

A COMPARATIVE CRITIQUE OF THE PRACTICE OF IRISH NEUTRALITY IN THE 'UNNEUTRAL' DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

This article takes a comparative, empirical look at the practice of Irish neutrality during the World War II. It critiques a model of neutrality presented in a thesis on Irish neutrality called *Unneutral Ireland*, consisting of factors derived from an analysis of three states regarded as well-established European neutrals, Austria, Sweden and Switzerland that reflect the practice of neutrality. That model focused on the rights and duties of neutrality; the recognition of Ireland's status by belligerents and others; the disavowal of external help; and the freedom of decision and action. This present article focuses on the factors flowing from these latter obligations that are cited in an analysis of the practice of Irish neutrality, in the *Unneutral* thesis as proof of Ireland's 'unneutral' status, i.e. ideology; involvement in economic sanctions; partiality; the practice of Irish citizens joining the British army; and post-World War II factors such as Ireland's EEC membership. In this article, Ireland's practice of neutrality is evaluated against the practice of other European neutral states - Sweden, Switzerland, Austria and Finland (including Norway's truncated practice of neutrality) - vis-à-vis the above variables. This article also deals with the perennial myths that crop up in 'unneutral' discourses on Irish neutrality, for example, the oft-cited incidence of de Valera's alleged visit to the German legation in Ireland to sign a book of condolences on Hitler's death and the suggestions of a British government offer of a deal on Northern Ireland in exchange for Ireland dropping its neutral stance and supporting the Allies in World War II. The article concludes that the practice of Irish neutrality is equivalent to or superior to the practice of other European neutral states, thus undermining the dominant discourse that Ireland's neutrality is a myth and that Ireland is 'unneutral'.

INTRODUCTION

A discourse produced by a number of academics, journalists and political elites claims that Irish neutrality is a 'myth', because the alleged inadequate practice of Irish neutrality during the Second World War vis-à-vis a conceptual model of neutrality renders Ireland 'unneutral'. This conclusion, that Ireland's neutrality does not exist¹, is reflected in much of the academic discourse on Irish neutrality² and is echoed in the media discourse.³ Discourses propounding the conceptual metaphors

¹ Trevor C. Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland* (Oxford, 1989), 8

² Róisín Doherty, *Ireland, Neutrality and European Security Integration* (Aldershot, 2002), 13; Garret FitzGerald, 'The Origin, Development and Present Status of Irish "Neutrality"', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 9 (1998), 11-19: 13 (Hereafter cited as 'Origins, development and present status'); Harold J. Kearsley, 'Irish neutrality and the state, past, present and prospects', in Jouko Huru, Olli-Pekka Jalonen, and Michael Sheehan (eds), *New dimensions of security in Central and Southeastern Europe* (Tampere, 1998), 167-90: 172; Roger MacGinty, 'Almost like talking dirty: Irish security policy in post-Cold War Europe', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 6 (1995), 127-43: 129

³ Garret FitzGerald 'A myth of "traditional neutrality" developed from the Irish decision to be a non-belligerent in the Second World War', *Irish Times*, 21 October 1997; Garret FitzGerald 'Wartime neutrality theoretical rather than real', *Irish Times*, 29 January 2005. Stephen Collins 'Casting off the imaginary cloak of neutrality', *Sunday Tribune*, 23 March 2003. Stephen Collins 'Our sham neutrality has finally been exposed', *Sunday Tribune*, 30 March 2003. Rory Keane, 'Neutrality nothing but a 'group think' mantra', *Irish Times*, 30 July 2004.

that Irish neutrality is mythical or ‘unneutral’ are pertinent to examine, given the current significance of Irish neutrality for a proportion of the electorate who vote against EU Treaties in referenda due to perceived threats to neutrality arising from proposals for progressive European integration in the area of security and defence.⁴ The repetition of these negative discourses on Irish neutrality has the effect of ‘sedimenting’ the ‘unneutral’ and ‘myth’ metaphors, i.e. such discourses become ‘common sense’ and may, over time, constitute deeply internalized structures that people exposed to the discourse take for granted and as natural.⁵ Such discursive structures are argued to have causal effects that are linked to policy:

Discursive structures are ‘systems of rules which make it possible for certain statements but not others to occur at particular times, places and institutional locations’...they facilitate certain policies while making others more difficult....prepare us for some avenues of social change, making them widely expected, but also prevent us from perceiving alternative avenues of change.⁶

These ‘myth’ and ‘unneutral’ discourses are propounded by many elites who advocate Ireland’s participation in NATO and/or a European Union (EU) military alliance, and who support the more recent, concrete plans to build up EU military capabilities (with an associated hypothesised rationale to rival US military hegemony⁷) proposed in the Lisbon Treaty.⁸ Irish neutrality is a barrier to these policies, and the ‘unneutral’ and ‘myth’ discourses are produced and reproduced to undermine the value and status of Irish neutrality as part of the strategy to persuade voters to acquiesce to the proposed EU military and defence policy goals.

This article critiques the *Unneutral* thesis’s premise of deriving its model of neutrality from well-established practitioners of neutrality, namely Austria, Sweden and Switzerland. It reviews the Unneutral analysis of the model’s variables with respect to Ireland, specifically, the variables of “the rights and duties of neutrality [broken down into (1) due diligence and defence resources, (2) defence expenditure and costs of attack, and (3) supplies, trade and economic dependence]; the recognition of Ireland’s status by belligerents and others; the disavowal of external help; and the freedom of decision and action”.⁹ It also reviews some ancillary factors that are cited in *Unneutral Ireland* as additional evidence that Ireland is unneutral, specifically, ‘ideology’, ‘involvement in economic sanctions’ and ‘impartiality’¹⁰ and the fact that Irish citizens joined the British army.¹¹ Finally, the article considers the perennial issues that crop up in the ‘unneutral’ discourses: de Valera’s alleged visit to the German

For a critical analysis of this ‘unneutral’ discourse, see Karen Devine, ‘The Myth of ‘the Myth of Irish neutrality’: Deconstructing Concepts of Irish Neutrality using International Relations Theories’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 17 (2006), 115–139.

⁴ See Richard Sinnott, *Post-Referendum Survey on the Treaty of Amsterdam*, The Referendum Commission (Dublin, 1998); Richard Sinnott, *Attitudes and behaviour of the Irish electorate in the referendum on the Treaty of Nice* (Dublin, 2001) and European Commission, *Flash EB No 245 – Post-referendum survey in Ireland: preliminary results*, (Brussels, 18 June 2008).

⁵ Petr Drulák, ‘Motion, container and equilibrium: Metaphors in the discourse about European integration’, *European Journal of International Relations*, (12) 4 (2006), 499-531: 506-8 (Hereafter cited as ‘Motion, container and equilibrium’.)

⁶ Drulák, ‘Motion, container and equilibrium’, 501.

⁷ Tuomas Forsberg, ‘Explaining the Emergence of the ESDP: Setting the Research Agenda’, draft paper given at BISA Conference, (Cork, 2006), 11-12. See also Knud Erik Jørgensen, ‘Four More Years: perceptions of and strategies for emerging world orders’, Jean Monnet Action Group Conference in cooperation with the European Community Studies Association (ECSA)-World, (Brussels, 30 November - 1 December 2004), 4; the text of this conference presentation is available at: http://www.ecsanet.org/conferences/ecsaeworld7/documents/Knud_Erik_Joergensen.doc (June 2008); and Javier Solana, ‘A Secure Europe in a Better World’, European Council meeting (Thessaloniki, 20th June 2003), 15; available at: http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/76255.pdf (June 2008).

⁸ See in the text of the Lisbon Treaty contained in Official Journal C306 (Brussels, 2007), the new article 9E, new Chapter 1 and Articles 10A and 10B; new Article 10C, amendments to Article 11, new wording of Article 12, amendments to Article 13, new Article 13a, amendments to Article 14 and Article 15, new Article 15a and 15b, amendments to Article 16 and Article 17 (with the latter moved into a new Article 28A), amendments to Article 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23 (with the latter two articles moved into Article 15a and 15b respectively), new wording of Article 24, amendments to Article 25, new Article 25a and Article 25b, replacement of Articles 27a to 27e by an amended Article 10, amendments to Article 28, the inclusion of ‘Section 2 Provisions on the Common Security and Defence Policy’ containing a new Article 28A, and a further four new articles 28B to 28E (see C306/21-38). See also the new Protocol on Permanent Structured Cooperation, including new Articles 1, 2 and 3 (see C306/153-155).

⁹ Trevor C. Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland* (Oxford, 1989), 122. (Hereafter cited as *Unneutral Ireland*.)

¹⁰ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 127, 281-82.

¹¹ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 129-30.

legation in Ireland to sign a book of condolences on Hitler's death¹² and the suggestion that de Valera was open to a deal on Northern Ireland in exchange for Ireland's neutrality during the war,¹³ as well as post-World War II factors such as Ireland's membership of the EEC.¹⁴ The argument of this article is that if the behaviours of Austria, Sweden and Switzerland were fairly evaluated, each of them would also be deemed 'unneutral' alongside Ireland, because each state violated these variables to an equal or greater extent. This conclusion gives rise to the following propositions: either the model of neutrality in the *Unneutral* thesis effectively defines neutrality out of existence, and is thus unhelpful in a fair and realistic evaluation of the practice of any state's neutrality; or the Irish practice of neutrality is not 'unneutral' by comparison with the above-named neutral states and Ireland was, in some respects, arguably more neutral than these others.

CRITIQUE OF THE MODEL

The first problem with the approach to formulating the model of variables used to evaluate Ireland's neutrality in the *Unneutral* thesis concerns tautology. The thesis takes Austria, Sweden and Switzerland as neutral states because they are "universally regarded as such", because they are "commonly identified as neutral...in the literature".¹⁵ Using a common, inter-subjective belief that these states are neutral states to identify them as exemplars of a concept of neutrality, rather than arriving at this classification by analysing the practice of their neutrality, is a flawed basis for the formulation of the model. The *Unneutral* thesis does not evaluate both Ireland's neutrality and the practice of neutrality of these neutral states vis-à-vis its model of neutrality variables. There is no systematic analysis in the *Unneutral* thesis evaluating whether these neutral states adhered to the variables of neutrality. Only Ireland is evaluated against these variables, and is found wanting, to the extent that a dominant discourse is in operation that Ireland is 'unneutral'.

Garret FitzGerald also argues that Irish neutrality is a myth, on the same basis of a comparison with other neutral states, which he claims have had much more clear-cut concepts of neutrality than Ireland.¹⁶ FitzGerald contends that

it is at least questionable whether Ireland can properly be described as having been "neutral", because the scale of assistance given secretly to Britain was scarcely compatible with the concept of neutrality under International Law'.¹⁷

And it is not just the proponents of the 'unneutral' discourse in Ireland, but also "both great power blocs, and all the more, the Continental neutrals"¹⁸ who have viewed Ireland's practice of neutrality as "sui generis". Thus, it is necessary to evaluate the neutrality of Sweden, Switzerland and Austria as well as that of Ireland against those variables of the model, to establish whether Irish neutrality really

¹² This 'book of condolences' myth is part of mainstream public discourse that will be discussed later. A variation on this myth is also a significant part of academic anti-neutrality discourses, the difference being that the academic discourse does not materialise the myth in the form of a book of condolences, and many acknowledge that de Valera visited the home of the German Representative in Ireland, although all maintain that de Valera went to pay 'condolences': O'Halpin is one of the few academics who claim that de Valera went to the legation; see Eunan O'Halpin, 'Irish neutrality in the Second World War' in Neville Wylie (ed) *European Neutrals and Non-Belligerents during the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2002), 283-303: 293 (Hereafter cited as 'Irish neutrality in the Second World War'.) See also Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 128; Brian Girvin entitled the first chapter of his book, *The Emergency: Neutral Ireland 1939-45* (London, 2006) 'Condolences on Hitler's death', 1-28. (Hereafter cited as *The Emergency*.) Other repetitions of the 'condolences' discourse include Neal G. Jesse, 'Choosing to go it alone: Irish neutrality in theoretical and comparative perspective', *International Political Science Review* (2006) 27 (1), 7-28: 24; Aengus Nolan, *Joseph Walshe: Irish Foreign Policy 1922-1946* (Cork 2008), 289-90 (Hereafter cited as *Joseph Walshe*.); Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A history of Ireland during the Second World War* (London, 2008), 214. (Hereafter cited as *That Neutral Island*.); Robert Fisk, *In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality* (London, 1983), ix. (Hereafter cited as *In Time of War*.) The passages of text cited as the basis of the above academics' analyses of the nature of the visit refer only to an act of courtesy, not a call of condolence. In this and the other primary source (a Dáil statement) relied on by the above academics, 'courtesy', not 'condolence', was the self-professed purpose of de Valera's visit. The 'courtesy' afforded to Hempel by de Valera in the form of an offer of asylum and the details of what actually took place when de Valera called on Hempel - will also be discussed in detail later.

¹³ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 4, 100. See also Trevor C. Salmon, 'Ireland: A Neutral in the Community?' *Journal of Common Market Studies*, XX (3) (1982), 205-227: 205 for post-World War II analyses of potential deals, and Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 208, 265.

¹⁴ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 71-5.

¹⁵ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 43.

¹⁶ FitzGerald, 'Origins, development and present status', 18.

¹⁷ FitzGerald, 'Origins, development and present status', 13.

¹⁸ Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States* (London: 1988), 169. (Hereafter cited as *Neutrality and Small States*.)

is all that different from the neutrality practised by European neutral states during and after the Second World War.

The second problem with how the Unneutral thesis evaluated Ireland's neutrality concerns the proposition that if each of those neutral states violated many elements of the thesis's model of neutrality, they would also be deemed 'unneutral'. The approach of evaluating the failures of each state on a 'sortal' rather than a 'scalar' basis effectively defines neutrality out of existence. The problem is that there is no indication of a hierarchy of the variables in the model, of which variables are fundamental to the concept of neutrality and which variables are auxiliary. Is it possible to violate auxiliary elements of neutrality and still be considered a neutral state? Or is it the case that a violation of just one variable of the model renders a state 'unneutral'? Does a state have to violate all of the variables to be deemed 'unneutral'? This is not made clear. Although it is possible to argue for a scalar concept of neutrality that allows violations of some variables in the model, the specification of such conditions would be political and contested. This issue pervades the following comparative analysis of European neutral states' policies and practices of neutrality.

Benevolence and Concessions

Ireland did give assistance to Britain during the war in terms of shipping, emigration and aviation policy¹⁹; for example, de Valera came up with "an ingenious plan to help Britain while at the same time preserving the appearance of strict neutrality".²⁰ Once the Irish authorities located a submarine, information on its whereabouts would be radioed "to the world".²¹ This would not be of assistance to the Germans because they were too far from Ireland to use the information, but Britain could take action.²² However, most of the actions were mutually beneficial. It was out of a determination to remain neutral that De Valera denied the British the cooperation from Ireland they wanted most:²³ the return of the Treaty Ports to British hands, and as a result, Irish neutrality was never legally compromised. Bill McSweeney reasoned that Ireland's "defence was backed up by some ostentatious displays of military impartiality and other, less public, concessions to the Allied cause which were deemed necessary to pacify an outraged Westminster government".²⁴

Arguably, Salmon and FitzGerald's point about Ireland's alleged lack of adherence to the international law of neutrality could apply to all of the neutral states, not just Ireland. As Risto Penttillä explains, the World Wars shattered the idea of strict, impartial neutrality because those who were able to stay out of the war (many neutral states were invaded) had to compromise their neutrality in economic and military terms in favour of the stronger belligerent side. Citing the case of Sweden, which allowed the transport of German troops through its territory, he argues that such states were legally non-belligerent rather than neutral, concluding, however, that, "because of these concessions, Sweden managed to stay out of the war even if it broke legal rules concerning neutrality".²⁵ Constance Howard cites another example in the case of the Swiss, who also made concessions to the Axis side: "while the Swiss were determined to maintain their political independence and to defend their neutrality, the Government were obliged to make a number of concessions to Germany and Italy".²⁶ Thus, Roderick Ogley surmises, "Sweden and Switzerland, like other successful neutrals, had to make concessions, in their case, largely to the Axis powers".²⁷ Ogley argues,

¹⁹ See T. Ryle Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality and the USA 1939 – 1947* (Dublin, 1977), 19 for an extensive list of the type of assistance provided. (Hereafter cited as *Irish Neutrality and the USA*).

²⁰ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality and the USA*, 18.

²¹ Robert Fisk, *In Time of War*, 111.

²² Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality and the USA*, 18.

²³ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality and the USA*, 19-20.

²⁴ Bill McSweeney, 'Changing perceptions of Irish neutrality' in Bill McSweeney (ed) *Ireland and the Threat of Nuclear War: the question of Irish neutrality* (Dublin, 1985), 118-140: 120. (Hereafter cited as 'Changing perceptions of Irish neutrality').

²⁵ Risto E. J. Penttillä. 'Non-alignment - Obsolete in Today's Europe?' in Mattias Jopp and Hanna Ojanen (eds) *European Security Integration: implications for non-alignment and alliances*, (Helsinki, 1999), 167-187: 170. The argument corroborates Salmon's point about the difference between non-belligerency and neutrality, but the problem remains that both Salmon and FitzGerald consider Sweden as neutral and Ireland as 'unneutral' by comparison.

²⁶ Constance Howard, 'Switzerland' document no.26 in Roderick Ogley (ed.) *The Theory and Practice of Neutrality in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1970), 143-153: 143-145. (Hereafter cited as 'Switzerland').

²⁷ Roderick Ogley, 'The Second World War', in Roderick Ogley (ed.) *The Theory and Practice of Neutrality in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1970) 128-172: 130. (Hereafter cited as *The Theory and Practice of Neutrality*.)

the fact that Sweden and Switzerland survived at all as neutrals in the Second World War says much for their diplomatic skill. Their problem, essentially, was to concede what had to be conceded to Axis powers, and no more, while making clear that they would fight against any wholesale assault on their independence.²⁸

Ogley concludes that “only Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland of the European States, preserved their neutrality throughout the war”.²⁹ Thus, Ireland is included in the bracket of successful European neutral states in his analysis. It also appears that Ireland did not have to make as severe concessions as other European neutrals – such as facilitating the transportation of British or German troops, as some other neutrals did - thus casting doubt over the argument made by Salmon and FitzGerald that Ireland’s neutrality is a myth because it was of a ‘less clear-cut’ type than that of Sweden or Switzerland.

Impartiality and disavowal of external help

Impartiality is a property of neutrality that Salmon finds lacking in the exercise of Irish neutrality: he argues “partiality to one side or the other is not simply to be added up and judged acceptable if the score comes out evenly at the bottom. There can be little doubt that the Irish engaged in unneutral acts and in partial behaviour”.³⁰ Dwyer recounts that de Valera was cautious in providing measures that might appear to prove beneficial to one side, i.e. the British, more than the other side, and he had made changes to an exclusion order to include aircrafts and ships because, “if the policy were directed against U-boats alone, critics would charge that it was entirely anti-German”.³¹ Salmon also argues that an estimated forty thousand Irishmen from the Republic fighting in the British army “did infringe neutrality by its partiality”.³² This argument, however, runs contrary to the legal concept of neutrality, for example, the Swiss Doctrine of neutrality provides that neutrality is not conducted by private individuals. Therefore in a neutral country there is freedom of the press, and freedom to join an army if an individual so wishes.³³ Furthermore, Salmon raises the question of whether involvement in the EEC and EPC is incompatible with impartiality, especially as Ireland has participated, along with other Community members, in imposing sanctions against various states on various occasions. Yet, the 1993 Swiss Federal Council report concluded “the law of neutrality does not render neutrality and participation in economic sanctions fundamentally incompatible”.³⁴ Salmon makes a number of other arguments and suggests a number of incidents, actions, decisions and attitudes concerning talks, supplies, aid, trade, due diligence, disavowal of help and ideology that, he argues, means that Ireland was ‘unneutral’. Each of these points will be examined in detail below and a comparison made with the other European neutral states to establish whether Ireland has failed to live up to the same standards of these ‘clear-cut’, ‘genuine’, ‘established’ neutral states.

Salmon argues that Ireland was unneutral during World War II on the basis of Irish participation in talks about a defence alliance. He claims that “a number of talks with the British showed a clear partiality as regards disavowal of external help”,³⁵ although there are assumptions underlying this claim.³⁶ What of the behaviour of the other neutrals, such as Sweden and Norway? Those two neutral states also engaged in similar discussions, with some analysts claiming that Sweden had “made secret preparations for co-operating with the West in the event of Soviet aggression and neutrality failing”.³⁷ Moreover, neutral Norway (at least up until the time the Nazis intervened to pre-

²⁸ Ogley, *The Theory and Practice of Neutrality*, 18.

²⁹ Ogley, *The Theory and Practice of Neutrality*, 129.

³⁰ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 126-127.

³¹ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality and the USA*, 17.

³² Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 130.

³³ Patrick Keatinge, *A Singular Stance: Irish neutrality in the 1980s* (Dublin, 1984), 148. (Hereafter cited as *A Singular Stance*.)

³⁴ Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland, *Swiss Neutrality In Practice: Current Aspects*, (Berne, 2000), 2.

³⁵ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 145.

³⁶ See the Carroll reference cited by Salmon - Joseph T. Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years 1939 - 1945* (Newton Abbot, 1975), 96. (Hereafter cited as *Ireland in the War Years*) in which there is an assumption that the practice of General McKenna reporting to de Valera after meetings with British officials meant that de Valera must have authorised a meeting on 18 March 1940 himself. Joseph T. Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years 1939 - 1945* (Newton Abbot, 1975), 96. If Salmon’s argument were to be down-graded to suggest that the meetings were representative of a discussion of emergency plans in London rather than of discussions of an alliance, Fisk’s analysis is supportive: see *In Time of War*, 191.

³⁷ Bo Huldt, Teija Tiilikainen, Tapani Vaahtoranta, and Anna Helkama-Rågård, *Finnish and Swedish Security - Comparing National*

empt Churchill's landing of British troops)³⁸ discussed a potential defence alliance; as Hicks recounts:

the only occasion on which a slight relaxation of Koht's strict conception of neutrality was noticeable was when he took part in deliberations on the possibility of a defensive alliance between the Scandinavian states and Finland after the conclusion of the Russo-Finnish Peace treaty of 12 March 1940.³⁹

What Salmon's analysis fails to consider is that the accusations he levels at Irish neutrality are not unique to Ireland; in an effort to avoid participating in the war, all of the other European neutral states engaged in unneutral acts and were biased in favour of hostile or friendly neighbours. Even the 'British Representative' in Ireland, Sir John Maffey, understood that De Valera's "goal had been to maintain neutrality and to help us within the limits of that neutrality to the full extent possible"⁴⁰, and he further understood that de Valera regarded his policy as consistent.

Nevertheless, Salmon continues,

the real question is whether the Irish reservation was sufficient to save their policy of neutrality. Preparations for and expectations of help certainly ran counter to the principles underpinning a policy 'for neutrality', as followed by Austria, Sweden and Switzerland.⁴¹

Based on the evidence of the analysis so far, Irish neutrality is no different, no less 'neutral' than that of Austria, Sweden and Finland, Salmon's paragon neutral states. Thus, either Ireland is neutral because she compares well, or none of the other states are neutral and the model in the 'Unneutral' thesis has effectively defined the concept out of existence. De Valera had said in the Dáil on 19th May 1937 that he was willing to accept assistance from the British, "provided it was clear that the whole object of it was to maintain the inviolability of our territory";⁴² in other words, so that the state and its independence could be protected. The then UK Minister for Health in the wartime Cabinet, Malcolm MacDonald, was sent to Dublin to try to persuade de Valera to allow British troops into Ireland to take over the ports - his advice was given "principally in the interests of Éire in itself".⁴³ Fisk surmises, "MacDonald must have realized that this was less than the truth; in her greatest moment of peril since Napoleon planned an invasion across the Channel, Britain was not offering her troops to Éire for de Valera's benefit". In his response to each of the British proposals, de Valera emphatically rejected any possibility of 'Éire' abandoning her neutrality.⁴⁴ The key point is that de Valera rejected the proposals of external help offered by the British out of a concern to preserve neutrality and the state.

Due diligence and defence resources

Salmon argues,

it is difficult to say categorically what constitutes sufficient resources, but at sea and air the Irish clearly did not have 'enough', since they were incapable of preventing invasions into territorial waters and airspace, or violations of their neutrality. Their relative defencelessness meant that on occasion they did bend...with respect to 'due diligence' the Irish clearly defaulted, particularly in the air and at sea. The Irish objective was simply to avoid participation in the war. That is not neutrality.⁴⁵

Policies Programme on the Northern Dimension of the CFSP, 2 (produced by FIIA and IEP in cooperation with the EU Commission), available at <http://www.northerndimension.org/finswe.html> (downloaded 21 March 2002). For a more balanced discussion see: Birgit Karlsson, 'Neutrality and Economy: The Redefining of Swedish Neutrality, 1946-52', *Journal of Peace Research* 32 (1) (1995), 37-48: 38.

³⁸ Ogleby, *The Theory and Practice of Neutrality*, 128.

³⁹ Agnes Hicks, 'Norway: Political Antecedents to the German Invasion', document no.25 in Ogleby, *Theory and Practice of Neutrality*, 135-143: 141. (Hereafter cited as 'Norway').

⁴⁰ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 124.

⁴¹ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 144-145.

⁴² Fisk, *In Time of War*, 111.

⁴³ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 191.

⁴⁴ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 191.

⁴⁵ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 136.

Before going into the detail of the “due diligence” accusation, it is worth pointing out, in reference to the last argument, that it is clear from this analysis that the other neutral states also had only one goal in mind - to avoid participating in the war - and this goal was pursued at the expense of many legal rules of neutrality. If Ireland is ‘unneutral’ on this basis, then all of the other states in this present analysis must also be ‘unneutral’.

Fisk reasons that

accidental encroachments into Irish territorial waters and a flood of refugees from Britain were the natural burdens of neutrality and de Valera could not have been surprised by these events. Éire was the only British dominion to choose neutrality – the rest of the Commonwealth followed Chamberlain’s lead by declaring war on Germany.⁴⁶

Salmon argues that airspace violations rendered Ireland unneutral, however, it is also the case that other European neutrals also suffered airspace violations, many of them committed by the British. Howard recounts the Swiss experience of airspace violations:

since the summer of 1940, however, British bombers had repeatedly crossed Swiss territory on their way to attack north Italian towns and, in spite of repeated protests from the Swiss Government, this violation of Swiss air by British aviators continued. The Italians complained that Swiss illumination gave an unfair advantage to British bomber crews as it helped them to find their targets in northern Italy.⁴⁷

Norway also experienced airspace violations: Hicks describes how

there were minor violations of Norwegian neutrality during this period, in the shape of flights by belligerent aircraft over Norwegian territory. Such incidents were always followed by prompt Norwegian protests to the offending Power when it was possible to identify the trespassing aircraft.⁴⁸

And in the post-war period, Schlesinger maintains that although lip service was paid to Austria’s armed neutrality, “...the words are rarely converted into expenditures and law”.⁴⁹ Air defence was a particular weak spot: Austria’s “effective air defense has been virtually non-existent”, to the point that Austria was forced to protest to the United States over violations of its airspace during the Near East crisis.⁵⁰

Salmon further assesses,

on land the situation was somewhat different, since throughout the duration the land area of the twenty-six counties remained inviolate. There was perhaps an element of deterrence...Certainly the Irish could have made wholesale occupation unprofitable.⁵¹

De Valera’s determination for the state to remain inviolate will be dealt with below, in relation to defence resources and threats of invasion from Britain. The Swiss were in much the same situation as Ireland, with an aggressive, hostile belligerent as a near neighbour in Germany, but they managed to stay out of the war despite similar threats of invasion:

In 1943 the Government had real grounds for fear that German threats might indeed be

⁴⁶ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 105.

⁴⁷ Howard, ‘Switzerland’, 145.

⁴⁸ Hicks, ‘Norway’, 138.

⁴⁹ Thomas O Schlesinger, *Austrian Neutrality in Postwar Europe: the domestic roots of a foreign policy*, (Wient-Stuggart, 1972): 125. Hereafter cited as *Austrian Neutrality*.

⁵⁰ Schlesinger, *Austrian Neutrality*, 121-122.

⁵¹ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 136.

translated into action. Hitherto, also, although Hitler had been greatly irked by Switzerland's continued independence and neutrality, the advantages which would have accrued from the invasion and conquest of Switzerland had been clearly outweighed by the drawbacks. The Germans were aware that any attack would be strongly resisted by the Swiss.⁵²

The Irish government itself acknowledged that neutrality meant limited warfare with all belligerents. As Frank Aiken, the minister for the 'Coordination of Defensive Measures' said on 23 January 1940, "in the modern total warfare it [neutrality] is not a condition of peace with both belligerents, but rather a condition of limited warfare with both...".⁵³ De Valera added,

neutrality if you are sincere about it means you will have to fight for your life against one side or the other – which ever attacks you first. Neutrality is not a cowardly policy if you really mean to defend yourself if attacked. Other nations have not gone crusading until they were attacked.⁵⁴

Defence expenditure and "costs of attack"

Although, as mentioned earlier, Salmon admits, "it is difficult to say categorically what constitutes sufficient resources",⁵⁵ he does confirm that, "neutrals do, however, need the ability to deter by making the costs of attack too high, relatively, for the belligerent".⁵⁶ Salmon claims that the Irish position was undermined by de Valera's recognition that Ireland was a small state and the equipment and arms required in modern wars were beyond a small state.⁵⁷ These issues were also acknowledged by the small neutral states in mainland Europe. The notion that a certain level of arms means that a defence is 100% effective is a (neo)realist myth; no defence can be 100% effective and the Swedes and other World War II neutrals knew their defence limits too. The important fact is that de Valera pledged that Ireland would fight any incursion from any side, and the costs of attack were made high. This was acknowledged by both the Germans and the British.

In January 1938 one of the questions put to the British chief of staff's sub-committees included a question as to whether the importance of the Irish ports was so great as to warrant military operations to regain possession of them. The reply indicated that this would require a campaign of Gallipoli proportions if it were carried out in the face of opposition.⁵⁸

Duggan recalls de Valera's contingency plans in 1938 that if Britain were to be an aggressor, "Ireland would make such aggression as costly as possible for Britain".⁵⁹ O'Halpin also admits that 'the evident determination of the Irish to resist any invader, however briefly, undoubtedly had some influence on British thinking'.⁶⁰ He argues, 'it can also fairly be said that, by as early as the spring of 1941, the defence forces were sufficiently well organised to provide sustained resistance to British action'.⁶¹ On 14 December 1941 Hempel confirmed de Valera's reiterated determination to defend Irish neutrality.... 'not an inch' of Irish territory was for sale.⁶² It is worth noting that the strategy of other neutral states, such as Austria, was also based on the strategy of "the highest possible price of entry", with relatively low levels of defence expenditure.⁶³ Thus, de Valera had shown comparatively sufficient due diligence and defence resource preparations to make the perceived costs of occupation too high for belligerents, an achievement he shared with the other neutral states.

⁵² Howard, 'Switzerland', 151.

⁵³ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 156.

⁵⁴ John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin 1985), 123. (Hereafter cited as *Neutral Ireland*.)

⁵⁵ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 136.

⁵⁶ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 24.

⁵⁷ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 131.

⁵⁸ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 57.

⁵⁹ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 40.

⁶⁰ O'Halpin, 'Irish neutrality in the Second World War', 297.

⁶¹ O'Halpin, 'Irish neutrality in the Second World War', 289.

⁶² Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 213.

⁶³ Anselm Skuhra, "Austria and the New Cold War" in Bengt Sundelius (ed) *The Neutral Democracies and the New Cold War* (Boulder, 1987), 117-147: 136. Its defence expenditure has been noted as languishing at the bottom of the OECD scale.

What Salmon's analysis (in particular the charge regarding Ireland's lack of arms) fails to acknowledge sufficiently is the British and American refusals of de Valera's requests for arms.⁶⁴ Duggan recalls, "it was difficult if not impossible in the circumstances to procure weapons. Britain was obstructive; the US was unco-operative. ...Still the realisation that the Irish would resist with whatever weapons they had was a bottom line deterrent: there was a long tradition of taking the pikes down from the thatch".⁶⁵ Dwyer also documents the almost vicious responses to de Valera's pleas for arms from the Allied sides, coupled with the belligerents' threats to invade Ireland given the poor defence capabilities of the army: "with the British, the American President stymied every suggestion to supply additional arms to the Irish army".⁶⁶ O'Halpin also notes that 'efforts to secure arms in the United States also fell on deaf ears, primarily because of Roosevelt's hostility to Irish neutrality'.⁶⁷ And David Gray, the United States representative in Dublin during the war years and a confidant of the American President (Gray was also related to Eleanor Roosevelt by marriage to her aunt), made the threat from the Third Reich seem remote by comparison: "Allied troops were already poised on Irish soil and Gray had an insensitive amateur's appetite for action".⁶⁸ Fisk also recounts that

de Valera's persistent, occasionally frantic quest for weapons was to be a consistent theme of Irish foreign policy over the coming years, a search that was principally directed towards the belligerent powers and which was thus always rewarded by demands which would – if met – totally compromise Éire's neutrality. In return for guns, the British wanted the use of the Treaty ports, the Americans wanted Irish participation in the war, and the Germans – less ambitious because there was little else to be gained – wanted a closer relationship between Dublin and Berlin. Denuded of weapons, Éire's refusal to participate in the war was no longer just an assertion of sovereignty; from now on, the policy had to prove successful in keeping Éire out of the war.⁶⁹

Supplies, trade and economic dependence

Because there were exchanges of food for military supplies across the Northern Ireland border, a lack of a 'strategic reserve' and a dependence on other countries' shipping for imports of wheat, maize, petroleum and bulk cargoes, Salmon claims "third parties" saw room for influence and manoeuvre, and doubted the credibility of Irish neutrality.⁷⁰ On the other hand, Fisk regards de Valera's prioritizing of food supplies and external trade, followed by censorship, counterespionage and coast-watching, over military measures and air-raid precautions as

an authentic policy of neutrality, the desire to maintain the country's commercial life and safeguard its political integrity from external pressures, while taking only minimum defence precautions on the grounds that neutrality – if strictly adhered to – would obviate the need for enormous military expenditure.⁷¹

In fact, de Valera turned down trade agreements with Britain in order to safeguard Irish neutrality:

in November the war cabinet was told that Éire had rejected the storage and trans-shipment proposals as being incompatible with neutrality and from fears that they would provoke German attacks on the ports if not on the country as a whole. Ireland's refusal of the trade agreement may have left her vulnerable to the British economic pressure, but the refusal also sealed off a potential serious breach in Ireland's neutrality and nothing was more important for de Valera.⁷²

⁶⁴ Although the point is not ignored entirely: see Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 135; for de Valera's decline of the offer of arms from the Germans, see Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 139.

⁶⁵ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 182.

⁶⁶ Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality and the USA*, 177.

⁶⁷ O'Halpin, 'Irish neutrality in the Second World War', 288.

⁶⁸ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 177.

⁶⁹ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 160.

⁷⁰ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 146. Although the 'third parties' are not identified.

⁷¹ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 99.

⁷² Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years*, 84.

Although Salmon is right to point out that Ireland was vulnerable, if this vulnerability renders Ireland ‘unneutral’, then Salmon must retract his understanding of Switzerland, Sweden and others as neutral, because those states experienced similar difficulties. Howard points out that although the Swiss, with the exception of a minority of fanatics and defeatists, were resolved to maintain their political independence, economically they were obliged to align themselves much more closely with Hitler’s Europe.⁷³ After the fall of France, Switzerland was economically at the mercy of the Axis, which controlled practically all ways in and out of Switzerland. In a trade agreement reached on 9 August 1940, Germany undertook to supply her with certain quantities of raw materials, of which the most vital were coal and iron. In return, Swiss industry was to supply Germany with goods required for her war effort.⁷⁴ The Swiss neutrality doctrine states that the neutral country is entitled to trade with belligerents; the neutral country has merely to submit to certain encroachments by the belligerents, e.g. a blockade. According to the 1954 Swiss Ministry doctrine, “the rules adopted by Switzerland during the last war of maintaining the normal level and an adequate consideration in trade were voluntarily elected economic principles of its own”.⁷⁵

Norway had to deal with a similar situation: “Norway continued to maintain commercial relations with both belligerents – though this to a decreasing extent, and at the price of incurring both Germany and Franco-British displeasure”.⁷⁶ It is held that Swedish neutrality during World War Two was compromised by its trade with Nazi Germany⁷⁷, whilst Austria’s leading trade partners were Germany and Italy.⁷⁸ The point is that although there is some support for Salmon’s claims that Ireland was non-belligerent in the Second World War because of dependent trade relations or concessions made or assistance given, this analysis shows that Salmon must withdraw his definition of Switzerland and Sweden as being neutral, and to re-brand those states as non-belligerent, because those states failed the same criteria more severely than Ireland is alleged to have failed them. Finally, other academics have argued that the analyses painting a picture of Ireland during the war as simply a British satellite, entirely dependent for national survival on Britain’s good will, is not accurate; as O’Halpin contends, ‘even in the spheres of trade and commerce, it is more accurate to characterise the relationship as one of interdependence’.⁷⁹

“Non-belligerency” and official belligerent acknowledgement of Irish neutrality

Salmon claims that because the British didn’t guarantee not to invade Ireland and refused to officially recognise Ireland as a neutral state, Irish neutrality was not possible. He argues, “neutrality does not come into existence until recognized by both belligerents”,⁸⁰ and therefore Ireland was ‘unneutral’; he does, however, concede that “on occasion there was a certain apparent de facto recognition of the Irish position”.⁸¹ It is notable that Hitler did not guarantee not to invade Switzerland,⁸² and yet Salmon regards Switzerland as neutral.

The British always refused to acknowledge Ireland’s neutrality and preferred to use the term ‘non-belligerency’, because Ireland was still a member of the Commonwealth. As Fisk recounts,

a formal recognition of Éire’s neutrality presented a serious difficulty, said Eden⁸³, because ‘we do not want formally to recognize Éire as neutral while Éire remains a member of the British Commonwealth’. This would surrender the ‘constitutional theory of the indivisibility of the Crown’.⁸⁴

⁷³ Howard, ‘Switzerland’, 147-8.

⁷⁴ Howard, ‘Switzerland’, 147-8.

⁷⁵ Keatinge, *A Singular Stance*, 151.

⁷⁶ Hicks, ‘Norway’, 137.

⁷⁷ Neal G. Jesse, ‘Contemporary Irish Neutrality: still a singular stance’, *New Hibernia Review*, (2007) 11(1), 74-95: 86.

⁷⁸ Schlesinger, *Austrian Neutrality*, 93.

⁷⁹ O’Halpin, ‘Irish neutrality in the Second World War’, 297.

⁸⁰ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 21.

⁸¹ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 138.

⁸² Howard, ‘Switzerland’, 150-1.

⁸³ Anthony Eden was the UK Dominions Secretary in 1939.

⁸⁴ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 110.

Duggan's account of this period states,

the [German] Envoy had reported Allied pressure to change the Irish neutrality posture to a stance of technical nonbelligerency, which would be designed, he said, to permit the Allies to use the ports".⁸⁵

Therefore, regardless of the language the British government used because of political considerations, it was recognised by both the British and German sides that Ireland was indeed 'neutral', and this legal, official stance could only turn into "non-belligerency" if troops were allowed in (as in the example of Sweden cited by Pentillä above).

Britain's official view of Ireland's status emerged during times when the British government tried to persuade the Irish government to allow British soldiers into Ireland. MacDonald offered,

we would be content for Éire to remain non-belligerent if she invited our ships into her ports and our troops and aeroplanes into her territory to increase her security against the fate which had befallen neutral Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg.⁸⁶

Whereas MacDonald avoided the word 'neutrality' throughout these meetings,⁸⁷ in fact there was 'official British' recognition of Ireland's neutral status in various forums, although many were off-record.

There are several examples of this "certain apparent de facto recognition of"⁸⁸ Ireland's neutrality by Britain. For example, Duff Cooper, the UK Minister for Information, made a speech in May 1941 in which he

had been rash enough to state that however deeply and disastrously Britain suffered from Irish neutrality, 'we respect the independence of Éire and allow them to remain neutral while we are fighting for our lives. That shows Great Britain abides by her word'.⁸⁹

Fisk also tells us that

when Hugh Dalton, the president of the British Board of Trade, told the House of Commons that 'in view of her neutrality, Éire cannot expect the same considerations as those who are at war with the common enemy', the Irish Department of Supplies not unnaturally concluded that this 'quite clearly indicates that because of our neutrality we are being subjected to a "squeeze"'.⁹⁰

In a War Cabinet memorandum, Viscount Cranbourne, the UK Dominions Secretary from 1940-2, described life in "Southern Ireland" as very uncomfortable, and stated that the discomfort "is a direct result of her neutrality".⁹¹ When Cranbourne informed Churchill of a request for arms from de Valera in a cover note attached to a dispatch from Maffey, Churchill replied,

no attempt should be made to conceal from Mr de Valera the depth and intensity of feeling against the policy of Irish neutrality. We have tolerated and acquiesced in it, but juridically we have never recognized that Southern Ireland is an independent Sovereign State, and she herself has repudiated Dominion Status. Her international status is undefined and anomalous.⁹²

The issue behind British refusal to officially acknowledge Ireland's neutrality was largely

⁸⁵ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 220.

⁸⁶ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 205.

⁸⁷ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 206.

⁸⁸ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 138.

⁸⁹ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 304.

⁹⁰ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 315.

⁹¹ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 306.

⁹² Fisk, *In Time of War*, 299.

inspired by Churchill's imperialist attitude towards Ireland. Fisk reports,

there is, throughout Churchill's writing and speeches at this period, an ill-concealed impatience with the Irish that sometimes turns into contempt. Above all, there was his notion that by rejecting the Oath of Allegiance, de Valera's Ireland might somehow legally cease to exist. It was a very disturbing idea to have been gestating in the mind of a future British Prime Minister.⁹³

At the time described by Fisk, Churchill,

still smarting over the Anglo-Irish rapprochement of 1938 [Chamberlain's decision to hand the Treaty Ports back to de Valera]...also brought with him to the Admiralty his profound distrust of de Valera's young state....Here, clearly, would be no friend of a neutral Éire. So it was to turn out, for as Britain went to war against Germany, Churchill's contempt for Éire's political status surfaced almost at once. Only two days after the British declaration of war, he ordered the Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound, the First Sea Lord, to compile a special report 'upon the questions arising from the so-called neutrality of the so-called Éire'.⁹⁴

On foot of this request, Sir William Malkin, the UK Foreign Office Legal Advisor, wrote a ten-page report (it was classified top secret and was never seen by de Valera) on the legal aspects of Irish neutrality and the Treaty ports, which amounted to

'as blunt an acknowledgement of Éire's juridical right to remain neutral as had yet come from a British Government official'. Malkin went on to define the complexities of Irish neutrality in a way that morally precluded any British action against Éire.⁹⁵

Anthony Eden added to the report by hand:

I fear that it becomes every day clearer that it is scarcely possible for "Dev" to square neutrality with the grant of the facilities for which the Admiralty ask. And at least 80% of the Irish people favour neutrality. Altogether a pretty problem.⁹⁶

Churchill responded to the paper in a way that

revealed the extent of Churchill's disturbing obsession about Ireland: he did not just throw doubt on the international validity of Irish neutrality. He was questioning Éire's very right to exist as a separate and independent state⁹⁷....seventeen months later, Churchill had become possessed of the idea that Éire had no international rights at all.⁹⁸

Thus, the refusal by 'Britain' to recognise the neutrality of Ireland was in effect, Churchill's refusal to recognise Ireland as a sovereign state, and this was the real dynamic behind Salmon's argument that

the British never simply accepted the 1939 Irish *aide-mémoire* and throughout the war refused to recognize the Irish position formally. Moreover, there was lacking not only a guarantee of respect for Irish neutrality but also a guarantee not to invade Irish territory: this latter omission was quite deliberate.⁹⁹

⁹³ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 64.

⁹⁴ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 114. Eunan O'Halpin cites an analysis by Nicholas Mansergh that touches on this point: it concerns the phraseology of Maffey's title of 'British Representative in Ireland' rather than 'minister', which was designed so as to avoid any hint of British recognition of Ireland's independence. See O'Halpin, 'Irish neutrality in the Second World War', 295.

⁹⁵ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 199.

⁹⁶ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 120.

⁹⁷ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 120-21.

⁹⁸ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 122.

⁹⁹ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 137-8.

Germany did officially recognise Ireland's neutrality; hours before Germany's invasion of Poland, "on the instructions of Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, Hempel told de Valera that Germany would respect Éire's neutrality."¹⁰⁰

Protective umbrella and "relying on Britain"

Salmon's thesis claims that "the Irish relied on a protective umbrella supplied by the British"¹⁰¹ and that "during the war there was no consistent Irish disavowal of external help...there still remained a belief in the protective umbrella".¹⁰² Salmon is employing a classic (neo)realist myth in his use of the concept of a protective umbrella to argue that Ireland is 'unneutral'. His argument is feasible in a different sense, in terms of seeking help to prevent an attack, as a speech by de Valera on 5 October 1943 illustrates. On that occasion, the taoiseach reasserted in tones reminiscent of a 1940 speech recalled earlier, that if Ireland were attacked by one side, Ireland would seek aid from the other. In this sense, the notion of a protective umbrella applies equally to the other major belligerent in the War, Germany, as it does to Britain. Regardless, as Duggan points out, "this did not indicate any overt change in maintaining the policy of neutrality".¹⁰³

Salmon's argument may also be resting on the notion that the Germans would have to overcome Britain before launching an invasion of Ireland, but that argument does not hold either, given the inability of the British to defend Belfast and the indications of German plans to occupy Ireland directly. Fisk posits,

if the British could not even defend Belfast and protect these people, how could they possibly have guaranteed Dublin's safety under air attack if Éire had allied herself to Britain in 1940?"¹⁰⁴

and the British themselves, through MacDonald, put it to de Valera that a German invasion of Ireland might precede an invasion of Britain.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the notion that Ireland was relying on Britain to protect her from a German invasion does not stand up to scrutiny, because Britain was simply incapable of defending any part of Ireland from the Axis aggressors. Furthermore, it was the British that were most hostile to Ireland and her policy of neutrality throughout the Second World War. In an interesting reversal of the 'protective umbrella' thesis argued by Salmon and others,¹⁰⁶ after the blitz of the British cities began, there were

rumours that the North [of Ireland]'s freedom from attack could be put down to the fact 'that de Valera has indicated to the German embassy that Ireland is to be regarded as a *whole*' and there was 'a belief that the neutrality of the South would somehow cast a protective shield over Northern Ireland'.¹⁰⁷

Salmon was cited earlier as drawing attention to the fact that Churchill was very careful not to acknowledge or guarantee Irish neutrality; in fact, Churchill threatened to invade Ireland several times and made reference to these intentions in his victory speech after the War ended. Fisk argues that, as early as 1940, "Éire now believed that a British invasion was more likely than a German attack".¹⁰⁸ British Cabinet records show that, in the event of an enemy invasion of Ireland, Churchill proposed plans to gas the Irish population, as he was prepared to use poison gas against other populations during World War II. As Chomsky points out,

¹⁰⁰ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 99.

¹⁰¹ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 114.

¹⁰² Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 145.

¹⁰³ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 223.

¹⁰⁴ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 498.

¹⁰⁵ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 191.

¹⁰⁶ Nowadays the talk of various Anglo-American neorealists in relation to Irish neutrality and a protective umbrellas concerns a 'nuclear umbrella', see James F Clarity, 'Ireland Weighs Trading Neutrality for Europe's Military Pact', *New York Times*, 17 May 1998.

¹⁰⁷ Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 214.

¹⁰⁸ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 285.

as Secretary of State of the War Office in 1919, Winston Churchill was enthusiastic about the prospects of ‘using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes’ – Kurds and Afghans – and authorized the RAF Middle East command to use chemical weapons ‘against recalcitrant Arabs as [an] experiment’, dismissing objections by the India office as ‘unreasonable’ and deploring the ‘squeamishness about the use of gas...’.¹⁰⁹

The validity of “the Irish” relying on Salmon’s (neo)realist concept of a British protective umbrella is undermined by the fact that “de Valera was never able to rule out the possibility of British attack”.¹¹⁰

Throughout the War, de Valera did not know which side was going to be the first to launch an invasion of Ireland and he had to make plans to tackle both the Germans and the British, and also the Americans. Fisk reports that in June 1944 “Éire thought she might be invaded by American troops”.¹¹¹ Duggan recounts that,

Hempel passed on the following British secret service report: in their judgement the Irish army was very good, in spite of a shortage of armament; that factor meant that a large force of, say, 100,000 men would be required for a quick occupation of Ireland”¹¹²

and that Hempel felt a British attack had to be reckoned with¹¹³ - “de Valera did not exaggerate when he stressed the threat from both sides”.¹¹⁴ Fisk confirms that, “the Irish Government anticipated not only an invasion but an occupation of large parts of Éire by British or German troops.”¹¹⁵

Ideological impartiality

Salmon quotes FitzGerald who said in 1980, “there really isn’t such a thing as neutrality today: we are part of Western Europe and our interests coincide with theirs”¹¹⁶ and he argues the fact that Ireland’s profession of itself as not neutral between ideologies (i.e. between Western values and Communism) violates neutrality. However, the other neutral states also declared they were part of Western Europe and shared the associated values. Hakovirta states “the neutrals identify themselves ideologically with the West”.¹¹⁷ Schlesinger notes Austrian foreign policy’s general identification with the West as a value system¹¹⁸ with significant economic and cultural relations with Germany¹¹⁹ and that Austria’s neutrality was a consequence of a Soviet-Austrian understanding.¹²⁰ Furthermore, Schlesinger points to an analyst who declared that Austria and Switzerland, as two ‘alpine neutrals’, had been “more Western than the West”.¹²¹ Keatinge notes that Finland has a consideration for the Soviet Union, mirroring Ireland’s consideration for the United States, and argues that Sweden and Switzerland are “essentially oriented to the west”.¹²² Andrén clarifies this in more detail;

Sweden has never sought to assume a neatly balanced position in all major respects between the superpowers or between the power blocs. The Swedish policy of neutrality is related only to security, not to ideology, economic relations, or other aspects of international affairs. Sweden has repeatedly and emphatically rejected the idea of ideological neutrality.¹²³

McSweeney argues “the law, for what it is worth, places no barrier to neutrality for a nation which is

¹⁰⁹ Noam Chomsky, *Rogue States* (London, 2000), 26-27.

¹¹⁰ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 188.

¹¹¹ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 258.

¹¹² Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 167.

¹¹³ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 185.

¹¹⁴ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 168.

¹¹⁵ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 183.

¹¹⁶ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 281.

¹¹⁷ Harto Hakovirta, *East-West Conflict and European Neutrality* (Oxford 1988), 83. (Hereafter cited as *European Neutrality*.)

¹¹⁸ Schlesinger, *Austrian Neutrality*, 7.

¹¹⁹ Schlesinger, *Austrian Neutrality*, 6.

¹²⁰ Schlesinger, *Austrian Neutrality*, 25.

¹²¹ Schlesinger, *Austrian Neutrality*, 52.

¹²² Keatinge, *A Singular Stance*, 97.

¹²³ Nils Andrén, ‘Swedish Defence’, in J. Kruzal and M. H. Haltzel (eds) *Between the Blocs: Problems and Prospects for Europe’s Neutral and Nonaligned States*, (Cambridge 1989), 175-199: 176.

ideologically close to one of the belligerents. Nor does it demand ideological impartiality even during a war".¹²⁴ He argues that impartiality is not with respect to ideology or culture, but the likely *consequences* of ideology, such as trade, communication links and the possibility of recruitment and propaganda.

Northern Ireland

There were other issues alleged to violate or vilify Irish neutrality that continue to crop up in the national public discourse that are worth examining: specifically, the allegations regarding a deal offered by the British government on Northern Ireland and the matter of de Valera offering condolences on Hitler's death. After the bombing of Pearl Harbour, Churchill sent a telegram to de Valera, which the latter understood to be a

coded offer of a united Ireland in return for the abandonment of neutrality. It was apparently one of a large number of euphoric telegrams which Churchill had fired off to all corners of the globe in the wake of America's entry to the war. De Valera's habitual reserve stood him in good stead at that moment: neither then nor later did he seriously entertain Churchill's offer...in truth, he had his mind made up on his preference for neutrality.¹²⁵

Fisk also shows that even if a united Ireland came about through the negotiations proposed by the British government, de Valera would not have allowed Ireland to join the war. He describes how Mulcahy asked de Valera five days after the meeting with MacDonald, "if he would be prepared in...an All-Ireland Parliament to advocate and support going into the war against Germany. And de Valera 'stated that he would not'".¹²⁶ De Valera surmised, "we are, of course, aware that the policy of neutrality has its dangers, but, on the other hand, departure from it would involve us in dangers greater still".¹²⁷ It was Craigavon (the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland) who implied in public that the initiative for Irish unity in return for the abandonment of the neutrality policy had come not from the British but from de Valera.¹²⁸

Condolences

Mansergh recounts, "the rigid formalistic adherence to the letter of neutrality, which found significant expression on many occasions, caused much misunderstanding of Éire's position even among the members of the united nations most friendly to her".¹²⁹ One such occasion concerns de Valera's "formal call of condolence on the German Minister on 3 May 1945" after the end of the war.¹³⁰ This incident is a central part of the anti-neutrality discourse of the past 35 years and is continually cited in the context of arguments that seek to undermine positive adherence to Irish neutrality by members of the Irish public (particularly those who have vetoed EU treaties in the 2001 Nice Treaty referendum and 2008 Lisbon Treaty referendum in an attempt to protect Irish neutrality). Discourse theorists are concerned with looking at 'play of practice': in particular, the efforts of agents to articulate and re-articulate a particular version of an event so that it will become sedimented as a 'regime of truth', pointing to a singular 'common sense' policy practice.¹³¹ They are also concerned with examining the genealogy of a dominant discourse and with making space for the subjugated alternative than the dominant discourse, thus to make space for other logical policy avenues to the dominant one.¹³² This article will now focus on these efforts to stabilize and fix particular meanings of neutrality and will critique the genealogy of the 'book of condolences' myth.

¹²⁴ Bill McSweeney, 'Some Arguments Against Irish neutrality' in Bill McSweeney (ed) *Ireland and the Threat of Nuclear War: the question of Irish neutrality* (Dublin, 1985), 3-20: 11. (Hereafter cited as 'Some Arguments Against Irish neutrality').

¹²⁵ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 173-4.

¹²⁶ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 214.

¹²⁷ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 212.

¹²⁸ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 212.

¹²⁹ Nicholas Mansergh, *Britain and Ireland* (London, 1946), 95.

¹³⁰ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 241.

¹³¹ Jennifer Milliken, 'The Study of Discourse in International Relations: a critique of research and methods', *European Journal of International Relations*, 5 (2) (1999), 225-254: 230, 239. (Hereafter cited as 'Discourse in International Relations'.)

¹³² Milliken, 'Discourse in International Relations', 243-244.

This ‘book of condolences’ myth is widespread: it is part of mainstream publicly-available accounts of Irish neutrality. For example, it appears in the first and highest ranked article in a Google search on “Irish neutrality”¹³³; it arises in tourist guides’ talks;¹³⁴ it is cited by secondary school students of history;¹³⁵ it is a constant in public and political discourse in Ireland;¹³⁶ and it is part of media discourse on Irish neutrality abroad.¹³⁷ Its ubiquity is connected to the activities of a significant number of anti-neutrality academics, politicians and journalists, such as Salmon, FitzGerald, Roberts, Girvin and Collins, who continue to publicize and promote the story that de Valera went to the German Legation in order to sign a book of condolences and/or to sympathize over the death of Hitler.

There are three core untruths in this collection of discourses:

(1) de Valera went to the home of Eduard Hempel, the German Minister in Ireland from 1937 to 1945, not to the German legation (the legation was the equivalent of a German Embassy at that time). This is an important detail, because the claim that de Valera went to the Legation obscures the fact that the central purpose of the visit was of a personal nature.

(2) De Valera did not sign a book of condolences. There is no academic evidence in the historical literature that this book existed. There is no material evidence, in terms of the book itself or pictures of signatures. Neither polemic nor disinterested academic accounts have referenced a source that accounts for the book’s existence.

(3) De Valera’s visit was an act of courtesy, rather than a call of condolence. He visited Hempel out of personal consideration for him because, with Hitler’s death and the end of the war, the British and Americans would seek the removal of Hempel¹³⁸ and de Valera wanted to assure him that he and his family would be given appropriate diplomatic protection and asylum in Ireland. Thus, it appears that although Hitler’s death prompted the visit, it was not the focus of it.

But what is the evidence upon which to base these three arguments, and a further argument that the claims made in the discourses above regarding the location of the meeting and indeed, the purpose of it, are undoubtedly connected to negative attitudes towards Irish neutrality and a desire to fulfil alternative security and defence policy ambitions?

John P. Duggan’s account of the visit appears to be the only historical (and more importantly, referenced) account that is based on independent, primary evidence. According to Duggan, who personally interviewed Hempel’s wife in Ireland, “it took Frau Hempel to put the record straight as to the location of the visit. The Taoiseach had visited Hempel’s home rather than the legation”.¹³⁹ Was the purpose of de Valera’s visit to sign a book of condolences? According to Duggan’s account, de Valera paid a visit out of consideration for Hempel¹⁴⁰ – “the German minister, who deduced his mission as being the preservation of Irish neutrality”,¹⁴¹ who was “a great favourite of Dev’s because he had fought against any German infringement of Irish neutrality” – and because it was the right thing to do.¹⁴² His attitude to “the displaced German diplomat” was “charitable and understanding. He granted asylum to him and his family”.¹⁴³ De Valera defended his decision to grant Hempel asylum against British and American pressure to do otherwise.¹⁴⁴

¹³³ At the time of writing, from February 2006 – June 2008, the Wikipedia entry on Irish neutrality was available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_neutrality; (23rd June 2008).

¹³⁴ see Adam Harvey, ‘Dublin and a rare owl’ time’ *Irish Times*, 19 April 2008

¹³⁵ see Letters to the Editor “Condolences on neutrality” *Irish Times*, 14 October 2003

¹³⁶ For example, Alan Shatter, ‘State must apologise for de Valera’s morally repugnant error of judgment over Hitler’, *Irish Independent*, 28 January 2005; Dick Walsh, ‘When history repeats itself and no lessons are learned’ *Irish Times*, 27 December 1997,

¹³⁷ For examples in the USA, see Clarity, ‘Ireland Weighs Trading Neutrality for Europe’s Military Pact’, *New York Times*, 17 May 1998; James F Clarity, ‘Tie to NATO Forces Ireland To Reconsider Neutral Role’ *New York Times*, 16 December 1998; and James F Clarity, ‘Call to Modify Irish Neutrality Ignites Debate’, *New York Times*, 1 April 1996

¹³⁸ Nolan, *Joseph Walshe*, 296 - 299.

¹³⁹ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 243.

¹⁴⁰ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 241.

¹⁴¹ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 202.

¹⁴² Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 241.

¹⁴³ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 244.

¹⁴⁴ Tim Pat Coogan, *Eamon de Valera: the man who was Ireland* (London, 1993), 614. (Hereafter cited as *Eamon de Valera: Ireland.*); Earl of Longford and Thomas P. O’Neill, *Eamon de Valera* (Dublin, 1970), 410. (Hereafter cited as *Eamon de Valera.*); Nolan, *Joseph Walshe*, 297.

Is there other primary evidence that might contradict this account? There appears to be little official pronouncements to analyse, as de Valera would not make any public comment on the visit.¹⁴⁵ There are two ‘official’ sources that are relied upon by commentators and academics,¹⁴⁶ included in more recently published accounts by Brian Girvin¹⁴⁷ and Clair Wills¹⁴⁸, in their discussions of the visit:

- (1) a Dáil statement made by de Valera on 19 July 1945¹⁴⁹ and
- (2) a letter written by de Valera in a private correspondence to the Washington-based Robert Brennan.¹⁵⁰

Notably, the word ‘condolences’ is absent from the letter text cited; de Valera used the word ‘courtesy’. The same is also true of the Dáil statement; de Valera never used the word ‘condolences’, he used the words ‘courtesy’ and ‘courtesies’.¹⁵¹ Whilst it is undoubtedly reasonable to assume that de Valera went to Hempel to express condolences, (1) given that de Valera himself invoked established procedure and practice¹⁵² as justification in response to criticism of the visit, and (2) discussion by others in the Dáil referred to ‘condolences’, remarkably, the primary evidence cited in all of the academic analyses to date does not support this specific interpretation.

The political context of the interpretation of the event is the fact that de Valera knew that his personal visit would be deliberately misrepresented by the British and the Americans (who waged vicious propaganda wars against Irish neutrality¹⁵³); turning to the two primary sources for evidence of this context, de Valera noted in the letter to Brennan that his visit had been ‘played up to the utmost’¹⁵⁴ by the British and the Americans; and in his Dáil Éireann statement he pointed to the spin of the ‘propagandists’ who were displeased with Ireland’s neutrality and sought to ‘malign’ and ‘misrepresent’ the country.¹⁵⁵ Brian Girvin points out that senior members of the British government and news media refused to accept the terms of de Valera’s visit,¹⁵⁶ which explains the hostile British press campaign ‘spinning’ the visit, despite de Valera’s protestations that Sir John Maffey, ‘knew as well as he did how opposed he was personally to the Nazi regime’.¹⁵⁷ These points form an improbable basis for claiming de Valera sought to express condolences on Hitler’s death. Interestingly, Aengus Nolan’s account argues that, privately, Maffey had acknowledged that “while the visit to Hempel was abhorrent to him and to many others, the Taoiseach was ‘mathematically correct’ and consistent in making the visit”.¹⁵⁸ Maffey felt that de Valera wanted to show that he was no ‘bandwagoner’ in the light of the Allied victory.¹⁵⁹

There remain important aspects of the event that are contradicted across various academic analyses, for example, Clair Wills writes that “Hempel himself was apparently bewildered by the visit”,¹⁶⁰ whereas according to Duggan’s primary account, the Hempels “had expected that Mr. de Valera would visit them and were also aware that he would be letting himself in for trouble by doing so”.¹⁶¹ Drawing on de Valera’s Dáil statement, Duggan recounts that de Valera felt

¹⁴⁵ Longford and O’Neill, *Eamon de Valera*, 412.

¹⁴⁶ For example, Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 284; Nolan, *Joseph Walshe*, 291, 370. (Nolan cites the letter itself: ‘De Valera to Brennan, Whit Monday 1945, de Valera papers, 1304 Franciscan archives, Killiney’); Coogan, *Eamon de Valera: Ireland*, 610, 731.

¹⁴⁷ Girvin, *The Emergency*: 7, 9, 333.

¹⁴⁸ Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 389-90.

¹⁴⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 97, col. no. 2754-2755 (19th July 1945), Eamon de Valera.

¹⁵⁰ De Valera to Brennan, Whit Monday 1945, cited in Longford and O’Neill, *Eamon de Valera*, 411-12, 485.

¹⁵¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 97, col. 2755 (19th July 2008).

¹⁵² *Dáil Debates*, vol. 97, col. 2754 (19th July 2008).

¹⁵³ For example, O’Halpin recalls how Irish neutrality was bitterly resented in Britain and discusses the examples of the consequent propaganda: see O’Halpin, ‘Irish neutrality in the Second World War’, 298.

¹⁵⁴ Longford and O’Neill, *Eamon de Valera*, 411.

¹⁵⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 97, cols 2755-2956 (19th July 2008).

¹⁵⁶ Girvin, *The Emergency*, 7.

¹⁵⁷ Girvin, *The Emergency*, 14.

¹⁵⁸ Nolan, *Joseph Walshe*, 295.

¹⁵⁹ Nolan, *Joseph Walshe*, 294.

¹⁶⁰ Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 389. Wills does not provide a reference, but Nolan cites Boland’s memoirs, which state that Hempel was surprised at the visit: see Nolan, *Joseph Walshe*, 291.

¹⁶¹ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 243.

that it was important that it should never be inferred that these formal acts imply the passing of judgements, good or bad, on the Third Reich. He was quite sure that he had acted correctly and wisely¹⁶²

and concludes his analysis by noting “[t]he Hempels were grateful for de Valera’s consideration and helping hand. He was indeed a friend in need”.¹⁶³

The ‘book of condolences’/‘condolences’ myth is undoubtedly widespread and consistently repeated, although, tellingly, this genealogical analysis shows that none of the primary sources relied on by the historians citing the few words from de Valera referring to the visit involve ‘condolences’. Girvin titled the first chapter of his account of Irish neutrality “Condolences on Hitler’s Death”, indicating a remarkable devotion of space and priority to the event given the scope of the history of Irish neutrality. This indicates a rather obvious anti-neutrality political position, one that the author acknowledges in the preface to his book: “I was an active proponent of European integration, believing that Ireland should join NATO..”.¹⁶⁴ The same pattern is found in relation to Garret FitzGerald, who argued that “military neutrality is immoral” and initiated and carried on a series of columns in the Irish Independent advocating Irish membership of NATO.¹⁶⁵ Later, as Ireland’s minister for foreign affairs, FitzGerald ensured the perpetuity of the condolences story by passing it on to other EC Foreign Ministers.¹⁶⁶

The debate continues in recent historical texts, but what this analysis seeks to highlight is that history is political, particularly the history of Irish neutrality. In the absence of readers’ own independent investigations of the primary sources referenced by the above academics, whose interpretation of the event would the reader choose to believe? Current historians and academics who faithfully maintain the condolences discourse, although some of whom have expressed their personal hatred of Irish neutrality? Or the past generation of politicians and diplomats, who were agents with political and personal agendas towards neutrality, such as the Germans who wanted to maintain it and the Americans and British who wanted to end it? For discourse theorists, it is important to offer the ‘subjugated’ knowledge and interpretation of an event, particularly in the face of unrelenting repetitions of myths involving manipulation of the truth, ignorance of primary evidence and disregard of political context due to an underlying agenda; evidence and context that can provide an alternative and arguably more authentic interpretation of an event.

EEC membership

Salmon argues that the act of joining the EEC in 1973 cast doubt on the principle of Irish neutrality because Ireland “accepted...the political objectives of the Community, including political unification and a European identity...and the need ultimately to partake in Community defence”.¹⁶⁷ Twelve years after the initial application, the EEC agreed to accept Ireland as a member, and the Irish government put the proposal to the people through a referendum. The 1972 public debate on EEC membership concentrated on the economic implications of membership¹⁶⁸ and although the question of the possible political consequences was raised, the consequences were not explored in any depth.¹⁶⁹ The government took the line that defence co-operation was a consequence and not a pre-condition of political union, and that it would only arise when economic integration was complete. In the campaign in the run-up to the 1972 referendum, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael reiterated the line that there was no

¹⁶² Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 242.

¹⁶³ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 244.

¹⁶⁴ Girvin, *The Emergency*, x. Notably, Girvin relates that de Valera went with Joseph Walshe, who he notes was a friend of Hempel’s (see *The Emergency*, 5), but he ignores the significance of this point, in that it could further indicate that the purpose of the visit was of a personal nature. Furthermore, although Girvin asks the question of why de Valera went to see Hempel, his chapter does not reference what was considered as ‘the standard work’ (see Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 428), in his analysis of the event: Duggan’s 1985 book on Ireland and the Third Reich. Thus, Girvin ignores the only referenced, primary account of the event indicating that de Valera went to the home of Hempels to assure them they would be provided with asylum and out of courtesy to the diplomat who supported Irish neutrality when others would not.

¹⁶⁵ Garret FitzGerald, ‘Military neutrality immoral, despite virtuous Irish claims’, *Irish Times*, 15th April 1995.

¹⁶⁶ Garret FitzGerald, ‘Walking a wartime tightrope’ *Irish Times*, 28 June 2003.

¹⁶⁷ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 224.

¹⁶⁸ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 214.

¹⁶⁹ Patrick Keatinge, *The Formulation of Irish Foreign Policy*, (Dublin, 1973), 36.

threat to Irish neutrality, and that, in any case, neutrality was accidental, ad hoc, temporary and conditional.¹⁷⁰

The then Taoiseach and leader of Fianna Fáil, Jack Lynch, said Ireland would defend others in the Community and that Ireland had no traditional policy of neutrality like Sweden and Switzerland, and nor did Ireland's neutrality compare with Austria's declaration of permanent neutrality.¹⁷¹ The Labour Party, traditionally a defender of Irish neutrality, was the only large political party to campaign against membership. As Salmon points out,

Successive government declarations did not help to clarify the issue: they emphasised the legal position when referring to neutrality, but Irish moral and political obligations when referring to Community commitment. A distinction was drawn between current and future commitments, and between the Community and an alliance.¹⁷²

However, Salmon goes on to argue that this acceptance was the position not only at the elite level:

underneath these statements lay a public recognition and acceptance that at some time in the future, and conditional upon certain developments, Ireland would join in the defence of the Community. The problem arose from a reluctance to accept the corollary, namely that such a position involved the abandonment of neutrality.¹⁷³

This is a rather confident statement regarding the state of public opinion given that Salmon does not consider public opinion as a substantive concern in his analysis of Irish neutrality and does not cite any primary evidence in support of this claim.

Is Salmon's thesis that the Irish people accepted that Ireland would take up membership of a European military alliance true? With regard to public opinion at that time, other perspectives imply there is no case to answer, because in the public debate over Irish membership any incompatibility of these goals [of EU membership and neutrality] did not appear to have been pressed home to the Irish public.¹⁷⁴ Keatinge argues

the decisive vote of the electorate in favour of membership of the European Community is explained by the quantifiable expectations of economic gain rather than by views, one way or another, on neutrality.¹⁷⁵

According to Hederman, the Irish population had not decided its preferences on the limits of European integration, and Irish people were no different to other member-state populations in this respect.¹⁷⁶ EEC Eurobarometer opinion poll data supports this view.¹⁷⁷

Keatinge's and Hederman's analysis of the debate on EEC membership is corroborated by members of the public exposed to the campaigns of the political parties at the time. In 1995 one such member of the public, Mr. Desmond Curley, wrote a letter to the Editor of the Irish Times newspaper to point out that the former Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald, together with the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael political parties, deliberately minimised the debate on security implications in their campaigns for people to vote 'yes' in the referendum on Ireland's membership of the EEC in 1973.¹⁷⁸ The comparative international literature on neutrality also confirms this version of events: Karsh notes

¹⁷⁰ Keatinge, *A Singular Stance*, 27.

¹⁷¹ Keatinge, *A Singular Stance*, 28.

¹⁷² Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 220.

¹⁷³ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 220.

¹⁷⁴ Miriam Hederman, *The Road to Europe: Irish Attitudes 1948-61*, (Dublin, 1983), 38, 47, 71, 144. (Hereafter cited as *The Road to Europe*.)

¹⁷⁵ Keatinge, *A Singular Stance*, 28.

¹⁷⁶ Hederman, *The Road to Europe*, 152.

¹⁷⁷ For example, Eurobarometer Report No. 3 June-July 1975 (fieldwork conducted 1973) Table 11A, A44 shows that the level of non-response to a question concerning Europe developing into a political union in Irish public opinion reflects levels in public opinion in Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands. A later Eurobarometer Report, no. 29 (fieldwork conducted 1987/1988), Table A15, shows that Irish responses to a question concerning integration further than the single common market elicited a similar level of 'don't know' responses as the Portuguese, Spanish and Greeks.

¹⁷⁸ Desmond Curley, 'The Makers of Myths', *Irish Times*, 28 April 1995.

“the dismissive attitude of the Irish proponents of EEC membership to the possibility of Ireland’s entanglement within the political and military designs of the European Communities”.¹⁷⁹ Hakovirta also opines that

the question of neutrality was never very important in the arguments presented by the Irish government for EC membership, or even in the Irish EC debate in general. It was basically seen as a limited question of non-membership in military alliances. The government argued that membership of the EC was something quite different from that.¹⁸⁰

CONCLUSION

Salmon’s conclusion that Ireland’s neutrality does not exist¹⁸¹ has spread into and seemingly taken root in the mainstream academic discourse on Irish neutrality, and is echoed in the media discourse. The approach Salmon has taken in evaluating a state’s neutrality according to a legalistic, prescriptive, sortal definition has effectively defined neutrality out of existence, because any empirical evaluation of a state’s neutrality shows discrepancies between theoretical and legal prescriptions and state practices. The comparative analysis undertaken in this article demonstrates the failure of all neutral states to fulfil the criteria of neutrality proposed in the “Unneutral Ireland” thesis. The assertion by many academics that Ireland’s neutrality is questionable because it does not mirror the clarity of the concept reflected in the practice of other European neutral states is therefore falsified through this comparative analysis. Tonra summarises the ‘unneutral’ thesis as one in which Ireland’s “neutrality has been dismissed as an almost adolescent effort to distinguish the state from its ancient enemy (Salmon, 1989)”.¹⁸² Arguably the Unneutral thesis’s effort to understand and give a fair account of Irish neutrality falls short in a comparative, empirical context.

Neutrality is a concept needing evaluation in relation to the particular time in which it exists and the situation thereof. Jessup and Deak illustrate this point:

it may be well to suggest a distinction between the factors contributing to the creation of these rules of the international law of neutrality rights and the factors conditioning their application. It is apparent that economic necessities and opportunities and political alignments moved the states of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to embrace and advocate particular rules. But the rules having once come into vogue often developed into a servant stronger than the master. The rules became part of the factual situation which statesmen had to take into account in shaping their policies from time to time. This was true because the rules were themselves the reflection of economic and political realities.¹⁸³

Thus, many empirical differences in the conduct of neutrality are argued to legitimately exist, and are rationally explicable in the context of state interests, the external environment and perceived associated demands. Evaluations and conclusions as to a state’s neutrality based on a particular definition will always be questionable, because the concept is fundamentally essentially contested. What is clear is that Ireland’s practice of neutrality was arguably as clear-cut, legally circumspect, and sufficiently deterring, credible, recognised and respected, as that of the other neutral European states during the Second World War, if not more so. As a result, the current elite strategy to discredit Irish neutrality through incomplete comparative or ideological analyses of the practice of Irish neutrality, and to claim on the basis of such analyses that the public has ‘illusions’ about the nature of Irish neutrality¹⁸⁴ during the Second World War is undermined.

Neutrality is a complex policy, in theory and in practice, and tends to be universally hated by

¹⁷⁹ Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States*, 168-69.

¹⁸⁰ Hakovirta, *European Neutrality*, 131.

¹⁸¹ Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, 8.

¹⁸² Ben Tonra, ‘Constructing Narratives in Irish Foreign Policy’, *American Conference for Irish Studies (ACIS)*, (University of Limerick, 27 June 2000), 2.

¹⁸³ Phillip C. Jessup and Francis Deak, *Neutrality: the Origins*, *Neutrality: its history, economics and law* (4 vols, New York, 1935), vol. 1, 18.

¹⁸⁴ O’Halpin, ‘Irish neutrality in the Second World War’, 303

all sides. The Americans waged an unscrupulous campaign in the press against Irish neutrality,¹⁸⁵ as did the British. As Frank Aiken, the Irish Minister for the Coordination of Defensive Measures, put it in January 1940:

neutrality is not like a simple mathematical formula which has only to be announced and demonstrated in order to be believed and respected...instead of earning the respect and goodwill of both belligerents it is regarded by both with hatred and contempt, 'He who is not with me is against me'. In the modern total warfare it is not a condition of peace with both belligerents, but rather a condition of limited warfare with both...¹⁸⁶

In these perennial circumstances, it will always be difficult to achieve an 'unbiased' analysis of Ireland's neutrality.

¹⁸⁵ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 176.

¹⁸⁶ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 156.