



IRELAND AND THE EU: DEFENDING OUR COMMON EUROPEAN HOME

FINE GAEL 

 **epp**
group
in the european parliament

Table of Contents

Introduction 3

New and complex threats 5

We are active players on the international stage 6

10 Recommendations for a progressive future Irish security and defence policy 7

Conclusion13

Annex I14

Annex II15

INTRODUCTION

As the four Fine Gael MEPs representing Ireland in the European Parliament we believe the time is right to openly debate the issue of Irish security and defence. We cannot leave this debate to other Member States. Ireland should support the emerging European Defence Union and should seek to shape it according to our needs and traditions.

The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, has correctly said that more progress has been made on intensifying EU defence cooperation in the last year, than was achieved in the last 10 years put together. Big developments are potentially on the horizon.

Ireland is not immune from security concerns. New threats and challenges are emerging and old ones are evolving in new circumstances. These new threats were recognised in Ireland's White Paper on Defence in 2015 and the Minister for Defence, Paul Kehoe, has been very proactive in developing our defence capabilities in response to these threats in recent years.

We want to make it clear that we do not support the creation of an EU army. Instead we should be asking how collaboration can be enhanced and how this can be done while respecting the traditions of all EU Member States. Much of the debate in Ireland on this issue is characterised by outdated language. Some in society will always oppose European defence/security cooperation and integration purely on ideological grounds. EU action in security and defence is simply about working together where it is beneficial for individual Member States and the whole Union. There is no question of overriding our sovereign wishes.

In short, we need an outcome to this debate that meets our national objectives, reflecting our traditions, building on our proud record of peace keeping and humanitarian support and working with other EU member states in a new spirit of cooperation, mutual respect and openness.

A meaningful approach to security and defence must be built on solidarity with other EU member states. As An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said recently, we are part of the common European home and that is where we believe the great majority of Irish people want to stay.

Ireland claims a jurisdiction that is about three times the size of Germany, almost a million square kilometres, 93% of which is under water, on the western periphery of Europe. This is of huge strategic interest to the whole EU. It would be completely reasonable that we look for substantial investment from the EU to bolster our defence capability for the western periphery of Europe. Is it feasible to expect a small island economy to defend, police and monitor such a significant and strategic jurisdiction?

As Irish MEPs, we welcome the decision taken by the Dáil and the government to join PESCO. We should embrace these changes and work with all Member States to improve and design the emerging European Defence Union. None of what is proposed cuts across our position on mutual defence.

The proposed changes under Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) point to a more permanent structure of security in the EU. PESCO is all about coordinating our defence planning, it is about improving the effectiveness of our military and civilian operations and about bringing together Member States where they are willing and able to jointly develop defence capabilities. While PESCO is a permanent structure, a Member State's involvement is based on a case-by-case basis.

In this document, we are not arguing for an increased militarisation of Europe. On the contrary, we believe that PESCO and the emerging European Defence Union give us the opportunity to spend better on military.

Rarely, if ever, is the value and significance of security and defence cooperation highlighted in our domestic political conversation. Yet our defence forces contribute in such a professional and enduring way in missions under the EU, as much as they do under the UN. It is time to discuss security and defence matters, to plan accordingly, and to consider how those plans might be advanced through further EU integration.

In this discussion paper, we explain the new and complex threats facing Ireland, we describe how Ireland has contributed to EU security and defence policy missions and finally we outline 10 concrete policy proposals as our contribution to this debate. We would invite others to do the same.

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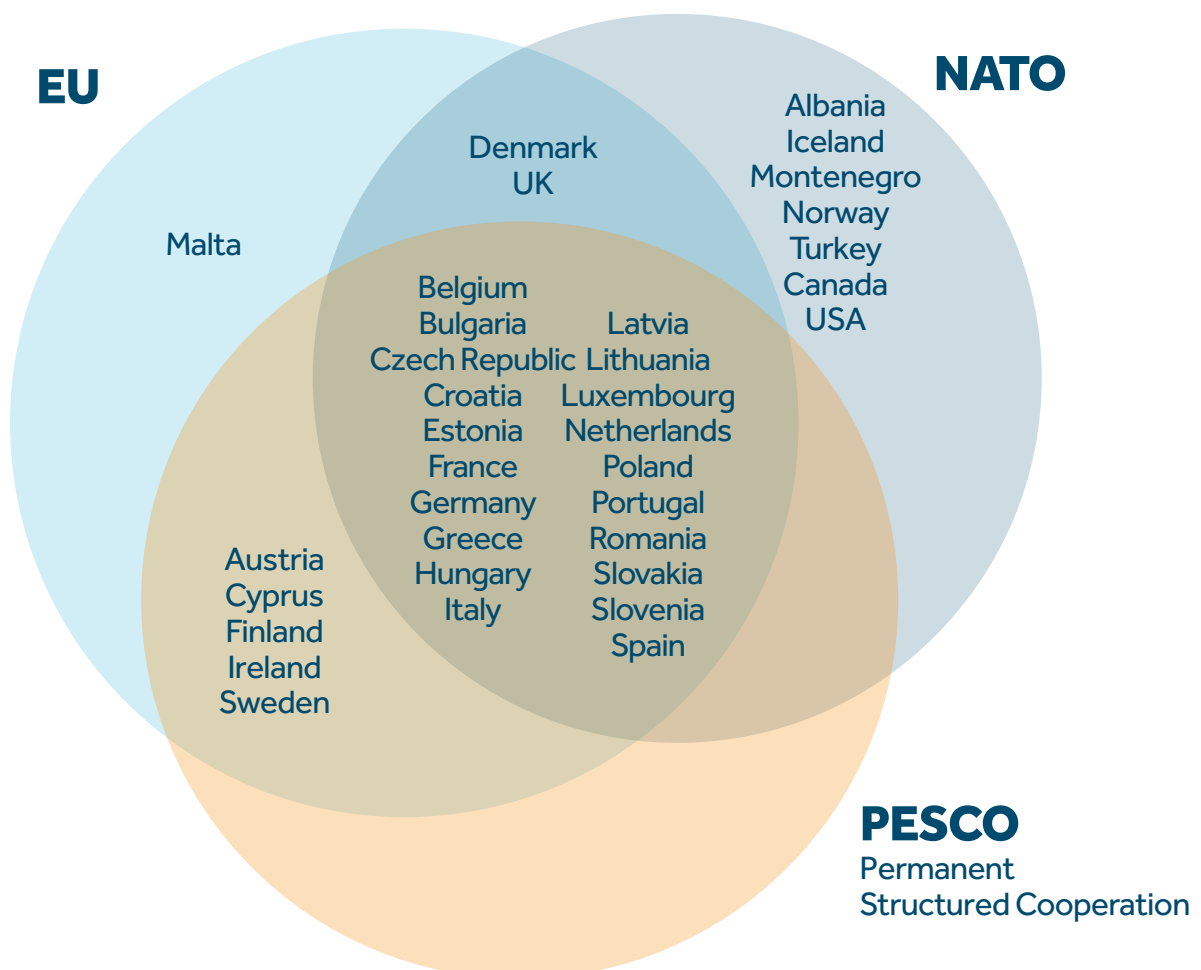
NEW AND COMPLEX THREATS

Today's reality means that EU Member States have to cope with an ever increasing array of complex threats as their existing defence capabilities come under pressure. As was pointed out in the White Paper on Defence in 2015, Ireland is vulnerable to a growing number of security threats that face the world today. Threats that are increasingly interconnected and less predictable. Threats such as terrorism and cyber-attacks that can strike anywhere without warning. Member States cannot act alone to adequately defend against such security threats. At the very least we need a public information campaign, as has happened in other Member States, informing the public what to look out for and how to respond were an attack to occur.

Ireland is a small, open economy that is home to some of the highest profile multinational companies in the world. We are a hub for large technology companies and data storage. Given our historic underinvestment in Defence Force infrastructure, we could be seen as a soft target in the current global security landscape. This calls for a serious conversation about national security. The first duty of public representatives is to provide security for its citizens. In this context, we must strive to work as close as possible with EU partners and coordinate efforts in response to new and complex threats.

See Annex I on the threat and risk analysis.

DEFENCE: OVERLAPPING ALLIANCES



WE ARE ACTIVE PLAYERS ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Ireland has been an active participant in EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations over the last 15 years. This has been based on a strong tradition of engagement in UN peacekeeping, which is generally regarded as an important part of the country's foreign policy. Our proud tradition of taking a leading role in peacekeeping operations is something that should continue. We are respected and have credibility in this area. Yet, rarely is there recognition in public debate about Ireland's role in EU missions.

The EU is planning to accelerate its role in peace and security in international affairs, through CSDP. We should have nothing to fear from participating in future discussions about enhancing Europe's role in this area.

Ireland has participated in and supported a great deal of EU overseas missions (see Annex II). They range from military missions tackling conflict to civilian missions providing police training and naval service missions addressing migration challenges. These missions result in the EU working together with the shared goal of peace and stability and represent a key pillar of the EU's security and defence policy.

The debate on a possible new EU Defence Union continues. Nobody knows the outcome to that. It is our firm view that Ireland needs to be part of that debate and seeking to shape the final outcome on needs that meet our objectives.

See Annex II for an overview of the Irish contribution to CSDP missions.



10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A PROGRESSIVE FUTURE IRISH SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

1. Support the development of a European Defence Union

We live in a highly integrated world; we must start to consider that threats towards the EU are threats to Ireland as well. Provided that any future European Defence Union does not go against the 26th Amendment of Bunreacht na hÉireann, we should aim to support such a project. That means we need to actively participate in the shaping of what constitutes a new European Defence Union. We cannot be on the sidelines of this debate as the outcome may lead to Treaty change.

Ireland should make it clear that we support reinforced security and defence cooperation in Europe, subject to our traditional position of military non-alignment. However, if the outcome to the current debate on a European Defence Union leads to some form of mutual defence pact within the EU, we should be prepared to consider that on its merits. Joining a Defence Union that involved a mutual defence pact would of course require a Referendum.

In this context, we see new coordination and initiatives at an EU level in the areas of defence spending, research, technology, innovation and military capabilities being of significant benefit to our Defence Forces.

2. Redefine the concept of Irish neutrality

Neutrality is a concept that needs constant re-evaluation. Ireland's policy was one that ebbed and flowed with the international climate thereby allowing us to protect our international interests as a small island. Our neutrality has always been practical, flexible and pragmatic. The decision to remain neutral during World War II was more around not opening up the wounds of the Irish Civil War and the limited defence capacity of the new state.

Fellow Member States, Sweden and Finland, also non-aligned countries, are now seeking more defence integration among Nordic countries and demonstrate strong support for the EU's security and defence agenda. This could be described as a progressive form of neutrality, where Member States change their policy to meet new circumstances. It is time to move beyond slogans and start to debate the real security and defence needs of Ireland and those of the EU.

There may be scope for a broad national debate on what we mean by neutrality. The term 'Independent Non-nuclear Defence' might be a better way of describing our position. In other words, a position on security and defence that is open to active engagement in international security operations but non-militarily aligned. Such a description also does not imply any indifference to, or disengagement from, the pursuit of justice, human rights and the protection of vulnerable groups, which the term 'neutral' may suggest.

3. Amend Ireland's Triple Lock system

The term 'Triple Lock' emerged as a consequence of the Nice Treaty debates. It refers to the need for a UN authorisation, a Government decision and Dáil vote before the deploying of Irish troops abroad on peacekeeping missions. Of the three elements to the Triple Lock, the strict legal requirement for UN authorisation is probably the only real lock - a self-imposed lock. This is despite the fact that - as in the case of the EU peacekeeping mission to FYR Macedonia in 2003 - sometimes the UN cannot agree to authorisation for purely political reasons.

Ireland has a proud record in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. Can we put at risk that hard-earned reputation by continuing to allow a permanent member of the UN Security Council to ultimately hold a veto over the decisions of the Dáil and government in the deployment of Irish peacekeepers?

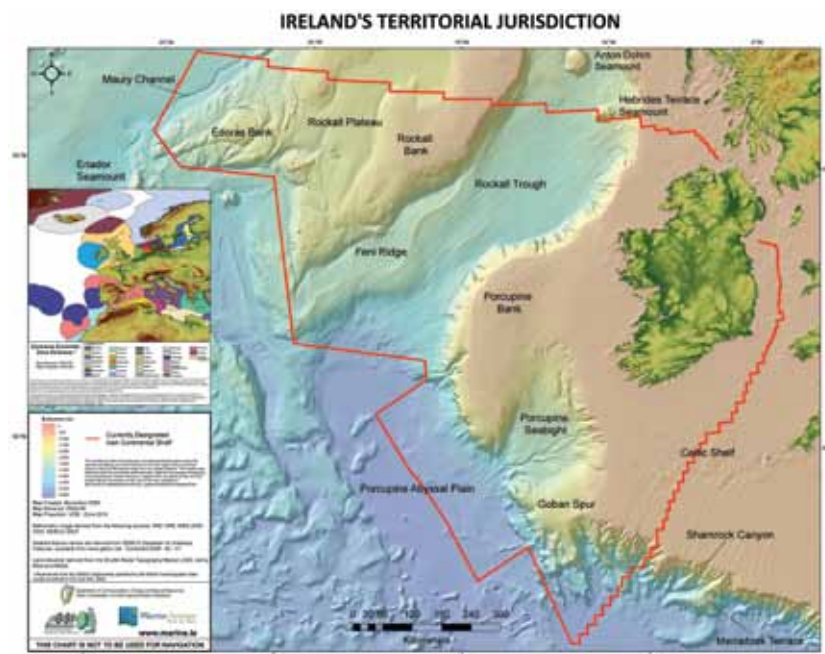
We believe that there should be greater flexibility in how our Defence Forces may be deployed internationally in times of crisis or natural disaster. It is possible to construct a 'Triple Lock' with a fail-safe option which could be used in exceptional circumstances when UN approval is blocked. An acceptable resolution to the existing Triple Lock system might be for the imposition of a voting threshold in the Dáil of a super majority, of say two-thirds of the house, requiring broad cross-party support, to authorise the deployment of our troops overseas. Another option would be to change the "UN authorisation" part of the Triple Lock to "UN authorisation or EU council decision". This would allow for us to participate in all EU peacekeeping missions, without fear of a UN veto, subject to the agreement of both the Dáil and the government.

4. A continued strong commitment to peace keeping and crisis management operations

As a small open economy, Ireland is susceptible to global instability. That is why our continuing commitment to international peacekeeping and security operations must remain a priority. An amendment to the Triple Lock system along the lines recommended would help to ensure this priority is upheld.

As set out in the 2015 White Paper on Defence, Ireland has always had "a principled interest in global and regional peace and security." Opinion polls indicate that security has become a very serious concern for most European citizens.¹

Since Ireland joined the UN in 1955, we have developed a high profile in traditional peace support operations mandated and directed by the UN. This has amounted to more than 81 missions, ongoing or completed, and over 55,000 tours of duty and entailed the sacrifice of 86 lives of members of the Defence



1 https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief_43_CSDP_polls_01.pdf

Forces². Our EU partners have most recently acknowledged the major humanitarian contribution that our naval service has made to EU operations in the Mediterranean in response to the on-going migrant crisis. The decision taken in 2017 to deepen our participation in operation Sophia, especially with a mandate to destroy the vessels of people smugglers, showed a maturity on the part of the government and Dáil. All Member States face similar security threats so they should work together to protect each other.

5. Increase defence spending, particularly on defence capabilities, research, innovation and personnel

The low level of spending on defence in the State - at 0.3% of GDP according to the World Bank³ - means that Irish defence spending is the lowest in the EU. The Defence Forces deserve the best equipment, training and upgraded platforms. The EU's ability to provide joint planning and procurement, the pooling and sharing of equipment and joint maintenance programmes can be of significant benefit to our defence forces.

It is time to reflect upon the level of absolute and relative funding necessary to sustain Ireland's engagements at home and abroad based upon an explicit and formal risk analysis including consideration of potential threat scenarios, both domestic and overseas.

The long-term nature of defence planning means that investment in defence tends not to be prioritised in the absence of immediate and tangible threats to security. The government's commitment in the 2015 White Paper to put in place a new defence expenditure review is overdue. It is essential that the Defence Forces should have the capabilities, including equipment, necessary to undertake operations successfully, taking account of the inevitable risks associated with military tasks.

It is welcome that the government has committed to increase our defence spending through the ongoing capital investment plan which lasts until 2021. This includes more than €250 million in a ship replacement programme and a capital budget of €416 million for the period 2018-2021. However, we're still quite some ways off where we need to be.

The White Paper committed to maintaining the number of Defence Forces personnel at 9,500, but we are currently below that level. We need proper investment in our Defence Forces if we want to achieve our full potential in terms of planning, training and deployment of troops for overseas missions. The optimum strength for the Defence Forces to meet its current commitments is an active operational strength of 10,000. This number needs to increase by at least 500 to account for constant recruitment and personnel in training. We recognise the importance of enhancing pay and conditions for the Defence Forces. This must be prioritised now that the financial crisis is over.

Significant additional funding is required simply to maintain existing levels of capability and associated operational outputs. The lead-in time required to procure certain major equipment items would suggest that it might not be possible to initiate expenditure in the short term. As such, there would be a requirement to develop a procurement strategy and align requirements and lead times with future expenditure profiles.

2 <https://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/foreignaffairs/Opening-statement-re-Motion-23.03.2017.pdf>

3 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=IE>

The Government have resolved that Ireland's investment in defence, over the lifetime of the White Paper, must be on a sustainable footing, taking account of long-term national interest. Any new approach must take cognisance of the realities of the state of the public finances. It is time to discuss whether we think security and defence matters should be given higher priority and longer-term planning and to consider how those plans might be advanced through EU membership.

6. Set up a central intelligence unit which would interact with a future European intelligence unit

Both our Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána have separate intelligence units and they have different ways of acting on intelligence information. Therefore, the State has essentially two intelligence-gathering agencies, and uniquely for a European country, there is no overarching body above them nor is there a senior government security adviser or office mandated with synthesising that intelligence into a comprehensive security analysis. The investigations of major terrorist attacks in Europe has highlighted the contradiction between the seemingly free movement of terrorists across the Union, in stark contrast to the lack of free movement and sharing of intelligence among the various security agencies.

Our failure to embrace intelligence gathering and sharing is weakening our intelligence capability, as there is no clear line for our EU partners and external agencies to interact with one central agency or point of contact.

The Department of An Taoiseach, utilising the recently established Government Security Committee, should immediately develop a roadmap for the creation of a security and intelligence unit which could advise and report to government on and interact actively with other European stakeholders and partners.

7. Establish a cohesive National Cyber Security Strategy

Due to the digitalisation of everything from communication to business to trade, cyber-attacks are becoming more and more common as certain players try to take advantage of the technological advances in society. In Ireland, we have seen a number of cyber-attacks or attempted cyber-attacks this year alone, including attempted attacks on the HSE and the ESB. Given the presence of high profile multinational and large tech firms, Ireland could face significant risks into the future.

While the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources has put work into developing a National Cyber Security strategy, not enough resources are being devoted to establish a properly cohesive and coordinated national cyber security strategy. We don't have enough collaboration between departments and we don't have proper contingency planning in place in the case of a major cyber-attack. We don't have enough collaboration with the private sector. Given the number of tech firms that are based in Ireland, we have the opportunity to become a cybersecurity hub. According to a 2016 survey, six out of ten Irish firms expected to fall victim to a cyber-attack in the year ahead and 90% of businesses believe that the government is not prepared for a potential cyber-attack against the state⁴.

We believe as a priority that one of the first joint approaches in the area of cyber security needs to occur at an EU level. In the area of joint planning and joint research between Member States, cyber security provides an appropriate area for much more EU cooperation and funding.

4 <https://www.independent.ie/business/technology/ireland-not-ready-for-cyber-crime-threat-say-90pc-of-businesses-35155451.html>



8. Establish a National Security Council

Relative to our size we have a considerable level of operational expertise, within the emergency/security services. Yet the operational coordination of these agencies as a cohesive entity is still problematic. Interoperability and coherence is the key to uniting all these elements as an orderly systematic entity.

A National Security Council (NSC) should be established with a statutory responsibility to report and reassess, on a bi-annual basis, the threat analysis, while identifying the gaps in our ability to respond and specifying the funding and resources required to address this.

Part of the NSC's remit should be the establishment of a regular Forum on security and Defence policy, which invites participants from all government departments, political parties, NGOs, wider civil society, industry and academia and would allow such stakeholders to help shape our evolving policy in this area.

9. Develop Ireland's defence industry

There is an on-going requirement to examine new and innovative means of improving capabilities in the security and defence domain so that the Defence Forces are in a position to undertake the roles assigned by Government. The Defence Forces and Department of Defence, through their commitment to continuous training and education, possess a wealth of innovative personnel who contribute to the development of ideas, technology and processes.

Within the EU, the role of well-funded research has been identified as one of the drivers of enhanced capability. The EU is investigating innovative funding mechanisms to support security and defence research in the face of declining national defence budgets so as to deliver capability and support industry. From 2020, it is anticipated that up to €5 billion of EU funds could be devoted to defence spending annually, through a new European Defence Fund.

Sweden, Switzerland and Austria are all neutral and have substantial defence industries, which strengthens their respective capacities to contribute to both national defence and international security obligations. The myth that a 'Defence' industry is incompatible with 'Neutrality' is clearly wrong. We should be looking to maximize Ireland's benefit from this EU funding.

In consultation with other national bodies and departments, the Department of Defence is active in assessing the opportunities arising from EU funding, to the benefit of Irish enterprise and Defence Forces' capability.

The Defence Enterprise Initiative as highlighted in the White Paper should be developed further, with the establishment of a Security and Defence Enterprise Group bringing together enterprise, industry, research and practitioners in the field of security and defence to identify areas of common endeavour and collaboration and the potential of securing EU partners and EU funding to pursue promising projects.

Another area that could assist our defence capabilities is through increased participation in European Defence Agency (EDA) research programmes. Participation in EDA research programmes by Irish researchers has the potential to lead to spin-off benefits for the Irish economy through the development of non-military applications arising from the research.

Through the Security and Defence Enterprise Group, the Department and the Defence Forces, with Enterprise Ireland, should seek to support Irish based enterprise in their engagement with the EDA and in accessing funding through EDA and Horizon 2020 research programmes.

10. Assess the implications of Brexit and plan for Ireland's post-Brexit security and defence policy

The signing of a defence co-operation Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Ireland and the UK in 2015 was an important indication of the growing co-operation across a whole range of policies between the two islands. This MoU reflects elements of the incremental evolution of similar cooperation between the Defence Forces, i.e. Finland, Switzerland and European partners in EU security.

It is effectively a voluntary, non-binding arrangement between our Department of Defence and the UK Ministry of Defence and does not affect or prejudice the position, policy or security arrangements of either country.

The scale of border controls in Ireland, and at ports on either side of the Irish Sea, and of the English Channel, will depend on the eventual trade deal between the UK and EU. Ireland has the same electricity grid as the UK, and our air space and territorial waters are contiguous, as is our territory on land. We must make sure that our existing structures and bilateral arrangements with the UK remain strong into the future. We must also plan for a post-Brexit security and defence architecture that continues the close cooperation between Ireland and the UK. This should include an assessment of the implications of Brexit on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

CONCLUSION



This document represents our view as to the best way to open this crucial debate. It is a discussion document. We recognise the unique composition of the current government and especially the fact that it does not have a majority in Dáil Eireann. But this is a debate for all political parties in Ireland and especially the parties that believe in the European Union and our solidarity to each other.

As four Fine Gael MEPs actively involved in these discussions at an EU level, we see the merits of developing a more progressive Irish security and defence policy, one that is closely linked with our partners in the EU and which fully reflects Irish characteristics in the area of foreign and security policy.

We have outlined in this paper some concrete steps that will align our position closer to the EU. We believe this will help us become a safer and more secure country into the future and will also see Irish values and interests reflected in the larger EU policy debates.

Can anyone really say for sure that we are now a truly neutral country? That we would never take sides in the event of a conflict involving one of our close partners in the EU? These are questions that need to be debated and discussed.

Given the uncertainty of the traditional security blanket that the United States has provided to Europe, the EU is right to reassess its needs and see how fit-for-purpose its defence and security capacity is.

The reality of Brexit means that Ireland in addition to cementing its relationship with the United Kingdom must look to the existing or new members of the EU to form new alliances to further our interests and that of the EU. Taking a more proactive position in the security and defence policy of the future is in our national interest. We should be contributing to the making of the policy, not reacting to its creation.

We should put the interests of the Irish people first and deliver an inclusive, progressive and forward-looking security and defence policy. A policy that meets our needs in an ever-changing world. A policy that makes new alliances within the EU which can ultimately lead to a more peaceful world.

ANNEX I: THREAT AND RISK ANALYSIS

Threats, risks and challenges	Incidents/State-of-play
Terrorism	Regular major attacks in Europe since 2015 - Manchester, London, Paris, Barcelona, Brussels, Nice, Berlin.
Cyber threats	3 major attacks on NHS; 4000 ransomware attacks per day in 2016; Attempted attacks on the HSE and ESB.
Human trafficking, smuggling and migration	Thousands of refugees drowning annually in the Mediterranean. Large scale and illegal migration can raise significant challenges for host countries and for the EU more generally. Several people smuggling incidents in Irish ports, such as Rosslare.
Regional instability	From Russia to Ukraine, from Lybia to Syria, geopolitical instability close to Europe's borders is a growing threat.
Proliferation of weapons	Constant proliferation of weapons, nuclear and non-nuclear, that feed local and regional conflicts around the world.
Energy security	It is projected that the EU will import 75% of its energy by 2030*. Much of this energy is sourced from potentially unstable regimes.
Inter and Intra-State armed conflict	Civil war and conflict between two or more states will always remain a threat to the EU, no matter where it occurs. With globalisation, conflict can have a reverberating effect all over the world.
Subversion of political process	Attempted subversion of elections in France.
Emergencies, natural and man-made disasters	Emergencies can occur that have the potential to cause serious disruption to the functioning of a state and adversely affect its citizens. These could include severe weather events, pandemics or other natural disasters.
Transnational Organised Crime and drugs	There are many activities that can be categorised as transnational organised crime including: drug smuggling, smuggling of migrants, human trafficking, money laundering and cybercrime as well as counterfeiting activities. While organised crime is a global threat, its effects can also be felt locally. One obvious example is the extent to which Irish gangs, such as the Kintahan gang, have reach in other EU countries.

* Aarten and Wolf in "The Merits of Regional Cooperation: The case of South Asia". 2014

ANNEX 2: OVERVIEW OF IRISH CONTRIBUTION TO CSDP MISSIONS

Mission	Military/ Civilian	Nature of Irish contribution	Date
EU Operation ARTEMIS Congo	Military	This was the first autonomous EU military mission set up to tackle fighting which broke out following the departure of Ugandan troops. A small deployment of Irish defence forces was sent.	June 2003 - Sept 2003
ALTHEA/BiH	Military	Irish forces joined a stability force and have had a presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina for over 20 years in either EU or UN missions.	Dec 2004 - present
EUFOR Chad	Military	Large deployment of Irish defence forces assisted to tackle the crisis in Darfur. The Operation Commander was Lt General Patrick Nash of the Defence Forces.	Jan 2008 - March 2009
EU NAVFOR Somalia	Military/ Civilian	Ireland has provided military staff to work at the EU NAVFOR Operational Headquarters in Northwood, UK	Dec 2008 - present
EUTM Somalia	Military	A military training mission in Somalia to contribute to strengthening the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the institutions of Somalia.	April 2010 - April 2014
EUTM-Mali	Military	The Defence Forces deployed 10 personnel to contribute to the training of Mali security forces.	Feb 2013 - to date
EUNAVFOR MED (Operation Sophia)	Military/ Civilian	Ireland joined this operation in October 2017 by sending the LE Niamh ship to assist in tackling the migration issue in the Mediterranean.	May 2015 - present
EUJUSTLEX Iraq	Civilian	Irish experts have been deployed to support and train judges, prison officials, and other justice-sector workers in Iraq.	July 2005 - present
EUPOL COPPS/ Palestinian Territories	Civilian	Ireland has provided expertise and support to this police support mission in Palestine in order to assist the development of effective policing.	Jan 2006 - present
EUPOL Afghanistan	Civilian	A number of Members of An Garda Síochána were deployed in this civilian peace operation aimed at training the Afghanistan police force.	June 2007 - Dec 2016
EULEX Kosovo	Civilian	Members of An Garda Síochána were deployed to serve in this EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo.	Feb 2008 - present
EUMM Georgia	Civilian	Small Irish civilian deployment to work with EUMM to ensure there is no return to hostilities with Russia.	Sept 2008 - present
EUCAP Nestor	Civilian	Irish experts are serving in this mission which works in the Horn of Africa and Western Indian Ocean to assist countries in maritime security.	July 2012 - present

Sources: Department of Foreign Affairs Ireland (DFA) website, Defences Forces of Ireland website and European External Action Service (EEAS) website



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