

IRELAND'S FOREIGN POLICY AT A CROSSROADS: BETWEEN NEUTRALITY AND STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT IN EUROPEAN SECURITY

Olena Zayats¹, Marianna Marusynets²

Abstract. The purpose of this study is to examine Ireland's foreign policy evolution as it navigates the tension between its long-standing military neutrality and growing engagement in European security integration, prompted by geopolitical shifts and EU collective defence imperatives. The research explores how Ireland balances its non-aligned identity, rooted in its historical struggle for sovereignty, with pragmatic participation in EU and NATO frameworks amid challenges such as Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and maritime activities in Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The methodology employed a qualitative case-study approach with discourse analysis, drawing on official government documents (e.g., Defence Commission Report, EU Strategic Compass), parliamentary debates from the Oireachtas, media reports (e.g., Irish Times, RTÉ), academic literature, and the 2023 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy. Process tracing is utilised to monitor policy decisions made by Ireland, including its involvement in PESCO and NATO's Individual Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP). A comparative analysis with neutral states such as Austria, Sweden, and Malta is employed to provide contextual background information regarding Ireland's strategic choices. The results of the study indicate a shift in Ireland's foreign policy towards what has been termed "adaptive neutrality". This is characterised by a selective engagement in EU defence initiatives such as PESCO (four non-combat projects by 2023) and the Strategic Compass, alongside limited NATO co-operation through the ITPP, while maintaining non-alignment. Domestic debates over the 'triple lock' mechanism highlight polarised views, with 61% public support for neutrality but only 40% endorsing the UN mandate's necessity, reflecting openness to EU co-operation among younger voters. The recalibration of the EU's approach is driven by external pressures, including Russia's actions and Ireland's 2026 EU Council presidency. However, it is important to note that neutrality remains a rhetorical pillar. The practical implications of this analysis include the recommendation to reform the "triple lock" to enhance EU mission flexibility, with an increase in defence spending to 0.5% of GDP by 2030 to address maritime and cyber vulnerabilities, and the leveraging of Ireland's normative role as a UN peacekeeper to shape EU strategic autonomy. These steps ensure that Ireland maintains its credibility as an EU partner while preserving its neutral identity. Value/Originality. The study introduces the concept of adaptive neutrality as a dynamic framework through which to understand Ireland's foreign policy, offering a fresh perspective on the agency of small states in a Europe that is rearming. By integrating Ireland's EU engagement, domestic discourse, and comparative insights, it fills gaps in post-2022 analyses and contributes to international relations theory and policy debates on the relevance of neutrality in a volatile security landscape.

Keywords: Irish foreign policy, military neutrality, security and defence co-operation, PESCO, Triple Lock, small state adaptation, Ireland–EU relations.

JEL Classifications: F50, F59, H56, D74

1. Introduction

Ireland's foreign policy, which has long been defined by its commitment to military neutrality, is currently at a pivotal moment. This is due to the fact that global and regional security dynamics are challenging

its traditional stance. Since the mid-20th century, neutrality has been identified as a fundamental aspect of Ireland's international identity, stemming from the nation's aspiration to assert sovereignty that is distinct from British influence and to circumvent involvement

¹ State University "Uzhhorod National University", Ukraine (*corresponding author*)

E-mail: olena.zayats@uzhnu.edu.ua

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9904-8706>

² Ferenc Rakoczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, Ukraine

E-mail: maruszinec.marianna@kmf.org.ua

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1931-6876>



This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 4.0

in major power conflicts (Boulter, 2023). However, Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, coupled with its growing military assertiveness – such as conducting naval operations within Ireland's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) – has intensified scrutiny of the sustainability of this policy (Boulter, 2023; Mulcahy, 2022). The European Union's push for enhanced collective defence, as demonstrated by the adoption of the Strategic Compass in 2022, alongside Ireland's increasing involvement in initiatives such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, highlight the necessity of a strategic re-evaluation (European External Action Service [EEAS], 2022). This article examines Ireland's foreign policy at a crossroads, exploring how external threats, expectations of alliances, and domestic debates are reshaping its approach to European security integration while preserving its neutral identity.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on Ireland's evolving foreign policy as a case of *adaptive neutrality*, a concept that captures the balance between maintaining principled non-alignment and pursuing pragmatic security co-operation in response to a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape. Contrary to the findings of preceding studies, which have often portrayed neutrality as a static policy, this research underscores Ireland's dynamic adaptation, particularly in the context of recent EU defence initiatives and domestic policy debates, such as the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy held in June 2023 (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2023). The **relevance** of this topic is driven by the unprecedented security challenges facing Europe, which have been described as "Europe's 9/11" by former Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Charles Flanagan. These challenges have prompted even traditionally neutral states like Finland and Sweden to join NATO (Fazio & Rossi, 2023). The evolving global order, wherein rising powers such as India navigate the interplay of domestic politics and international roles (Jha, 2023), provides a comparative framework for analysing how Ireland's domestic debates, including those surrounding the 'triple lock' mechanism, reflect tensions between national identity and global responsibilities.

The **aim** of this study is to analyse how Ireland's foreign policy is adapting to the pressures of European security integration while maintaining its commitment to neutrality. To achieve this, the research addresses the following **objectives**:

1. To trace the historical foundations of Ireland's neutrality and its role in shaping national identity.
2. To evaluate Ireland's participation in EU defence initiatives (e.g., PESCO, Strategic Compass) and NATO's Individual Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP).

3. To analyse domestic political discourse and public opinion on neutrality, focusing on debates surrounding the "triple lock" mechanism.

4. To compare Ireland's approach with other neutral or formerly neutral states (e.g., Austria, Sweden, Malta) to contextualise its strategic choices.

5. To propose scenarios for the future evolution of Ireland's neutrality in the context of EU strategic autonomy.

The **methodology** employs a qualitative case-study approach with elements of discourse analysis. Data sources include official government documents (e.g., Ireland's Defence Commission Report, EU Strategic Compass), parliamentary debates from the Oireachtas, speeches by political leaders, media reports (e.g., *Irish Times*, RTE), and academic literature, including insights from the *Defence Forces Review 2022* (Cooke, 2022). The study employs **process tracing** to monitor pivotal policy decisions, such as Ireland's involvement in PESCO and the ITPP, and **discourse analysis** to scrutinise political statements, media narratives, and public opinion polls, including those from the 2023 Consultative Forum (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Taking a comparative approach with Austria, Sweden and Malta provides additional context for understanding Ireland's trajectory. The **logic of presentation** commences with a historical overview of Ireland's neutrality, followed by an analysis of its current engagement in European security frameworks and domestic political debates. This is concluded with theoretical and practical implications for Ireland's foreign policy.

Historically, Ireland's neutrality emerged as a deliberate policy under Éamon de Valera during the 1930s, reflecting a commitment to non-alignment and independence from great power blocs. This position was solidified during the Second World War, when Ireland, then the Irish Free State, maintained a neutral stance despite considerable pressure from both the Allied and Axis powers. The decision, formalised through the Emergency Powers Act of 1939 and supported by de Valera's Fianna Fáil party, was driven by a need to assert Ireland's sovereignty, particularly in the context of its recent independence from Britain (Cesarz & Stadtmüller, 1996). Notwithstanding the criticisms and myths surrounding Ireland's neutrality, including the alleged condolence visit to the German legation upon Hitler's death, it is evident that Ireland's stance was not merely passive. Rather, it was a strategic choice that balanced ideological commitments with pragmatic co-operation, including covert assistance to the Allies, such as intelligence sharing and the repatriation of Allied airmen (Cesarz & Stadtmüller, 1996). During the Cold War, Ireland's non-alignment enabled it to carve out a role as a mediator in international conflicts, notably through

its contributions to United Nations peacekeeping missions, which bolstered its international reputation (Boulter, 2023; Fazio & Rossi, 2023). As explored by Wylie (2006), Ireland's diplomatic strategy during this period focused on selective recognition policies and cautious engagement with global powers. This approach reinforced its non-aligned stance while navigating the East-West divide.

This legacy has imbued neutrality with deep cultural and political significance, often being seen as an expression of Ireland's sovereignty and moral authority. During the Cold War, Ireland used its neutral status to encourage disarmament, prevent conflict, and promote international humanitarian law. This aligned with its role as a small state that advocated for a rules-based international order (Wylie, 2006). Despite an invitation, Ireland's refusal to join NATO in 1949 was rooted in its rejection of military alliances tied to Britain, particularly given the unresolved issue of partition (Schwanberg, 2012). Instead, Ireland actively participated in UN peacekeeping, contributing to over 54 operations and amassing more than 56,000 individual missions, which enabled it to maintain neutrality while enhancing its global standing (Schwanberg, 2012).

Ireland's struggle for independence, marked by events such as the 1916 Easter Rising and the War of Independence (1919–1921), shaped its neutrality as a symbol of defiance against British imperialism. The 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, which established the Irish Free State but partitioned the island, reinforced Ireland's determination to assert its sovereignty through non-alignment. This stance was further solidified by de Valera's leadership in the 1930s (Schwanberg, 2012). Unlike Austria's 1955 State Treaty, the absence of constitutional codification for neutrality allowed Ireland flexibility in its application, but also fuelled public debates, particularly during EU treaty referenda, where neutrality became intertwined with national identity (Schwanberg, 2012).

The *Defence Forces Review 2022* provides additional context for understanding the historical and contemporary challenges to Ireland's neutrality (Cooke, 2022). The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 – described as Europe's first major war in decades – has made Ireland's security policy more relevant, particularly in light of the 2022 Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces. The Commission's report emphasised Ireland's vulnerabilities in the maritime, air and cyber domains, observing that the current Level of Ambition (LOA 1) renders the Defence Forces "unable to conduct a meaningful defence of the State against a sustained act of aggression" (Cottey, 2022). This has prompted a government commitment to transition to LOA 2 by 2028, with an increase in defence spending to 1.5 billion EUR and an expansion in personnel from

9,500 to 11,500, indicating a shift towards enhanced capabilities while maintaining neutrality (Cottey, 2022). However, as Cottey (2022) contends, Ireland's low-threat environment, its reliance on NATO, and domestic political constraints suggest that a radical shift, or "Celtic Zeitenwende", is improbable, with continuity prevailing over transformative change.

To frame the analysis, this article defines three pivotal concepts central to understanding Ireland's foreign policy trajectory:

– **Neutrality.** Within the framework of Ireland's foreign policy, neutrality signifies a deliberate policy of non-participation in military alliances and the avoidance of belligerency in international conflicts. This principle, historically rooted in Ireland's quest for sovereignty, entails refraining from joining formal military alliances such as NATO and maintaining an impartial stance in global conflicts. Ireland's neutrality is operationalised through policies such as the "triple lock" mechanism, which requires UN, government, and parliamentary approval for the deployment of troops abroad (Boulter, 2023). During World War II, Ireland's neutrality was enacted through the Emergency Powers Act of 1939, which allowed the government to maintain strict non-involvement while managing domestic and international pressures (Cesarz & Stadtmüller, 1996). The *Defence Forces Review 2022* underscores the domestic political consensus around neutrality, with polls indicating strong public support (e.g., 66% in April 2022) for retaining this policy despite external pressures (Cottey, 2022).

– **Non-alignment.** Non-alignment is defined as a broader strategic posture of avoiding alignment with great power blocs. This is particularly evident during the Cold War era, when Ireland distanced itself from both the Western and Eastern blocs. In contrast to neutrality, which is predicated on military non-involvement, non-alignment embodies a more expansive reluctance to commit to ideological or geopolitical alignments. This enables Ireland to pursue an independent foreign policy that is predicated on diplomacy and peacekeeping (Fazio & Rossi, 2023). This approach was evident in Ireland's decision to remain outside both NATO and the Non-Aligned Movement, prioritising UN-centred multilateralism and selective diplomatic recognition to maintain its independent stance (Cesarz & Stadtmüller, 1996; Wylie, 2006). The *Defence Forces Review 2022* highlights Ireland's contributions to UN peacekeeping as a key expression of non-alignment, contrasting with its limited engagement in EU CSDP operations (Cottey, 2022).

– **Strategic autonomy.** Strategic autonomy is indicative of the European Union's ambition to develop independent defence and security capabilities, thereby reducing reliance on external actors such as the United States while complementing NATO's role

in collective defence. For Ireland, strategic autonomy signifies a nuanced engagement with EU defence initiatives such as PESCO and the Strategic Compass, thereby facilitating participation in collective security efforts without compromising its neutral status. This concept underscores Ireland's evolving role in contributing to EU security while navigating domestic constraints (EEAS, 2022). The *Defence Forces Review 2022* notes Ireland's cautious engagement with EU CSDP, exemplified by limited contributions to operations like EUFOR Chad/CAR (2007–2009) and Operation Sophia, reflecting a balance between good citizenship and domestic political sensitivities (Cotney, 2022).

The central research question is how Ireland's foreign policy is adapting to the pressures of European security integration while maintaining its commitment to neutrality. The hypothesis posits that Ireland is undergoing a phase of *adaptive neutrality*, balancing its traditional principles with pragmatic engagement in EU and NATO frameworks to address emerging security challenges, as evidenced by initiatives like the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2023) and the government's response to the Commission on the Defence Forces (Cotney, 2022).

This study draws on official government documents, parliamentary debates, EU policy frameworks, academic literature, and the *Defence Forces Review 2022* to trace Ireland's foreign policy trajectory. By analysing Ireland's participation in PESCO, its engagement with NATO's Individual Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP), and domestic debates surrounding the 'triple lock' mechanism, the article argues that Ireland is navigating a delicate balance between preserving its neutral identity and responding to the imperatives of collective security.

2. Literature Review

Academic discourse on Ireland's neutrality engages with the fields of international relations (IR), European Union (EU) studies and small-state theory. This offers insights into how neutral states adapt to a changing security landscape. This review summarises theoretical frameworks and empirical studies in order to contextualise Ireland's strategic recalibration, emphasising concepts such as adaptive neutrality, soft balancing and normative power. It provides comparative analyses of neutral states such as Austria, Sweden and Malta in order to contextualise Ireland's approach. The focus is on the recent pressures resulting from European security integration and geopolitical developments, particularly since 2022. The review prioritises analytical contributions and avoids repeating the historical context provided in the introduction.

In international relations (IR), neutrality is increasingly viewed as a dynamic strategy shaped by geopolitical and identity-driven factors. Guzzini (2017) argues that neutrality reflects a state's negotiation of its identity amid resurgent power rivalries. This perspective is particularly relevant to Ireland's balancing of non-alignment with EU security commitments. The resurgence of geopolitics, exacerbated by Russia's actions in Ukraine, is pressuring Ireland to reconsider its neutral stance, as evidenced by its participation in the PESCO initiative and NATO's Individual Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP). In the post-Cold War era, Delanty (2025) critiques Irish neutrality as a "comforting illusion", arguing that its relevance has waned in the face of emerging hybrid threats, such as Russian submarine activity in Irish waters. This situation requires pragmatic co-operation with EU and NATO partners.

Theory on small states sheds light on the constraints and strategies of Ireland's foreign policy. According to Archer, Bailes and Wivel (2014), small states rely on soft balancing through multilateralism to enhance security without forming alliances. Ireland's role in UN peacekeeping and its selective participation in the CSDP exemplify this approach. Wivel (2005) suggests that small EU states can leverage the EU's normative identity to maintain security while contributing to collective goals. However, Ireland employs this strategy cautiously due to domestic support for neutrality. Bury and Murphy (2025) emphasise the urgent need for Ireland to strengthen its defence capabilities. They advocate a defence spending target of 1.5% of GDP to address vulnerabilities in maritime and air security, in line with the responsibilities of small states in a collective security framework.

As articulated by Manners (2006), normative power underscores Ireland's historical role as a moral actor that promotes peace and multilateralism through UN missions. However, Manners also highlights tensions arising from the EU's shift towards militarised security, which challenges neutral countries such as Ireland to align their normative ideals with practical demands. This is evident in domestic debates over the 'triple lock' mechanism and Ireland's participation in the PESCO initiative, which reflect efforts to preserve neutrality while meeting EU expectations.

Empirical studies emphasise the importance of neutrality to Ireland's identity and how it has adapted to EU membership. Devine (2011) highlights the origins of neutrality in anti-imperialist sentiments, which were reinforced by public opinion during EU treaty referenda. More recently, analyses such as those by Fazio and Rossi (2023) have described Russia's invasion of Ukraine as "Europe's 9/11", prompting Ireland to engage more intensely with the EU Strategic Compass while grappling with the limits of neutrality. O'Brennan (2025) has observed a growing

level of "disbelief" within the European Union (EU) concerning Ireland's relatively low defence expenditure, particularly in the context of heightened security concerns following the events in Ukraine. This has resulted in Ireland being positioned as a notable outlier among EU member states.

The utilisation of comparative studies is instrumental in providing the necessary context. Popławski (2020) traces Austria's shift from strict neutrality to a post-neutral stance via EU membership, contrasting with Ireland's uncoded, flexible neutrality, which enables selective engagement in PESCO. Lee-Ohlsson (2009) examines Sweden's transition from neutrality to ESDP leadership prior to its 2024 NATO accession, driven by threat perceptions absent from Ireland's domestic discourse. Cassar (2024) examines Malta's pragmatic neutrality, opting out of PESCO but aligning with EU foreign policy, in a manner similar to Ireland's cautious approach. These cases exemplify Ireland's adaptive neutrality, which is characterised by its navigation of EU integration while preserving non-alignment.

Adaptive neutrality, as conceptualised by Goetschel (2011), encapsulates Ireland's strategy of maintaining non-alignment whilst engaging in co-operative security. Ireland's PESCO projects and ITPP participation address emerging threats, such as cyber attacks and maritime vulnerabilities, without compromising its neutrality. Cassar (2024) provides an illustration of this in Malta's use of neutrality for autonomy while aligning with EU positions, a dynamic applicable to Ireland. Nicoll (2024) explores how neutral states like Ireland leverage normative power in disarmament initiatives, such as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, to maintain influence despite limited military capacity.

As asserted by Archer et al. (2014), soft balancing is evident in Ireland's multilateral engagements through the UN and EU. Ireland's UN peacekeeping contributions and its limited CSDP roles, such as EUFOR Chad/CAR, are indicative of this strategy. Lee-Ohlsson (2009) has observed that Sweden adopts a more flexible approach in shaping the ESDP, a role that Ireland adopts with greater caution due to domestic constraints. Bury and Murphy (2025) argue that Ireland's reliance on NATO partners such as the UK and the US for maritime security highlights the concept of "soft balancing", but also carries the risk of "free-riding". This has prompted calls for increased defence investment.

Although the literature offers robust frameworks, few studies have examined Ireland's policy shifts since 2022 in response to the Russia-Ukraine War and EU initiatives such as the Strategic Compass. Although Guzzini (2017) and Manners (2006) offer theoretical insights, their analysis is not specific to Ireland. While Popławski (2020), Lee-Ohlsson (2009) and Cassar (2024) offer valuable comparative insights, they fail to

adequately explore Ireland's internal debates, including the "triple lock" and the 2023 Consultative Forum. O'Brennan (2025) and Fazio and Rossi (2023), on the other hand, highlight external pressures but overlook nuanced domestic drivers. This study addresses these gaps by integrating theoretical and empirical evidence to offer a comprehensive analysis of Ireland's adaptive neutrality in a dynamic security landscape.

3. Ireland's Engagement in European Security

Amid geopolitical shifts such as Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Ireland's engagement in European security reflects a pragmatic balance between its constitutional neutrality and the demands of EU collective security, particularly through the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the Strategic Compass. Joining PESCO in 2017 under Articles 42(6) and 46 of the Treaty on European Union, Ireland participates in four projects as of May 2023, focusing on non-combat capabilities to align with neutrality: the Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance, the Cyber Threats and Incident Response Information Sharing Platform, the Maritime (Semi) Autonomous Systems for Mine Countermeasures, and the Deployable Military Disaster Relief Capability Package (Oireachtas, 2023a). These projects, led by Greece, Belgium and Italy, enhance Ireland's maritime situational awareness, cyber security resilience, and humanitarian response, with completion timelines set for 2025 (except Mine Countermeasures, due by 2030). The financial implications of this arrangement are minimal, with expenditures being confined to the travel expenses of Defence Forces experts attending planning meetings (Oireachtas, 2023a). Ireland's observer status in 21 projects, including Critical Seabed Infrastructure Protection, joined in 2024, allows knowledge-sharing without voting rights, supporting its cautious approach (Oireachtas, 2024; The Journal, 2023).

The EU's Strategic Compass, adopted in March 2022, provides the overarching framework for Ireland's contributions to crisis management and infrastructure protection. As outlined in Table 1, Ireland's response to the Russia-Ukraine War has included the hosting of refugees, the provision of financial aid, and the participation in PESCO projects. Ireland has hosted over 80,000 Ukrainian refugees under the EU's Temporary Protection Directive, allocated 68 million EUR for humanitarian support (2022–2023), and strengthened cyber and disaster response capabilities, aligning with the Compass's "act" and "secure" pillars (European External Action Service, 2022; Department of Foreign Affairs, 2023; Oireachtas, 2023a).

Ireland's involvement with the European Defence Agency (EDA) is evident in the number of procurement projects it has undertaken since 2004. By July 2023, the country had joined the EDA on 11 projects, with

Table 1

Ireland's contributions to EU security frameworks in response to the Russia-Ukraine War, 2022–2023

Contribution type	Description	Scale/Impact
Refugee hosting	Hosting Ukrainian refugees under the EU's Temporary Protection Directive.	Over 80,000 refugees by September 2023, with access to housing, education, and healthcare.
PESCO Disaster Relief	Participation in the Deployable Military Disaster Relief Capability Package (Italy-led).	Enhances EU crisis response capacity; Ireland contributes personnel and expertise.
Financial aid	Contributions to EU funds for Ukraine, including humanitarian aid and cohesion funds.	68 million EUR allocated for humanitarian support and refugee integration (2022–2023).
Cyber resilience	Engagement in the Cyber Threats and Incident Response Information Sharing Platform (Greece-led).	Strengthens EU cyber security, protecting against hybrid threats linked to Ukraine conflict.

Source: compiled by the authors based on European External Action Service (2022), Department of Foreign Affairs (2023), and Oireachtas (2023a).

a particular focus on cyber and maritime equipment (Department of Defence, 2025; RTÉ News, 2023). The 2022 Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces recommended increased involvement in PESCO and EDA to address capability gaps, particularly in the maritime and cyber domains, with participation growth from one project in 2021 to four by 2024 (Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces, 2022; Oireachtas, 2023a).

Beyond the EU frameworks, Ireland has been co-operating with NATO through the Partnership for Peace (PfP) since 1999, enhancing interoperability for UN-mandated peacekeeping operations. A notable example of this co-operation is the joint Irish-Polish UNIFIL battalion in Lebanon, which had 344 Irish personnel in 2023 (Oireachtas, 2024). The Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP, 2024–2028) facilitates training in cyber defence, maritime security, and logistics at NATO facilities such as Oberammargau. However, Ireland has opted out of intelligence sharing for operational confidentiality (Oireachtas, 2024). This limited NATO engagement is consistent with Ireland's normative role as a small state, which prioritises UN peacekeeping and EU co-operation over military alliances (Goetschel, 2011).

Despite an increase in engagement, Ireland's defence expenditure remains low at 1.29 billion EUR (0.24% of GDP) in 2024, the lowest in the EU, constraining naval and cyber capabilities (Laffan, 2025). The government has announced its intention to increase funding to 1.5 billion EUR by 2028, with additional capital funding to be allocated in July 2025, following the recommendation of the 2022 Commission's "Level 2" capability (Laffan, 2025; Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces, 2022). Domestic debates, intensified by the proposed reform of the "triple lock" mechanism requiring government, Dáil, and UN approval for the deployment of over 12 troops, highlight tensions. The position of Sinn Féin and other like-minded parties is that the removal of the UN veto could potentially compromise the maintenance of neutrality. Conversely,

the government asserts that this is an indispensable element for enhancing the flexibility of both the EU and UN missions (Laffan, 2025).

This approach is in contrast to that of other neutral or small EU states, as illustrated in Table 2. As a constitutionally neutral state, Austria allocates 0.7% of its GDP to defence expenditures and actively participates in PESCO. In contrast, Malta, being the only neutral state outside the PESCO framework, maintains a minimal involvement (Poplawski, 2020; Cassar, 2024). Unlike Ireland's selective EU and PfP engagement, Sweden's 2024 NATO membership reflects a shift from neutrality driven by Russian threats (Fazio & Rossi, 2023; Oireachtas, 2024). Ireland's low defence spending and ongoing debates about neutrality risk perceptions of under-contribution, particularly as the 2026 EU Council presidency approaches and deeper EU defence integration becomes paramount (Laffan, 2025).

Ireland's selective engagement leverages its normative identity as a small state, balancing EU security contributions with neutrality (Archer et al., 2014). However, as the EU prioritises rearmament and transatlantic tensions increase, Ireland's limited capabilities and domestic constraints could restrict its influence. To remain relevant, it will need to align itself strategically with EU defence initiatives (Laffan, 2025).

4. Domestic Political Discourse and Drivers of Change

As previously discussed, Ireland's deepening engagement with European security frameworks unfolds against a backdrop of intense domestic debate. The principle of neutrality remains a cornerstone of national identity, yet it is under increasing pressure to adapt to contemporary geopolitical realities. The discourse surrounding the 'triple lock' mechanism – a legislative requirement for the approval of the UN Security Council, the government and the Dáil for the deployment of more than 12 Defence Forces personnel abroad – epitomises the tension between Ireland's commitment to non-alignment and

Table 2

Ireland's engagement with the Strategic Compass

Pillar	Description	Ireland's contribution	Challenges
Act	Enhances crisis management through rapid deployment, e.g., EU Military Assistance Mission in Ukraine (2022), EUNAVFOR ASPIDES (2024).	Participation in PESCO's Deployable Military Disaster Relief Capability Package supports EU crisis response. UN peacekeeping aligns with CSDP goals.	Limited naval and air assets restrict contributions to missions like EUNAVFOR ASPIDES. Domestic opposition to EU military deployments.
Secure	Protects strategic domains via hybrid rapid response teams, FIMI toolbox, NIS2 directive (2023).	Observer status in Critical Seabed Infrastructure Protection addresses undersea cable vulnerabilities. Cyber Threats project enhances resilience.	Inadequate maritime surveillance capabilities. Low budget limits cyber security investment.
Invest	Increases EU defence spending (290 billion EUR in 2023, 92 billion EUR for investments) and supports European Defence Fund.	Modest budget increases (36 million EUR, 2018–2020) and 11 EDA procurement projects.	Defence spending (0.24% GDP) lags EU averages. Political resistance to budget increases.
Partner	Strengthens ties with NATO, UN, and regional partners via Schuman Forum, EU-NATO declaration (2023), partnerships with Moldova and Norway (2024).	Engagement through PESCO, EDA, and PfP (ITPP 2024–2028) for peacekeeping and training.	Limited NATO engagement due to neutrality. Reliance on UK/US for maritime security.

Source: compiled by the authors based on European External Action Service (2022), Oireachtas (2023a), Oireachtas (2024), The Journal (2023), RTÉ News (2023), and Fazio and Rossi (2023).

the demands of EU collective security. This section examines how political actors, public opinion, media narratives and civil society have shaped Ireland's strategic recalibration. Drawing on parliamentary debates, the 2023 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy and recent scholarly and policy analyses, it elucidates the domestic drivers that are redefining Ireland's foreign policy trajectory within the European security landscape.

The political landscape is characterised by divergent views among key figures. Leading the coalition government, Fine Gael advocates a pragmatic evolution of Ireland's security policy. The Tánaiste and Minister for Defence, Micheál Martin, has prioritised reforming the "triple lock", arguing that the veto power of the UN Security Council, frequently exercised by Russia and China, prevents Ireland from participating effectively in EU and UN crisis response missions. In April 2023, Martin obtained government approval to initiate a review of amendments to the Defence Acts. He characterised this reform as being of paramount importance for ensuring Ireland's alignment with the EU's Strategic Compass, while at the same time preserving the fundamental principles of neutrality (Department of Defence, 2023). This position is indicative of Fine Gael's broader vision of Ireland as a proactive member of the European Union, capable of addressing hybrid threats, such as cyberattacks and maritime incursions, without compromising its non-aligned status (Oireachtas, 2023b).

Sinn Féin, the primary opposition party, staunchly opposes "triple lock" reform, viewing it as a potential erosion of Ireland's sovereignty and a step toward integration into NATO or EU militarised structures.

The party's 2023 policy document, *A New Ireland in a Peaceful World*, underscores neutrality as an expression of Ireland's anti-imperialist heritage, rooted in its historical struggle against British colonialism (Sinn Féin, 2023). Sinn Féin contends that the removal of the UN mandate could potentially compromise public trust and embroil Ireland in conflicts that are not aligned with its normative role as a global peacebroker. This position finds significant resonance with its electoral base, particularly among younger and working-class constituencies, who perceive neutrality as a fundamental aspect of Ireland's independent identity (Irish Times, 2025).

Coalition partners, including the Labour and Green parties, adopt more nuanced positions. Labour supports limited reforms to the 'triple lock' to enable participation in EU-led peacekeeping missions. The party emphasises the need to balance neutrality with contributions to collective security frameworks such as PESCO (Oireachtas, 2023b). Historically cautious about militarisation, the Green Party has shifted towards endorsing enhanced cyber and maritime defence capabilities, particularly in response to Russian naval activities in Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone. However, it remains wary of fully endorsing 'triple lock' reform (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Smaller opposition parties such as People Before Profit and the Social Democrats have joined forces with Sinn Féin to defend the "triple lock", presenting it as a safeguard against Ireland's integration into militarised EU frameworks (Oireachtas, 2023b). These positions are summarised in Table 3, which outlines the range of parliamentary views on 'triple lock' reform and its potential impact on Ireland's neutrality.

Table 3

Parliamentary positions on “Triple Lock” Reform, 2023–2025

Party	Position on Reform	Core rationale	Implications for neutrality
Fine Gael	Supports amending Defence Acts to remove UN mandate for EU/UN mission flexibility.	Enhances Ireland's responsiveness to crises, aligning with EU Strategic Compass while preserving neutrality.	Risks perceptions of diluted neutrality, potentially aligning Ireland with EU defence priorities.
Sinn Féin	Opposes reform, prioritising UN mandate as essential to neutrality.	Protects sovereignty and anti-imperialist identity, preventing NATO or EU military entanglement.	Reinforces traditional neutrality but may limit Ireland's EU security contributions.
Labour	Endorses limited reform to support EU peacekeeping without compromising non-alignment.	Balances multilateral commitments with neutrality, addressing maritime and cyber vulnerabilities.	Enables pragmatic engagement while maintaining Ireland's non-aligned status.
Green Party	Cautiously supports reform, emphasising cyber and maritime defence enhancements.	Responds to hybrid threats while preserving neutrality's normative principles.	Signals adaptive neutrality, aligning with EU goals but constrained by public sentiment.
People Before Profit	Strongly opposes reform, viewing it as a step toward militarisation.	Upholds neutrality as a symbol of Ireland's anti-imperialist legacy.	Limits Ireland's flexibility in EU missions, reinforcing strict non-alignment.
Social Democrats	Opposes reform, advocating for strict adherence to current “triple lock” mechanism.	Neutrality is integral to Ireland's global reputation and sovereignty.	Maintains traditional neutrality but may hinder Ireland's role in EU crisis response.

Source: compiled by the authors based on Oireachtas (2023b), Sinn Féin (2023), Irish Times (2025), and Department of Foreign Affairs (2023)

Public opinion, as measured through the 2023 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy and subsequent polling, reveals a complex interplay of support for neutrality and openness to reform. Chaired by Professor Louise Richardson, the Forum convened over 800 participants in Dublin, Cork and Galway to evaluate the relevance of neutrality in a transformed global security environment (Government of Ireland, 2023). The findings indicated robust public support for neutrality (61% in a 2025 Irish Times/Ipsos B&A poll), but a declining commitment to the 'triple lock', with only 40% viewing it as indispensable (Irish Times, 2025). This divergence reflects generational and regional variations: younger voters (aged 18–34) and urban residents are more open to EU defence co-operation due to concerns over hybrid threats such as cyberattacks. In contrast, rural and older demographics prioritise strict non-alignment as a marker of national sovereignty (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2023). The Forum highlighted public anxiety over Ireland's maritime and cyber vulnerabilities. However, there was also resistance to reforms that were perceived as undermining Ireland's UN-centred multilateralism.

Media narratives and expert analyses significantly influence the discourse. *The Irish Times* and RTÉ have emphasized Ireland's defence deficiencies, particularly in light of Russian maritime activities and the Russia-Ukraine War, framing neutrality as a potential constraint in addressing modern security challenges (O'Brennan, 2025; RTÉ News, 2023). *The Irish Times* advocates for a modernised neutrality that accommodates EU integration, citing Ireland's low defence spending (0.24% of GDP in 2024) as a liability

ahead of its 2026 EU Council presidency (Irish Times, 2025). RTÉ's 2023 documentary *Neutrality Under Pressure* underscored Ireland's reliance on NATO partners for maritime security, prompting calls for increased investment in naval and cyber capabilities (RTÉ News, 2023). The Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) has provided rigorous policy analysis and recommended a phased increase in defence spending to reach 0.5% of GDP by 2030, as well as deeper engagement with PESCO, in order to align with EU strategic autonomy while preserving neutrality (IIEA, 2024). Military experts, including contributors to the *Defence Forces Review*, argue that enhanced training and equipment are critical for Ireland to meet its PESCO commitments without compromising its non-aligned stance (Bury & Murphy, 2025).

The discourse is further influenced by civil society and grassroots movements. The Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA) has mobilised significant opposition to 'triple lock' reform, with a 2023 protest in Dublin supported by DiEM25 drawing over 1,500 participants to advocate for preserving Ireland's non-aligned identity (DiEM25, 2023). The notion of PANA frames reform as a precursor to NATO alignment is one that resonates with constituencies that are wary of EU militarisation. Conversely, youth-led initiatives such as Future of Ireland are proposing a reimagined neutrality, advocating for increased investment in cyber and maritime defences to safeguard sovereignty, whilst engaging in EU co-operative frameworks. The 2024 electoral campaign, entitled *Neutrality 2.0*, places significant emphasis on the concept of adaptive neutrality as a means to achieve an equilibrium between Ireland's normative role and its practical

security requirements (Future of Ireland, 2024). These contrasting movements highlight the polarised yet dynamic nature of public engagement, amplifying both traditionalist and reformist perspectives.

As illustrated in Figure 1, Ireland's model of adaptive neutrality can be considered a dynamic framework balancing identity and pragmatism. The diagram maps the interaction between historical foundations, domestic debates (e.g., the "triple lock"), and external pressures (notably the Russia–Ukraine war and Ireland's 2026 EU Council presidency), showing how these factors drive selective engagement through mechanisms like PESCO, the ITPP, and the Strategic Compass. Arrows represent the directional influence of structural drivers on Ireland's strategic recalibration, which ultimately results in a security posture grounded in soft balancing and normative power.

The factors influencing Ireland's strategic recalibration are numerous. Externally, Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and its maritime activities in Ireland's EEZ have heightened awareness of defence vulnerabilities, prompting calls for enhanced capabilities (Mulcahy, 2022; DW, 2023). Within the European Union, the country of Ireland is set to assume the role of Council presidency in 2026, a development that has led to mounting pressure to align with the Strategic Compass and demonstrate a commitment to collective security (Laffan, 2025). Domestically, the interplay of political ideologies – Fine Gael's pragmatism versus Sinn Féin's traditionalism – shapes the reform debate, while public engagement through the Consultative Forum and media coverage fosters a more informed but divided discourse (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2023; The Journal, 2023). The "triple lock" debate encapsulates these tensions, serving as a litmus test for Ireland's ability to reconcile its neutral identity

with the demands of European security integration. As Ireland navigates this critical juncture, its foreign policy trajectory will be contingent on achieving a balance between domestic consensus and the strategic imperatives of a rapidly evolving global order.

6. Conclusions

Ireland's foreign policy, historically grounded in military neutrality, finds itself at a critical juncture as it navigates the pressures of European security integration while endeavouring to preserve its non-aligned identity. This study has traced the evolution of Ireland's strategic posture, highlighting its shift from principled neutrality toward pragmatic engagement with EU and NATO frameworks, driven by geopolitical shifts, alliance expectations, and domestic debates. The analysis reveals a process of adaptive neutrality, wherein Ireland balances its commitment to non-alignment with selective participation in collective security initiatives. The final section of this study synthesises the findings, delineating their theoretical implications, addressing methodological limitations, offering practical recommendations, and identifying avenues for future research.

6.1. Theoretical Implications

Ireland's case calls into question established models of neutrality, which are generally regarded as static policies of non-involvement in military alliances or conflicts. The present study demonstrates that neutrality is a dynamic strategy, shaped by the interplay of national identity, geopolitics, and strategic necessity. Ireland's incremental engagement in EU defence initiatives, such as PESCO (four non-combat projects by 2023) and the Strategic Compass, alongside

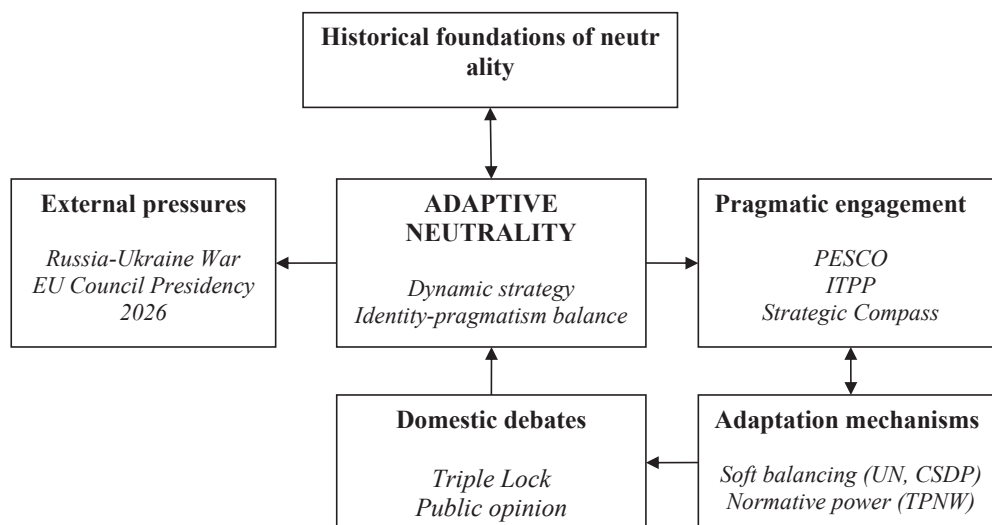


Figure 1. Ireland's adaptive neutrality in the European context

Source: compiled by the authors

cautious NATO co-operation through the Individual Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP), illustrates a redefinition of neutrality that accommodates practical security co-operation without formal alliance commitments. This recalibration is congruent with the notion of adaptive neutrality, which is in turn associated with the concept of soft balancing in small states (Archer et al., 2014) and with the concept of normative power (Manners, 2006). Evidence of soft balancing can be observed in Ireland's multilateral engagements through UN peacekeeping and selective PESCO participation, which enhance security without the need for alliance commitments. The norm of power undergirds Ireland's role as a peacebroker, leveraging its UN peacekeeping legacy to contribute to EU strategic autonomy while preserving non-alignment.

Ireland is a compelling case study of adaptive neutrality within an evolving European security landscape. Comparative analysis reveals divergent adaptation mechanisms. For example, Austria, which is bound by constitutional neutrality, robustly engages in PESCO by leading cyber defence projects, all the while maintaining non-alignment. This offers a model for Ireland's deeper integration without compromising sovereignty. By contrast, Sweden and Finland's NATO accession in 2024 reflects a threat-driven alignment that is absent in Ireland's context of low threat. Meanwhile, Malta's PESCO opt-out prioritises minimal engagement. Ireland's nuanced strategy leverages its normative identity as a small state to contribute to multilateral security efforts, challenging the idea that states must be either neutral or aligned. These findings advance international relations theory by highlighting the agency of small states in redefining neutrality as a proactive and flexible tool for navigating complex geopolitical landscapes.

6.2. Methodological Limitations

While the study's reliance on qualitative case-study methods and discourse analysis is robust, it has limitations. The absence of expert interviews means that insights into policymakers' motivations are restricted, and nuanced perspectives on "triple lock" reform or PESCO engagement may be overlooked. Drawing on media reports (e.g., *The Irish Times* and RTÉ), the discourse analysis may reflect editorial biases, as outlets such as *The Irish Times* advocate modernised neutrality, which could potentially skew public sentiment interpretations. Additionally, while the comparative analysis with Austria, Sweden and Malta is informative, it is constrained by the limited primary data available on the internal decision-making processes of these states, with the analysis relying primarily on secondary sources. Future research could address these gaps by conducting interviews

and sampling a broader range of media to enhance analytical depth.

6.3. Practical Recommendations

The domestic debate surrounding the "triple lock" mechanism reflects Ireland's challenge in balancing neutrality with European security integration. This study puts forward three reform scenarios for the "triple lock", each with different implications.

1. Maintaining the status quo. Retaining the approval of the UN Security Council, the government and the Dáil ensures continuity with Ireland's UN-centred multilateralism. However, this restricts the flexibility of EU-led crisis management missions, especially when vetoes prevent action, which could reduce Ireland's influence during its EU Council presidency in 2026.

2. Amending domestic legislation. Reforming the Defence Acts to remove the UN mandate while retaining government and Dáil approval would increase participation in EU and UN missions and align with the rapid response focus of the Strategic Compass. While this would address maritime and cyber vulnerabilities and preserve parliamentary oversight, it could provoke a backlash from traditionalists (e.g., Sinn Féin), so public communication would be needed to maintain legitimacy.

3. Developing an alternative approval mechanism. A hybrid EU-based approval process for non-combat missions could strike a balance between neutrality and flexibility. This could be modelled on Austria's approach to PESCO engagement, avoiding any constitutional breaches. While allowing contributions to PESCO, this approach mitigates concerns about NATO alignment. However, it requires careful design to align with Ireland's identity and the 61% of the public who support neutrality.

In order to enhance Ireland's security posture, it is recommended that the government increase defence spending to 0.5% of GDP by 2030. This target can be considered modest when compared to the 5% GDP goal set by NATO for its members by 2035, a benchmark that is reflected by Ireland's non-NATO status and neutral identity. In contrast to NATO's combat-focused strategy, Ireland's approach emphasises non-combat PESCO contributions, such as maritime surveillance and cybersecurity. This utilisation of EU funding is strategically designed to address hybrid threats, including Russian activities in the EEZ. Ireland's low debt-to-GDP ratio (43% in 2024) ensures fiscal sustainability, distinguishing it from NATO states facing debt pressures. The framing of this as a matter of safeguarding sovereignty and supporting EU strategic autonomy has the potential to maintain public support, particularly among younger, urban voters (40% of whom are open to the

"triple lock" reform), while countering traditionalist opposition.

In advance of its 2026 EU Council presidency, the Republic of Ireland should prioritise transparent stakeholder dialogue in order to build consensus. Ireland, by advocating for an EU defence policy that accommodates neutral states, has the potential to spearhead a "coalition of neutrals" alongside Austria and Malta. This coalition could utilise mechanisms such as joint PESCO project proposals or coordinated EU Council statements to advocate for non-militarised contributions, including cyber defence and disaster relief. This would enhance Ireland's normative influence, positioning it as a mediator between NATO-aligned and neutral EU members.

6.4. Future Research Directions

Comparative studies with Sweden and Finland could shed light on why Ireland's adaptive neutrality differs from their NATO alignment and assess its sustainability. Analysing Austria's PESCO mechanisms could provide Ireland with practical insights into engagement. Exploring the roles of small neutral states in EU strategic autonomy could clarify their influence on the development of non-militarised security frameworks. Finally, investigating a "coalition of neutrals" could examine the impact of specific coordination mechanisms, such as joint policy papers or PESCO leadership, on EU defence policy, thereby enriching the understanding of the relevance of neutrality in a rearming Europe.

References:

- Archer, C., Bailes, A. J. K., & Wivel, A. (Eds.) (2014). *Small states and international security: Europe and beyond*. Routledge.
- Boulter, J. (2023). Ireland's neutrality in a changing world: Challenges and opportunities. *Defence Forces Review*, 20, 45–62.
- Bury, P., & Murphy, D. (2025). No time to spare: Irish defence and security in 2025. *War on the Rocks*. Available at: <https://nosi.org/2025/03/18/no-time-to-spare-irish-defence-and-security-in-2025/>
- Cassar, V. (2024). Neutral yet aligned? Malta's security and defence identity as an EU member state. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 33(1), 1–20. Available at: <https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/events/20yearseumembers/ValentinaCassar.pdf>
- Cesarz, G., & Stadtmüller, E. (1996). Irish neutrality in historical perspective. *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 7, 133–147.
- Cooke, J. (2022). Ireland's defence capabilities: A review of strategic gaps. *Defence Forces Review*, 20, 12–28.
- Cottey, A. (2022). Ireland's defence policy and the shadow of neutrality. *Defence Forces Review*, 20, 29–44.
- Delanty, G. (2025). In the age of Trump and Putin, Irish neutrality is a comfortable but dangerous illusion. *LSE EUROPP Blog*. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2025/02/20/in-the-age-of-trump-and-putin-irish-neutrality-is-a-comfortable-but-dangerous-illusion/>
- Department of Defence. (2023). Tánaiste secures government approval to reform the triple lock. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-defence/press-releases/t%C3%A1naiste-secures-government-approval-to-reform-the-triple-lock/>
- Department of Defence. (2025). Minister Coveney welcomes Dáil approval of Defence Forces' participation in new PESCO projects. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-defence/press-releases/minister-coveney-welcomes-dail-approval-of-defence-forces-participation-in-new-pesco-projects>
- Department of Foreign Affairs. (2023). Consultative Forum on International Security Policy: Summary report. Government of Ireland. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-foreign-affairs/publications/terms-of-reference-consultative-forum-on-international-security-policy-june-2023/>
- Devine, K. (2011). Neutrality and the development of the European Union's common security and defence policy: Ireland's dilemma. *Irish Political Studies*, 26(2), 193–211. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2011.573003>
- DiEM25 (2023). Ireland: Protest says 'Yes' to neutrality, 'No' to militarisation. Available at: <https://diem25.org/ireland-protest-yes-neutrality-militarisation/>
- European External Action Service (2022). A Strategic Compass for security and defence. European Union. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/strategic-compass/>
- Fazio, G., & Rossi, A. (2023). European security & defence: Irish neutrality and European peace initiatives. *DCU Brexit Institute Blog*. Available at: <https://dcubrexitinstitute.eu/2023/04/european-security-and-defence-irish-neutrality-and-european-peace-initiatives/>
- Future of Ireland (2024). Neutrality 2.0: A vision for Ireland's security future. Available at: <https://futureofireland.ie/neutrality-2-0/>
- Goetschel, L. (2011). Neutrals as brokers of peacebuilding ideas? *Cooperation and Conflict*, 46(3), 312–333. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836711416956>
- Guzzini, S. (Ed.). (2017). *The return of geopolitics in Europe: Social mechanisms and foreign policy identity crises*. Cambridge University Press. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317207197>
- IIEA (Institute of International and European Affairs). (2024). Ireland's security future: Navigating neutrality and EU integration. Available at: <https://www.iiea.com/publications/irelands-security-future>

- Irish Times. (2025, April 19). Irish voters support neutrality by 2:1 margin but are less convinced on triple lock, poll finds. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2025/04/19/irish-voters-support-neutrality-by-2-1-margin-but-are-less-convinced-on-triple-lock-poll-finds/>
- Laffan, B. (2025, March 14). Europe is rapidly rearming. Will that leave neutral Ireland defenceless? *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/14/ireland-neutral-europe-rearm-triple-lock-donald-trump>
- Lee-Ohlsson, F. (2009). Sweden and the development of the European Security and Defence Policy: A bi-directional process of Europeanisation. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 44(2), 123–142. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836709102731>
- Manners, I. (2006). Normative power Europe reconsidered: Beyond the crossroads. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(2), 182–199. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501760500451600>
- Mulcahy, E. (2022). Ireland's maritime security challenges in the wake of geopolitical shifts. *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 33(1), 78–95.
- O'Brennan, J. (2025). Ireland's neutrality under attack: Shifting geopolitics bring pressure to change. *The Irish Times*. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2025/02/01/irelands-neutrality-under-attack-shifting-geopolitics-bring-pressure-to-change/>
- Oireachtas (2023a, May 23). Written answers: PESCO projects participation (Questions 186, 187). Available at: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2023-05-23/187/>
- Oireachtas (2023b, May 18). Dáil debate: Neutrality and the triple lock. Available at: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2023-05-18/32>
- Oireachtas (2024, October 17). Written answers: NATO cooperation and ITTP (Question 44). Available at: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2024-10-17/44/>
- Popławski, D. (2020). Neutrality in Austria's foreign and security policy after the Cold War. *Studia Europejskie – Studies in European Affairs*, 2, 105–120. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33067/SE.2.2020.6>
- Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces (2022). *Strengthening our defence forces: A pathway to LOA 2*. Government of Ireland.
- RTÉ News (2023, September 29). Govt 'unlikely' to expand PESCO involvement until next year. Available at: <https://www.rte.ie/news/2023/0929/1408118-pesco-ireland-defence/>
- Schwanberg, J. (2012). Ireland and the United Nations: A history of peacekeeping. *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 23, 67–84.
- Sinn Féin (2023). *A New Ireland in a Peaceful World: Sinn Féin's foreign policy vision*. Available at: https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2023/Sinn_Fein_Foreign_Policy_2023.pdf
- The Journal (2023a, July). Ireland takes first steps towards joining European security project to protect undersea cables. Available at: <https://www.thejournal.ie/ireland-pesco-undersea-cables-6116640-Jul2023/>
- The Journal (2023b, August). Ireland's neutrality: Support remains strong despite Ukraine war. Available at: <https://www.thejournal.ie/ireland-neutrality-ukraine-6148644-Aug2023>
- Wivel, A. (2005). The security challenge of small EU member states: Interests, identity and the development of the EU as a security actor. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 43(2), 393–412. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0021-9886.2005.00561.x>
- Wylie, P. (2006). *Ireland and the Cold War: Diplomacy and recognition, 1949–63*. Irish Academic Press.

Received on: 21th of July, 2025

Accepted on: 10th of September, 2025

Published on: 09th of October, 2025