996, which originally decided to cut the Defence Forces from 13,000 to 11,500. The new target set by Mr. McCreevy was a force of 8,500, with a single brigade structure and the possible amalgamation of the Air Corps and Naval Service into a coastguard service.'[98]

Naturally, the Irish Defence Forces were not happy about this proposal, and a compromise was reached on personnel levels, with a figure of 10,500 now agreed. However, Irish defence spending may have to increase if the Irish government is to maintain troop levels at the present level of 10,500, and continue to acquire new equipment that may be needed. Further cuts in personnel could cause force over-stretch depending on operational commitments. In addition, further personnel cuts should not be expected to assist in making funds available for new equipment, nor for maintaining acquired equipment. With a booming economy and a budget surplus, Ireland can no longer make the claim that it simply does not have the money. Equally, increasing defence spending is not guaranteed to be politically popular.

The other significant problem which the Irish Defence Forces confront, and again share with other Europeans, is force over-stretch. As indicated earlier, Ireland is to provide a battalion of 750 troops, a 'special services' squadron of 40 troops from the Irish Army Rangers wing, and a permanent liaison corps of about 60 officers; in total 850 personnel.[99] To put this into context this is approximately 8.5% of the Irish forces. The Irish Defence Forces are undertaking a serious commitment to the ERRF, especially when one considers that while one battalion is on a mission, another must be in training, and another must be 'resting' in reserve. Thus, Ireland will be 'earmarking' 2,550 personnel at any one time for the ERRF, which is approximately 25% of a force of 10,500. It seems that Ireland can afford to give such a commitment due to the present benign external and internal security environment, and thus on paper it should be achievable.

However, there are some considerations. Ireland's border commitments on the Northern Irish border are about 1000 troops in seven military posts. One suggestion by the former Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Gerry McMahon, has been to close the seven border posts, because 'if not, then the troops are required for wasteful housekeeping duties.'[100] However, there would be problems if the situation in Northern Ireland, and/or in Lebanon were to deteriorate.

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[96] 'Smith and McCreevy may be split over Defence cuts', *The Irish Times*, February 21 2000.
[97] International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2000-2001*, p.297.
[98] Denis Coughlan, 'Smith ducks and weaves presenting defence truce', *The Irish Times*, March 1 2000.
[99] Government of Ireland, Department of Defence, *Speaking points for Minister for Defence*, delivered by Minister of State, Mr Seamus Brennan, Capabilities Commitment Conference, Brussels, November 20 2000. Available at www.irlgov.ie/defence/speech/intranet.htm.
[100] Lt.-Gen. Gerry McMahon (Former Chief of Staff), 'Debate needed on role in EU defence', *The Irish Times*, June 21 2000.

For one thing the British Ministry of Defence would likely require security guarantees from the Irish Department of Defence to continue monitoring dissident paramilitary groups operating from the Republic of Ireland, if the British Army reduces its presence in South Armagh. Thus, it may not prove to be possible to reduce the Irish Defence Forces' border presence. In fact, the Irish media has recently reported that the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, is prepared to increase the number of Irish security forces on the Northern Irish border as part of any agreement on further British demilitarisation in Northern Ireland. [101]

In addition, recent reports from the Lebanon of the Israeli reprisal bombing against Hizbollah positions,[102] where Ireland is fulfilling its UN mission, have indicated that a deterioration of the situation there is still possible. Thus, the expectation that the Irish government would finish its UN mandate in the Lebanon soon, may prove to be too optimistic.

At present the Irish military is trying to balance the books between its border duties, UN missions, and being on standby for the ERRF. All of this on top of the 10% cut in the Defence Forces announced in the 2000 White Paper, which exerts its own re-organizational demands. While it is also understood that if troops are suddenly needed at home, the country in question can withdraw their forces from an EU operation immediately, as is the case with UN missions, further cuts in the Irish Defence Forces must be guarded against, because of the danger of reaching the operational limit too quickly if things go very wrong. Also, as is often the case in a benign economic situation, such as in the US and Ireland at present, the Irish Army, like its American counterparts, is encountering difficulties in attracting and retaining its forces.[103]

III.5 Ireland and the UN Security Council

As of January 1st 2001, Ireland is a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. This was greeted with enthusiasm in Ireland, as demonstrated by the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, who claimed that it 'illustrates the high regard in which Ireland's contribution to the work of the UN is held throughout the world'. [104] He added that Ireland's aim would be to try to make the UN Security Council more effective and representative. Some critics also asked why people in Ireland had never taken notice of the non-permanent members of the UN security council before, implying that it is not really that significant.[105] Regardless, what is significant is the high value Ireland gives the UN in its pursuit of security. Secondly it will prove valuable politically, and perhaps very significant depending on events.

What can Ireland do as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council that it could not do as a non-member? Firstly Ireland has a vote on the council, which is a direct influence on the council's decisions, although it does not have a veto which is reserved for the permanent members.[106] Secondly, it implies a CFSP obligation. The EU Treaty states:

> 'Member States shall coordinate their action in international organizations and at international conferences. They shall uphold the common positions in such fora. In

[101] Frank Millar, 'Ahern prepared to send extra security to Border', *Irish Times*, December 15 2000.
[102] Robert Fisk, 'Conflict widens with reprisal bombardment of southern Lebanon', *The Independent (London)*, November 27 2000.
[103] Jim Cusack, 'Record numbers leave army for better-paid jobs', *The Irish Times*, August 8 2000.
[104] 'Ahern promises reform role for Ireland at UN', *The Irish Times*, October 11 2000.
[105] Brendan O'Connor, 'UN Seat merely shadow boxing', *Sunday Independent*, October 15 2000.
[106] Charter of the United Nations, Article 27. The permanent members are China, France, Russia, UK, US.

> international organizations and at international conferences where not all the Member States participate, those which do shall take part shall uphold the common position.' [107]

Moreover, on the role of member states on the UN Security Council, the Treaty adds:

> 'Member States which are also members of the United Nations Security Council will concert and keep the other Member States fully informed. Member States which are permanent members of the Security Council will, in the execution of their functions, ensure the defence of the positions and the interests of the Union, without prejudice to their responsibilities under the provisions of the United Nations Charter.'[108]

In other words, this could be interpreted as meaning that Ireland, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, has in some ways more of an obligation to uphold and defend the positions and the interests of the EU than France or Britain. As permanent members France and Britain have recourse to their UN Charter responsibilities, which must not be 'prejudiced' by the EU position. This could cause political problems depending on events. The Presidency of the EU Council officially represents the CFSP at international fora, including the UN Security Council even if they do not have a vote (any member state can attend even if they do not have a vote).

At the beginning of Ireland's membership in 2001, Sweden will hold the EU presidency, so there shall be an added 'neutral' flavour to CFSP representation on the UN Security Council, in addition to the EU nuclear powers, France and Britain. One additional factor is if the Labour party was to enter the Irish government during Ireland's time on the UN Security Council. It would be interesting to see how far their proposals regarding reform of the Security Council would go, and in particular the reception they would receive from the EU permanent members, Britain and France, as well as Germany and Italy who are also seeking permanent seats in the near future.

The last time Ireland was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council was between 1981-1983, and it is an interesting case study for the interaction of UN Security Council membership and EU requirements. It also shows how events can greatly increase the political responsibilities involved in participation in such fora. Indeed, this was a very challenging period for Irish foreign policy. The 're-heating' of the Cold War had re-politicised Irish neutrality, and Anglo-Irish relations were at a very low ebb due mainly to Mrs Thatcher's rejection of demands for 'special category' political status from hunger-striking IRA prisoners. In addition, Ireland was experiencing a particularly delicate domestic political situation with three different general elections during 1981-1982. Thus, the Falklands crisis broke out at a most inconvenient political time from an Irish point of view.

The UK asked for EEC support for economic sanctions against Argentina, and the Irish (Fianna Fail) government at first backed the EEC sanctions. Ireland had earlier supported a UN Security Council resolution denouncing the Argentine invasion and demanding a cessation of hostilities. However, the Fianna Fail minority government came under pressure to distance itself politically from such support for EEC sanctions, especially from Fianna Fail's more nationalist members.[109] Intensifying conflict increased the pressure and shortly after

[107] The Treaty on European Union, Article 19.
[108] Ibid., Article 19.
[109] One of the first Fianna Fail members who declared her opposition to the EC sanctions was the afore-mentioned 'Eurosceptic' Sile de Valera, who was an MEP at the time.

reports of the sinking of the Argentine ship, the *General Belgrano*, the Irish government called for a cessation of hostilities, an end to EEC sanctions, and an immediate meeting of the UN Security Council.

At the EEC level the Irish declaration created some confusion, and while some other EEC member-states had their reservations about the UK's position, such as Italy, the Irish move put them under the spotlight to show their support for the UK. In the UN the Irish call for a UN Security Council meeting caused some irritation because the UN Secretary-General had been conducting negotiations with both sides, whereas an immediate meeting would force them back to their original positions. The Irish government was forced to revise the situation and agreed not to drop the EEC sanctions unless all EEC members agreed, while reviewing the request for an immediate meeting of the UN Security Council because of the difficulties it caused for the UN Secretary-General's negotiations with the belligerents. The opposition parties, Fine Gael and Labour, roundly criticized the Fianna Fail government for its handling of the affair and for claiming that it was acting in accordance with Ireland's independent neutrality policy when the opposition parties felt the government was more playing to the domestic gallery.

As Ben Tonra rightly points out, the Falklands incident of 1982 underlines the importance of EEC solidarity ahead of Irish unilateralism or military neutrality, as Ireland did ultimately support the EEC sanctions.[110] This support in turn could be interpreted as supporting a belligerent action and thus not the act of a militarily neutral country; an indication of the flexibility of Irish neutrality? This support for EEC sanctions also occurred despite the very low ebb in Anglo-Irish relations and the domestic pressure the Irish government was facing to withhold such support. Such a situation would be handled differently now by an Irish (or any other EU member-state) government in light of the upholding of the common EU interest required by the EU Treaty, which did not apply in 1982. However, the Falklands crisis does show how events can put any non-permanent UN Security Council and EU member in an awkward position very quickly. While a similar fragile Irish domestic situation and deterioration in Anglo-Irish relations is not expected during Ireland's present tenure on the UN Security Council, the 1982 experience reaffirms Ireland's determination to support EU actions.

III.6 The challenges for the Irish government

The Irish government is fully committed to the aims of the CESDP, and is serious in its preparations for the ERRF. Ireland's participation in the CESDP also creates many new defence policy challenges for the Irish government. Many re-organizational demands have been made of the Irish Defence Forces, and this will take time to ensure that Irish troops can contribute fully to the ERRF by 2003. A reconsideration of the number of troops in the Irish Defence Forces may be required if continued demands are made on Irish troops both on the Northern Irish border, and for UN missions. The defence budget may need to be increased, depending on increasing equipment requirements, and selling military property or cutting troop levels will not continue to compensate for this. The Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Defence may also require more resources with the increasing

[110]For more discussion of Ireland, the EC, and the Falklands conflict, see Ben Tonra, 'The Internal Dissenter (II): Ireland', in Christopher Hill & Stelios Stavridis (editors), *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy – West European Reactions to the Falklands Conflict*, (Oxford, 1996).

responsibility, and thus increasing demand on departmental resources, to continue participating effectively in the CESDP.

In addition, the Irish government (regardless of party) will have to ensure that there is no perceived 'democratic deficit' concerning Irish troop contributions to the ERRF, particularly when these troops are actually deployed. The government has a responsibility to ensure that Irish participation in the ERRF has clear public backing. In the future an Irish government may also have to consider the possibility of Ireland joining an EU mutual defence agreement and/or NATO, and if this were the government's intention, this would require an extensive political campaign to win widespread public support for such a move.

On the other hand, the Irish government is right to see the CESDP as an opportunity as well as a challenge. It is an opportunity for Ireland to play a bigger role in promoting European peace and security. It is also an opportunity for Ireland to participate in an EU security and defence policy the aims of which match those of official Irish international security policy, namely the upholding of international law and supporting UN, or UN-mandated, peace-support missions. The Irish government is right to play its part in the construction of an effective EU crisis management policy, to make the EU a more effective collective security actor.

CONCLUSION

Irish defence policy has changed since the end of the Cold War. This is a reflection of the changing global and European security environment, which now requires crisis management military and civilian responses to lower-scale escalations, rather than a collective defence military response to a major regional conflict. A changing Irish defence policy is also a reflection of the changing roles of the UN, the EU, and NATO, as well as a much improved on-island security environment in Ireland. The UN is still the primary international security institution for Ireland, but the types of peace-support missions, and the nature in which they are organised, has changed. Ireland is now prepared to undertake new types of peace-support missions, including peace-enforcement missions, and under the aegis of institutions other than the UN, such as NATO and now the EU, albeit with a UN mandate. Simultaneously, the EU has aspired to be a more effective security actor with the development of the CESDP, which focuses on crisis management rather than collective defence. Thus, Ireland now has a new collective security role in the EU context as a participant in the CESDP.

Ireland is still officially 'militarily neutral', but neutrality is no longer the correct definition of Irish defence policy. Irish governments have realigned Irish neutrality during the 1990s, and the Irish contribution of troops to the ERRF is a reflection of this. Ireland is now a non-aligned state, but it is not a neutral state, as it is prepared to use military force for collective security actions, including peace-enforcement if necessary. However, the Irish government is still not prepared to join a mutual defence alliance, such as NATO, nor is any Irish political party advocating such a change in Irish defence policy; but this is more a function of the political significance of maintaining national sovereignty for defence policy decisions than maintaining neutrality. It is also a reflection of the need for a more open debate on neutrality's role in Irish defence policy, as well as Ireland's future role in EU defence policy.

On the other hand, Irish defence policy is continuing to change due to participation in the CESDP and the contributions to the ERRF. It has seen more resources being directed towards the procurement of new military equipment, and will continue to see new demands be made of the Irish Defence Forces in terms of training, and interoperability requirements with other EU member-state forces, for the effective implementation and completion of missions. These demands have come at a time when Ireland is still contributing to UN peacekeeping missions, and may have to increase its presence on the Northern Irish border. Thus, the Irish government must ensure that the Irish Defence Forces, and the departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs continue to have the resources required to effectively complete their missions and policy briefs.

Finally, these are interesting times for Irish defence policy. The CESDP offers Ireland a new international security decision-making role, with greater resources to implement decisions, and a broad holistic approach to international security issues, which compliments Irish foreign policy goals. The CESDP ultimately offers Ireland an opportunity to contribute much more, along with the other EU member-states, towards promoting European peace and security.