

A FORCE FOR GOOD?

REFLECTIONS ON NEUTRALITY AND
THE FUTURE OF IRISH DEFENCE

With an open letter to Lt-General
Seán Clancy, Chief-of-Staff

Afri 

First published by Afri, 8 Cabra Road, Dublin 7, 2022

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ISBN 978-0-9511178-3-5

Designed and printed by AC Designs.

Afri would like to thank especially Larysa Karankovich, Rob Fairmichael and Andy Storey for their help in producing this book.

Dedicated with gratitude to the memory of
Gearóid Kilgallen, Dervla Murphy, Bruce Kent, and our Patron Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

PREFACE

These essays are a vital resource for reclaiming and reaffirming Irish Neutrality. They offer an antidote to the pandemic of violence and hatred which threatens our species and our planet, most recently endangering any dream of a Common European Home. Their authors have long and deep experience of working for peace and against militarism at every level from academic to activist, on this island and in the wider world.

They refute the lie that war ‘works’ – except for the arms industry and its hangers-on – and forensically probe the delusions and deceptions with which it is marketed. Against these, they set the overwhelming evidence of the destruction of lives and communities, of habitats and hopes, all in a context of climate crisis and the mind-numbing rhetoric of the nuclear priesthood.

My own experience of the horrors of violence led me to play my part in our Peace Process, which has been created, and must daily be sustained, by the courage and patience of so many individuals and groups. It is underpinned by the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, where the two Governments declared their commitment to exclusively peaceful and democratic conflict-resolution, and rejected any use or threat or force.

Yet, as I have witnessed in so many other conflict zones, both Governments have undermined these commitments by promoting the global arms race and the myth of a ‘war on terror’. The recent Defence Forces report urges further alignment of Irish policy with NATO-led EU militarisation: active neutrality and genuine UN-directed peacekeeping to be displaced by overseas force-projection and ‘war fighting capability’.

These well-grounded reflections will inform the urgent debate on neutrality and defence policy. They reassert Ireland’s commitment in *Bunreacht na hÉireann* to ‘peace and friendly co-operation amongst nations founded on international justice and morality... the pacific settlement of international disputes... [and] international law as its rule of conduct in its relations with other States’ (Article 29). We owe this to ourselves, and to our troubled world.

Mairead Maguire

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FOREWORD

Ireland should be a voice for Demilitarisation, De-escalation and Disarmament in the World

This collection of essays is a vital contribution to the discussion on the importance of Irish neutrality, and its role as the bedrock of Irish foreign and defence policy. Neutrality was perhaps never more impactful than during Frank Aiken's tenure as Ireland's Minister for External Affairs and his promotion of progressive policies within the UN regarding the rights of small nations and the urgent need for disarmament. These eventually led to the adoption of the non-proliferation treaty in 1970. Dr Karen Devine powerfully illustrates the enduring relevance of Aiken's ideas, even in relation to the current crisis in Ukraine: decades ago, he proposed a 'safety zone' in Europe to head off potential superpower conflict.

Frank Aiken created a template for Irish foreign policy, and remained an inspiration for many years afterwards. The practical result has been that Ireland was not a participant in the war industry, and pursued an entirely non-aggressive foreign policy. Irish Defence Forces were used overseas exclusively for peacekeeping duties, serving with great distinction and often at great cost in some of the most intractable areas of conflict around the world.

Despite the fact that it has been such a positive force in the world and the fact that it is supported by the majority of Irish people, Irish governments have consistently sought to undermine, dilute and debase our neutrality, most markedly in recent years. Afri has been persistently among the groups that raised a red flag regarding the military implications of successive EU treaties. We were invariably accused of scaremongering, only to be told later that in those self-same treaties we had indeed agreed to a further step towards militarisation. We have also vociferously opposed the use of Shannon as a US war-port, and supported the courageous people who have taken non-violent direct action to expose our government's complicity in war crimes. These activists include US Veteran for Peace Tarak Kauff, whose tribute to Irish neutrality is included in this publication.

Our planet is teetering on a precipice, with less than a decade left to avoid catastrophic climate change. The war industry is undoubtedly one of the primary contributors to global warming, through its massive consumption of fossil fuels and its pounding of our planet with indescribably destructive weapons systems. Yet, in this context, and in the midst of a homelessness, housing and health crisis, what does our Government do? It hosts a seminar, introduced by Minister Simon Coveney, to encourage Irish companies and Third Level Colleges to become involved in the war industry; it proposes the greatest ever increase in military expenditure; and – already involved in Battle Groups and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) – a Taoiseach from Aiken’s own Fianna Fáil party now openly contemplates formally joining NATO. And this happens while the Green Party is a partner in Government!

More than ever, as war rages in so many areas around the world and as two nuclear armed ‘superpowers’ actively engage in a proxy war, the world urgently needs voices calling for, and countries working towards, de-escalation, demilitarisation and disarmament. Carol Fox, and Professor Iain Attack, emphasise how Ireland is ideally placed to be such a voice, as it has been for many generations.

We could and should deploy the ‘soft power’ acquired largely through our neutrality, giving us the diplomatic voice which has been rightly called the envy of the world. Our governments, against our wishes, have opted instead to become a cog in the gears of the war machine; what an arrogant, foolish and shameful betrayal of past, present and future generations.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Mairead Maguire outlines the horrific cost of war and violence, resonating with Afri’s ‘Just a Second’ programme for secondary schools and third-level Institutes. This programme addresses the twofold immorality of the war industry, which not only kills and destroys people and planet but also diverts scarce resources from our real needs for food, clean water, housing, health care and education. In a significant and highly symbolic project some years ago, Afri supported 26 anti-poverty projects around the world with the equivalent of ‘just a second’ of the mind-numbing annual cost of the global arms trade.

But why do our Government and military personnel feel the urge to join forces with the former colonial powers in their projects – a movement that was underway long before Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine? This publication includes an open

letter to Chief of Staff General Clancy from Professor John Maguire, challenging him and his colleagues to justify the determination to deflect Ireland from the path of peacekeeping and into the arms of the war industry. It also challenges the Government to undertake the long-promised and much needed debate on Irish neutrality which successive governments have assiduously avoided.

Despite the constant hollowing out and demeaning of neutrality, we will continue to defend this proud and practical policy and to demand that the militaristically minded minority respect the will of the people on this critically important issue. We owe it to our children to challenge the reckless addiction to war and violence, which wreaks havoc on human beings as well as on the natural world and even threatens the annihilation of our very planet home itself.

Joe Murray

Director, Afri

NEUTRALITY: FRANK AIKEN'S LEGACY AND ITS LESSONS FOR THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

Dr. Karen Devine

This contribution has two main aims. The first is to explain why Ireland's neutrality-based foreign policy approach is such a valuable resource in the realm of international relations and the promotion of peace. It also aims to highlight how the framework and plans to secure peace in Europe, put forward by Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Frank Aiken, at the United Nations in the 1950s and '60s, might serve as a blueprint for the resolution of the current Ukraine crisis.

In paying homage to the foresight, independence and courage of Ireland's neutrality-based foreign-policy activism at the UN, we can see how the continued diminution of this important and valuable legacy by recent Irish governments will result in further deterioration in European and global security. Our collective failure to pursue the goal of a just peace will undoubtedly cause further suffering and destruction, not just for humankind but for all creatures whose home is Planet Earth.

Ireland's history, values and identity - principles that drive foreign policy

Ireland's colonial and postcolonial experiences, with the derived values of the promotion of self-determination, anti-imperialism, and anti-militarism, from the outset defined Ireland's contribution to peace proposals at the United Nations (UN). Our first Minister for External Affairs to address the UN, Liam Cosgrave, outlined that "Ireland is unique in that it is the only Western European country which has the long experience of having been treated as a colony - not just of having been temporarily occupied during a war, but of having been governed, during many generations, by a foreign country whose rule our people rejected and strove to shake off" (603rd UN Plenary meeting, paragraphs 112-113, 30 November 1956).

Ireland's diplomats and ministers used this history to claim some understanding of the psychology of opposing belligerents, and always appealed to both sides in conflicts. Frank Aiken outlined it as follows: "like many of our fellow Members here, we are a young state, but a people with a proud and ancient history... [It] is as such a country that we speak here today in the hope that our profound conviction, born of long experience of tragic frustration, may carry weight with this Assembly" (Aiken, UN General Assembly 12th Session, 23 September 1957, paragraph 29).

To the present day, Irish ambassadors explain that most UN member states are small states, many of them former colonies, and these states identify with Ireland's size and history, and with Ireland's commitment to the rule of law, equality, justice and multilateralism and her discourses, policies and voting positions on decolonisation and disarmament at the UN. This 'soft power' is a valuable asset in any work to secure global peace and prosperity.

The foreign policy principles of the creator of the European détente plan

Frank Aiken insisted Ireland should maintain her "independence and not become part of any tied group bound by agreements to support one another no matter what the subject for discussion" (Skelly, 1997: 92-93). This unwavering sense of independence is what underpinned Aiken's radical, ground-breaking proposals, including the 'Area of Laws' formula – and the fact that the great Powers did not always embrace them – reinforced Ireland's independent identity at the UN. Aiken was renowned at the UN for never caving in to pressure from the British or the Americans. (Skelly, 1997: 95) In short, acting from the value of independence reinforces the value and identity of Ireland at the UN in a virtuous cycle. And it was Ireland's neutrality that enabled this vitally important, independent 'bloody maverick' position.

This is an important point to make in relation to the contemporary context of the Ukraine crisis, because Aiken's belief that a small neutral state had a crucial role to play in UN diplomacy is not shared by recent Irish governments. Instead, those governments' increasing alignment with and absorption of French and German neo-imperialist foreign policy positions through the European Union –

diminishing our hard-won identity as a 'bloody maverick' – means that a huge opportunity for Ireland to contribute to peace has been lost. Much of the rest of this contribution argues that the development and application of Aiken's European détente plans to the Ukrainian situation would save lives, reduce the intensity and duration of the conflict, and ultimately provide a blueprint for peace.

The principles of the European détente plan

Frank Aiken outlined a sophisticated and plausible framework for peace and security in Europe, and other conflict-ridden areas of the world, in a series of General Assembly Plenary Meetings at the United Nations. Put simply, Aiken argued that peace is founded on the elimination of areas of conflict, thereby supporting the 'superstructure' of international agreements to limit weapons. Specifically, as the plans relate to the current crisis in Ukraine, on 20th September 1957 Aiken proposed a 'safety zone' for détente in Europe to head off potential superpower military engagement and conflict (drawing on Plenary meeting no. 669, 12th Session, 1957):

In the debate on Hungary [669th meeting], we made suggestions as to how in Europe a safety zone could be substituted for an area of potential conflict. Progressive military disengagement in Europe, along the lines which we suggested, would be a major contribution towards the building of peace.

The following section uses extracts from Aiken's peace proposals, delivered between 1957 and 1963 through General Assembly speeches at the UN, and examines the applicability of the criteria contained therein to resolving the current Ukrainian crisis.

Aiken's 1960 speech outlined three primary safety measures: Firstly, control the incidence of flash points, to stop the development of situations in which the nuclear powers might become too deeply involved and from which they could not retreat without loss of prestige. Secondly, contain nuclear weapons and stop their spread to further countries. (Aiken was working on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to further that goal). The third safety measure

was to turn the critical areas of tension in the world into peaceful areas of law: "By an area of law I mean a specific region or zone in which the neighbouring States would agree to limit their arms below "blitzkrieg" level, to exclude foreign troops from their territories and to accept supervision by the United Nations of the fulfilment of these conditions" (Fifteenth Session, 6 October, 1960).

The principal elements of Aiken's proposals are:

The elimination of:

- colonialism,
- 'spheres of influence',
- imperialist empire-building by great Powers; funding, arming and subsidisation of other peoples in related proxy wars; and any hateful propaganda campaigns.

The introduction of:

- nuclear weapon-free zones,
- safety zones and Areas of Law, underpinned by the neutrality of surrounding states,
- bolstering the independence and self-determination of buffer states, with
- disarmament agreements policed by the United Nations and the use of peacekeeping forces to safeguard same.

Colonial, Imperialist, Militarist Empire-Building

France, as one half of the Franco-German so-called 'juggernaut' within EU member-states, enjoyed commercial monopolies over strategic minerals, oil and uranium in Francophone Africa. These were written into agreements signed upon independence in the 1960s, leaving behind a French military presence to prop up 'friendly' governments threatened by internal dissent. This was accepted by France's allies as part of anti-Soviet Cold War strategic arrangements. In response to Algerian nationalist movements seeking decolonisation and independence, Aiken declared that "The French Government must abandon the theory which the loi-cadre asserts: the theory that Algeria is an integral part of France". Essentially, neo-imperialism must be called out and opposed:

the ending of imperialism is not only in the interests of the subject peoples, of peace and of the general good, but in the specific interests of the peoples of the imperial countries themselves. ...[That] campaign must start from a very much greater respect for the freedom of weaker peoples. It must bring the end of imperialism in all its shapes and forms, whether direct or indirect, Eastern or Western, diplomatic or military, capitalist or communist... (Aiken, UN General Assembly Twelfth Session, 20 September 1957, paragraph 20)

Aiken went on to declare:

the liquidation of colonialism is another top priority item on the agenda. My delegation wishes to reaffirm its unalterable opposition to colonial domination in all forms and manifestations. (Aiken, General Assembly Seventeenth Session, 4 October 1962, paragraph 31)

Just as in the present conflict in Ukraine, the EU, and in particular France and Germany, allied with the United States of America, must let go of their long-held imperialist goal of an EU 'Empire' (Barroso, 4 December 2007) incorporating all of eastern and central Europe, including Ukraine. Prior to the 2014 Western coup (Mearsheimer, 2014: 4, 5) in Ukraine, forcing Ukrainian Prime Minister Yanukovich from office (discussed more fully below), Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov accused the EU of trying to create a "sphere of influence" in eastern Europe. In the eyes of Russian leaders, EU expansion is a stalking horse for NATO expansion (Mearsheimer, 2014: 3). And Russian President Vladimir Putin maintained that admitting Ukraine to NATO would represent a "direct threat" to Russia.

France and Germany have used the departure of the UK from the EU ("Brexit") as an opportunity to allocate a large increase in EU military spending, in the European Commission's announcement of a budget of twenty-seven and a half billion euro for the period 2021-2027 (EU, 9 October 2019). These monies are being used to expand arms production and the European military-industrial complex, and to alter roads and tunnels across Europe to enable tanks and armoured carriers to cross the continent, west to east, to fight Russia. All this accords with the aforementioned Franco-German-sponsored, US-backed coup on 22 February 2014 to overthrow Viktor Yanukovich because he had failed to sign an EU association agreement.

Having fled the country, Yanukovych was replaced by a puppet leader who, 24 hours later, ensured Parliament voted to repeal minority language laws, effectively criminalising anyone speaking the Russian language – targeting the Russian-speaking and ethnic Russian Ukrainian population in the eastern part of the country. Meanwhile this Western-orchestrated war in Ukraine (Mearsheimer, 2014) is being used as the perfect excuse to push public opinion in Denmark to join the European Union military-industrial complex: as Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen claims, “when there is once again war on our continent, you can’t be neutral” (*Le Monde*, 2 June 2022) – and, successfully and sadly, for Sweden and Finland to join NATO.

Great Powers’ Proxy Warfare

Proxy wars between states or non-state actors are instigated and funded by big powers that are not directly involved in the conflicts. Aiken’s peace proposals were designed to dismantle this system, as he declared: “The great Powers must reach an agreement to halt their present acute diplomatic competition, involving the selective arming and subsidizing of weaker peoples” (Twelfth Session, 20 September, 1957). However, the USA, EU, France, Germany and the UK are unwilling to desist from providing funding, military training and arms to Ukraine, given the financial incentives involved in the military-industrial complex and system of martial capitalism, from which the leaders of those states traditionally benefit. Russia is no less unwilling to desist on the other side, leading to the near total destruction of Ukraine, its infrastructure, economy and political system. As Aiken foretold:

by the intensity of their competition the great Powers become more and more deeply implicated in the internal policies of this vital and troubled region... the rivalry of the great Powers, sapping the spirit of independence and self-reliance of the smaller nations, constantly tends to promote civil wars - the most cruel of all wars - and national wars among the peoples of this region. If that result were sought by deliberate long term policy, it would be hard to find terms strong enough to condemn the callousness of the calculators... This competition, with its play of alliances and counter-alliances, with the overt or suppressed local resentments which it causes, may easily get

out of the control of the participants, both great and small, and ignite a general war. (Twelfth Session, 20 September, 1957).

Protection for the Rights of People from Small Nations and for Minorities

Aiken defended the existence and rights of small nations and their peoples on the question of Tibet in 1959: “we believe that whenever the rights of a small people are forcibly violated... the representatives of other small peoples in this Assembly have the duty to speak out”. (Aiken, Fourteenth Session, 7 October 1959, paragraph 30). Applying this principle to the current crisis in Ukraine requires Ireland to demand that US and European leaders “encourage Ukraine to respect minority rights, especially the language rights of its Russian speakers” (Mearsheimer, 2014: 11). The rights of a small people and minorities are based on the principles of self-determination and independence which, along with neutrality, were basic tenets of Aiken’s European détente plans.

Self-Determination, Independence and Neutrality

As Aiken suggested in the Areas of Law plan, for peace to reign, smaller states around the Areas of Law and Safety Zone must declare their neutrality: “The Irish delegation has suggested that there should be a military and diplomatic drawing back in Middle Europe”. Furthermore, “States can play their part, if they desire to do so, by declaring neutrality which the great Powers and United Nations should guarantee” (Thirteenth Session, 19 September 1958, Paragraphs 89 and 87). Applying Aiken’s strategy to the present crisis, Ukraine should declare neutrality and reject involvement in either the Russian or Western political orbits.

This is a democratically supported path, as opinion polling showed that a neutral, democratic, peaceful Ukraine, supported in its resistance to the influences of either Russia to the east, or the aforementioned Western Powers on the other flank, is what the population in Ukraine, in the east and west of the state, desired (Mearsheimer, 2014). The foundation of this path is respect for the self-determination of the people in Ukraine – a core value of Aiken’s détente plans and Ireland’s wider approach to the functioning of the international system

and the UN: "The principle of self-determination of peoples ought, we believe, to be the great master principle by which this Assembly should be guided in its quest for a just and peaceful world order" (20 September, 1957, paragraph 29).

Disarmament and Peacekeeping

The success of Aiken's proposed 'safety zone' and 'Areas of Law' in central Europe was dependent on the participating states' enjoying independence and neutrality. A key element of his proposals, consistent over the years, was to include a) disarmament spaces, and b) support for these zones and areas through peacekeeping. He argued for subject states "not to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons or other weapons of blitzkrieg or mass-destruction, and secondly to subject themselves to United Nations inspection to ensure that they are keeping to that agreement" and for Members to "be prepared to support a permanent United Nations force designed to protect one such area" (23 September 1959).

Aiken's 1963 contribution pushed more vigorously for the UN to upgrade its peacekeeping capacity to support such plans, saying:

I would again suggest that, wherever possible, regional groups of States should combine to organize and establish areas of law and limited armaments. Such groups, I would urge, should agree to settle their disputes on the basis of law or by means of conciliation, and should also agree to restrict their armaments to police level and to refrain from acquiring nuclear weapons or amassing major offensive weapons such as heavy tanks, planes and missiles. Such groupings based on mutual co-operation, restricted armaments and the rule of law, would constitute major contributions to world peace and stability. It should be the special interest of the United Nations, including the nuclear Powers, to foster their development and to defend them against outside interference in their affairs. The time is now ripe, I submit, for the United Nations to adopt a more positive role in international conciliation and to improve the efficiency of our

peacekeeping machinery... [N]ational units should be especially trained and held ready for instant dispatch on peace-keeping missions. (18th Session, 3 October 1963, paragraphs 18-19, 22)

Critics of Aiken's Radical Peace Plans for Central Europe

Ireland's small-state, postcolonial, independent neutrality led to a decolonising, anti-imperialist, nuclear-free, demilitarisation formula for peace in central Europe at the United Nations in the 1950s and 60s. That formula is wholly pertinent to resolving the current conflict in central and eastern Europe. I fundamentally disagree with Skelly's assessment of Aiken's plans for a troop withdrawal scheme and his neutral 'Areas of Law' zones in central Europe as 'overreaching' (1997: 163). Aiken himself told the UN:

It would be presumptuous to expect a miraculous peace. Building a stable peace will require not only great skill and wisdom and respect for the rights and interests of all peoples, great and small, but, above all, patience, tolerance and charity. (Thirteenth Session, 19 September 1958, paragraph 77).

For common sense rejects the fatalistic argument that, because we cannot at once by force or persuasion, secure total disarmament and the universal application of the rule of law, we should make no attempt to apply the law as and where we can, and no attempt to prevent nuclear weapons becoming the normal equipment of an ever-increasing number of armies. (Fourteenth Session, 23 September 1959, paragraph 63).

The achievement of peace based on law requires positive but limited sacrifices, which may not eventually be forthcoming, but which it is our duty to seek, each according to his ability and influence, and to seek without fear or favour. It may be said that such projects are visionary. Perhaps they are, but those who like to use that word to describe any far-reaching suggestion for peace would be well advised to keep another vision before their eyes: a vision of what the third

world war would mean for mankind. (Twelfth Session, 20 September 1957, paragraph 20).

We realize, much as we would wish it otherwise, however, that effectively controlled world disarmament and the universal rule of law cannot be attained in a single spectacular bound. But we can start moving towards these desirable ends with assurance of success, even if it takes many decades to attain them – if all Members of the United Nations sincerely recognize and agree upon them as our ultimate objectives, and if each is determined to work for them as if the fate of mankind depended upon its sole will. (23 September 1959)

Aiken was not over-reaching simply because the great Powers were unlikely to embrace these proposals; he was carrying out Ireland's duty, as a small state, to pursue peace and carve out a path towards that goal. Ireland was as critical of Russian imperialism (Cosgrave, Eleventh Session, 30 November 1956) as it was of American or European imperialism, and stood up to all of those states at the UN without fear or favour in the pursuit of a just peace. Ireland was also realistic and fair enough to acknowledge that neither of the belligerents can be put in a position of losing face in any resolution of conflict.

Conclusion

Ireland used her postcolonial identity and history to gain support from other UN members. A fiercely-guarded commitment to independence from big power pressures, facilitated by an equally strong commitment to neutrality, produced radical and far-reaching proposals for peace in central Europe. Frank Aiken's formulae for peace are vitally relevant to resolving the Ukrainian situation today: the introduction of nuclear weapon-free zones, safety zones and Areas of Law underpinned by the neutrality of surrounding states; the independence and self-determination of buffer states, with disarmament agreements policed by the United Nations and the use of peacekeeping forces to safeguard such agreements; the elimination of colonialism and of imperialist empire-building by great Powers through their spheres of influence, their funding, arming and subsidisation of weaker peoples in related proxy wars, and their hateful propaganda campaigns. In failing to promote these core elements of Aiken's peace-policy legacy, the

current Irish Government has failed to uphold the historical values of Irish foreign policy, which so many died to bring into existence.

An independent, truthful media is almost non-existent as EU-led governmental war propaganda swamps “news” sources with discourses that ignore the fundamental principles and components of neutrality, characterising it as meaningless or as requiring redefinition so as to be compatible with the European Union’s ‘big power’ military ambitions. Neutrality has rarely been allowed as a topic of discussion in its own right, and instead is subordinated to discussion of the merits and demands of NATO membership and of EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mandates.

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said that the public constitute the third great superpower in international diplomacy (Budapest, 30 June 2000). The issue of Big Power interests being served comes into play in public perceptions: many see NATO and the EU not as values-based alliances (upholding democracy, progress, peace, the rule of law) but as interests-based alliances (Heller and Rényi, 2003: 323-325). Just as the public perceived NATO’s interventions in the war in Bosnia negatively, driven by selfish interests (Heller, 2003: 276), the same may be seen in public attitudes towards Western interventions in the Ukrainian conflict.

Referring to imperialist superpower military interventions in third states, Liam Cosgrave opined that democratic governments would withdraw troops (603rd meeting, paragraph 108, 30 November 1956) in response to national and global public demands. However, with today’s military funding and planning decisions being driven at a level above the state – the EU – and with the use of private military corporations rather than nation-state soldiers, there is now much less prospect of any democratic control over the mechanics of conflict. The knowledge required for public activism on the conflict is also stymied, if not virtually extinguished, under the weight of government propaganda.

The onus disproportionately, and admittedly unfairly, falls on non-governmental sources of power, a small number of Independent TDs, such as Catherine Connolly and Thomas Pringle, smaller political parties, and the ever-vital work of NGOs such as Afri, PANA, Shannonwatch, Irish CND and others linked to the Irish Anti-War Movement to assert Irish neutrality-based peace proposals, in the face of unrelenting harassment and abuse from establishment quarters. Generations

of Irish leaders died in the struggle for the principles they believed in; if we fail at least to take a stand in support of their hard-won values, then we, along with other fellow peoples caught up in conflict, will end up paying, in some harsh and likely fatal way, for our failure to stand up for what we should have struggled to maintain.

Dr. Karen Devine is a lecturer in European Union policies and politics, Gender and Politics, Irish Foreign Policy, Gender and Security, and Research Methodologies, at Dublin City University. She has published numerous journal articles and papers on issues including Irish Neutrality, Gender & Education, and Ireland and the European Union. She is a frequent contributor to various media outlets including TV, radio and newspapers.

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THE TRUE COST OF VIOLENCE AND WAR

Mairead Maguire, Nobel Peace Prize Winner

We all know the cost of violence and war in economic, physical and psychological damage done to people. There are lots of websites giving the information. We can watch the horrors of war every day on our television. Search Google, or any search engines, and ask any question about war and in a moment we get the information.

We live in an incredible age of technology which makes clear the cost in money and weaponry, lives lost and damaged and resultant migrants, refugees, etc. The cost of militaries to the environment and national budgets spent on horrific weapons should instead be spent on human security, health care, infrastructure, climate change, education, peacebuilding, etc. But does this information technology, do these facts, figures and histories, really bring home to us the deeper cost of violence and war: the billions of lives that have been shattered and destroyed and will never be the same again?

War never ends, and when the guns have been silenced and the peace agreements reached, the lives it has destroyed will never recover. In my own life, I have lived the horror of war with my family and that is why I have a passion for peace and will never give consent to war or weapons in my name. In 1976 my young sister Ann, while out walking her children, was hit by a paramilitary getaway car and her three children were killed and she herself dangerously injured. Ann recovered slightly but went on to take her own life several years later, as she could not live with the emotional and physical pain of losing her children.

After violence and war many people never recover. They are like the walking dead, wanting every moment to escape from the suffering, pain, and harshness of life. If people allowed themselves to feel compassion for and empathize with

the suffering of those who have been injured or had someone killed, they would not so glorify war and militarism, or offer their young to do their killing or dying for others. No cause is worth killing or dying for, and governments who send money and weapons to far-off lands and encourage the citizens or armies to kill are complicit in murder. Wars, ethnic conflicts, invasions are mass violence.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine was wrong and should be recognised as the old way of dealing with problems. Violence is always wrong. The violence we do to ourselves and to others is like a disease which eats away at our heart and soul and makes us emotionally and mentally sick. Depression hits entire societies and many thousands of people commit suicide as they lose all hope. Violence hardens our hearts and makes us bitter and resentful towards everyone. We are angry at everyone – ourselves, others, the world – and enemies are easy to find. Once someone has hurt us we decide we will hurt them and often revenge is best served cold. It's easy to hold and feed revenge and choosing to forgive is hard. Violence leads to more violence.

We sometimes choose, instead of forgiving, to arm ourselves and our countries against 'the enemy' and kill them before they kill us. Too often enmity and revenge become the values by which we live our lives. Demonizing 'the other' becomes toxic, so we can talk of 'nuking' and 'burning alive' and destroying their economy and putting on 'sanctions' or sending in armies 'to punish or destroy', and the words forgiveness and reconciliation disappear from the rhetoric of people and politicians.

We and our Governments become 'bullies' by proxy, putting children, families, societies into modern-day slavery, taking their land and resources for our own benefit because we feel superior to them and simply because we can do this without conscience or respect for human dignity and equality. As a child I used to read the prayer 'Oh take away our hearts of stone and give us hearts of love'. Listening to media, arms corporations, Military and Politicians pumping out war propoganda and blatant lies and fake news, boasting about how many people were killed today and their homes destroyed and sending billions and encouraging citizens to take up arms, sophisticated weapons and kill, kill, kill, I feel so sad. Where is our compassion? Where is our empathy? Where is our sense of truth and justice? Don't we feel the pain of the young person who is forced to kill his fellow traveller and live with the memory of doing so for the rest of his life?

Don't we feel the pain of the person who is in a tank and destroying homes of other people, or will himself be burnt inside this war machine?

We in the 21st century cannot call ourselves civilized people as long as we indulge in our mass murder of each other for any reason whatsoever. Violence is never right. During the violent ethnic/political conflict in Northern Ireland, I listened for peace voices. I hungered for clear leadership speaking out unambiguously against violence and for peace. Sadly, for so long there was always a BUT... and an excuse made for those using violence! It was as if those who could have spoken out and demanded an end to violence were hypnotized into believing that violence worked and it was alright to let it go on.

I believe we must join our voices to say clearly that militarism, nuclear weapons, wars are not the tools of peace and justice. Our world is at a very dangerous crossroads and we as the human family must choose. Do we continue on the road of NATO, weapons and war or do we choose the world of Peace and Nonviolence? Martin Luther King once said that his country, the USA, was the greatest purveyor of violence in the world; I agree. But we all have a responsibility for the violence in our own lives and countries and our governments' policies; we cannot feel self-justified and place the blame on others, but must play our part in changing from violence to nonviolence.

We, the human family, are on a dangerous trajectory to World War Three. The mainstream media, here and everywhere else in the West, have been brought under close and firm control. Voices calling for peace and negotiations and offering alternatives to violence and war are silenced. If one does not keep to the official narrative they will be silenced or sidelined. Where is the space for peaceful dissent to war and weapons and the militarization of the world led primarily by USA/NATO in their quest to fulfil the US's stated Policy of 'Full Spectrum Dominance'? However, there are countries who refuse to be pulled into NATO, and uphold their proud tradition of neutrality, choosing peace and not to be part of the US/NATO dominated global war machine.

In Northern Ireland, thirty years of ethnic/political violence ceased with the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in 1998 marking a commitment to move from force to exclusively peaceful and democratic means of resolving conflict. But both governments, UK and Republic, are betraying this commitment through

their involvement with NATO. Contrary to its claims, NATO is not a defensive organization. Its purpose from the start has been to act as an instrument for US world domination and to prevent all challenges to US hegemony. Instead of extending NATO (and allowing it to demonize Russia and China) it should be abolished, and efforts made by a real International Community to build relations amongst the nations based on peaceful co-operation and development for humanity.

An International Community dealing with the real challenges of poverty, climate change, pandemics, and human security will need all our combined efforts, built on forgiveness, reconciliation and trust. Such an approach would give hope to humanity, and the youth of all countries would be capable of sharing a vision built on joy and beauty and hope.

We as Peoples of the World call on President Zelenskiy to work with President Putin to call an immediate ceasefire and carry out negotiations to find a solution to this problem and stop the killing. We call on USA/UK Governments to halt all military aid and encourage a negotiated settlement for the sake of all the people who are suffering so much. Neutrality for Ireland can be used as a model of hope within the UN Security Council if the rush to the militarization of Europe and the world is firmly rejected as a way forward for humanity.

Mairead Maguire is a Nobel Peace Prize Winner and co-founder of the Peace People. Since winning the Peace Prize she has devoted her life to promoting peace and opposing war and the weapons industry in many conflict zones around the world. She is deeply committed to Nonviolence, which she describes as 'a way of life which always rejects violence and killing, and instead applies the force of love and truth as a means to transform conflict and the root causes of conflict'.



Victims: this monument, located in Merrion Square opposite Government Buildings and Leinster House, depicts victims of war, soldiers who die and families who grieve them. ©Photo by Derek Speirs

‘TOWARDS A SAFER TOMORROW’? AN OPEN LETTER TO LT-GENERAL SEÁN CLANCY

Professor John Maguire

Dear General Clancy,

I trust that this letter finds you well. I also trust it will find you at all. It’s probably rare for a member of the public to write directly to our Chief of Staff. I hope you will find the time to read my letter, and respond to its contents.

Why bother a busy person with my considerations? Because they concern a crisis for us all: the gulf between our recent (and projected) military policies and the values and perceptions of the majority of our people. This matters particularly in Ireland, where the People are the cornerstone of our Constitution.

Along with a right, Article 6 imposes a *duty* on each of us. The Defence Forces’ Dignity Charter lists ‘*moral*’ along with ‘physical’ courage. As citizens we may rely on our soldiers’ physical courage, but we cannot ‘outsource’ our *moral* courage: we must know, and own, what we ask our soldiers to do.

Article 29 declares our commitment to ‘peace and friendly co-operation amongst nations founded on international justice and morality... pacific settlement of international disputes by international arbitration or judicial determination... [and] the generally recognised principles of international law’. There is no additional clause that, failing the above, we may threaten or attack people.

Article 28 does indeed mention war but, particularly given Article 29, this clearly envisages defence of the national territory rather than any notion of pre-emption or of ‘force-projection’ overseas. These are not airy, abstract principles: they are a practical promise of who we are and how we will interact with our world. They were previously practised through active neutrality, work for disarmament, and UN-directed peacekeeping.

Recent governments have insisted that successive EEC/EU and NATO military developments have properly reflected, indeed *enhanced*, such a policy; we, the people, all along had apparently no need for concern. Now, overnight, we're told that all along we have been out of touch with 'reality'. Even membership of NATO, a nuclear-armed alliance, is now something we should apparently consider.

This is a huge policy crisis, of our politicians' making. At least they now admit there *is* a gulf, but how do they plan to bridge it? Do the People need to be brought into line with the 'new reality' – or does *it* need to be realigned with our explicit constitutional commitments?

It says something positive about our society that I can even envisage writing this letter. Though it has been seriously degraded, we retain significant elements of a democratic republic. This encourages me to write to you at a most fundamental level: as it were, John Citizen to Seán Citizen!

Where do we now stand? The official story reports a lengthy and appropriate **process** of updating our defence **policy**, which the recent Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces (CDF)¹ rounds off with well-founded proposals for **practice**.

Many of us have consistently and coherently argued over decades that the process has been seriously and demonstrably flawed, producing an unhinged and incoherent policy, which must be replaced by a realistic and acceptable practice.

WHAT EINSTEIN ACTUALLY SAID – AND DID

I joined last November's webinar on EU funding for military-related enterprise here. In your closing remarks you urged that we should 'collaboratively explore towards a safer tomorrow'². You invoked two eminent figures: Einstein and Buckminster Fuller. I was puzzled to hear them quoted in support of weapons

¹<https://www.military.ie/en/public-information/publications/report-of-the-commission-on-defence-forces/>

²<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/customer%40defence.ie?compose=SxfkdqLZkcNXtStM-XVcJKPwITmnkNkkMTgQtLvnkCnFwHzkqSQvnhMjchbWmPstdkMTsBRXTJkLgzgQzqbdctMIsSZVhfDnMZQZLPWPhLgPkdLmkFXB&projector=1> Text kindly supplied by Dept of Defence,

production.

I've tried to grasp Einstein's Theory of Relativity, but I've also studied his thinking on war and peace, particularly the threat of nuclear war. You told us Einstein had said 'We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them'. There are two problems here.

First, it's doubtful Einstein ever said those exact words. Secondly, what he *did* say expressed his rejection of war as such. Does this matter, except to pedantic professors? I think it matters greatly here, because of where Einstein actually said something close to what you mention. It was in a telegram quoted in the *New York Times* of 25th May 1946: 'a new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels.'

Far from some new version of military policy, Einstein was promoting the urgent search for peace that preoccupied his final years. His partner was the philosopher Bertrand Russell – a fellow Nobel laureate (Literature, 1950). In December 1954 Russell gave a chilling radio talk, 'Man's Peril'³. His script became a letter which he hoped prominent scientists and others would sign, primarily Einstein in Princeton.

Russell was flying from Rome to Paris when the pilot announced the news of Einstein's death. "I felt shattered, not only for the obvious reasons, but because I saw my plan falling through without his support. But, on my arrival at my Paris hotel, I found a letter from him agreeing to sign." Einstein's letter, written exactly a week before his death in April 1955, stated categorically: "I am gladly willing to sign your excellent statement." Russell noted: "This was one of the last acts of his public life."⁴

Russell carried the work forward with Joseph Rotblat, the only scientist who had actually resigned from the Manhattan Project. The resulting Russell-Einstein Manifesto, published on 9th July 1955, sounded the alarm on nuclear weapons and led to the famous Pugwash Conferences.

The Manifesto resonates as clearly today as it did in 1955, perhaps even more

³<http://digitalarchive.mcmaster.ca/islandora/object/macrepo%2FA91946>

⁴<https://expo.mcmaster.ca/s/scientists-for-peace/page/einstein-s-approval-of-the-manifesto-his-death-bed-letter>

urgently given the proliferation and multipolarity of our present world:

There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge, and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal as human beings to human beings: Remember your humanity, and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the risk of universal death.⁵

I know even less about your other source, the architect and inventor Buckminster Fuller – but a cursory search on the Internet yields a number of his explicit statements *against war*⁶.

‘Either man is obsolete’, he tells us, ‘or war is’. Specialisation breeds ‘international and ideological discord, which, in turn, leads to war.’ He called our planet ‘Spaceship Earth’, warning we could not maintain it much longer ‘unless we see it as a whole spaceship and our fate as common.’

He hoped we’d stop devoting our new technology ‘principally to the development of military power, or weaponry’ rather than to what he called ‘livingry’ – housing, education and the like. He lamented that young people saw their politicians ‘locked in the same old static mentality, still putting everything into weaponry, although it’s perfectly obvious where that’s taking us.’ No more bangs for this Buck, apparently!

I won’t speculate on what led you to promote weapons projects by invoking two leading critics of war and weaponry – but there’s clearly a problem: they challenge the assumptions behind the CDF report and all that today’s world regards as ‘security’ and ‘defence’.

HOW WE’VE GOT HERE

The Government claim they are straightforwardly implementing foreign and defence policies which have been openly updated, with full democratic endorsement, from the 1972 Referendum afterwards.

⁵<https://www.atomicheritage.org/key-documents/russell-einstein-manifesto>

⁶<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/529559>

An alternative story sees our current policies as a muddle; they have been devised furtively and undemocratically; this has undermined the People's authority under Article 6, and sidelined our most fundamental commitments – yours, and mine, and our fellow-citizens' – under Article 29. This alternative is no nostalgic or utopian wish-list, but a detailed understanding of the last fifty years, and their consequences. It can no longer be dismissed by an Establishment who now themselves declare that the people – *in a democratic republic* – are out of touch with their own defence policy.

THE TORTUOUS PATH

I have often spelt out the alternative story, as have many others. *Nothing that we have said, written or done has managed to penetrate the official story.* We've been dismissed, as paranoid fantasists. I doubt you will endorse the alternative story as such. I simply ask you, General Clancy, to consider how we've arrived here, as described for example in DJ Maher's *The Tortuous Path: The Course of Ireland's Entry into the EEC 1948-73*⁷.

Its author, a committed member of our official negotiating team, documents how Seán Lemass regularly endorsed EEC plans for enhanced integration, including foreign policy. He occasionally did so even at home, for example to Cork Chamber of Commerce in November 1961.

But Maher himself notes that Lemass's remarks there were 'addressed as much to the governments of the EEC as to the Irish public', within a series of 'curtain-raisers to the main event': a meeting in Brussels the following January. The disjunction here – in Mr Maher's own words: 'the main event' vis-à-vis 'the Irish public' – is telling. It doesn't resolve our decades-long debates, but it identifies the *frame within which* they've taken place.

Lemass knew of concerns, in Dáil Éireann and elsewhere, about military implications of EEC membership. He dissembled, denying any 'suggestion' about NATO had arisen, or that the Government had even considered 'a change of policy in this regard'.

⁷IPA Dublin, 1986 Quotations are from, respectively, pp. 143-45, 150 and 156.

Visiting journalists were told a NATO invitation might 'create misunderstanding in the minds of the Irish public' about the EEC's 'aims and purposes'. But how much 'understanding' was he conveying to those same minds – the source of his power, with 'the right, in final appeal, to decide all questions of national policy' (Article 6)?

The tortuous path was strewn with tangled webs.

Whatever about my interpretation of Maher's account, no interpretation can square it with the categorical assurance given to the people of Ireland when the entry terms were put to them at the 1972 referendum:

The Treaties of Rome and of Paris do not entail any military or defence commitments and no such commitments are involved in Ireland's acceptance of these Treaties.

Those crafty words, airbrushing assurances already conveyed to Brussels by Lemass and others, come from the January 1972 White Paper⁸ – in which Maher himself played a key role, according to Dr Whitaker. All subsequent military steps were presented as natural, even essential, consequences of our EEC/EU membership.

Our negotiators perhaps thought the twin-track strategy was their only option; but it misused powers which 'derive, under God, from the people' (Article 6). *On the fundamental question of war and peace, the constitutionally sovereign citizens have never once been confronted with the full facts and real choices as such.* Military developments were invariably packaged as merely side dishes, to be gulped down while we fixated on juicier morsels promised for, or threatened with deletion from, the 'main menu'.

The twin-track strategy involved: Government denials at every stage that referendums were necessary; joining NATO/PfP without the manifesto-promised referendum; 'reform' of the Referendum Commission's mandate, from presenting the arguments For and Against to magisterially pronouncing on 'The Facts' – and above all the blatant rejection of two legally binding referendum results, Nice I and Lisbon I.

⁸White Paper 'Accession of Ireland to the European Communities: laid by the Government before each house of the Oireachtas, January, 1972', p. 57.

In their determination to overthrow Lisbon One, the Government of the day simply abolished the Forum on Europe, to the dismay of its fair-minded chairperson, Dr Maurice Hayes. Lucinda Creighton TD declared that ‘The National Forum on Europe had degenerated into a talking-shop, dominated by the social partners’⁹. *Quelle catastrophe!*

The abiding image is of a funnel: such debate as cannot be prevented is guided – if necessary, simply shoehorned – into an ever-narrowing channel; a travesty in what our constitution still confirms is a republic. This casts a dark shadow over claims that our foreign and defence policies can help to build a democratic world.

It also, ironically, lets Official Ireland dismiss *defenders* of Neutrality and Article 29 as *undemocratic*, precisely because we resist the travesty! The label ‘populism’ can be glibly smeared on anyone in fact striving – against all the resources and stratagems of our ‘commanding heights’ – to defend and restore the complex *articulation* of power laid out by *Bunreacht na hÉireann*.

NATO/EU/UN

The Tortuous Path has also led us to dilute our commitment to the UN, as richly documented in Dr Karen Devine’s contribution to this booklet. The official story is that NATO has had to shoulder the burden of promoting peace and democracy on behalf – even in place – of the UN. In *Defending Peace*¹⁰, and elsewhere, I have presented the evidence for an alternative account: that NATO directly, along with its leading members, has contributed to and exploited the ‘failure’ of the UN which they all bemoan.

Dr Devine details how Ireland has, over recent decades, shamefully abandoned our unique position as a small former colony which even now could modestly and creatively help to promote peace and conflict-resolution. Her observations on the conflict in Ukraine call to mind the Russell/Einstein Manifesto:

⁹ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/forum-on-europe-to-be-shut-down-1.838839>

¹⁰ Maguire, J *Defending Peace: Ireland’s Role in a Changing Europe* (Cork UP, 2002), See also ‘A Vivid Impression: The repressed potential of Irish Neutrality’ in *PESCO: Irish Neutrality and the Militarisation of the EU*, (People’s Movement & Afri, Dublin 2018), pp. 20-28.

Most of us are not neutral in feeling, but, as human beings, we have to remember that, if the issues between East and West are to be decided in any manner that can give any possible satisfaction to anybody, whether Communist or anti-Communist, whether Asian or European or American, whether White or Black, then these issues must not be decided by war. We should wish this to be understood, both in the East and in the West.¹¹

With tragic irony, their Manifesto emerged in the pivotal year of 1955 – when Ireland joined the UN, the Warsaw Pact was signed, and the Neutral and Non-aligned (NNA) movement met for the first time.

Frank Aiken, in an address also quoted by Dr Karen Devine, echoed the Manifesto's wisdom in 1957:

It may be said that such projects are visionary. Perhaps they are, but those who like to use that word to describe any far-reaching projects for peace would be well-advised to keep another vision before their eyes – a vision of what the Third World War would mean for mankind. No one who has that vision... is likely to be satisfied with anything less than a full-scale all-out campaign for peace. That campaign... must bring the end of imperialism in all its shapes and forms, whether direct or indirect, Eastern or Western, diplomatic or military, capitalist or communist.' (*Ireland and the United Nations*, p. 21)¹²

ENVOI

Here I'll sign off this long letter, General Clancy. There is so much to say: an unhappy history to repair, practical value-commitments to reaffirm. The crucial question is: who has the right to speak, and who will listen? This matters urgently, as the Government has already decided to adopt key elements of the CDF Report, while yet again postponing 'the Neutrality Debate' to a vague future.

I hope to have shown that the Report and the 'Debate' are *one and the same*:

¹¹<https://www.atomicheritage.org/key-documents/russell-einstein-manifesto>

¹²https://books.google.ie/books?id=8WUUA AAAI AJ&source=gbs_book_other_versions

the Report has emerged in a context, and from a history, of the furtive and undemocratic erosion of our commitment to active neutrality and genuine UN-directed peacekeeping. I will not now turn to the very many problems within the Report itself. I raise some of these in an Appendix here, and hope to expand on it online in the near future.

On 6th July I joined the Hiroshima commemoration in Merrion Square. We heard moving poetry and beautiful music, and the dignified remarks of the Japanese Ambassador. We heard of the genuine, effective work Ireland has been doing for nuclear disarmament and against proliferation.

As we observed a minute's silence, the sky darkened. I was irresistibly reminded of Ian Campbell's song 'The Sun is Burning'. He imagines another park, where 'little kids lie down to take their rest', and couples are 'holding hands and waiting for the dark'. But there comes 'a blinding flash of hellish heat... All that's left is darkness, pain and fear... And the sun has disappeared.'¹³

We stood there, across from Leinster House and Government Buildings, with officials from Foreign Affairs among us. I had to wonder how on earth we have come to this: our ever-deepening incorporation with NATO undermining our own good work and helping to endanger our troubled planet.

Detailed analyses and reasoned arguments are vital, but they must be rooted in a grasp of our fragile, challenging fellowship with all the crew of Spaceship Earth. Buckminster Fuller, and Einstein and Russell, and Frank Aiken have all warned us of the perils of our current course, particularly where nuclear powers are involved:

Remember your humanity, and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the risk of universal death.

John Maguire, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, UCC, Board Member of Afri, is the author of *Defending Peace* (Cork UP 2002), and, with Joe Noonan, of *Maastricht and Neutrality* (People First/Meitheal 1992).

¹³<http://www.songlyrics.com/luke-kelly/the-sun-is-burning-lyrics/>

A wreath laid at the cherry tree in Merrion Square to commemorate those who died in the nuclear attack on Hiroshima in 1945. © Photo by Afri



IRISH NEUTRALITY AS A GLOBAL FORCE FOR PEACE

Tarak Kauff

It was the morning of St. Patrick's Day 2019, when retired US Marine Major Ken Mayers and myself, a former US Army paratrooper, crawled under one fence, cut through another and the barbwire beyond it, and made our way onto Shannon airfield.

St. Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland. Our aim was the same, only this time the snake was the US war machine. Like others before us, our intention was to inspect a plane that we believed carried US troops and weapons and expose the criminality of the US war machine and the complicity of the Irish government in allowing Irish neutrality to be so blatantly breached since the year 2001.

Ken and I made no effort to hide as we walked towards the US plane that we were virtually certain carried troops and weapons to wreak death and destruction in the Middle East. For half an hour, we closed in on that plane before airport security stopped us. If we had been actual terrorists with intent to do grievous damage in revenge for what happened to their people, airport security would have failed with potential horrific consequences for civilian workers at Shannon.

As it was, both Ken and I are peaceful, nonviolent activists and security had no trouble holding us until the Gardaí arrived. We explained what we were doing and why and asked the Gardaí to inspect the plane for weapons, as was their job. Of course they didn't, and we spent a not unpleasant night in the Shannon jail before being remanded without bail to Limerick Prison where we would spend the not-so-pleasant next 13 days mostly confined in a two-by-three-and-a-half-meter cell.

We were released, but not before we paid €5,000 in security bail and had our passports taken. They were not returned until almost nine months later, when the judge at the criminal court in Dublin finally decided we were honourable men and would come back to Ireland for trial, whenever that was.

Although we wanted to be home, the next nine months were actually among the best of my life. We were welcomed by the Irish everywhere we went, as the TV, newspapers and radio followed the case of the two elderly US veterans arrested at Shannon. People, even the guards in Limerick Prison, respected what we did and the vast majority agreed with why. It was “fair play, lads” and “well done” and the warmth, conviviality, hospitality and generosity of the Irish people made us feel at home away from home.

As we travelled and walked throughout this green island we spoke to crowds in pubs and gathering places about why we felt Irish neutrality was of critical importance not only for Ireland but for global peace. We spoke of the damage to our precious climate and environment caused by US militarism, wars and proxy wars; we spoke of the many tens of thousands of children orphaned, maimed and killed by these wars, and our commentary did not leave unscathed Irish politicians who were betraying the people and were complicit in US war crimes by subserviently surrendering their country’s precious neutrality.

Others had done and said similar things for two decades but we were the first US veterans to take such a stand and that helped bring the issue to the forefront.

But does Irish neutrality, as we claimed, have relevance for the safety of humanity not only in Ireland but worldwide? Let’s examine this.

Irish neutrality has a long and proud history, and the vast majority of Irish people support the concept. Although neutrality is not enshrined in the Irish Constitution, Article 29 does say that:

“1. Ireland affirms its devotion to the ideal of peace and friendly co-operation amongst nations founded on international justice and morality. 2. Ireland affirms its adherence to the principle of the pacific settlement of international disputes by international arbitration or judicial determination. 3. Ireland accepts the generally recognised principles of international law as its rule of conduct in its relations with other States.”

But what does neutrality mean for a country or a nation? According to Britannica.com, neutrality under international law is the “legal status arising from the abstention of a state from all participation in a war between other states, the maintenance of an attitude of impartiality toward the belligerents, and the

recognition by the belligerents of this abstention and impartiality. Under international law, this legal status gives rise to certain rights and duties between the neutral state and the belligerents."

Britannica goes on to state, "The most important of the rights that result from a state of neutrality is the right of territorial integrity. Belligerents may not use a neutral's territory as a base of operations or engage in hostilities therein. This right applies not only to neutral territory and water but extends to air space above that territory as well."

The government of Ireland, in violation of what is generally understood as neutrality and what the majority of its people believe in, has allowed US military aircraft full of armed troops, as well as CIA torture-related flights, to refuel at Shannon Airport. The aircraft in question were not supposed to be carrying any arms or explosives and/or taking part in any military exercises or operations. Of course, as came out in sworn testimony at our trial by Shannon airport authorities, to their knowledge, no US plane landing at Shannon has ever been inspected for armaments, let alone hooded and gagged CIA prisoners.

At present, as many Irish politicians look to enhance their status as allies of the US and NATO, there are moves to militarise Ireland and eventually bring it into NATO. The Irish people will in no way benefit from this. A few in the military-industrial complex will indeed profit financially, but the country as a whole will be put in a more dangerous position. The sons and daughters of Ireland will be sent to fight and die in NATO's wars. To what gain? Irish citizens recognize the danger.

Sabina Coyne Higgins wrote on 27th July 2022 to the *Irish Times*, "Continuing the war of course makes the climate change crisis worse which is resulting in millions of people in Africa, and elsewhere, being put in further danger of starvation, and the endangering of the food security of so many in different parts of the world."

She says further, "The Ukrainian people have suffered tens of thousands of casualties and are now losing up to a thousand soldiers a day, killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Your editorial states that in the war it is estimated that 25,000 to 27,000 Russians have been killed in the fighting. ... This is surely a moment of moral choice. Concerned people of the world anxious to live together in peace and sustainability must demand that this war be brought to an end so that lives are saved, and there is a lessening of the suffering, and the reconstruction of lives and livelihoods can begin."

Now more than ever, the world needs Ireland to use its powerful voice as a neutral country to forcefully advocate for peaceful resolutions to conflict. Ireland needs to unequivocally say no to war, no to the US and NATO war machine, and no to proxy wars: 'No, we will not allow our neutrality to be compromised any longer.' If Ireland can do this, if the Irish people can stand up to the war-bully, the international community will heed their voice and their brave example. Other countries, especially in the global South, will take heart and stand up to the war machine that is literally destroying the very planet we need for life.

Stand up Ireland, defend your neutrality. The global community needs you to do that.

Tarak Kauff is a long-time anti-war and social justice activist, having previously served as a paratrooper in the US army from 1959 to 1962. From the Vietnam War to the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, he has consistently opposed U.S. wars and occupations. He is a member of Veterans for Peace and, together with Ken Meyers took part in an action at Shannon Airport on March 17th 2019 to expose the Irish Government's complicity in war crimes. Regarding recent developments here he says, 'there is a negative force in Irish politics that wants to sell the most precious commodity Ireland has – its neutrality – down the drain to the highest bidder, the US/Nato war machine'.

IRISH NEUTRALITY: A VITAL RESOURCE IN DANGER¹⁴

Russia has been waging a barbaric war against Ukraine. Few can be optimistic about how it will end. But it will end: there will eventually have to be a ceasefire and a negotiated settlement. What message are we and the rest of Europe taking from this conflict? Unfortunately, it is not that we must pull back from the abyss and the real threat of a nuclear confrontation, that we must turn from war-making, learn to cohabit this planet and concentrate on the Earth's pressing problems such as climate catastrophe and world hunger.

¹⁴This article is an edited version of contributions provided by Professor Iain Atack (Swordstoploughshares/StoP) and Carol Fox (Peace and Neutrality Alliance/PANA).

A new mindset is required, something far from the official reaction to the recent killing of 19 children and two teachers in Texas by an 18-year-old with a legally purchased assault rifle. The Governor, the Texas Attorney General and Senator Ted Cruz all argue that what is required is yet more guns. Are we not witnessing a 'Texas Reaction' here? Sweden and Finland are rushing to join NATO. The Irish Government is rushing to join an EU defence grouping, essentially the European arm of NATO, and even floating the idea of NATO membership.

What Europe and the World need now is a challenge to military blocs armed to the teeth, not a glorification of them. In the 1990s, with the Cold War abating, there was talk of a Common European Home, of the strengthening of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) which includes every country in Europe. What we need is more Neutral/Non-Aligned States, not fewer.

We must resist efforts by the current government to use the war in Ukraine as an excuse yet further to weaken and undermine Irish neutrality. Irish neutrality must instead be protected and strengthened so as to support an end to the war in Ukraine, and to reduce rather than exacerbate conflict and war in Europe and globally, in Yemen, Palestine, Ethiopia and all war-afflicted countries. Our efforts should be directed towards ending war rather than undermining or even eliminating neutrality.

Irish neutrality has been pared down to 'military non-alignment' by successive governments; by this, they mean non-membership of NATO. However, they cannot claim even such minimal 'non-alignment' while already participating in NATO's 'Partnership for Peace' (PfP) and actively facilitating the U.S. military in its wars of aggression in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere through the use of Shannon airport. (The recent Commission on the Defence Forces (CDF) report makes no mention of this misuse of Shannon, let alone its possible implications for Irish security.)

The war in Ukraine is also being exploited to support NATO expansion, increase EU militarisation, and boost military expenditure throughout Europe. The only beneficiaries of this war, as with all wars, are weapons manufacturers and those involved in the global arms trade, who have already seen weapons sales and the resulting profits increase astronomically. Global military expenditure surpassed U.S.\$2 trillion for the first time in 2021, and will increase again in 2022.

The Generals pushing for military solutions are not confined to the armed forces. In Ukraine and the world over there are Generals at work of a different kind, including General Dynamics, General Electric, and General Motors. And as we all know, 'There's No Business Like War Business'. All but four of the world's biggest sellers of weapons have seen their share prices soar since the invasion began¹⁵. And the war in Ukraine provides a highly visible and effective showcase for all their deadly merchandise.

The U.S. on its own spent \$800 billion on its military in 2021, or almost 40 per cent of global military expenditure. NATO member countries were responsible for almost \$1 trillion in military spending in 2021, or half the global total¹⁶. Ireland unfortunately is not immune to all this. We have to be aware that the push to end our Neutrality is not just a question of wanting to play with the Big Boys, or of 'Growing up' as some have put it, of showing solidarity with our EU partners, of being 'Good Europeans'. There is also money at play here.

We need to ask why such a vast increase in military spending and military capability is required by Ireland – unless its purpose is to facilitate greater integration into both EU and NATO military structures. The CDF report states that the chances of Ireland's being attacked by a 'conventional military force' are low, yet nevertheless we must develop more enhanced military capabilities – with our Defence Forces and equipment conforming to NATO standards and interoperability with NATO – not so much to defend Ireland but for use 'overseas on peace support and crisis management operations'.

EU security and defence policy is closely aligned with NATO military policy and strategy, so that Ireland's involvement in EU military programmes inevitably involves cooperation and collaboration with NATO even without formal NATO membership. Fianna Fáil's Barry Andrews MEP argues that neutrality must be reconsidered in light of developments in Ukraine – echoing remarks from the Taoiseach and others – and that our Triple Lock (which prevents Irish troops being deployed abroad without a UN mandate) should be ditched in favour of the European Council's mandating where to send our troops. He has also advocated a mutual defence policy within the EU. His recent policy document, 'Irish Neutrality in a Changing Europe', sets out his vision for how our neutrality

¹⁵According to figures in the early days of the war from Open Democracy, March 17, 2022

¹⁶See the International Peace Bureau's 'Give Peace a Budget' infographic: <https://demilitarize.org/resources/world-military-spending-%c2%b7-2021-biggest-spenders/>

should 'develop' i.e. be phased out¹⁷ .

NATO's goal of 2 per cent of GDP for military expenditure seems to have been accepted as a target. At its most ambitious, the CDF report considers even tripling expenditure on the Defence Forces, increasing it from €1 billion to €3 billion annually. Minister Coveney has already proposed significant increases in Ireland's military budget on the basis of this report. Ireland's participation in PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) as part of the EU's security and defence policy already demands greatly increased spending in support of the integration of EU military capability. The exponential growth of finance channelled through the European Defence Fund, and the establishment of the new 'European Peace Facility', are indications of the significant shift by the EU towards militarisation and funding the European arms industry.

The current Government is actively supporting the increased involvement of Irish industry in weapons research and production and processes of EU militarisation by its involvement with the European Defence Fund. The Department of Defence and the Defence Forces hosted a webinar on 'Support for Enterprise, Research and Innovation: EU Funding for Irish Defence and Security' in November 2021. Over the Zoom, Foreign and Defence Minister Coveney emphasised the need to 'develop and exploit emerging and disruptive technology developments to support defence capabilities, while also supporting wider access and market engagement for Irish research by academia and enterprise.' Ireland contributes millions to the EDF and several contributors on the Zoom meeting emphasised that Ireland needs to get a return on that investment.¹⁸

Besides direct military production, Irish firms are also active in 'dual-use technology', which can be used for military as well as civilian purposes, including drones and communications systems. Specifically military equipment includes components for armoured cars¹⁹. According to journalist Conor Gallagher, there are 550 firms in Ireland active in the Irish 'defence' industry and in 2019 dual-use exports were 2.4 billion euro, larger than Ireland's beef exports.

Our military equipment exports more than doubled in one year, from 42.3m euro

¹⁷<https://cdn.thejournal.ie/media/2022/04/irish-neutrality-in-a-changing-europe-barry-andrews-mep-080422.pdf>

¹⁸https://merrionstreet.ie/en/news-room/news/eu_funding_for_irish_defence_and_security_enterprise_and_r_d_maximising_the_opportunities.172171.shortcut.html

¹⁹*Irish Times* 24 February 2022

in 2019 to 108.5m euro in 2020 ²⁰.

The Government is actively encouraging the arms industry and eagerly embracing the military components of the EU. There is a Security and Defence Enterprise Group within the Government, promoting 'Innovation and Enterprise' in defence. There is also a new grouping outside Government, the Irish Defence and Security Association, formed by a former Army Cavalry officer, comprising small and medium enterprises and research institutes, including UCD. The Department of Defence has also set up a Research, Technology and Innovation Unit to assist Irish companies and researchers to apply for funding from the EDF. So the Weapons Industry is an ally of the Government in the move to end neutrality in favour of the Greater European Good: Good Europeans allegedly are well-armed Europeans.

Recent statements by Taoiseach Micheál Martin that Ireland's membership of NATO would be 'a policy decision of government' and would not require a referendum show a contempt for the views of the majority of Irish citizens and a complete disregard for the need to uphold and strengthen Irish neutrality. Such statements also reveal the true intentions of the Government parties, which are otherwise cloaked in obfuscation and duplicity.

Ireland should instead pursue a foreign policy based on principled neutrality in support of international cooperation and constructive multilateralism. Principled neutrality requires solidarity rather than polarisation and division as the basis of a peaceful international order. Principled neutrality involves a commitment to the exclusively peaceful resolution of international disputes, in accordance with Article 29 of the Irish Constitution, support for human rights, human security and global justice, and respecting, protecting and preserving the natural environment.

Such a policy of principled neutrality precludes not only formal membership of NATO but also participation in NATO programmes and structures such as PfP. NATO is a nuclear weapons-based military alliance and an instrument of U.S. hegemony which seeks to divide and dominate rather than to resolve international conflict by peaceful and non-military means. Involvement with NATO and EU militarisation is in direct contradiction to Ireland's longstanding

²⁰*Irish Times* 25 April 2022

opposition to nuclear weapons and work on behalf of the non-proliferation and elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is more important than ever for Ireland to pursue a policy of active and constructive neutrality in both a European and a global context, now that Sweden and Finland have abandoned their longstanding policies of neutrality and have been accepted for NATO membership. Ireland's use of diplomacy and involvement in multilateral organisations such as the UN has demonstrated repeatedly that this is the most effective role for Ireland internationally. Ireland as a small country with its own history of colonisation and armed conflict can have more impact through the use of such 'soft power', supported by an unambiguous and unequivocal policy of active and constructive neutrality.

Two years ago *The Economist* noted with envy that this small neutral country has 'a good claim to be the world's most diplomatically powerful country'²¹. Speaking in March at a protest in support of People Before Profit's Bill for a Referendum on Neutrality, now-Senator Tom Clonan, retired Irish Army Captain and former UN peacekeeper, emphasised that if Ireland surrendered its neutrality, if we merged into an EU defence force, we would become invisible. Our diplomatic clout would be seriously diminished.

A recent opinion poll [Irish Times/Ipsos, April 15, 2022] shows that two-thirds of people in the Republic of Ireland want to retain our Neutrality and only 24% want to change it. Neutrality is our best option to promote peace, as mediators, and UN peacekeeper, for which we have a long-standing and valued reputation. The Irish diaspora, and the fact that we are a post-colonial country, give us connections and friends throughout the world.

Involvement in NATO military structures and processes of EU militarisation will only undermine this 'soft power' and subsume and subordinate Ireland within the geopolitical ambitions of larger countries. Principled neutrality can be a central component of an Irish foreign policy that promotes genuine human security through dealing with global threats such as climate change, poverty and inequality, and human rights abuses and social injustice. This, rather than entrapping ourselves in a narrow and self-contradictory effort to achieve military security through destroying human lives: fomenting war, instability and armed

²¹'How Ireland Gets Its Way', *Economist Magazine*, July 18, 2020

conflict rather than preventing them.

Human security also requires a focus on the appalling human impact of war itself, for both civilians and soldiers alike. Ireland should use its neutrality to work on behalf of disarmament, human rights and climate justice, rather than becoming further embedded in the military-industrial complex. Ireland should promote the global reduction of military spending (rather than contributing to its increase), support resistance to the global arms trade, and act in solidarity with people struggling against oppression, war and injustice globally.

We can also draw upon our experience of the need for exclusively peaceful efforts to resolve protracted and deeply entrenched political conflict on this island. There are many examples of civil society groups and social movements in Ireland involved in building and supporting efforts to achieve peace both within Ireland and globally. Such efforts both require and can reinforce a foreign policy based on principled neutrality. One such effort is the Downpatrick Declaration, a recent initiative of Swords to Ploughshares Ireland (StoP), Afri (Action from Ireland) and INNATE (Irish Network for Nonviolent Action, Training and Education) and supported by Irish and international peace activists.

The Declaration, which is printed on pp. 54 ff. below, draws upon the Irish peace process and the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement as ‘a guide for building sustainable communities, and for our conduct in the wider world’. The Declaration points out that the sources of conflict must be addressed, not just their symptoms in the form of war and armed conflict. It states that: ‘We need to produce ploughshares in a spirit of recognition and rebuilding, rather than swords with the mindset of militarism and mistrust.’ Using limited resources to boost military capabilities and invest in weapons can only add to the levels of destruction and loss of human life resulting from war. Supporting an active and constructive policy of neutrality is the best way for Ireland to resist militarisation and to contribute to human wellbeing and the wellbeing of the planet.

We are currently occupying powerful diplomatic positions internationally. Ireland is on the UN Security Council, and holds the Presidency of the Council of Europe. Could we not expect some kind of mediation/ceasefire/peace proposal efforts coming from the Irish Government? We should employ some of that diplomatic power we reputedly possess. Could we at least put our minds towards ending this war rather than focusing on how to end our neutrality?

THE COMMISSION ON THE DEFENCE FORCES REPORT: AN INITIAL RESPONSE

Professor John Maguire

My Open Letter analyses the undemocratic process from which the CDF Report has emerged. This Appendix will present some of the main problems posed by the Report itself. It is intended as merely an initial contribution to an urgent public debate on defence policy and Neutrality. We, the public, will have to insist that the Government join us in that debate; governments for decades have evaded any serious confrontation between what they have been doing on the ground and what they airily refer to as 'our traditional stance of military neutrality'.

Reading the Report closely proves surprising. We might have expected a document with which we could disagree, but which was cogent and well-argued within its own terms. The reality proves underwhelming: it is, in too many places, badly compiled and poorly written. Too often, assorted points are merely *set down* rather than analysed and organised. It reads in places as the work of a group of people who didn't expect many 'outsiders' to read it, who knew from the start where they were heading, and who felt a certain amount of verbiage was necessary along the way.

Before presenting some critical points, it is important to stress that we do not question the basic approach of the Commission on questions of pay, career-structure etc. Our concerns are entirely with how Ireland defines the role of our Defence Forces, rather than with structuring that role properly and rewarding it appropriately.

‘PEOPLE’, ‘VALUES’, ‘CULTURE’

The word ‘People’ figures largely in the Report, earning 75 references. We’re told that ‘the Defence Forces’ key success factor is its people’ (p. 2) – but what about ‘*the people*’ as envisaged at the heart of *Bunreacht na hÉireann*? The Report’s focus is very largely internal – as is the related implementation plan, *Building for the Future: Change from Within*. Where do we, the citizens, come into that picture?

One glaring instance of unguarded writing here is the ethically troubling suggestion that a ‘more strategic communications approach’ should include: ‘Engaging with sports clubs and other voluntary bodies, *especially in areas challenged by poverty or isolation*, to spread awareness of the benefits of joining the Reserve’ (p.132; italics added.) One wonders what that proposal will have done for the morale of our existing Defence Forces.

Many of us could well apply to ourselves the Report’s diagnosis within the defence forces of ‘a sentiment... of disempowerment and a lack of agency... [which] can express itself as a strong sense... of not being appreciated or understood’ (p. ix). However, the proposed remedy is to make us understand our military, rather than the reverse: a ‘grounded debate... *developing people’s awareness and understanding of the role of the Defence Forces*’ (pp. 145-6; italics added).

Will building a force that ‘better reflects Irish society today in its culture, values and symbols’ (p. 91) involve even a glance towards Article 29? Of course the role of our defence forces should be in tune with, and appreciated by, the citizens – but who gives the note, and who holds the tuning fork?

THREAT AND RISK ENVIRONMENT

The Report references a list of threats and risks from the 2015 defence White Paper:

They include increased use of hybrid aggression, cyber-attacks aimed at manipulating systems or stealing data, terrorism, proliferation of weapons to hostile actors, organised crime, espionage, energy insecurity, threats to free trade, climate related risks, emergencies and natural disasters, conflicts related to resource scarcity, and illegal exploitation of Ireland’s maritime resources. (p. 5)

This ill-assorted catalogue is not much clarified when overlaid by a reference to increased unpredictability, and a fourfold grid of:

‘increased great power competition... [;] instability on Europe’s borders and less United States involvement in containing it... [;] blurring of the lines between internal and external security... [with increased] hybrid forms of aggression against Western democracies... [and] a more demanding environment for troops deployed overseas.’
(p. 30)

The effect is *literally* alarming, a call to ‘get more guns’. The various threats and risks are not adequately analysed or prioritised. There is for example no grasp of the interactive, cyclical, two-sided nature of so many conflicts. The Report has not given us a well-considered basis on which to assess *actual risks confronting Ireland*, let alone how to prioritise and respond to them.

We must note another astonishingly unguarded passage:

While stressing that the risk of a conventional military attack on Ireland remains low, the White Paper highlights the instability on Europe’s Southern and South-Eastern flank as a cause for concern and Ireland as a potential target due to its profile as an EU Member State and active participant in multi-national peace support operations.
(p.5, and p. 30)

The Eurosceptic, let alone the proponent of ‘Irexit’, would surely seize on the implication here that the dangers facing us stem primarily from our membership of the EU, and indeed from the EU’s increasingly fraught interface with other states and regions beyond. We must wonder how that reads in Brussels!

All of us might ask how Ireland could play a different role within a Europe that makes better use of its vast economic, political and cultural resources to contribute modestly to world peace and creativity. The Report says effectively nothing about the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe – a sad contrast with the 1996 White Paper on Foreign Policy:

The Government believe that, as the only regional organisation to which all the states of Europe and North America adhere, the OSCE is uniquely placed to develop further its existing role as a focal point for

European security cooperation... We believe that the model should be based on the OSCE's comprehensive approach to European security.²²

We must also note the strategic foregrounding of 'aggression against Western democracies'. This airbrushes the contribution of Western societies themselves to the world's sorry state, as well as their often less than ideal democratic practice. It also intensifies the recent rebranding of Ireland as a 'Western partner' or even 'ally'. Neither national self-interest, nor the commitments of Article 29, nor any worthwhile perspective on our troubled planet is served by this simplistic identification. Einstein, Russell and Aiken will turn in their graves...

WEAPONS INDUSTRY AND 'GREEN DEFENCE'

The Report is replete with references to the European Defence Agency, European Defence Fund etc., all promoting the alleged benefits of Ireland's further involvement in the world's \$2 trillion-plus annual weapons production. We need not here dwell on the many arguments against this prospect, which have been outlined in Afri's recent submission for the forthcoming White Paper on Enterprise Policy²³, and of course underpin the recent Downpatrick Declaration, included here on pp.54 ff.

The Report tells us that 'green defence is a concept that will affect the way the future Defence Forces will operate and deploy' (p. 49), but we are not told what that concept involves: normal military activity but with an enhanced environmental awareness; increased disaster relief etc., possibly made more onerous by climate change; something else altogether?

Climate crisis is presented primarily as creating problems *for*, rather than in significant part resulting *from*, military operations. The Commission approaches surreal self-parody with its advocacy of 'green ammunition and green pyrotechnics'. There are no doubt different kinds of ammunition, with different effects – but this hardly captures the full environmental impact of the military, as audited for example in studies published by Brown University in the United States.

²²Challenges and Opportunities Abroad – White Paper on Foreign Policy [1996], pp. 124-125

²³<https://www.afri.ie/category/transforming-our-world-afri-submission-for-white-paper-on-enterprise/>

There is very little here that could not be found in the business plan of a responsible road haulage firm, or indeed in the code of conduct of a sports club on cleaning up after itself. The Commission talks vaguely about carbon footprints, but ignores the *weapon footprint* of modern warfare. The section on 'Green Defence' is unworthy of its authors and of its subject.

'PEACEKEEPING' – BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT?

Along with a total failure to define 'defence' – ignoring for example the vast literature on and practice of non-violent approaches – we note that the umbrella term 'peacekeeping' is stretched to breaking point over proposals such as recasting the Army Ranger Wing (ARW) as 'Ireland's Special Operations Force (IRL SOF)' (pp. ix, 67 etc.). This force would have 'a range of capabilities across each domain... which includes war fighting capability', for 'deeper engagement' and/or 'higher intensity' in 'more demanding' or 'challenging situations' entailing 'higher risks and harsher conditions' in 'tougher environments' (pp. v, 2, 9-10, 32, 49 and elsewhere).

These labels may mean something precise to the Commission, but they give us a very questionable basis on which to send our troops abroad. Regarding them all as elements of genuine peacekeeping shatters credulity. This matters greatly, in light of the recent Dáil debate on further EU PESCO missions.²⁴ There, Minister Coveney declared himself 'loyal' to the Commission, and argued for some projects on the basis that they had been chosen by the military themselves.

The Minister argued for one of the proposed new projects on the grounds that our ARW were already operating in Mali in West Africa. That encounter with an instance of what the CDF Report calls 'instability on Europe's Southern and South-Eastern flank' has been part of a chaotic and hugely damaging re-enactment of the original colonial 'Scramble for Africa'; in no way could it be regarded as a peacekeeping mission.²⁵

²⁴<https://www.kildarestreet.com/debates/?id=2022-07-05a.140&s=speaker%3A314+section%3Adebate>

²⁵See, for a brief critical account, 'Coup-Contrecoup' by Dr Rahmane Idrissa of the Leiden African Studies Centre, *London Review of Books*, 24th February 2022.

CONCLUSION: WHEN WILL THE GOVERNMENT JOIN THE DEBATE?

This Appendix has tried simply to show that we have many grounds for concern, as citizens, with the analysis and recommendations of the CDF Report. As Doctor Johnson famously said about a dog walking on its hind legs, the surprise is not that it is done well, but that it is done at all. The point is simply to help to initiate a profound public debate on Neutrality and defence policy, in the hope that our Government will finally come clean and try to convince us that what they have been doing furtively with NATO, PESCO and the like in any way fulfils our values, our constitutional commitments, or the desperate needs of a deeply troubled planet.

DOWNPATRICK DECLARATION



The island of Ireland has known decades, indeed centuries, of conflict

The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement of 1998 marks a commitment to move from force to 'exclusively peaceful and democratic means' of resolving conflict

But both governments, UK and Republic, are betraying this commitment through their involvement with NATO

NATO's so-called 'War on Terror' has put enmity in place of understanding, in a tragic cycle of aggression and retaliation

Our leaders display the mindset of what U.S. President Eisenhower called the military-industrial complex

They suggest that peace and sustainable prosperity can be achieved through producing weapons of war

Our children, our communities and our environment cannot be nourished or sustained by weapons

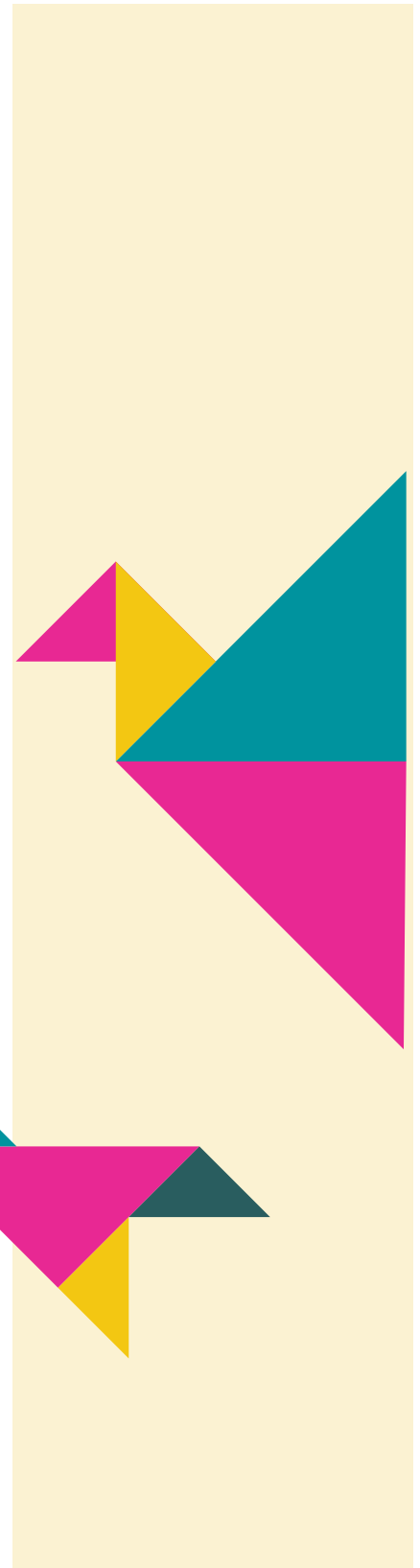
We need urgently to convert swords to ploughshares

**Belfast/Good Friday Agreement:
DECLARATION OF SUPPORT**

We reaffirm our total and absolute commitment to exclusively democratic and peaceful means of resolving differences on political issues, and our opposition to any use or threat of force by others for any political purpose, whether in regard to this agreement or otherwise. (Section 4)

CONSTITUTION OF IRELAND Article 29

Ireland affirms its devotion to the ideal of peace and friendly co-operation amongst nations founded on international justice and morality. Ireland affirms its adherence to the principle of the pacific settlement of international disputes by international arbitration or judicial determination. Ireland accepts the generally recognised principles of international law as its rule of conduct in its relations with other States. (Sections 1-3





DOWNPATRICK

The history of Ireland is a reminder of the complexity of community and identity, and of the devastation of violence. Our Peace Process marks a break with centuries of conflict on the island. The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement establishes vital principles for recognising one another and for peacefully acknowledging and resolving differences.

Leaders in Britain and in both parts of this island have endorsed 'exclusively peaceful means of resolving differences on political issues' and rejected 'any use or threat of force'. (Declaration of Support, § 4) These principles are a guide for building sustainable communities, and for our conduct in the wider world.

We should at least not aggravate, and at best help modestly towards resolving, the challenges and conflicts of our troubled Planet Earth. No one person or group is responsible for all these problems, but we are all accountable for how we respond to them.

Tragically, both UK and Irish governments have betrayed the Agreement in their so-called 'defence' policies. Their involvement in NATO (UK) and NATO's so-called 'Partnership for Peace' (Republic) has been a moral and practical disaster.

NATO's 'War on Terror' has brought catastrophic onslaughts and human-rights abuses, perpetuating a bitter cycle of aggression and retaliation. It invokes threats but fails to address their nature and sources or to create a context where the tragic cycle could be broken.

DECLARATION

This betrays the Republic's constitutional commitment to 'the pacific settlement of international disputes... [and] the generally recognised principles of international law'. (Article 29) It is equally at odds with the pronouncement of Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam in 1999 that 'all violence, no matter for what purpose, is unacceptable'.

Both governments display the mindset of what US President Eisenhower 60 years ago called 'the military-industrial complex'. They suggest that producing weapons of war can be a sound basis for prosperity on this island and for supporting peace and development in the wider world. We challenge them, as joint guarantors of the Peace Process, to show how this could be so.

Weapons not only kill and maim; they also wreck homes and habitats and damage our ecology. They distort and distract from the real challenges of security. They deflect resources of mind and matter from worthwhile production. They undermine the good work of governments, NGOs and others for disarmament, peace and development, instead producing a tragic tide of suffering and displacement.

Our world is sliding towards a horrific era of enmity and revenge, as dangerous and destructive as the Cold War. Our governments must bring their policies, at home and abroad, into line with the Declaration of Support. We need to produce ploughshares in a spirit of recognition and rebuilding, rather than swords with the mindset of militarism and mistrust.



Our Declaration invokes Downpatrick, a site recognised by all as emblematic of the island's ancient history. The Shrine of the Three Patrons, embodying the tradition that Saints Patrick, Brigid and Colmcille are interred there, celebrates the shared roots of the island's different Christian faith traditions, stemming from the Abrahamic roots which they share in turn with Judaism and Islam. Downpatrick itself has known conflict throughout the millennia, up to and including the recent Troubles, but remains a beacon of the values of its patrons: Patrick, an enslaved immigrant, returned with a radical message of peace and love and rejected killing; Brigid lived a life of peace and harmony with nature, selling a bejewelled sword to feed the hungry, and Colmcille left the island in repentance for his own past involvement with violence, bringing to the world a message of charity and peace.



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