

CFSP WATCH 2003

Ireland is not so unique

- Firstly, Ireland is not as unique or anomalous as is sometimes assumed – either within or outside Ireland.
- In essence, Irish ‘military neutrality’ approximates to the current policy of non-alignment of Austria, Finland and Sweden.
- In terms of public debate, Ireland has much in common with Sweden, given the similar sensitivities about identity and the historical development of their neutrality policies, which are both somewhat identity-driven.
- In policy terms, Ireland perhaps shares even more with Finland, especially given that Irish policy-makers view Finland as an excellent example of what is sometimes described as an ‘active’ neutral i.e. Finland is not isolationist but an engaged non-aligned actor and has no explicit self-interest in the arms industry.
- All EU non-aligned actors are seen by Irish elites as operating with a broad understanding of security and of their status as small states. Such an understanding implies a multilateral response to security threats, with CFSP and ESDP posited in that context.
- Movement towards hard security in CFSP and ESDP provoke considerable domestic political controversy.

Europeanisation

- Secondly, it is important to note that there has been a shift in Irish foreign, security and defence policy that accords somewhat to the concept of ‘Europeanisation’.
- Particularly since the early 1990s, there has been a greater willingness on the part of Irish policy-makers to frame Irish foreign, security and defence policy within a broader European context.
- Numerous academic and public policy seminars have been organised on the topic of Ireland’s role within the CFSP/ESDP that have generated substantial elite-level debate.
- However, there is a continued inability to communicate this deeper engagement with CFSP/ESDP to a broader mass of Irish citizens.
- The Fianna Fail-Progressive Democrat government has continued – as have all past Governments –to reassure the electorate that nothing fundamentally has changed in Irish security and defence policy and that Ireland maintains its

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Differing Perceptions

- Fourth, there is a distinction to be made between the perception of the CFSP/ESDP held by academics, policy-makers and practitioners on the one-hand and certain sections of civil society, the media and the general public on the other-hand.
- A communications problem seems to have emerged in relation to developments in CFSP/ESDP i.e. experts are well informed on policy development but in the absence of a sustained and substantial political debate, the general public is simply left behind.
- Consecutive referendum debates then become periods of ‘crisis learning’ – with CFSP/ESDP experts and the socio-political elites pitched directly against dedicated political activists in the battle for public hearts and minds.
- In general terms, the public begins from a position of scepticism towards developments in CFSP/ESDP because they view it through the prism of neutrality, whereas the policy-makers are more supportive of CFSP/ESDP developments because they tend to view ‘neutrality’ more pragmatically, and sometimes even instrumentally.
- Even when ‘defended’ by political elites, CFSP/ESDP is most often presented as a necessary ‘cost’ of EU membership which impinges only marginally if at all upon the practice and substance of Irish foreign, security and defence policy.
- Policy makers have only recently begun to make a strong explicit case for an effective and coherent EU foreign, security and defence policy.

Potential for Debate

- Fifth, there is significant potential for serious debate on the CFSP in Ireland.
- During the Balkans crises, September 11th and the most recent Iraqi crisis; calls for ‘more Europe’ were heard regularly in the Irish discourse, reflecting similar demands in some other EU States.
- The EU’s definition of security, the need for increased coherence in EU foreign policy, EU-US relations, the tempering of globalisation, the logic of integration have all been discussed with increased frequency in Ireland since the mid-late 1990s.
- Irish neutrality should not be confused with any aspiration to isolationism. There is considerable concern

- However, the weak communication of CFSP/ESDP developments prior to referenda leaves policy-makers vulnerable to groups fundamentally opposed to the direction of EU Treaty change and/or Irish membership of the Union who employ ‘pro-neutrality’ arguments against EU referendums.
- It is also true to say that many such opponents assert that there exists an inverse relationship between a commitment to UN peacekeeping and a contribution to EU security and defence policy.

What are the priorities for your government in CFSP?

- The key, inter-related priorities of the Irish government are a holistic and broad-based security focus for CFSP. If there is to be hard defence then Ireland would want to be able to opt-out or not to opt in as the case may be. But Ireland would prefer that an opt-in or opt-out model should **not** emerge because then it would probably have to remain outside and its general policy is to keep to an absolute minimum the number of areas of EU activity in which Ireland does not participate.
- To ensure that in terms of institutional development and decision making, CFSP remains rooted in a consensus of national foreign policies. According to the Irish Government’s alternate representative in the Convention, Mr. Bobby McDonagh—quoted by the UK’s representative, Mr. Peter Hain “CFSP will only be strong if it draws on the experience and assets of the Member States (and) communitisation simply will not work.”⁵
- Over the course of the 1990s successive Irish governments have repeatedly emphasised that ESDP must be seen as being embedded within CFSP rather than as a separate or stand alone policy area. They have therefore repeatedly pressed for equal attention and resources to be devoted to the civilian and military dimensions of EU foreign policy.
- Another focus of attention has been development co-operation, which is also deemed by the government to be part of Ireland’s conflict prevention approach to international peace and security.
- During the Convention debate, Irish government amendments reflected this twin desire for retention of the EU’s holistic approach to security.
- For instance, the Minister for European Affairs, Dick Roche, proposed an amendment to the ‘solidarity clause’ that sought to reflect a broad definition of security as understood from an Irish perspective.
- Granted, the emphasis in the amendment on re-active measures may be interpreted as evidence of Ireland’s restrictive interpretation of security to the exclusion of defence. However, the amendment should also be seen within the context of Ireland’s emphasis throughout the Convention on combating the root causes of conflict, such as poverty and social exclusion, as a means of enhancing European security.
- The Irish Government is particularly concerned with multilateralism and respect for the UN system as the linchpin of international security.

⁵ <http://european-convention.eu.int/docs/speeches/1480.pdf>

- The legitimacy of CFSP/ESDP operations is determined by this commitment to the authority of the UN. This gives rise – at official level – to the institution of the ‘triple lock’, which precludes Irish participation in peacekeeping or peacemaking operations without formal authorisation of the United Nations. This is a legislative requirement arising under the Defence Acts.
- Policy-makers are keen to increase Ireland’s influence over European developments so that the EU, in turn, can become a more effective international actor to the benefit of a common (especially Irish) interest.

What are the key issues for your country?

· actor to the benefit of a country?

own 'power' capacity simply places it alongside the United States as yet another dangerous and/or threatening power.

2. National Perceptions and Positions with regard to CFSP/ESDP Issues

The perceived success and/or failure of CFSP/ESDP

- Taking elite and popular attitudes together, the overall perception of the CFSP/ESDP is probably best seen as ambivalent.
- The pervasive orthodox view at elite-level would support the creation and development of the Petersberg Tasks of crisis management, conflict prevention and peacekeeping so long as all are rooted in an intergovernmental decision making framework.
- These are tasks in which Ireland is deemed (by both elites and general public opinion) to excel and there is then a genuine desire 'to contribute' that expertise at European level – subject to the auspices of the UN.
- During crises, such as the Balkans in the early 1990s, there were confused calls both for 'more Europe' and for 'less Europe'. 'More Europe' in the sense of demands for Europe to speak and to act more effectively as a single unit and 'less Europe' in the sense that some saw the impact of European great power politics as exacerbating or even provoking such conflicts.
- At first sight, September 11th constituted something of an exception. Apart from shared values and kinship with the United States, it seems the logic of European integration was rendered more apparent and there was therefore significant consensus on the need for more cooperation. Certainly, there was significant agreement among policy-makers on this count.
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- The volatility of public opinion should be noted here. Opinion polls prior to the Allied coalition invasion of Iraq showed 68 percent opposition to any support of the Allied war effort through its use of Shannon airport as a refuelling stop. After the invasion, 51 percent supported the government's decision to facilitate the United States even in the absence of a second UN resolution.
- One of the points noted in a recent House of Lords Report on CFSP corresponds with experience in Ireland, namely the lack of awareness generated in the media about the positive aspects of the CFSP/ESDP. In particular, the civilian dimension of the CFSP/ESDP tends to be ignored.
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3. European Convention: Reform of EU External Relations, CFSP/ESDP

External Representation: What is the position of your country on the appointment of a European foreign minister and a President of the European Council? Is your country in favour of double-hatting?

- Initially, Ireland was opposed to the creation of a full-time European Council President and favoured the retention of a rotating Presidency.
- Two principle reasons influenced this decision. The fact that the case was not made sufficiently to justify change, as far as the Irish government was concerned and the criteria employed by Ireland that emphasised equality and institutional balance.
- Ireland also saw positive benefits in the concept of rotation (socializing all Member States into the system, raising public awareness of the Union in Member States etc.). The creation of a President of the European Council was seen as creating a new institution to which powers would accrue and which would diminish the role of the President of the Commission.
- Ireland was instrumental in building support for retention of the ‘principles and premises’ that had informed the Union to date. A so-called ‘Friends of the Community Method’ (FoCM) group emerged consisting of 16 small States of which Ireland was a key participant.
- During the latter stages of the Convention, the Irish Government signalled its intention to support the European Council President proposal so long as it was effectively a Chairman role and not a Presidential one. Respect for the institutional balance was a key ingredient for Irish support and Convention concessions on the status and size of the Commission helped to secure Ireland’s final acceptance at the Convention of the European Council President idea.
- Irish practitioners expressed initial doubts and reservations on the proposal for double-hatting.

bc Foreign Affairs Pres

Crisis Management

- There is general elite support for the extension of the Petersberg Tasks
- Translating this support into practical measures, such as increased defence spending or more targeted spending, is a different matter.
- Apart from a down-turn in the Irish economy, there is significant sensitivity to increases in military spending especially as these would inevitably be presented as being at the cost of other sensitive policy areas (health, education, etc)
- The focus on an 'Armaments' agency will be presented politically by some as further evidence of the 'militarization' of Europe.
- The Irish Defence Forces have factored ESDP's development into their military doctrine and practice and spending requests.

Defence

- The proposal most strongly endorsed by the Irish Government and Convention delegates is the extension of the Petersberg Tasks.
- The least favourable are the clauses on flexibility: 'structured co-operation' and 'closer co-operation'. In a recent debate at the National Forum on Europe these

political science and modern history with little or no focus on the European Union as a discrete international actor.

The field of European foreign, security and defence studies rests therefore upon fragile academic grounds in Ireland and is most often to be found represented in undergraduate or postgraduate programmes whose focus is that of European Studies. In undergraduate programmes, this is true for University College Cork, University of Dublin (Trinity College) and the University of Limerick. At postgraduate level, this is the case at the Centre for European Studies at the University of Limerick and University College Dublin's Dublin European Institute (host to the FORNET programme). The Royal Irish Academy's National Committee for the Study of International Affairs has also devoted its attention, from time to time, to aspects of EU foreign, security and defence policy

Think-tanks

The Institute for European Affairs Dublin is the main think-tank in Ireland on European affairs with access to key policy-makers and experts who analyse the issues, options and implications of European developments for Ireland. The IEA hosts an elite-level study group dedicated to CFSP/ESDP issues, convenes seminars and hosts guest speakers on this issue, addresses associated foreign policy issues with other dedicated study groups (eg Balkans, relations with Russia, EU-US relations etc), publishes analytical texts on CFSP/ESDP and Irish involvement therein as well as the regular distribution of newsletter on CFSP/ESDP developments to key policy making constituencies.

The European Movement acts as an advocacy coalition for Irish membership of the European Union and plays a role during referenda campaigns providing information on Irish EU membership

Irish Independent (www.unison.ie)
Sunday Independent
Sunday Business Post
The Examiner

National Forum on Europe:
www.forumoneurope.ie

Relevant Current Affairs Television & Radio Programmes:

'Prime Time' (Thursday nights, 10pm Radio Telefis Eireann, R.T.E.1)
'Questions and Answers' (Monday nights, 9.40pm R.T.E.1)
'The Week in Politics' (Sunday nights, R.T.E. 1)
'More to Do' (Tuesday nights, 11.25pm R.T.E.1)
'The Sunday Show' (Sundays at 12pm, Radio 1)
'Five-Seven Live' (Weekdays, 5pm, Radio 1)
'Morning Ireland' (Weekdays, 7am-9am, Radio 1)
<http://www.rte.ie/news/>
'Saturday View' (Saturdays, 12:00 noon, Radio 1)
'Tonight with Vincent Brown' (Weeknights, 10:00 pm, Radio 1)

Websites: (all websites were visited between June and August 2002)

Irish Political Parties

Fianna Fail <http://www.fiannafail.ie>, also www.fiannafail.ie/ffineurope.php4?id=430
Fine Gael (1999; relaunched 2003) Beyond Neutrality: Ireland's Role in European Defence and Security (Dublin: Fine Gael), <http://www.finegael.ie/main.htm>
Fine Gael <http://www.finegael.ie/main.htm>
Labour Party <http://www.labour.ie/policy>
Sinn Fein <http://www.sinnfein.ie/>
Green Party <http://www.imsgrp.com/greenparty/neutral.htm>
Socialist Workers' Party <http://www.dojo.ie/socialist/home.html>

NGOs & Think Tanks:

Afri (<http://www.afri.buz.org/>). (Action from Ireland NGO)
Peace and Neutrality Alliance
The European Movement
The Institute of European Affairs, (www.iiea.ie)
The National Platform (<http://www.nationalplatform.org/>)

Government/Oireachtas (Parliament)/State Department sites:

Defence Forces (<http://www.military.ie>)
Garda Siochana (<http://www.garda.ie>)
Department of Foreign Affairs <http://www.irlgov.ie/iveagh>
Department of Defence (<http://www.gov.ie/defence>)
Department of Justice (<http://www.justice.ie/>)

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