

DEFENDING

IRISH

NEUTRALITY

A SÍNN FÉIN POSITION PAPER



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Defending Irish Neutrality

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POSITION
PAPER



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The principle of neutrality

The right to determine one's own relationship with other countries and to pursue an independent foreign policy is a key component of the principles of national self-determination and sovereignty.

Sinn Féin believes that the principle of neutrality is a fundamental republican principle and was one of the cornerstones of foundation of the Irish Republic.

Over 200 years ago, as far back as 1790 the Father of Irish Republicanism Theobald Wolfe Tone published a pamphlet, *The Spanish War*, which set out the role for Ireland was to oppose being dragged into a war between the English and the Spanish. Over a 100 years later in 1914 the republican socialist leader and the Commandant of the Army of the Irish Republic in 1916 James Connolly was president of the Irish Neutrality Leagues at the outset of the First World War. The famous banner proclaimed “We serve neither King nor Kaiser” in full understanding of the then imperialist war and is a declaration with the same relevance as the world arms itself for future imperialist/resource wars.

Neutrality has earned the Irish state significant good-will abroad and is essential to our ongoing positive relationships with other countries. Furthermore, as a state with extensive experience of peace-keeping and conflict resolution, Sinn Féin believes that we as a people are in a uniquely strong position to advance a policy of positive neutrality.



Erosion of Neutrality by successive Irish governments

Successive Irish governments have allowed the principle of Irish neutrality to be eroded. In 1997, the Fianna Fáil government signed the state up to NATO's Partnership for Peace despite a pre-election pledge to call a referendum on the issue. The same government broadened the mandate for deployment of Irish soldiers to an international mission to include deployment with non UN forces.

Since 2002, Shannon Airport has been used to effectively become a forward military base for the US military. It is estimated that, in that time, that over 3,000,000 US soldiers have passed through Shannon Airport. In 2017, the Irish government approved 334 applications for military flights to land in Shannon Airport under exemptions provided for in current legislation. Only six applications were refused. In 2018 alone, the Irish defence forces were deployed to assist with military landings at the airport on 82 occasions.

Recently, in a discussion document on the future of EU defence policy, Fine Gael's four MEPs dropped completely the party's pretence of supporting neutrality and effectively called for its abandonment. This should be a huge wakeup call that we must now act to defend and reinforce Ireland's neutral position.

The escalation of involvement with EU military structures, approving EU Military Headquarters (March 6 2017), agreeing under PESCO for the formation of the European Medical Command (12/12/2017) and recently (February 2019) signing up to EU and NATO Status of Forces Agreements clearly shows that this government is prepared to sacrifice our neutrality and independent foreign policy at the altar of European integration unless they are stopped.

Gradual movement towards full EU army and full integration into EU military apparatus is accelerating pace. The abandonment of Ireland's neutrality is becoming more and more blatant

"Members of the Irish Defence Forces have been participating in European Defence Agency (EDA) projects since 2005.... My view is that peacekeeping and the EDA are interlinked and have interoperability"

Minister for Defence, Paul Kehoe, speaking at the Oireachtas Committee for Foreign Affairs and Trade, February 2019



in recent years, as is evidenced by the failure of 6 of Ireland's MEPs to vote against an EU report which called for the EU and NATO to act in a "truly co-ordinated manner" in the EU Parliament in June 2018; the four Fine Gael MEPS abstained and another four Irish MEPs voted in favour - Independent MEPs Marion Harkin and Nessa Childers, the DUP's Diane Dodds and the Ulster Unionist's Jim Nicholson.

Result was:- **For 441** **Against 182** **Abstaining 57**

Attack in France led to them declaring war abroad and call for Irish troops to be used. The Taoiseach at the time, Enda Kenny offered to send Irish troops to Mali to release French troops.



“By giving birth to the European Defence Union we have started to build what I like to call the ‘Army of the Europeans’ The European Defence Fund provides much incentive for that.”

German Minister for Defence Ursula von der Leven (17 March 2019)

Increased European Militarisation

The Nice and Lisbon treaties, initially rejected by the Irish people, further transferred much political, economic and military power away from Member states and centralised it with EU bodies such as the European Commission and the Council of Ministers.

This has coincided with an increased EU spend on military and evidence shows that this continues to increase across the EU. There are growing demands that each EU member state must increase the proportion of military spending from the current average of 1.3% to at least 2% of GDP, in line with current NATO spending targets. In Ireland’s case this would represent a five-fold increase in defence spending for Ireland, from 0.4%, despite obvious and critical budgetary demands in areas such as housing and health.

Fine Gael MEPs have supported these calls for more military spending. In December 2017 the Fine Gael MEPs voted in favour of an EU wide commitment to spending 2% of GDP on defence.

Current proposals under the EU’s budget process aim to create a defence fund of €13 billion, while at the same time it is proposed to cut Agricultural funding by 15% and Rural Development spending by 10%. The ironically named “European Peace Facility” further proposes a €10.5 billion fund under the EU budget to supply states, mainly in Africa, with military support.

The EU has further launched the European Defence Industrial Development Programme, until 2020, after which it will be incorporated into the Defence Heading in the EU Budget. This €500 million fund supports the arms industry and covers the costs of developing new weapons systems. Under this scheme, private arms companies can have up to 100% of development costs and 20% of prototyping costs covered.

This is demonstrated by the Irish Defence Minister, Paul Kehoe, in reply to Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD, stated that “until 2020 the European Commission will allocate €290 million to the European Defence Fund, €90 million to the research window and €500 million to the capability under the European defence industrial development programme, which was exclusively resourced from



redeployment under subheading 1a of the EU Multi-annual Financial framework 2014-2020. After 2020, the European Defence Fund will be finalised from the EU budget. The level of funding proposed is 13 billion, which will depend on the outcome of negotiations on the multiannual financial framework 2021-27.”

EU funding for research and development and measures to encourage and support business is now being plundered for defence spending. The European Defence Agency is actively targeting these funding streams and is actively providing information and support to military companies in order to secure funding under these streams for projects. Some companies have been successful in securing this funding and it can be anticipated that more will follow as the practice becomes more familiar.

This agenda is being supported by the EU Commission, which says it will exploit EU instruments, including EU funding, and the full potential of the Treaties, towards building a Defence Union. Much of this agenda is being pushed by the ‘Group of Personalities’ which is made up of 16 members, nine of whom are linked to companies involved in the arms industry – six of those companies are in receipt of EU aid under the first Defence Fund spend on military projects.



Arms Trade

The European Union collectively is currently the world's second largest arms exporter after the USA, with European arms exports worth over €191 billion in 2016. Controversial destinations such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia were amongst the top five destinations for EU arms in 2016. European arms companies such as Airbus, BAE, Leonardo and Thales are among the ten largest arms companies in the world.

Research by the Delas Institute has shown that EU arms companies consistently export weapons to countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, and Israel, where they are used in conflicts or to oppress civilians. Exports to countries with incompatible conditions (under the terms of the EU common position on arms exports) account for nearly 30% of all EU arms exports.

While Ireland has a relatively limited arms trade industry, amongst the known recipients of Irish arms to date are countries actively involved in ongoing conflict such as Israel, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Almost €2 million worth of arms exports from Ireland to Turkey were approved in 2016 and Turkey was the second largest customer for Irish arms companies in 2017. Turkey has used German tanks in its invasion of Kurdish territories in northern Syria. It is almost certain that weapon firing and small arms equipment produced in Ireland were also used in this illegal invasion and in other attacks on Kurdish communities in Turkey.

Fine Gael MEPs have consistently supported policies which give public money to arms companies. The discussion paper on defence policy, published by the Fine Gael MEPs, calls for further development of the Irish arms industry, a complete u-turn on their previous position that EU Social Funds or other grant aid should not be used to fund the arms trade. The government has further failed to exclude military products from the EU's emerging space strategy. In addition, Ireland is one of a small number of member states that does not record data on actual arms exports, which neither Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil nor Labour addressed during their time in office.

**“Getting ready to leave for Europe. First meeting —
NATO. The U.S. is spending many times more than any
other country in order to protect them.”**

**“NATO countries must pay MORE, the United States
must pay LESS. Very Unfair!”**

Tweets from US President, Donald Trump,
in advance of NATO Summit, July 2018



“We have to look at the vision of one day creating a real, true European army”

Angela Merkel, German Chancellor addressing the European Parliament in Strasbourg, November 2019

PESCO

Possibly the most alarming action taken against neutrality by any Irish government, is the signing up to PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation), the EU's military alliance. Described as the “sleeping beauty” of the Lisbon Treaty by the EU Commission’s President Jean-Claude Juncker, it lays the foundation for a full security and defence union. He is championing the establishment of a “fully fledged Defence Union” by 2025. Several high profile European leaders, including Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel, have openly endorsed the idea of an EU army and it is clear that they saw PESCO as a further step towards that vision being realised within Juncker’s 2025 timeframe.

This growing militarisation of the EU was the primary reason for the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty initially by the Irish people.

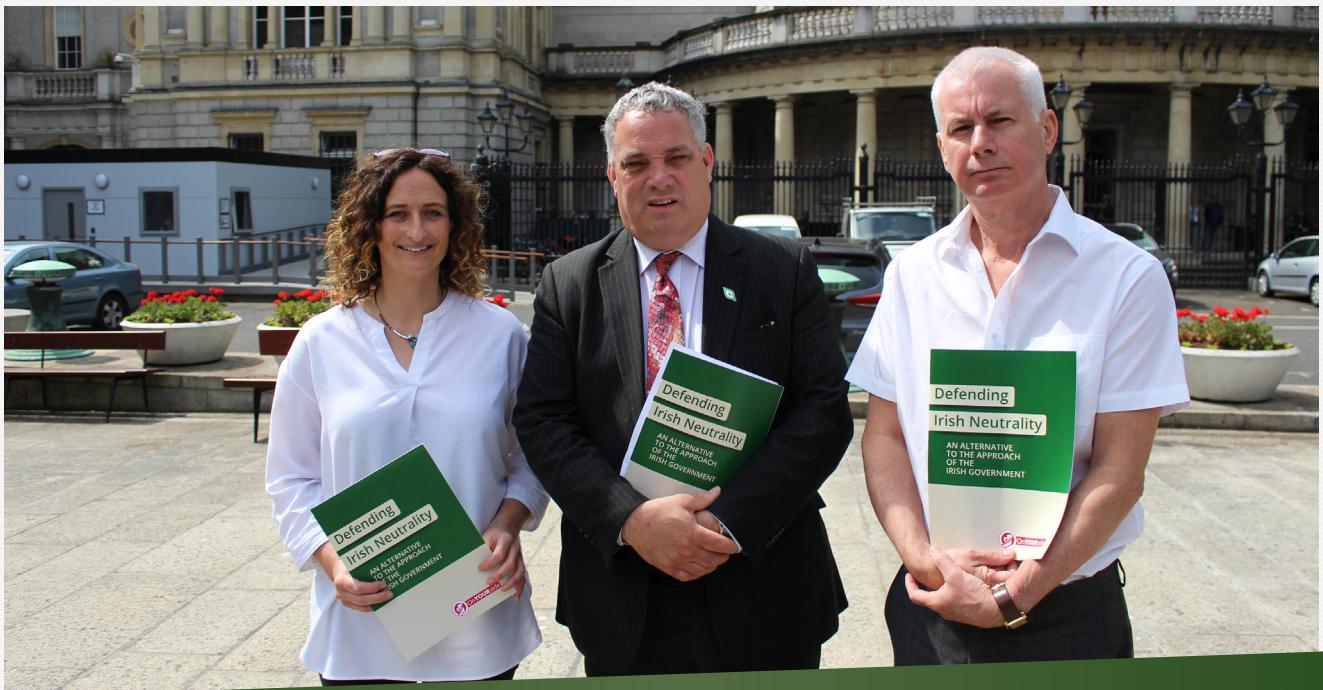
The then Foreign Affairs Minister, Micheál Martin, sold the Irish people a pup by fudging the issue of neutrality when his Fianna Fáil government forced the Irish people to vote for a second time on the Lisbon Treaty.

By signing up to PESCO after a cursory Dáil debate and vote, this government has further betrayed the Irish people with the active collusion and collaboration of the Fianna Fáil party. Signing up to PESCO was completely unnecessary as it was assumed by other EU states that the Irish state would not participate in it or its programmes as a result of our stated neutrality. There was no expectation or requirement for Ireland to join.

By participating in PESCO the Irish government has committed the Irish people to increasing defence spending and implementing a defence policy which is fully aligned with NATO’s strategic aims. It commits us to funding military projects and missions irrespective of Irish participation and by providing troops for deployment or back-up would see this state contributing fully to the European military alliance. It also commits Ireland to having our Defence spend open to annual critique by the EU for compliance with its military spend targets.

The CARD (Coordinated annual review of Defence) system, which the government approved in 2018, makes the Irish government’s Defence spending plans subject to other EU countries’ review. They could, on a par with the Oireachtas, effectively scrutinise and dictate as to whether or not





"We will not protect the Europeans unless we decide to have a true European army"

French President, Emmanuel Macron speaking at Verdun,
the scene of France's most bloody battle, November 2018

the Irish government's annual Defence spending plans is reaching the EU targets for enhancing its military capability. Sovereignty eroded once more.

The EU has consistently pointed out that PESCO is fully compatible with and will complement NATO – in order for projects to be funded via PESCO there must be clear coherence with NATO.

It is clear that this project is not intended to make Europe safer; it is intended to make it easier for EU troops to be deployed on missions outside of Europe and to further consolidate EU states' militaries and national military decision-making into a singular EU military construct – Jean Claude Juncker's EU army.

"By 2025 we need a fully-fledged European Defence Union. We need it. And NATO wants it."

European Commission President, Jean Claude Juncker, 2017



Overseas Missions

As of 10 January 2019, Ireland is currently contributing 678 personnel to nine different missions throughout the world and also to a range of international organisations and national representations.

Currently, before more than 12 Irish troops can be deployed overseas on a mission the “triple lock” must be satisfied – that is there must be a government decision, Dáil approval and a UN Security resolution in favour of the mission.

The “triple lock” system, while imperfect as a means of protecting our neutrality, was undermined by the Defence Force Amendment Act 2006. This legislation allows Irish defence forces to be deployed on overseas missions for “training” and other duties with only government approval required. For example the current deployment of 20 Irish Defence Forces personnel on the EU training mission to Mali was undertaken without Dáil approval under this legislation. In practice, this mission involves Irish Defence Forces providing training for the Malian army and is perceived by many as a one-sided involvement in a current conflict situation and certainly goes beyond a traditional peace keeping role.

Small numbers of Defence Forces personnel have also been deployed without a Dáil vote in the past as their numbers fall under the threshold of 12 that applies for the Triple Lock. These deployments include personnel being stationed with NATO, the EU Military HQ, the UN, OSCE, NATO’s Partnership for Peace offices and in Bosnia (5), Kosovo (12), Democratic Republic of Congo (4), Western Sahara (3).

By deploying Irish Defence Forces personnel in these ways it is clear that the Irish government is happy to use a legal loophole which allows for the circumventing of the Triple Lock and with it the state’s neutrality policy. That there is active “consideration is being given to the deployment of a small contingent of Army Ranger Wing personnel to the MINUSMA mission in Mali during 2019” (parliamentary question reply (January 17 2019) is further illustration of this government’s attempts to normalise breaches of Irish neutrality in preparation for full integration into the Emmanuel Marcon’s emerging “true European army”.

“The way we see Ireland is not as a neutral state. It does a lot in fact. I should remind everybody that you are in Mali, in EUTM Mali with 20 personnel”

French Ambassador Mr Crouzat



Status of Forces Agreements

By signing up to a SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement) with NATO and with the EU, the Irish government is making it easier for Irish soldiers to become fully immersed in the military operations of both.

Since Fianna Fáil signed up to NATO's Partnership for Peace, and as Irish soldiers were becoming immersed in EU Battlegroups, the government had to, in advance of deployment of each detachment and mission, negotiate a letter of agreement with the host country where the manoeuvres or military operation was taking place regarding the privileges and immunities which Irish troops would enjoy. In recent cases those letters were not forthcoming, thus hindering Ireland's participation in EU military operations and training.

The German government in 2016 refused to issue a SOFA thus restricting the part played by Irish soldiers in "field exercises". Defence Minister Paul Kehoe (23/2/2019) saw this as having "reputational damage", rather than seeing his capitulation to the EU/NATO's military agenda as doing Irish neutrality "reputational damage". On the same day he admitted that the Irish government (Fianna Fáil on this occasion) sent Irish soldiers abroad without the 'protections' of a SOFA, and he admitting that the soldiers had returned from their three month deployment before the "exchange of letters could be completed with France", the lead nation on Operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003.

Despite the minister saying the SOFA was not required, such was his eagerness to fully immerse Ireland in the EU's military apparatus and to smooth out the issues preventing full integration that he and his government with the support of Fianna Fáil passed the SOFAs in February this year. Minister Kehoe said "I would like to get these matters resolved before our proposed participation in the German led Battlegroup in 2020". This is in line with EU leaders who wish to "to fill in the gaps" in preparation for the 2025 EU army establishment date.

Perhaps the government should listen to members of its own parliamentary party on this issue, as articulated by Fine Gael TD and former Minister for Defence, Séan Barrett, speaking at the Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade January 2019:

"I ask that we revert back to what we were the best at, namely, peacekeeping. We do not want all of this. Leave it to others, if they want to become part and parcel of battle groups. Battle groups are not peacekeepers. The words "battle groups" mean that they are, trained to go into battle. Do we want to be part of the battle groups? Since when do peacekeepers become involved in battle groups? With the greatest respect, we are losing our way here."



Key Recommendations:

In order to strengthen Ireland's neutrality Sinn Féin would:

- ▶ Hold a referendum to amend the Constitution to enshrine neutrality in Bunreacht na hÉireann and have it codified in domestic legislation;
- ▶ Prevent the use of Irish airports, airspace, seaports, or territorial waters by foreign powers in their for preparation for war or other armed conflict;
- ▶ Stop the US Military from transporting arms and military equipment through Shannon Airport and protect Irish airspace;
- ▶ Oppose a European Army and end Ireland's participation in the EU Battle Groups and NATO's Partnership for Peace;
- ▶ Enhance our relationship and commitments with the UN and actively promote UN reform and capacity-building to create a revitalised UN which is capable of fulfilling the promise of the Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and of upholding international law;
- ▶ Ensure, until a Danish-style EU Treaty protocol is achieved, that as a minimum there is full adherence to the Triple Lock Agreement governing all overseas deployment of Defence Forces personnel;
- ▶ Ensure that Ireland is no longer a member of the EU Defence Agency;
- ▶ Resist, at all EU levels, the use of EU Social or other Funds for military or military research purposes;
- ▶ Update the Control of Exports Act to increase transparency on arms exports and introduce annual reporting of dual-use civilian/military goods;
- ▶ Encourage the formation of global alliances with progressive, neutral states and the promotion of the promotion of the human rights based Human Security approach to international relations;
- ▶ Rescind Ireland's ratification of the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO);





- ▶ Ensure that the EU treaties recognise neutral member states;
- ▶ Advocate for the establishment of a non aligned movement of member states within the EU;
- ▶ Actively seek the demilitarisation of the EU and resist efforts at further militarisation of the EU and between Member States;
- ▶ Amend the Defence Forces Acts to make clear that Irish troops cannot be deployed to areas of conflict in any capacity other than peace-keeping or humanitarian aid missions which have a UN mandate.



Timeline of Irish Government's erosion of Neutrality

1992	Irish government fails to follow Danish example of achieving a protocol, exempting them from involvement in increased EU militarisation
1997	Fianna Fáil government signed up for NATO's Partnership for Peace
1997	Irish Troops deployed on NATO-led missions in Europe
1999	850 Irish Troops committed to the NATO-aligned EU Rapid Reaction Force
1999	Irish Troops deployed to KFOR in Kosovo on a NATO-led missions
2000	First ever White Paper on Defence broadened mandate for international force deployment to include deployment with non-UN forces
2001	Nice Treaty rejected by the Irish people in a referendum
2001	Irish government refuses to seek a Nice Treaty protocol on Irish neutrality
2002	Second referendum held ties Ireland to the Nice Treaty
2002	Government allows Shannon Airport to be used as a military stopover for US troops en-route to or from the war in Iraq
2002	Bill to hold constitutional referendum to enshrine neutrality in Bunreacht na hÉireann voted down in Dáil by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael
2003	120,000 demonstrated in Dublin against war in Iraq, yet Irish government continue to allow Shannon Airport to be used as a military base for the US soldiers
2004	Government approved joining the European Defence Agency without a Dáil debate or vote.
2008	Irish Troops participated in Nordic Battlegroup
2008	People rejected Lisbon Treaty in a referendum
2009	Government hold second referendum on Lisbon Treaty, reassuring electorate that neutrality will not be affected
2011	Irish Troops participated in Nordic Battlegroup
2012	Irish Troops participated in German-led Battlegroup
2013	Irish Troops deployed to Mali, supporting the undemocratic Malian government responsible for large scale human rights abuses
2015	Irish Troops participated in Nordic Battlegroup





- 2015** Bill to hold constitutional referendum to enshrine neutrality in Bunreacht na hÉireann voted down by Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour
- 2016** Irish Troops participated in German-led Battlegroup
- 2016** Bill to hold constitutional referendum to enshrine neutrality in Bunreacht na hÉireann voted down in Dáil by Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Independent Alliance
- 2017** Government, including three Independent Alliance Ministers, signed up to PESCO
- 2017** Government backed proposals for the establishment of a European Military headquarters
- 2017** Government backed proposals for the establishment of a European Defence Fund
- 2017** Government approved participation in Operation Sophia, going beyond original humanitarian action mandate and thus became involved in EU naval force mission
- 2018** US Vice-President Michael Pence is filmed greeting US troops in combat uniforms at Shannon Airport
- 2018** Government committed Irish Defence forces to the German-led Battlegroup until July 2020
- 2019** Government, supported by Fianna Fáil, signed up to EU and NATO Status of Forces Agreements
- 2019** Government, supported by Fianna Fáil, approved Ireland's participation in the European Defence Agency Projects
- 2019** Government considers deploying elite Army Rangers Wing contingent to Mali





Who Wants The Constitution Changed To Enshrine Irelands Neutrality

(Base: All Adults 18+; n=1,008)

Q. Ireland has always claimed to be a neutral country. However, that neutrality is not currently enshrined in the Irish Constitution. Do you think the constitution should be changed to enshrine Ireland's neutrality?

57% Want Constitution Changed

Gender



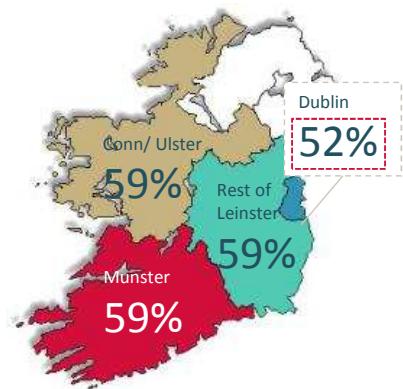
Social Grade



Age



Region



REDC

(Q.2)

Neutrality In Ireland

February 2016
Ref: 157716



REDC



0612

Issued by

Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD

Sinn Féin Whip and Spokesperson on Defence

Lynn Boylan MEP

Sinn Féin MEP for Dublin

Seán Crowe TD

Sinn Féin Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs and Trade
with special responsibility for International Affairs & Outreach



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