



Cumann na nIAR-Oifigeach Coimisiúnta

Association of Retired Commissioned Officers

04 JULY 2023

Prof Louise Richardson
Chair,
Consultative Forum on International Security Policy
c/o International Security Policy Section,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
80 St Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2,
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SUBMISSION TO THE CONSULTATIVE FORUM ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY POLICY
THE ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED COMMISSIONED OFFICERS (ARCO)

Dear Prof Richardson,

The Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (CFISP) is a very welcome and an urgently needed initiative in Irish public debate, in that it offers, for the second time in recent years, a public platform and informed process for wider national discussion on Ireland's pressing need to review and overhaul its approach to International Security Policy.

As a recognised organisation within the Defence Community, ARCO, through its membership of former Defence and Military professionals, is uniquely placed to offer valuable insights into how the wider question of how Ireland's Security Policy can make the urgently needed re-adjustments to meet our changing national and international responsibilities, to secure and protect our territorial integrity, people, resources, national values and interests, as well as those of our neighbours and fellow EU Member States. ARCO offers this experience and expertise in support of the Forum's deliberations.

Our considered submission is attached to this letter as Annex A – ARCO's Submission to the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy.

The submission is in eight Sections which explore various considerations ARCO believes should be addressed by the Forum.

The introductory overview in Section 1 offers perspectives on the peculiarly Irish 'cultural fog' surrounding the issue of neutrality and the clarity of establishing linkages between national security strategies and engagement with international partners.

Section 2 explores the necessity for Ireland to realign its approaches to Security Policy, positing the need to establish structures to manage security in its broadest sense and how we contribute to international security.

Section 3 examines the geo-political environment and the effectiveness of the current structures which inform Ireland's approach to security policy, identifying that there has been



a paradigm shift requiring a radically different approach to how we manage National Security in Ireland, and how we contribute actively to International Security. Our current approach we suggest, actually places Ireland, as more dependent on our international partners, in danger of becoming an irrelevance in the international milieu.

Section 4 examines Ireland's current security situation, who we are now, where we are and how we are seen and regarded as the international security environment becomes increasingly volatile and tense. Our European partners, and others, have heretofore regarded our position indulgently, but more recently as a weak link in their regional security apparatus, and thus an unreliable political partner. They will expect us to play our part and contribute to regional security in a confident, mature, and responsible manner.

In all of this, Ireland must remain mindful of the future security and policy implications arising from the unsettled and contested all-island reality, which has an international dimension and a part of the island already within NATO. The desired end state of an agreed unitary entity on the island will inevitably evolve from this dichotomy and the implications of whatever emerges for our international security policy must be pre-planned and not reactive.

Section 5 looks at how security is defined in the modern environment. Security has been redefined and broadened beyond the traditional foreign policy and defence considerations. The security paradigm is now multi-dimensional, requiring cross sectoral responses. We need to take a more comprehensive and visibly active approach to the analysis, management and planning of our own security and proactive engagement with our European neighbours in particular.

Section 6 considers the concept of hybrid defence and security. The central thrust of this submission is that any consideration of Ireland's International Security Policy is inextricably linked to our own National Security and Defence Strategy. ARCO advocates that the correct response is a properly constituted, independent, empowered, and resourced National Security Agency which can co-ordinate our policy and protective measures across a range of security and environmental areas and be the principal advisor to Government in the development and management of our National Security Response and ensure that the critical requirement for our own and European neighbour's ongoing security are addressed.

In ARCO'S view Ireland needs to move its sense of its own security from one of dependence to the reality of the interdependent world. As a State politically and economically aligned with our EU partner nations and morally with the UN and OSCE, Ireland has both its own needs and external obligations of which mutual deterrence and security is but one of many interconnected provisions.

Military neutrality is one of a range of optional practical policy instruments, not a defence policy in itself. Joining a military alliance such as NATO is also such a tool. Armed neutrality, a statement to our international partners of our intent to provide deterrence, to defend ourselves, and deny our infrastructure to an aggressor would be an ethical posture but



would incur considerably more investment than a militarily aligned posture where the burden is shared.

This submission does not make a recommendation on which policy tool should be utilised. From our perspective, both involve a considerable financial investment in the structures required of a mature and responsible engagement with our international partners across the broad spectrum of security concerns. In ARCO's view a credibly resourced military structure has the inherent organisational capability and agility to respond to a whole range of threats and provides an ideal platform upon which to build national resilience to respond to shocks, nationally and internationally, whether in the purely physical security domain or otherwise.

ARCO posits that these considerations outlined in our submission, all lead to one unmistakable conclusion, the old paradigm of International Security is no longer relevant, and Ireland, along with the rest of the European Union and wider democratic states, must radically adapt to the new, highly unstable geopolitical environment.

Two of our, until recently likeminded fellow neutrals and frequent partners on peacekeeping operations, have already dramatically re-aligned their international security policies.

ARCO is available for further interaction and clarification if required.

Le Meas

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Seamus Ó Giolláin'.

Brigadier-General Séamus Ó Giolláin (Retd)

President

The Association of Retired Commissioned Officers

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ANNEX A: ARCO's Submission to the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy.



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ANNEX A

ARCO Submission to the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (ISP)