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FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS?
NATO & THE EUROPEAN NEUTRALS
IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD



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Introduction

Europe's neutral states have occasionally been described as freeloaders, riding low under the protective wings of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), but they have also received praise from the Alliance for their contributions despite being non-members. This article assesses the health of the neutrals' relationships with NATO, diagnoses the challenges and prescribes actions to capitalize on opportunities. Though the contexts in which these states became neutrals differ, the rationales that determined their stance broadly share thematic similarities. The decision to maintain neutrality is a pragmatic decision for any government in time of crisis, but over time it can also produce a normative influence and neutrality has become enmeshed in the national identities of the neutrals examined here.¹ Nonetheless, these neutrals – Ireland, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Austria – are all members of a range of multi-lateral institutions, and they are also all members of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. Europe's current tense security environment makes an assessment of their current relations with NATO relevant and important. Though neutral Malta is both an EU member-state and a PfP partner, it is excluded from this review as its interactions with these institutions in defence and security areas are comparably very limited.

Though not a homogenous bunch, the European neutrals have all joined NATO's PfP programme and they all maintain policies precluding membership of military alliances. The neutrals can be roughly divided into two camps: the Nordic neutrals and the rest. This division is drawn according to the degree of engagement they have with NATO, but it also reflects the difference in their geo-strategic locations. The Nordic neutrals (Finland and Sweden) are the most similar in terms of defence and security policies and they hold a reputation for being more closely aligned with NATO than many of the Alliance's full members. Their proximity to a revanchist Russia makes their neighbourhood comparatively less secure than that of the other European neutrals. Ireland has been described as cautious and reluctant in its relations with NATO,² but this description could equally fit Switzerland and to a lesser degree Austria. The character of their relations with NATO is decidedly more low-key and they participate in fewer initiatives than the Nordic neutrals. A division can also be drawn between the constitutional neutrals (Austria and Switzerland) and non-constitutional neutrals (Ireland, Sweden and Finland) as well as the EU neutrals (Austria, Ireland, Finland and Sweden) and Switzerland. These cleavages provide much by way of nuance in how these states approach NATO and European security and defence developments in general.

This article begins by outlining the historical evolution of neutrality, followed by a brief overview of the European neutrals' approach to collective security through the PfP and EU frameworks. Tensions between the implied impartiality of neutrality and the concept of collective defence requires such contextualization. Having established the context and base principles of their relations, an assessment of current domestic opinions and political party positions towards NATO will follow. It will highlight what effect, if any, increased security threats from Russia, terrorism, migration, and cyber-attacks have had on public perceptions of NATO within these neutral states and whether or not they see the Alliance as a desirable security shelter. The political sphere determines the scope of the relationship and what they do with what they have at their disposal within those political confines in terms of practical cooperation is subsequently explored in the following section. This includes a summation of their engagement with NATO operations so far and their capacity to contribute further. Finally, prior to the concluding remarks, there will be an assessment of the opportunities and challenges within the neutrals' current relations with the Alliance.

A quick note on terminology is important before proceeding. Throughout this study, the terms neutral and neutrality will be used most frequently to describe the outlook of these states. Finland and Sweden refer to themselves as non-aligned, and there can be much for a pedant to semantically quibble about with these terms in relation to the character of their foreign policies. Nonetheless, these terms refer to the European states who currently wish to remain outside of military alliances and avoid war and so 'neutral' and 'neutrality' will be used.³

1 See, Ben Tonra, 'Security, Defence and Neutrality: The Irish Dilemma', in Ben Tonra, Michael Kennedy, John Doyle and Noel Dorr (eds.), *Irish Foreign Policy* (Gill and Macmillan, 2012), p. 224; Juhana Aunesluoma and Johanna Rainio-Niemi, 'Neutrality as Identity?: Finland's Quest for Security in the Cold War', *Journal of Cold War Studies* (Vol. 18, No. 4, Fall 2016), pp. 59-60; Christoph Reinprecht and Rossalina Latcheva, 'Neutrality and Austrian Identity: Discourse on NATO and Neutrality as Reflected in Public Opinion', in András Kovács and Ruth Wodak (eds.), *NATO, Neutrality and National Identity: the case of Austria and Hungary* (Böhlau Verlag, 2003), p. 439; Neville Wylie, 'Switzerland: a neutral of distinction?', in Neville Wylie (ed.), *European Neutrals and Non-Belligerents during the Second World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 332; Michael af Malmberg, *Neutrality and State-Building in Sweden* (Palgrave, 2001), pp. 198-199.

2 Magnus Petersson, 'NATO and the EU 'Neutrals' – Instrumental or Value-Oriented Utility?', in Håkan Edström, Janne Haaland Matlary & Magnus Petersson (eds.), *NATO: The Power of Partnerships* (Palgrave Macmillan, New Security Challenges Series, 2011), p. 121.

3 Michael af Malmberg addressed this terminological irritant thusly: "'Neutrality', like every abstract word, serves the purpose of making it easier linguistically to regroup innumerable series of single events which resemble each other", see Malmberg, *Neutrality and State-Building in Sweden*, p. 7.

Neutrality in Context

Thucydides' Melian Dialogue from his account of the Peloponnesian War is regularly invoked by political scientists when establishing the foundations of Realism and the use of power through *realpolitik*. 'The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must', is a staple of any foundational course on International Relations (IR) Theory. Here, however, it is important to remember that the phrase appeared in the context of one of the earliest castigations of the policy of state neutrality. During conflict between Athens and Sparta, the small island state of Melos wished to remain neutral. The Melian Dialogue recounts how the Athenians were poised to conquer the Melians and were scornful of their neutral position, which they believed to be foolish. Ultimately, the Melians opted to defend themselves to protect their independence. The subsequent slaughter of the people of Melos therefore stands as a warning to those who do not seek security shelter through alliances.⁴ Similarly, Niccolò Machiavelli described neutrality as the least advantageous course a state can follow. His seminal work, *The Prince*, claimed that the victors would not desire "doubtful friends" and the defeated had no reason to protect those who did not support them.⁵

With such reviews, one would reasonably question the sensibility of remaining neutral during conflict. Nonetheless, neutrality in time of war has been adopted by states big and small throughout the course of history. Some states adopt a policy of permanent neutrality which self-imposes a neutral mind-set in times of war and peace, which precludes the joining of military alliances. On a general level, the primary motivation to opt for neutrality is a desire to remain outside wars. However, other drivers include maintaining national cohesion and identity in states with serious social divisions, a desire for and expression of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and a wish to avoid the entanglements of alliances. Elements of these rationales informed the formation of the neutrality policies of all the neutrals under consideration here, though it would be an error to assume that their policies are homogenous. Neutral states variously interpret their scope for action in the international system under international law, which has produced a muddying of the neutral waters. This point is central to understanding the past actions of Europe's neutrals and forecasting, as much as one can, future developments.

As Stephen C. Neff highlights, "[the] law of neutrality does not possess a lengthy intellectual pedigree".⁶ The formation of neutrality law was a bottom-up process evolving haphazardly over centuries through accepted practices in the conduct of state affairs and trade.⁷ Modern concepts of neutrality primarily derive from attempts to regulate the international system through internationally recognized laws since the 19th century.⁸ The Hague Convention of 1907 is typically seen as the apotheosis of these efforts,⁹ in which the rights and obligations of neutrals during wartime were codified.¹⁰ However, since the Convention, two major international wars broke out during which these rights and obligations were regularly disrespected. Technological developments altered the practice of belligerent states in war, leading to the concept of total war in which military goals were often pursued without restriction. Consequently, the validity of neutrality was called into question after both world wars.

The rise of international institutionalism and collective security via the League of Nations and the United Nations (UN) after the wars was thought by some to be incompatible with the concept of neutrality and its connotation of impartiality, though the debates were more vociferous during the era of the former.¹¹ Today however, internal conflicts and military operations mandated by the UN Security Council are considered to fall outside the law of neutrality, while neutrality during peacetime falls under the accepted practice of states. Early adopters of this view were Austria, Finland, Sweden and Ireland who felt comfortable contributing to peace-keeping missions under UN mandate during the Cold War. Switzerland, by contrast, did not join the UN until 2002 primarily based on the Swiss public's belief that the obligations of UN membership and neutrality were competing. Since joining however, Switzerland has increased its contributions to peace-keeping operations. An explanation for this seemingly incongruent understanding of neutrality is that the concept has been historically elastic and in recent decades has taken on a normative character synonymous with being a good global actor through respect for a rules-based international system. Therefore, promoting adherence to, and assisting in the maintenance of, internationally agreed rules has become a strong feature of modern neutral states.

4 See Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (Penguin Books Ltd., 1954), pp. 358-366; also see, Christine Agius, *The Social Construction of Swedish Neutrality: Challenges to Swedish identity and sovereignty* (Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 11.

5 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1993), p. 174-175.

6 Stephen C. Neff, *The Rights and Duties of Neutrals: A General History* (Manchester University Press 2000), p. 7.

7 Jessup pointed to the 14th century as the nascent beginning of neutrality law, which took more solid form in the late 16th/early 17th centuries. See, Philip C. Jessup, *Neutrality: Its History, Economics and Law* (Vol. IV: Today and Tomorrow, Columbia University Press, 1936), p. 3.

8 See Maria Gavounelli, 'Neutrality – A Survivor?', *European Journal of International Law* (Volume 23, Issue 1, February 2012), pp. 267-273.

9 Neff identifies the Declaration of London (1909), regarding the laws of naval war, as symbolizing the high point; however, as the Declaration was never ratified this is a judgement based on international sentiment rather than international law. See, Neff, *The Rights and Duties of Neutrals*, pp. 140-142.

10 See, The Hague Convention 1907, Sections V & XIII, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/lawwar.asp [cited 16-05-18].

11 Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States* (Routledge, 1988), pp. 108-130; and Neff, *The Rights and Duties of Neutrals*, pp. 166-217, especially p. 191 which laments the absence of the intellectual clashes during the League of Nations period.

As scholars of neutrality have observed, theoretical tensions between the principle of impartiality, which underpins neutrality, and collective security actions have not proved problematic in practice.¹² Participation in operations mandated by UN Security Council resolutions is voluntary and neutrals can choose the type of assistance they provide. Similarly, the mutual defence clause of the Lisbon Treaty does not compel EU neutral states to provide military assistance, thus protecting what is called 'military neutrality'.¹³ The Swiss distinction between the law of neutrality and neutrality policies is worth noting here. The law of neutrality applies to international conflicts, which are separate to UN Security Council mandated operations whose goal is to restore peace. Neutrality policies, however, are not bound by legal norms and typically include activities designed to boost the credibility and international acceptance of a state's neutrality through the provision of good offices.¹⁴ The operation and practice of a permanent neutrality policy is the "combination of all the measures a neutral state takes of its own accord to ensure the clarity and credibility of its permanent neutrality", based on the contemporary international context.¹⁵ During the Cold War, neutral states ensured the preservation of their neutral credentials through bridge-building exercises between conflicting parties and participating in arms reduction and non-proliferation activities.¹⁶ Other measures which tend to fall under general neutrality policies include efforts to protect and enhance human rights and international development.¹⁷ Since the end of the Cold War, the neutrals have also engaged in peace-keeping, peace support missions and crisis management operations to varying degrees. Simply put: for policy-makers, neutrality policies are broad in implementation, while neutrality law is narrow in application.

The Neutrals, the PfP and Collective Security

The security objectives of Europe's neutrals have been in general alignment with European security developments following the end of the Cold War. Since then the international security environment has become characterized by Western global dominance and resistance to this dominance. With US hegemony secured in the 1990s, the pattern of conflicts shifted from the international to the intra-national and greater emphasis was placed on the trans-national.¹⁸ Europe's failure to adequately address the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s provided an opportunity for NATO's continued relevance through the implementation of its revised Strategic Concept (1991).¹⁹ Political concerns of enhancing democratic institutions were added to a widened concept of security which brought NATO into the conflict resolution and crisis management space as well as economic, political, social and environmental spheres. To further the new Strategic Concept, NATO created the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in the mid-90s as a framework through which former Soviet states could build trust with NATO via individually tailored programmes. Membership of the PfP was a pre-cursor for many of the former Soviet states to join NATO as full members, and the programme was seen by some as a waiting room.²⁰ However, for Europe's neutral states, the PfP provided an opportunity to engage with NATO in peace support and crisis management tasks and thus further their neutrality policies. Austria, Switzerland, Finland and Sweden all joined within two years of its establishment, while Ireland joined in 1999 having adopted a wait-and-see approach. The main objectives of the PfP are:

1. Transparency in defense planning and budgeting, 2. democratic control of defense forces, 3. non-combat operations under UN or OSCE authority, 4. cooperative military relations with NATO in joint planning, training and exercises, and 5. force interoperability over the longer term with NATO members, including through participation in Combined Joint Task Forces.²¹

The first two objectives comprise the political element, while the remaining aims refer to operational concerns. The

12 Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States*, pp. 108-130; and Neff, *The Rights and Duties of Neutrals*, pp. 166-217. See also, Andrew Cottey, 'European Neutrality in Historical Perspective', in Andrew Cottey (ed.), *The European Neutrals and NATO: Non-alignment, Partnership, Membership?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 25.

13 Treaty on the European Union (2009), Article 42(7), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/mutual_defence.html [cited 15-05-18].

14 Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, *Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2016-19: Federal Council report on the priorities of the 2016-19 legislative period*, p. 11, https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/en/documents/publications/SchweizerischeAussenpolitik/Aussenpolitische-Strategie_EN.pdf [cited 19-05-18].

15 Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), *The essence of Swiss neutrality*, https://dfae.admin.ch/dam/eda/en/documents/aussenpolitik/voelkerrecht/PDF_Haupttext_Neutralitaet_en_06.pdf

16 Cottey, *The European Neutrals and NATO*, pp. 35-36.

17 Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), *Neutrality: Ireland's Policy of Neutrality*, <https://www.dfa.ie/our-role/policies/international-priorities/peace-and-security/neutrality/> [cited 18-05-18].

18 Andrew Cottey, *Security in the New Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 32-36.

19 NATO, Strategic Concept 1991, https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official_texts_23847.htm [cited 18-05-18].

20 See David Betz, *Civil-Military Military Relations in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Routledge-Curzon, 2004), p. 32.

21 Summary from Petersson, 'NATO and the EU 'Neutrals'', p. 113, which refines the objectives listed in the PfP's framework document. For the original text of the objectives see: NATO, *Partnership for Peace: Framework Document* (January 1994), https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_24469.htm [cited 10-05-18].

political objectives were designed with the Eastern bloc countries in mind,²² therefore the operational concerns are more pertinent to the European neutrals.

Following 9/11, the EU adopted a widened security agenda as defined in the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS). The ESS provided a framework for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (created by the Maastricht Treaty, 1992), and what is now called the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).²³ European states recognized their national security concerns were intertwined due to increased interconnectivity regionally and globally. Trans-national security threats such as terrorism, migration crises, cyber-attacks, human trafficking, pandemics, money laundering and propaganda campaigns prompted greater collaboration between partners to tackle them effectively. Through the PFP, the EU neutrals complement their EU security commitments by enhancing interoperability with Member-States who are also NATO members.²⁴ Interoperability entails adherence to NATO standards, rules and procedures, as well as the use of similar equipment by the defence forces of partners. As the security objectives of NATO and the EU overlap, they have developed a partnership to enhance European defence cooperation. However, the expansion of the EU and NATO into the former Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe has created tensions with Russia, which sees Western expansion as encirclement. Russia has engaged in non-traditional forms of warfare to re-assert its regional power by engaging in cyber-attacks on former Soviet states who joined the Alliance and threatening close neighbours with retaliation should they join in the future.

Fears of Russian revanchism, stoked by its military reform programme, increased military spending, the annexation of Crimea (2014), and military war-games simulating attacks on European states have sparked a new spurt of European defence collaboration. In July 2016, the EU and NATO issued a Joint Declaration in Warsaw indicating their commitment to deepening their strategic partnership in European defence.²⁵ The primary focus areas for greater collaboration reflect the contemporary European security challenges of hybrid-warfare, cyber security threats, migration, lack of co-ordination in defence research and development, and interoperability. However, anxiety regarding the reliability of the Trump administration's commitment to European security has provided further impetus to European federalists seeking deeper and more extensive EU-wide collaboration in the security sphere. The EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), established under the Lisbon Treaty, was activated in 2017 to address European security frailties and all the EU neutrals have joined this initiative.

Relations between the European neutrals and NATO consequently involve twin-track objectives. On the one hand, the neutrals can further the active or engaged elements of their neutrality policies by continuing to collaborate in areas to promote international peace and stability. This also includes participation in peace support and crisis management missions under UN Security Council mandate. On the other hand, they can continue to engage in European-wide security collaboration which is of increasing importance to stability on the continent due to the unpredictability of the current US administration.

Domestic Politics & Public Perceptions of NATO

Current domestic political stances, government party configurations and public perceptions of NATO and national neutrality policies are important considerations when examining the relations between the neutrals and the Alliance, as they can indicate the available political space for deeper or broader ties.

Of the European neutrals, the Nordic states are considered the most likely candidates to join NATO at some point in the future. Such a decision is more likely than not to take place during a period of heightened security tension. As the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted in their 2016 assessment, though the time between application for membership of NATO and acceptance could be 'fast-tracked', it would still require strong parallel political and diplomatic co-ordination with Sweden and possible referenda in both states where the results may be uncertain.²⁶ Information on the threat perceptions of the Finns and their attitudes towards NATO membership have been regularly published over the years. These surveys show that Finns have consistently been against joining NATO by a relatively high margin. Surveys

22 Strengthening democratic control of the armed forces and improving transparency in the former Soviet states were key neighbourhood goals for Austria. See, Laura C. Ferreira-Pereira, *Inside the Fence, but Outside the Walls: The Militarily Non-Allied States in the Security Architecture of Post-Cold War Europe* (Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern, 2007), p. 207.

23 EU European Security Strategy (ESS), *A Secure Europe in a Better World*, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/european-security-strategy-secure-europe-better-world> [cited 21-05-18].

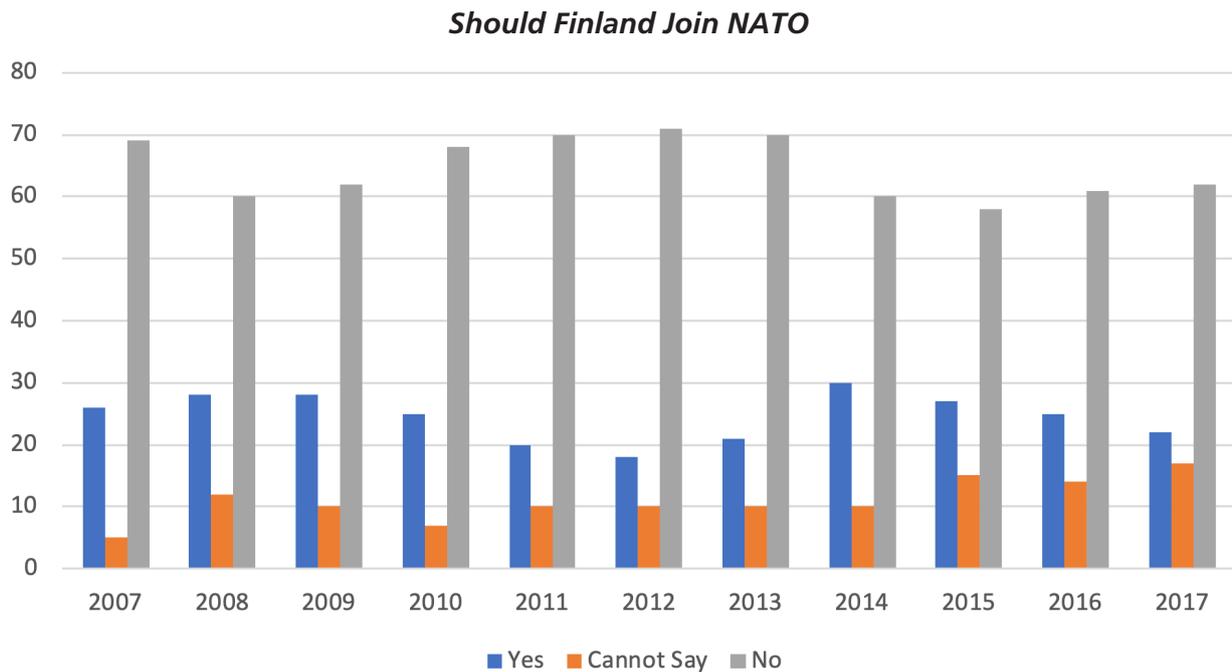
24 See Petersson, 'NATO and the EU 'Neutrals'', p. 112.

25 Joint Declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 8 July 2016, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/07/08/eu-nato-joint-declaration/> [cited 09-05-18].

26 Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Effects of Finland's Possible NATO Membership: An Assessment* (Government of Finland, April 2016), <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=345685> [cited 06-05-18].

conducted between 1996 and 2001 showed that between 60% and 80% of Finns were opposed to membership and this attitude was subsequently hardened in the immediate aftermath of the Iraq War.²⁷ Over the course of the last 12 years, Finnish public support for joining NATO has never exceeded 30% of respondents to annual Advisory Board for Defence Information (ABDI) polls [Fig 1]. The most recent ABDI poll shows that over 60% of Finns do not want the country to join NATO. This appears, on the surface at least, to support the view that the Finns concur with President Sauli Niinistö, who believes ‘sitting on the fence’ is the best policy for Finnish security.²⁸

Fig. 1: Data based on annual ABDI surveys.²⁹



Finland’s neutrality is a product of pragmatism. To assuage Russian security fears, based on historical conflicts with Western powers through the Finnish route, Finland concluded a Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) Treaty with the Soviet Union in 1948. This treaty contained a commitment on the part of Finland to seek to maintain neutrality. Preserving neutrality and friendship with the Soviet Union without being drawn into its orbit were the primary foreign policy goals of successive Finnish governments during the Cold War and the success of this approach has enhanced neutrality as a concept in the mind of many Finns.³⁰ Non-alignment also remains important for many Finns who cherish the country’s role in international conflict mediation, which in part explains the lack of political will to seriously explore NATO membership.³¹ Nonetheless, the ABDI survey showed that 61% of the respondents held a positive view of the country’s military cooperation with NATO, 59% had a positive opinion of military cooperation with the US, and 89% had a positive view of military cooperation with the EU. Of Finland’s major political parties, only the Conservative National Coalition Party (Kokoomus) are actively pro-NATO, supported in this stance by the small Swedish People’s Party. Together they command just over 23% of the seats in the Finnish parliament. While there are members of other parties who are not unfavourable to joining the Alliance, the preponderance of Finnish political parties and politicians remain opposed. Nonetheless, qualitatively the strength of the arguments put forward by those in favour of membership has increased since Russia’s annexation of Crimea.³²

27 Hannu Himanen, ‘Finland’, in Hanna Ojanen (ed.), *Neutrality and non-alignment in Europe today* (The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2003), pp. 21-22.

28 See Tuomas Forsberg, ‘Finland and NATO: Strategic Choices and Identity Conceptions’, in Andrew Cottey (ed.), *The European Neutrals and NATO* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), p. 110.

29 Finnish Ministry of Defence, *Finn’s Opinions on Foreign and Security Policy, National Defence and Security* (The Advisory Board for Defence Information, 2007-2017), https://www.defmin.fi/en/tasks_and_activities/media_and_communications/the_advisory_board_for_defence_information_abdi/bulletins_and_reports [cited 03-05-18].

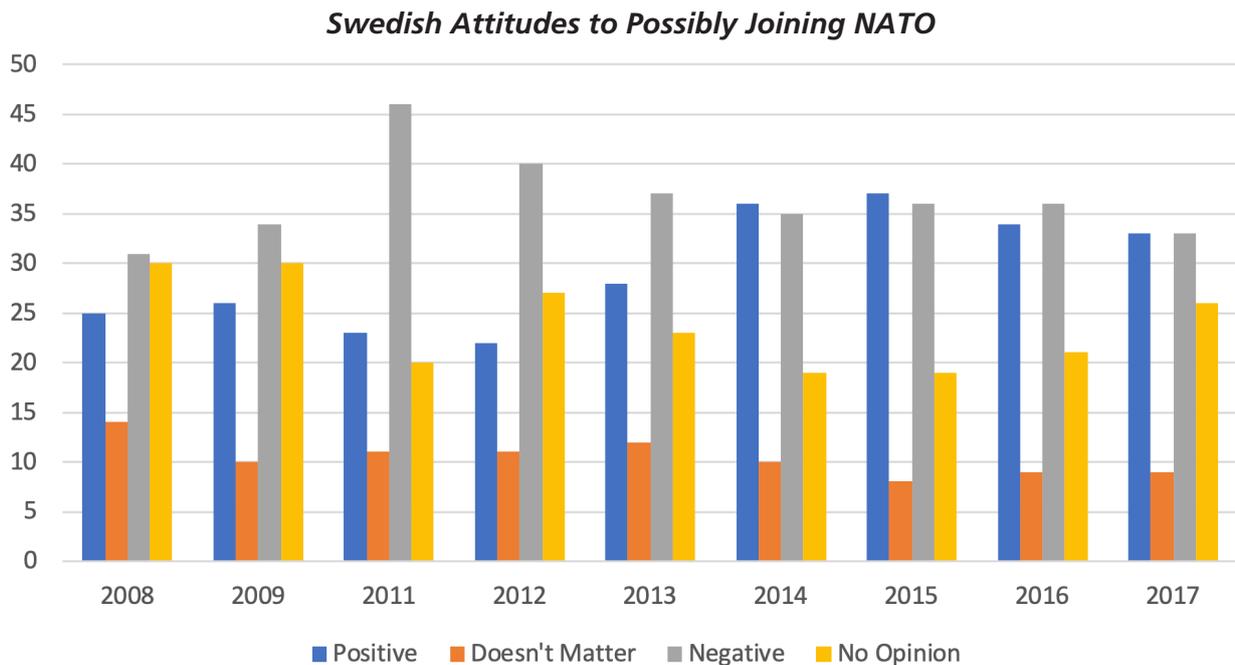
30 See Forsberg, ‘Finland and NATO’, pp. 100-102.

31 Aunesluoma and Rainio-Niemi, ‘Neutrality as Identity?’, p. 60.

32 Forsberg, ‘Finland and NATO’, in Cottey (ed.), *The European Neutrals and NATO*, pp. 110-113.

Oscillation in Swedish public sentiment regarding NATO membership over the last decade is more pronounced. Swedish cooperation with NATO is the most significant of the neutrals. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, opinion polls have shown convergence to the point of parity in the number of Swedish citizens with positive and negative attitudes towards the prospect of Sweden joining the military alliance (33% each) [Fig. 2].

Fig. 2: Data based on annual surveys conducted by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB).³³



*No survey in 2010.

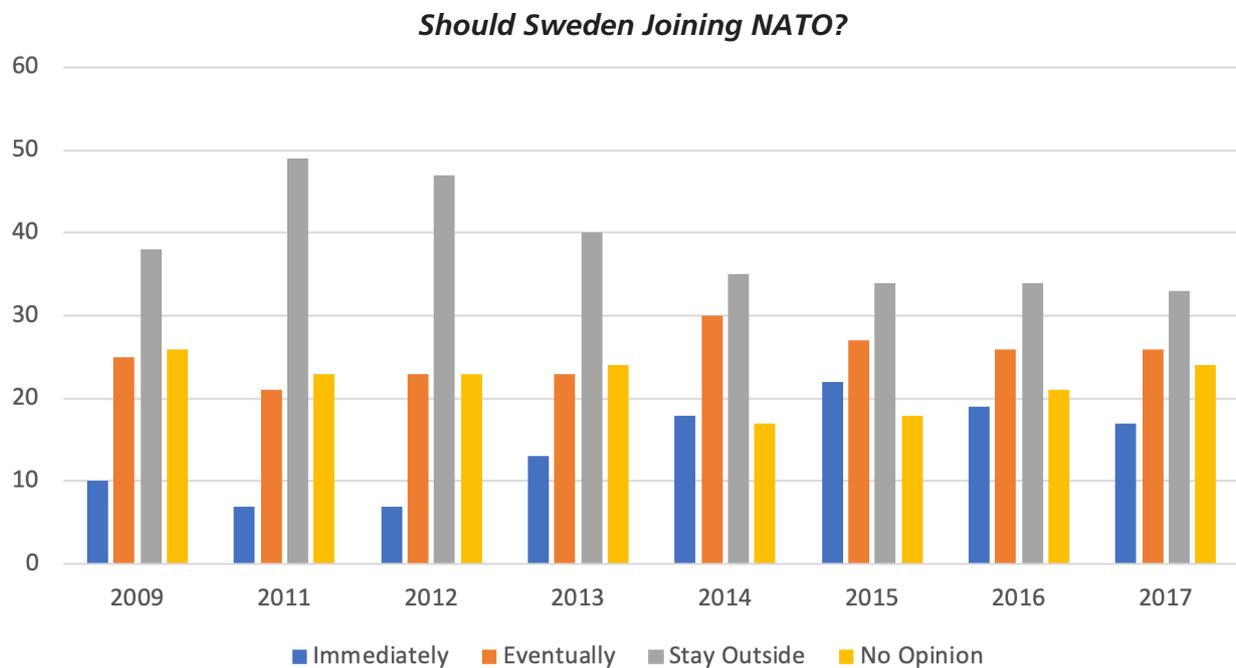
This differs significantly from 1994, when only 15% of Swedes were in favour of joining NATO.³⁴ However, an important caveat remains the fact that a quarter of Swedes claim to have no opinion. When asked the more direct question of whether Sweden should join NATO, a majority are at least in favour of eventually joining, but there remains a hesitancy and almost a quarter still express no opinion. Furthermore, the initial jump in support for immediately joining NATO after Russia's annexation of Crimea has begun to wane [Fig. 3].³⁵

33 Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, *Opinions 2017: Public Opinion on Social Protection, Preparedness, Security and Defence* (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2017), <https://www.msb.se/sv/Produkter--tjanster/Publikationer/Publikationer-fran-MSB/Opinioner-2017--allmanhetens-syn-pa-samhallsskydd-beredskap-sakerhetspolitik-och-forsvar/> [cited 04-05-18].

34 Magnus Petersson, 'The Allied Partner': Sweden and NATO Through the Realist-Idealist Lens', in Andrew Cottey (ed.), *The European Neutrals and NATO: Non-alignment, Partnership, Membership?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 89.

35 Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, *Opinions 2017: Public Opinion on Social Protection, Preparedness, Security and Defence* (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2017), <https://www.msb.se/sv/Produkter--tjanster/Publikationer/Publikationer-fran-MSB/Opinioner-2017--allmanhetens-syn-pa-samhallsskydd-beredskap-sakerhetspolitik-och-forsvar/> [cited 04-05-18].

Fig. 3: Data based on annual surveys conducted by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB).



*No survey in 2010.

One of Sweden's largest political parties, the Moderates (centre-right), favours joining NATO as the means through which Sweden can strengthen its security.³⁶ Other major parties, such as the Social Democrats and the Greens oppose NATO membership, as do the increasingly popular far-right Swedish Democrats. Relatively recent entrants into calculations around government formation, it remains to be seen whether the Swedish Democrats would drop their objection to joining the Alliance in a bid to coax the Moderates into a coalition government. Nonetheless, parties generally recognize that the security environment has become more threatening, exemplified by the government's decision in 2018 to re-issue guidance to all homes on how to prepare for total war,³⁷ which was eventually issued later in the year.³⁸ It remains to be seen what effect such preparedness measures will have on public sentiment, but a recent assessment by Magnus Petersson concludes that it is unlikely Sweden will join the Alliance, even in the long-term.³⁹

Discerning Irish public opinion towards NATO is not so easy to establish, but opinion polls have been taken regarding Irish neutrality and EU defence cooperation. A May 2018 poll showed that 59% of Irish people believe the country should be involved in EU defence and security cooperation.⁴⁰ However, surveys and opinion polls since the 1980s have also shown a consistently high-level of support for Irish neutrality. A 2013 poll conducted by RED C for the Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA) (strong critics of NATO) showed that 78% of Irish people believe Ireland should have a neutrality policy.⁴¹ Another poll in 2016 showed that 57% of Irish people believe Irish neutrality should be enshrined in the Irish constitution.⁴² What these polls fail to address, however, is the fundamental disconnect between the government's official interpretation of neutrality and the popular public understanding of the concept. To join the EEC in 1973, the Irish government agreed to commit to future European defence cooperation while claiming this did not compete with neutrality. To accomplish this feat, the Irish government defined Irish neutrality as a 'military neutrality', which simply entails non-membership of military alliances.

36 Defence Policy of Moderaterna (Moderates), <https://moderaterna.se/forsvar> [cited 28-05-18].

37 Richard Milne, 'Swedes told how to prepare for war as Russia fears grow', *Financial Times*, 17 January 2018.

38 John Henley, 'Sweden distributes 'be prepared for war' leaflet to all 4.8m homes', *The Guardian*, 21 May 2018.

39 Petersson, "The Allied Partner", p. 90.

40 European Movement Ireland (EMI) Research Poll conducted by RED C Research and Marketing Ltd., March 2018, <http://www.redcresearch.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/296918-EU-Movement-Research-Poll-March-2018.pdf> [cited 20-05-18].

41 Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA) Neutrality Poll conducted by RED C Research and Marketing Ltd., September 2013, <https://www.pana.ie/download/Pana-Neutrality-Poll-September-2013-Pie-Charts.pdf> [cited 20-05-18].

42 Neutrality in Ireland Poll conducted by RED C Research and Marketing Ltd., February 2016, http://www.shannonwatch.org/sites/shannonwatch.org/files/MW_Neutrality_Presentation.pdf [cited 20-05-18].

Karen Devine has been strongly critical of how Irish governments and elites have balanced EU defence commitments and neutrality.⁴³ Her research of Irish opinion polls on neutrality shows a vast divergence between the government's minimalist definition and the public's popular understanding of what neutrality means. Surveys taken in the 1980s, 90s and 00s, show that only 2.5% of the Irish population on average conceive of Irish neutrality in accordance with the government's official narrow interpretation.⁴⁴ These polls have also consistently shown that the public favours a policy of 'active' neutrality, which encompasses "peace promotion, nonaggression, the primacy of the UN, and the confinement of state military activity to UN peace-keeping, not being involved in wars, and maintaining Ireland's independence, identity, and independent foreign policy decision-making".⁴⁵ This disconnect manifested most clearly during the Nice and Lisbon Treaty debates. Concern for the protection of Irish neutrality featured prominently during the debates and was a significant contributor to the Irish electorates' initial rejection of Nice (2001) and Lisbon (2008).⁴⁶ To quell fears regarding the perceived dilution of neutrality during the Nice debates, the government put forward the concept of a 'triple-lock' on the participation of Irish forces in overseas military operations.⁴⁷ The 'triple-lock' is a construct derived from the government's understanding of Irish legislation and international law, which precludes the government sending forces without (1) a UN Security Council mandate, (2) a clear government decision and (3) parliamentary approval.⁴⁸ To further assuage Irish concerns, the EU has made guarantees and declarations that defence cooperation and the mutual defence clause of the Lisbon Treaty shall not prejudice Ireland's neutrality policy and the state is free to determine its level of commitment and assistance to EU defence projects and activities. Ireland is also free to determine its relationship with NATO, which it did under the Planning and Review Process (PARP) by focusing on capability and interoperability development for peace support missions to complement EU-level capability goals. Outside European treaty referenda however, concern for matters involving the defence forces rarely elicits much public debate.

The predominant political consensus between the state's dominant political parties — Fianna Fáil (FF) and Fine Gael (FG) — is that Irish military neutrality in its present form should be maintained. The majority party of every Irish government since 1932 has been either FF or FG and currently these parties occupy roughly 60% of seats in the present Irish parliament. They occupy the centre to centre-right ground in Irish politics and are more inclined to favour NATO and EU security cooperation than parties to the left who have tabled a number of unsuccessful bills to enshrine neutrality in the constitution. Despite a recent call from FG MEPs for Ireland to develop a stronger security posture,⁴⁹ hard security issues are currently far from the minds of the Irish public.⁵⁰ Furthermore, no major politician has called for Ireland to join NATO, though some within FG have openly questioned Irish neutrality.⁵¹ FF and FG have shown a commitment to European developments in military cooperation while maintaining optionality regarding the form of cooperation. In real terms this means further enhancements to interoperability cooperation and capability transformations through the EU and NATO for crisis management and peace support operations, but little more. It is likely that the Irish-NATO relationship will remain active but low-key so long as the Irish public's conception of neutrality remains popular and parties on the left remain politically weak.⁵²

Neutrality has been a bedrock of Austrian national identity since 1955 as it is intertwined with the state's independence from control by the victorious powers after the Second World War. Geographically placed between East and West during the Cold War, Austrian neutrality was necessary for Soviet acceptance of Austrian independence. Neutrality

43 Karen Devine, 'Values and Identities in Ireland's Peace Policy: Four Centuries of Norm Continuity and Change', *Swiss Political Science Review* (Volume 19, Issue 3, 2013), p. 405.

44 Karen Devine, 'The difference between Political Neutrality and Military Neutrality' (Address to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Public Service Oversight and Petitions, 15 July 2015), p. 4.

45 Ibid.

46 In referenda on successive EU treaties since the Single European Act (1987), fears surrounding the impact of these treaties on Irish neutrality have consistently ranked in the top two reasons behind a voter's decision to vote against the treaty. See: Karen Devine, 'The Myth of Irish Neutrality: Deconstructing Concepts of Irish Neutrality using International Relations Theories', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* (Vol. 17, 2006), pp. 116-117; Brigid Laffan and Jane O'Mahony, *Ireland and the European Union* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 120 and, Karen Devine, 'Irish Neutrality and the Lisbon Treaty' (Paper presented at "Neutrality: Irish Experience, European Experience" Conference organised by the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College, Dublin and Dublin Monthly Meeting [Quakers] Peace Committee, 8/9 May 2009), http://doras.dcu.ie/14898/1/Irish_Neutrality_and_the_Lisbon_Treaty.pdf [cited 20-05-18].

47 Ben Tonra, 'Unpicking the "Triple-Lock" of Ireland's Defence Green Paper' (Official blog of University College Dublin's School of Politics and International Relations, 17 July 2013). See: <http://www.politicalscience.ie/?p=451> [cited 20-05-18].

48 Point 3 is covered by Article 28.3.1° of the Constitution of Ireland (Bunreacht Na hÉireann).

49 Brian Hayes MEP, Seán Kelly MEP, Mairead McGuinness MEP and Deirdre Clune MEP, *Security and Defence Policy Recommendations*, March 2018, <https://brianhayes.ie/2018/03/09/fg-meps-we-need-a-proper-debate-on-security-and-defence-policy/> [cited 20-05-18].

50 The Spring 2017 Eurobarometer survey found that while Irish people were concerned for security in Europe in general, they were amongst the least concerned in Europe about their national security. Concerns for available and affordable housing were far greater. See, European Union, *Standard Eurobarometer 87: First Results* (European Commission, Spring 2017).

51 Devine, 'Irish Neutrality and the Lisbon Treaty', p. 1.

52 John Coakley, 'Society and political culture', in John Coakley and Michael Gallagher (eds.), *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (Routledge, 5th edition, 2010), p. 63.

has been emphasised through civic education as a binding agent in opposition to the turbulence of Austria's past.⁵³ Though opinion polls in Austria on the question of NATO membership are infrequent, other polls show a strong national attachment to neutrality. Opinion has fluctuated in response to conflicts and political developments (support dropped when Austria joined the EU, but increased after the Kosovo War), but support for retaining the policy has been estimated at about two thirds of the population.⁵⁴

Austria's current government is a coalition between the centre-right Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), who hold 31.5% of seats in the National Council, and the far-right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), who hold 26% of seats. In the early 2000s, former Austrian Chancellor and leader of the ÖVP, Wolfgang Schüssel, suggested Austrian neutrality was worthy of re-evaluation and the party continues to favour cooperation with the EU in the defence and security realm, which they argue is not a breach of neutrality.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, the new Austrian government has shown little indication that Austria is abandoning its neutral stance. Chancellor Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP) recently emphasized Austrian neutrality when he refused to join EU allies who expelled Russian diplomats following the Skripal poisoning case in the UK,⁵⁶ and he has promoted Austria's stance as an honest broker in the furtherance of peace in Europe.⁵⁷ ÖVP's coalition partner, the FPÖ is committed to Austrian neutrality and they wish to maintain "distance from non-European powers and military alliances dominated by non-European countries to safeguard common European interests worldwide".⁵⁸ The largest Opposition party, the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), which holds 26.9% of seats in the National Council, is committed to neutrality and European security cooperation, but they are opposed to joining a military alliance.⁵⁹ The remaining two parties that make up the Austrian parliament hold just under 10% of the seats. On political grounds, therefore, it is highly unlikely that Austria will deepen its relations with NATO.

Switzerland is typically considered the traditional neutral in the international system. The status and durability of Swiss neutrality made it an exemplar from which other states historically derived their own neutrality policies.⁶⁰ Neutrality is an inseparable 'element' of Swiss national identity,⁶¹ whose roots lay in a pragmatic geo-strategic calculation at the beginning of the 16th century.⁶² It has also served as a binding agent around which Switzerland's ethnic groups can unify to form a solid national identity.⁶³ The Swiss have been reluctant to compromise neutrality, which explains why they only joined the UN in 2002 and their late decision by referendum to permit Swiss peace-keepers to be armed (2001).⁶⁴ Through Switzerland's direct democracy political system, citizens are more capable of shaping Swiss foreign policy than in any other European state. This bottom-up approach does not preclude the government from making independent decisions in the foreign policy sphere, as exemplified by their decision to join the PFP without consulting the electorate, but domestic opinion matters greatly.⁶⁵

The Swiss Center for Security Studies (CSS) publishes annual reports on Swiss attitudes to security issues, including Switzerland's relations with NATO.⁶⁶ The 2017 survey shows that only 19% of the Swiss public favour joining NATO at present [Fig. 4].

53 Reinprecht and Latcheva, 'Neutrality and Austrian Identity', p. 439.

54 Ibid., pp. 441-444; Carmen Gebhard, 'Is Small Still Beautiful? The Case of Austria', *Swiss Political Science Review* (Vol. 19, No. 3, 2013), p. 292; Gunther Hauser, 'Austrian Security Policy – New Tasks and Challenges', *Obrana A Strategie* (Vol. 1, 2007), p. 54.

55 See Kate Connolly, 'Vienna prepares to ditch neutrality', *The Guardian*, 5 November 2001.

56 Stephanie Liechtenstein, 'Why Austria's response to the Skripal poisoning wasn't so tough on Russia', *The Washington Post*, April 2018. In 2017, as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Kurz was also involved in trying to ease tensions between East and West over the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

57 Interview with Sebastian Kurz, Austrian Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for 2017, in *Security Community* (OSCE Magazine, Issue 4, 2016), <https://www.osce.org/magazine/292376> [cited 28-05-18].

58 Party Programme of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) entitled 'Austria First', as resolved by the Party Conference of the Freedom Party of Austria on 18 June 2011 in Graz, https://www.fpoe.at/fileadmin/user_upload/www.fpoe.at/dokumente/2015/2011_graz_parteiprogramm_englisch_web.pdf [cited 28-05-18].

59 Party Programme of the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), https://spoe.at/sites/default/files/das_spoe_parteiprogramm.pdf [cited 28-05-18].

60 Christian Leitz, *Nazi Germany and Neutral Europe during the Second World War*, Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 10; this author's doctoral thesis also uncovered the influence Swiss neutral practices in the Second World War had on Irish governmental actions, Steven Murphy, 'Neutral Diplomacy: An Irish Perspective, 1939 – 1945' (Doctoral Dissertation, University College Cork, 2016).

61 Herbert R. Reginbogin, *Faces of Neutrality: A Comparative Analysis of the Neutrality of Switzerland and other Neutral Nations during WWII* (LIT Verlag, Berlin, 2009), pp. 23-25; Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland (ICE) Second World War: *Final Report*, p. 66 <http://www.uek.ch/en/index.htm> [cited 21-05-18].

62 Habicht, Max, 'The Special Position of Switzerland in International Affairs', *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-, Vol. 29, No. 4, Oct., 1953), p. 457; also see, Grieve, W. P., 'The Present Position of "Neutral" States', *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, (Vol. 33, Problems of Public and Private International Law, 1947), p. 100.

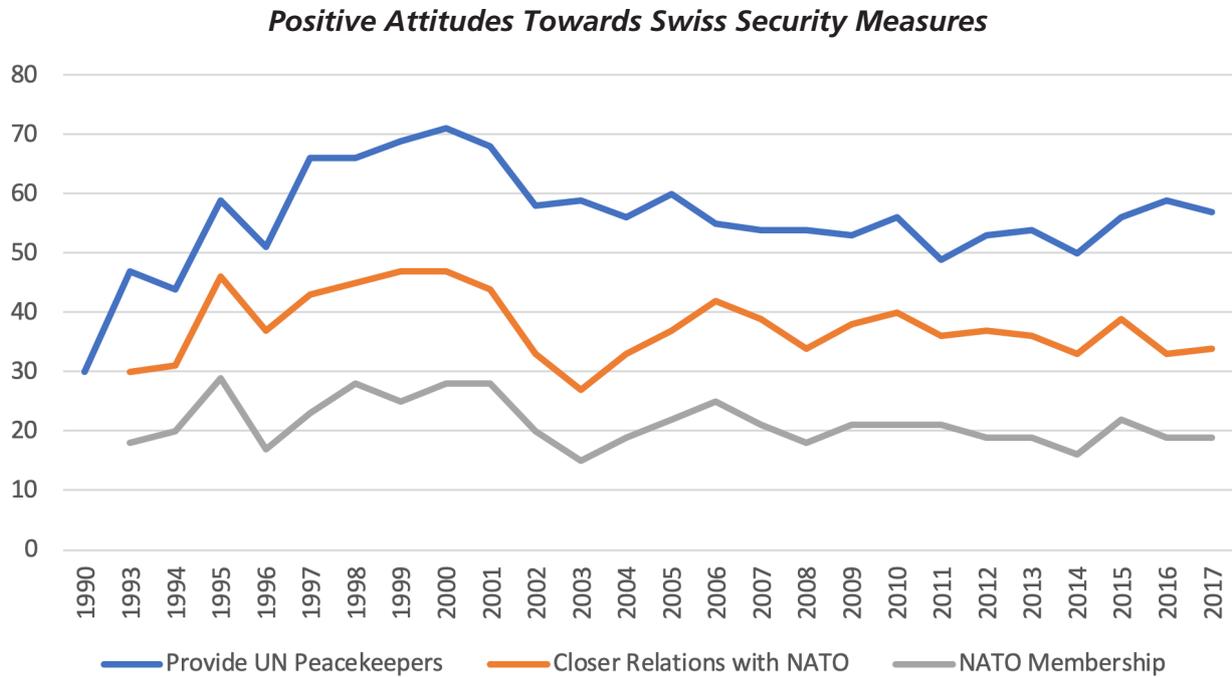
63 ICE: *Final Report*, p. 62.

64 See Nünlist, 'Switzerland and NATO', pp. 198-201.

65 Ibid., pp. 194-196.

66 CSS is based in the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich (ETH Zürich).

Fig. 4: Based on figures from CSS 2017 report on trends in Swiss security and defence policy.⁶⁷



Interestingly, 51% of respondents believe neutrality cannot be credibly protected militarily today, yet only 23% believe that joining a European defence alliance would bring more security than remaining neutral. The survey also showed that only 18% of respondents believed that Switzerland should abandon neutrality were it to bring no benefits. This represents a steady drop from 33% in 1993 and suggests that the prospects of Switzerland abandoning neutrality any time soon are exceedingly dim.⁶⁸

In the political arena, most of the centrist parties support continued engagement with NATO through interoperability and engagement in crisis management operations. The two centrist parties in the executive Federal Council, the Christian Democrats and the Liberals, currently hold 3 of the 7 seats. Criticisms of Swiss relations with NATO come from the left and right of the political spectrum. The conservative Swiss People’s Party (SVP), which holds 2 seats in the executive, advocates a strong national defence, is critical of Swiss involvement in overseas missions and has made repeated calls for Swiss participation in the PfP to end. These calls were re-iterated after Russia’s annexation of Crimea. The Social Democrats (SP), who hold the remaining 2 seats, prefer to downsize the army and focus on peace-building activities and development aid instead of military peace-keeping. Though a relatively minor party in the Federal Assembly, the Greens advocate going a step further than the SP by advocating for the total disbandment of the armed forces to focus on peace initiatives through the UN.⁶⁹ The current configuration of the Swiss political parties subsequently leaves little room for greater military engagement with NATO.

Engagement with NATO & Defence Capacity

As the previous section has shown, on domestic political grounds, the neutrals are unlikely to join NATO any time soon. Attention must consequently turn to their current relations with the Alliance and their capacity for further engagement. Therefore, it is important to review their history of engagement with NATO and assess how much the neutrals spend on defence as this can be an indicator of the fiscal space available for greater cooperation.

67 Tibor Szvircsev Tresch and Andreas Wenger (ed.), *Sicherheit 2017: Aussen-, Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitische Meinungsbildung im Trend* (Center for Security Studies, ETH Zürich, 2017), p. 146.
 68 Ibid., p. 130.
 69 See Nünlist, ‘Switzerland and NATO’, pp. 196-197.

The Neutrals and NATO

The contributions of the neutrals to NATO-led missions vary and there is much to be learned from their participatory differences. In the mid-1990s, Finland, Sweden and Austria contributed to peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the NATO-led Implementation/Stabilization Force (IFOR/SFOR) operation. Sweden and Finland each deployed an infantry battalion, while Austria sent transport assistance. Ireland sent military policing and national support assistance in 1997 despite not yet being a member of the PfP. All the neutrals examined here contributed to NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) operation. Again, Finland and Sweden sent battalions, Austria sent between 450 and 550 combat troops, Switzerland provided 200 peace-keepers and Ireland initially supplied logistical support, but this was later replaced by an armoured infantry company of 12 troops. All also contributed to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Sweden sent about 500 troops, Finland about 100, while Ireland, Austria and Switzerland sent a handful of staff officers. Sweden was the only one of the neutrals to contribute to the NATO-led operation in Libya with 8 fighter jets, despite the operation having a UNSC mandate.⁷⁰ From this breakdown of the neutrals' contributions, there is a clear distinction between the Nordic neutrals and the rest. Faced with more proximate threats, Finland and Sweden favour deeper relations with NATO and are more willing to deploy combat troops. Significantly, Sweden's contribution to the ISAF mission shifted focus from peace-keeping to counter-insurgency (COIN).

Outside operational missions, the Nordic neutrals also participate in other direct NATO initiatives and have increased indirect links. Directly, they are the only neutrals who participate in the NATO Response Force (NRF)⁷¹ and the Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC).⁷² They also participate in NATO BALTOPS exercises in the Nordic-Baltic region.⁷³ At the political level, the Alliance invited Finland and Sweden to become Enhanced Opportunities Partners (EOPs) at the 2014 NATO Wales Summit.⁷⁴ This golden circle of partnership status permits the Nordic neutrals to deepen dialogue and practical cooperation with the Alliance. Building on their already close partnership through the PfP, Finland and Sweden further signed Host Nation Support Agreements with NATO in 2016. These agreements provide for the stationing, operation and transit of NATO forces during exercises or in times of crisis if mutually agreed. Indirectly, the Nordic neutrals participate in the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO) structure, which was created in 2009 to boost regional cooperation politically and militarily in relation to defence and peace support issues. NORDEFECO involved the fusion of three previous Nordic cooperative structures on peace support training, armament cooperation and enhanced cooperation.⁷⁵ Primarily focused on bringing cost efficiencies in the procurement of defence systems, it nonetheless provides the Nordic neutrals with an additional tie to NATO states in the region.⁷⁶ The Northern Group is another political forum through which the Nordic neutrals discuss defence and security issues with European NATO members.⁷⁷ In May 2018, Finland and Sweden also signed a Tri-lateral Statement of Intent with the United States to deepen dialogue and bi-lateral relations in relation to defence.⁷⁸ The breadth and depth of the Nordic neutrals' relations with NATO far exceeds that of the other neutrals.

For the other neutrals, the primary advantages they derive from their relations with NATO concern interoperability and capability enhancement to ensure they can continue to effectively contribute to peace-keeping and peace-building operations. In addition to the over 200 Swisscoy personnel deployed to the KFOR mission, the Swiss also provide training courses through the PfP in "international humanitarian law, demining, arms control and disarmament, medical service and medical education, information and communication technologies, winter and summer mountaineering skills, civil protection, military observer training and general security policy education".⁷⁹ However, the majority of Swiss military cooperation has thus far focused on disaster relief in neighbouring countries and training for the Swiss Air Force.⁸⁰ Ireland has contributed to a number of NATO-led missions, but the depth of the country's commitment has been shallow

70 See Petersson, "The Allied Partner", pp. 84-86; Heinz Gärtner, 'Austria: Engaged Neutrality', in Andrew Cottey (ed.), *The European Neutrals and NATO: Non-alignment, Partnership, Membership?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 130; and Defence Forces Ireland, Kosovo Force, <http://www.military.ie/overseas/current-missions/kfor/> [cited 28-05-18].

71 The NRF is a multi-national rapid response force comprising elements of land, maritime, air and Special Operations Forces (SOF). See, NATO, NATO Response Force (NRF), https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_49755.htm# [cited 28-05-18].

72 The SAC allows 10 participating NATO members and the Nordic neutral partners to pool resources and collectively operate and manage strategic transport aircraft that would be too cost prohibitive for them to acquire alone. See, NATO, Strategic Aircraft Capability (SAC), https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50105.htm [cited 28-05-18].

73 Livia Majercsik and Lars Jaehrling, 'BALTOPS – a NATO maritime exercise with 46 years of history', *NATO Communications and Information (NCI) Agency*, 10 August 2017, <https://www.ncia.nato.int/NewsRoom/Pages/170808-BALTOPS.aspx> [cited 21-05-18].

74 NATO, Partnership Interoperability Initiative, https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_132726.htm [cited 21-05-18].

75 NORDEFECO, *The basics about NORDEFECO*, <http://www.nordefco.org/the-basics-about-nordefco> [cited 21-05-18].

76 Denmark, Norway, Iceland and the Baltic states on occasion. See, Petersson, "The Allied Partner", pp. 87-88.

77 The Northern Group consists of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the United Kingdom and Sweden.

78 Finnish Ministry of Defence, Trilateral Statement of Intent among the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Finland and the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Sweden, https://www.defmin.fi/files/4247/Trilateral_Statement_of_Intent.pdf [cited 29-05-18].

79 Christian Nünlist, 'Switzerland and NATO: From Non-Relationship to Cautious Partnership', in Cottey (ed.), *The European Neutrals and NATO*, p. 192.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

and a recent analysis of Irish-NATO cooperation described the relationship as low-profile.⁸¹ In 2016, Irish Minister of State for Defence, Paul Kehoe TD, highlighted that force interoperability was the main aim of Ireland's membership of the PfP.⁸² His comments came in the context of defending Ireland's decision to join the Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII) in 2014 which allows partners to participate in some NATO fora relating to interoperability.⁸³ Ireland also provides training to NATO members in dealing with threats arising out of terrorism, such as countering Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).⁸⁴ Austria's commitment to KFOR was significant, and crisis management is a core focus of the country's engagement with NATO under the PfP. Interoperability, Western security dialogue, and countering cyber-threats are also important areas for engagement, but Austria's strategic focus is on threats from Southern Europe relating to the migration crisis, terrorism and human security in contrast to NATO's current focus on threats from the East.

Defence Capacity

The neutrals' capacity to address modern security threats and further their collaborative security objectives can be crudely assessed by looking at how much they spend on defence. Spending alone does not tell the whole picture, but it is instructive. None of the neutrals currently meet NATO's 2% of GDP target for defence spending amongst its members [Fig. 5]. Unsurprisingly, the Nordic neutrals spend the highest share of GDP on defence and they can be separated from the other neutrals in terms of defence focus. For Finland and Sweden, traditional national defence concerns are far more salient due to their proximity to the Russian border. Sweden's spend is set to further increase in the 2018 budget,⁸⁵ and increases are expected to continue under the 2016 – 2020 Defence Policy.⁸⁶ The policy is framed around what is called the "Hultqvist doctrine", named after Sweden's Defence Minister. This doctrine consists of two pillars; boosting Sweden's capacity to defend itself and signing agreements with the United States and NATO which enhance the credibility of Sweden's military deterrence.⁸⁷ The approach is much the same for Finland, with a comprehensive and networked national defence across all sectors of society the cornerstone of the policy.⁸⁸ The conscription of all adult males is part of the Finnish constitution, which contrasts with Sweden's recent decision to re-introduce partial conscription in 2018 on a gender neutral basis.⁸⁹

81 Andrew Cottey, 'Ireland and NATO: A Distinctly Low-Profile Partnership', in Cottey (ed.), *The European Neutrals and NATO*, pp. 151-180.

82 Paul Kehoe (Teachta Dála - TD), *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 914, No.1, 21 June 2016.

83 See: NATO, *Partnership Interoperability Initiative*. https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_132726.htm [cited 10-2-18].

84 Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen praised these training programmes when he visited Ireland in 2013. See, NATO, *NATO and Ireland: working together for peace* (speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Institute for International and European Affairs (IIEA) in Dublin, 12 February 2013), https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_98369.htm [cited 20-05-18].

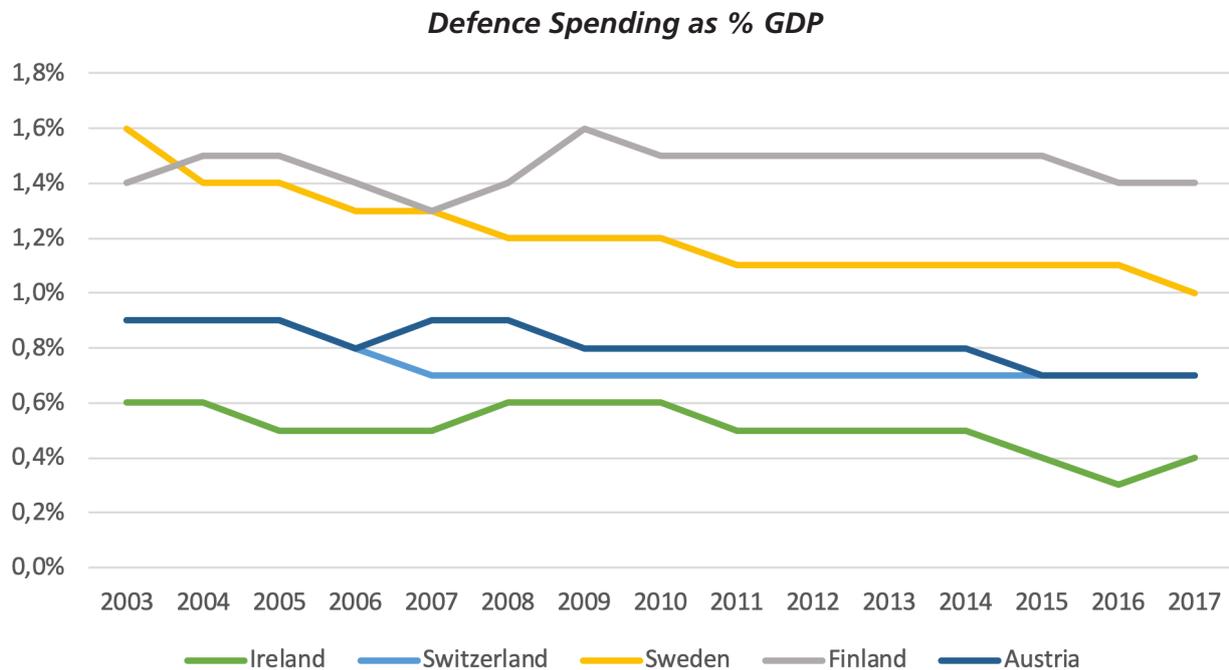
85 Government of Sweden, 'Budget 2018: Increased military capabilities and enhanced total defence', <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2017/09/budget-2018-increased-military-capabilities-and-enhanced-total-defence/> [cited 27-05-18].

86 Government of Sweden, *Sweden's Defence Policy 2016 to 2020*, https://www.government.se/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/sweden_defence_policy_2016_to_2020 [cited 27-05-18].

87 Barbara Kunz, 'Sweden's NATO Workaround: Swedish security and defense policy against the backdrop of Russian revisionism', *Institut français des relations internationales (Ifri)* (Focus Stratégique, No. 64, November 2015), p. 8.

88 Ministry of Defence, Finland, *Security Strategy for Society*, 16 December 2010, <https://www.defmin.fi/files/1883/PDF.SecurityStrategy.pdf> [cited 30-05-18].

89 Government of Sweden, 'Sweden re-activates conscription', <https://www.government.se/articles/2017/03/re-activation-of-enrolment-and-the-conscription/> [cited 30-05-18].

Fig. 5: Defence spending by European neutrals 2000 – 2017.⁹⁰

For the other neutrals, traditional national defence concerns are less of a priority as their immediate neighbourhood is relatively safe. For Switzerland, the current focus is on capability reforms and the head of the Swiss Armed Forces called for an increase in funding in 2017 to meet the requirements of the ongoing transformation programme.⁹¹ The current political stalemate between parties with divergent views about the military is a further challenge for the Swiss Armed Forces. How much should be spent on the military and how the army should be organized are also ongoing political debates. Other challenges include coordination and training deficiencies within the armed forces for international operations and to address hybrid threats.⁹² Austrian defence spending has seen a continual decline since the end of the Cold War, which reflects their increasingly safe neighbourhood following the expansion of the EU into Eastern Europe. Austria is more committed to crisis management than national defence,⁹³ which goes some way to explaining their relatively small defence budget. Ireland has always economized on defence and has never operated what a reasonable observer would consider an armed neutrality.⁹⁴ As the island is also of strategic importance to the defence of the United Kingdom (UK), Ireland profits from the shelter the UK provides out of its own interest. Consequently, the Irish government has been reluctant to open the purse strings for defence. Underinvestment has led to problems in recruitment and retention of staff,⁹⁵ a weak national security system,⁹⁶ and the absence of a militarily credible air force

90 Figures derived from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/3_Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988%E2%80%932017%20as%20a%20share%20of%20GDP.pdf [cited 06-05-18].

91 Online news bulletin of Radio Télévision Suisse (RTS), 10 April 2017

<https://www.rts.ch/info/suisse/8532695-le-chef-de-l-armee-philippe-rebord-veut-encore-plus-de-moyens.html> [cited 21-05-18].

92 See, Lieutenant-Colonel Hans-Jakob Reichen (Swiss General Staff Corps), 'Swiss Armed Forces Reform: Doctrinal Organizational Challenges' (Masters Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2016).

93 Gärtner, 'Austria: Engaged Neutrality', p. 139.

94 Ireland's defence forces are primarily concerned with performing civic duties domestically, such as cash transfers between banks, protection of fisheries, supporting local authorities during flooding, and providing an air ambulance service for the Health Service Executive (HSE). Internationally, their focus is on policy-making, peace-keeping and interoperability. See, Irish Department of Defence and Defence Forces, *Statement of Strategy 2016 – 2019*, <http://www.defence.ie/website.nsf/strategy2016>; and, Defence Forces Ireland, official website, <http://www.military.ie/en/info-centre/what-we-do/> [cited 12-05-18].

95 Tom Brady, 'Urgent bid to increase Defence Forces pay to stop mass exodus', *Independent.ie*, 2 April 2018; Sean O'Riordan, 'Drop in numbers joining Defence Forces', *Irish Examiner*, 3 April 2018; Stephen O'Brien, 'Irish Defence Forces' numbers hit by early retirements', *The Times*, 22 April 2018.

96 Ireland's intelligence infrastructure is under-funded, opaque, and its governance is weak. Recommendations made in 1974 to create a National Security Council have never been acted upon. See Eunan O'Halpin, 'Ireland: Plus Ça Change, 1945–2015', in Bob de Graaff, James M. Nyce and Chelsea Locke (eds.), *Handbook of European Intelligence Cultures* (Rowan & Littlefield, 2016), pp. 184-186.

and primary radar system.⁹⁷

For the EU neutrals, PESCO should at least lead to smarter choices in defence spending which may mitigate some effects of underinvestment in Ireland and Austria. This is expected to be achieved under the new Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), which involves systematic monitoring of spending plans to “identify opportunities for new collaborative initiatives”.⁹⁸ These cost efficiency efforts sit aside the European Defence Fund (EDF) which provides funding and incentives to boost defence cooperation amongst Member States. Thus far 17 projects have been identified under PESCO, cutting across 3 areas: common training and exercises, operational issues, and joint capabilities.⁹⁹ Russia’s use of hybrid warfare has also compelled innovations in European defence strategies and some of the first PESCO projects address new cyber and maritime threats to energy and environmental security.¹⁰⁰

Challenges and Opportunities

The prospects of the European neutrals abandoning neutrality remain dim in the short-term. Domestic support for neutrality remains strong across all of Europe’s neutral states. However, room does exist for greater coordination, integration, facilitation, cooperation and training. In terms of cooperation and integration with NATO, there is a clear division between the Nordic neutrals and the rest. For the former, more effort should be dedicated to improving coordination with NATO and individual NATO members at strategic and political levels. Political coordination for the Nordic neutrals is currently achieved through various fora comprising a variety of constellations of regional states. The Nordic neutrals coordinate through the EU, the PfP, NORDEFECO, Nordic and Baltic cooperation (NB8), the Northern Group, NATO COEs, and bi-lateral and tri-lateral consultations with NATO members. These fora provide avenues for relationship building, interoperability and information exchanges, but there is a lack of an overarching coordination body with clear policy objectives and regional meetings have a degree of informality.¹⁰¹ Their close relations with NATO and NATO members on security and defence issues also requires coordinated communications to counter propaganda directed at exploiting any perceived divergence between domestic opinion and government action. Greater emphasis should consequently be placed on boosting political and administrative capacity in these fora.

Strategically, it is important for the Nordic neutrals to signal a strong and credible deterrence capability. Participation in various NATO exercises, and exercises with regional NATO members outside Alliance structures, has increased coordination at the operational level which furthers this aim,¹⁰² but rapid response to hybrid threats requires specialized units with strong intelligence capabilities, and local support.¹⁰³ Special Operations Forces (SOF) are ideally suited to this task, but to be effective their position within a larger strategic concept needs to be clear, they need to be adequately resourced, and they require a high degree of interconnection with national security structures, personnel and tools pre-crisis.¹⁰⁴ Their utility as a complement to conventional forces appears to be well recognized in Sweden. Their ability to provide economy of force, act as a force multiplier, create an expansion of choice through flexibility and drive innovation have been highlighted as benefits in a recent survey of practitioners.¹⁰⁵ SOF’s utility is also supported by research on small state military defence strategies which suggests Finland and Sweden should provide a credible deterrent based on

97 In 2015, Russian nuclear bombers flew within 12 nautical miles of the Irish coast-line. As Ireland does not possess an air force capable of interception and a radar system that cannot detect aircraft flying with their transponders turned off, the UK intervened to divert the bombers. The government has subsequently committed to buying a primary radar system. See, Tom Clonan, ‘Why it’s time to have an open and honest debate about our neutrality’, *thejournal.ie*, 15 August 2016; and, Paul Williams, ‘Crisis’ in the Defence Forces means our Air Corps are effectively working 9-to-5’, *Independent.ie*, 19 March 2017.

98 European External Action Service (EEAS), PESCO Factsheet, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/34226/permanent-structured-cooperation-pesco-factsheet_en [cited 14-05-18].

99 Ibid.

100 Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), First collaborative PESCO projects – Overview, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32079/pesco-overview-of-first-collaborative-of-projects-for-press.pdf> [cited 19-05-18].

101 See, Tuomas Iso-Markku, ‘Nordic Foreign and Security Policy Cooperation: The New Strategic Environment as a Catalyst for Greater Unity?’, *Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA)* (Briefing Paper, No. 234, March 2018).

102 Finland, Sweden and Norway engage in Cross Border Training (CBT) aerial exercises in the Arctic Region on a weekly basis through NORDEFECO. The US and the UK took part in the Arctic Challenge (ACE13) exercise in 2013. Sweden and Denmark also engage in a cross-border aerial training activities, though to a lesser extent. See Ann-Sofie Dahl, ‘NORDEFECO and NATO: “Smart Defence” in the North?’, *NATO Defence College Research Division* (Research Paper, No. 101, May 2014), p. 8. US and NATO marine units also practiced amphibious landings in Sweden and Finland during BALTOPS drills in 2015 and 2016 and US and NATO forces also conducted a military exercise in 2017 focused on the defence of Gotland, called Aurora 2017. See Artur Kacprzyk and Karsten Friis, ‘Adapting NATO’s Conventional Force Posture in the Nordic-Baltic Region’, *Polish Institute of International Affairs* (Policy Paper, No. 3 (156), August 2017), p. 4.

103 AWE (name anonymized), ‘Framing SOF Intelligence’, in Gunilla Eriksson and Ulrica Pettersson (eds.), *Special Operations from a Small State Perspective: Future Security Challenges* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 163-164.

104 Ibid.

105 See Colonel Ronny Modigs, ‘The Utility of Special Operations in Small States’, in Eriksson and Pettersson (eds.), *Special Operations from a Small State Perspective*, pp. 43-64.

irregular warfare tactics.¹⁰⁶

Ivan Arreguín-Toft's examination of 197 conflicts from 1800 – 1998 showed that when small states adopted a different tactical approach to the stronger attacker, they avoided defeat 63% of the time.¹⁰⁷ Conversely, when the two sides adopted the same approach, the stronger actor won 76% of the time. Arreguín-Toft divided approaches into direct (traditional attacks to defeat the military forces of a foe) and indirect (actions to undermine the will of the opponent through irregular warfare or barbarism). From his findings, he concluded that indirect approaches were most effective for weak actors in an asymmetric conflict and that these actors succeed by delaying and frustrating the will of the stronger actor. However, Arreguín-Toft also highlights that to prosecute successful irregular warfare, weak actors must "work tirelessly to gain and maintain the sympathy or acquiescence of a majority of the population", which he believes "is no mean feat".¹⁰⁸ Knowledge of a strong national will to defend the country by any means can produce a deterrent effect. In fact, activities which engage civil and military groups to produce such a deterrent are propounded by the US Department of Defence (DoD) in its Directive 3000.07 on Irregular Warfare (IW).¹⁰⁹ Consequently, for Finland and Sweden the implication is that these states should boost funding and training for their SOFs, as Swedish SOF practitioners themselves have advocated,¹¹⁰ and maintain a credible national will to defend the country in time of war. Sweden, Finland and Austria currently participate with NATO members in this field via the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ) where enhancing integration and interoperability is a priority.¹¹¹ However, for these efforts to succeed it is imperative that the role of SOF forces is clear and supported pre-crisis.

Ireland, Switzerland and Austria do not face the same calculations as the Nordic neutrals at present. However, this does not mean that they cannot or should not contribute more meaningfully to NATO cooperation. The sheer breadth and complexity of transnational security issues provides a strong argument for deeper collaboration. Opportunities should also tie in with NATO's Smart Defence outlook,¹¹² which entails the prioritization of capabilities NATO needs most combined with a focus on what each country does best supported by "multinational solutions to shared problems".¹¹³ One such avenue could be through NATO's COEs, which cover a wide-range of transnational security concerns.¹¹⁴ As the COEs are outside NATO's Command Structure, they may also not elicit too much domestic political opposition. Austria, Finland and Sweden currently participate in some of these COEs. All three contribute to the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence COE, while Finland and Sweden participate in the joint EU-NATO European COE for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid COE) and the NATO Strategic Communications COE. Austria also participates in the COE for Mountain Warfare, Sweden contributes to the Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices COE, and Finland contributes to the COE for Operations in Confined and Shallow Waters. However, Ireland and Switzerland have not similarly engaged. Switzerland does plan to contribute to the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre,¹¹⁵ but it could also contribute to the COE for Military Medicine as this is an area of Swiss specialty.¹¹⁶ For Ireland, contributing to the COE for Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices could supplement domestic training centres and ensure Ireland maintains its status in this field. Participation in NATO's Cyber Defence Centre would also be beneficial as Ireland hosts headquarters and data centres for many large American multi-national companies and the country's ability to protect cyber networks and infrastructure is

106 Ivan Arreguín-Toft, 'How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict', *International Security* (Vol. 26, No. 1, Summer 2001), pp. 99-128; Also see, Fabien Sandór, *Irregular Warfare: The Future Military Strategy for Small States* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).

107 Arreguín-Toft, 'How the Weak Win Wars', p. 112. Data based on outcome and strategic interaction, see Appendix 1. Small actors were deemed successful if they won, brought the conflict to a stalemate, or if it was ongoing. At the time of his analysis, only a couple of conflicts could be considered to have been ongoing.

108 *Ibid.* p. 122.

109 US Department of Defense, Directive 3000.07, 28 August 2014 as amended by Change 1 of 12 May 2017, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=800965> [cited 15-05-18].

110 Gunilla Eriksson and Ulrica Pettersson (eds.), *Special Operations from a Small State Perspective: Future Security Challenges* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). This publication contains contributions from Swedish SOF personnel, some of whom are published under aliases due to security regulations.

111 NATO, Special Operations Forces, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_105950.htm [cited 14-05-18].

112 Smart Defence aligns with NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept which focuses on collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security. See, NATO, Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the NATO summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010), https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/pdf/Strat_Concept_web_en.pdf [cited 14-05-18].

113 NATO, Smart Defence, https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_84268.htm [cited 14-05-18].

114 NATO Centres of Excellence: Analysis and Simulation for Air Operations; Civil-Military Cooperation; Cold Weather Operations; Combined Joint Operations from the Sea; Command and Control; Cooperative Cyber Defence; Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices; Counter Intelligence; Crisis Management and Disaster Response; Defence Against Terrorism; Energy Security; Explosive Ordnance Disposal; Human Intelligence; Joint Air Power; Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence; Military Engineering; Military Medicine; Military Police; Modelling and Simulation; Mountain Warfare; Naval Mine Warfare; Operations in Confined Shallow Waters; Stability Policing; Strategic Communications; and the joint EU-NATO European COE for Countering Hybrid Threats.

115 NATO, 'Secretary General: Switzerland is a valued NATO partner', 1 March 2017, https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/news_141939.htm?selectedLocale=en [cited 08-06-18].

116 Switzerland is a significant contributor to the International Committee of Military Medicine (ICMM) through the hosting of workshops and training courses, and via the International Committee of the Red Cross.

questionable.¹¹⁷ Austria, Ireland and Switzerland could also consider joining the EU-NATO Hybrid COE. Though limited in scope to the identification and assessment of hybrid threats,¹¹⁸ early identification should lead to early remedy.

For the EU neutrals, PESCO and future EU collective security projects could pose a challenge to their relations with NATO were the Alliance to re-orientate back to a traditional collective defence focus. Most affected would be Austria and Ireland who could perceivably reduce their engagement with NATO under the PfP.¹¹⁹ However, force interoperability through NATO will remain important to their defence forces for some time to come, exemplified by the fact that neither are members of the EU's interoperability organization FINABEL. For Switzerland, it is probable that should NATO edge away from crisis management their interactions through the PfP would also be negatively affected.

Conclusion

The prospect of the European neutrals joining NATO remains low. Neutrality is tied to their national identities which are projected through their active neutrality policies. Political parties inclined to abandon neutrality in favour of joining NATO are few, and those that do exist currently do not have the political clout to even pose the question to voters. Nonetheless, the Nordic neutrals continue to expand their cooperation with NATO and NATO members, and enhancing the Alliance's ability to assist in times of crisis will no doubt be high on the agenda of the Finnish and Swedish ministries of defence. Efforts to strengthen deterrence to a military attack will likely continue in accordance with the Hultqvist doctrine, but membership seems a step too far. Challenges in their relations primarily centre around coordination on operational and strategic levels, which require greater focus and attention.

Austria, Ireland and Switzerland have no compelling reasons to join NATO as their geo-strategic position is comparably secure and neutrality is overwhelmingly popular domestically in these states. There is also little political and financial room for expansions in their current relations. Austria and Switzerland remain constitutionally bound by neutrality which naturally precludes membership of military alliances. Though Irish neutrality is not codified in law, the majority of the Irish electorate wish for neutrality to be enshrined in the constitution. Furthermore, security and defence issues remain a low priority for the general populace outside of EU treaty referenda. Nonetheless, there remain opportunities within their relations to enhance cooperation and knowledge transfer via NATO's COEs and interoperability will continue to be of great importance to their defence forces.

All of the EU neutrals signed up to the EU's PESCO initiative indicating their desire for deeper collaboration at the EU level. Engaging with EU collective security frameworks is sensible for these states as it ensures their ability to remain outside military alliances while also providing additional layers to the EU's currently soft security shelter. EU-level collective security developments could supplant some current NATO functions should progress continue in this sphere, thereby further reducing NATO's relevance to the neutrals. Similarly, were NATO to shift back to its original collective defence focus, it is likely to have a negative effect on the engagement of Austria, Ireland and Switzerland and may pose tough questions for Swedish and Finnish policy-makers.

117 Elaine Loughlin, 'Ireland 'extremely vulnerable' to cyber attacks from Russia', *Irish Examiner*, 26 March 2018. A former senior military intelligence officer stated that Ireland was naïve in intelligence matters and if the European security environment continues to degenerate the country may discover how immature its defence systems are.

118 See Niklas Helwig, 'New Tasks for EU-NATO Cooperation: An Inclusive EU Defence Policy Requires Close Collaboration with NATO', *German Institute for International and Security Affairs* (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Comment 4, January 2018).

119 Gärtner, 'Austria: Engaged Neutrality', p. 130.

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