

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Introduction

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled 'Strategic Narratives in Ireland's Defence Forces'. The study is being led by John Hogan, from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

1. What the study is about

This project investigates the strategic narratives of Óglaigh na hÉireann (the Irish Defence Forces) — both the official narratives reflected in military doctrine and government policy, and the 'lived' narratives of its military personnel. Doing this research will entail conducting interviews with a significant number of active and retired members of the Defence Forces.

Strategic narratives refer to the stories, meanings, and frameworks that shape how a state or its military understands its role in the world, perceives and responds to threats, and thinks about the use of force and its broader strategic objectives. Typically, studies draw upon state documents, doctrines, and official discourse to characterise these narratives. However, a different kind of narrative — that which is experienced and 'lived' by soldiers — can be investigated through interviews, memoirs, or oral histories. It is for this reason that I would like to interview you about your experiences as a member of the Defence Forces, with a particular but not exclusive focus on peacekeeping and Ireland's wider defence and security role.

In the interview, I would like to discuss what aspects of the Irish approach to defence and security you think are distinctive. In addition, I would like to chat about how (or whether) factors such as history, doctrine, or identity shape the narratives that underpin that approach. I would also like to hear your perspective on what other factors — particularly those that might not feature prominently in official accounts — play a role in guiding how Ireland's Defence Forces think and operate.

2. What I will ask you to do

Either in one-on-one conversation or as part of a larger group conversation, I would like to ask you about your experiences serving in the Defence Forces. While peacekeeping forms a central part of this discussion — given its importance to the Irish military tradition — I am also interested in your broader experiences of defence and security matters more generally.

In relation to peacekeeping, this would include questions such as where and when you served, the training that you received in advance, your experiences with local populations, and your interactions with other peacekeeping forces, as well as with other organisations on the ground, such as local governments, military forces, NGOs or civil society groups. More broadly, I am interested in your experiences and perspectives on Ireland's approach to defence and security, including how you understand Ireland's role in the world and what shapes that role.

Across both areas, I am particularly interested in learning what makes Ireland's approach distinctive, from the perspective of those who have served. I would also like to discuss what you perceive as the factors — e.g. training, national history, soldiers' life experiences, doctrine — that have contributed towards these distinctive features, and what outcomes you see resulting from them.

3. Risks and discomforts

I see no physical risks stemming from participation in this study, though there is the possibility of some discomfort, depending on how at ease participants are discussing their past experiences. In order to reduce the possibility of such discomfort, I guarantee that interviewees can opt not to answer any questions they would prefer not to, while they can also request that certain topics not be discussed or withdraw their participation entirely at any time they wish. I will also guarantee participants' anonymity, as discussed under Item 6 below.

4. Benefits

There are no direct benefits to participants in the form of, for example, compensation. However, the findings of the research project will be of benefit to the Irish Defence Forces and policymakers, as it will add to the understanding of how Irish peacekeepers perceive their roles, what they value, what they might like to see change and how their perceptions have evolved over time.

5. [Audio / Video Recording / Photos]

If participants are comfortable with me doing so, I would like to make an audio recording of the interviews. However, if they would prefer that I not make a recording, then I will be happy to just take notes on my laptop. Any data collected (either audio recording or notes) will be stored securely in a password-protected file on a local drive at the VU Amsterdam, to which only John Hogan has access.

6. Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security

Any personal data collected from participants will be subject to the strictest standards of confidentiality, in line with the ethics standards of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the VU Amsterdam. In interviews for this project, participants will be asked their name and (former) rank in the Irish Defence Forces. However, no data will be included in the final research outputs that could be used to identify interviewees, and any personal data that is collected will be stored securely at VU Amsterdam, as detailed under Item 5. In cooperation with interview participants, identifiers (e.g. 'Former officer', 'Current private') will be agreed upon that will allow readers to understand interviewees' roles in the Defence Forces without identifying them specifically. As detailed under Item 3, participants can withdraw at any time.

7. Data Availability

De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance science, but not in the form of audio recordings. If this does occur, it would only be in the form of notes taken during the interviews, and I will remove or code any personal information that could identify participants before files are shared with other researchers, to ensure that no one will be able to identify you from the information we share by current scientific standards and known methods.

8. Taking part is voluntary

Participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions/procedures that may make you feel uncomfortable, with no penalty to you of any kind.

9. Ethics review and complaints

This study complies with the ethical guidelines of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The Research Ethics Review Committee has reviewed this study with reference number RERC/2026-2-16-675.

If you have a complaint please contact the main researcher (John Hogan – j.hogan@vu.nl) conducting this study first. If this does not lead to an acceptable outcome you can write to the vice-dean for research of the Faculty of Social Sciences via the Research Support Office at onderzoeksbureau.fsw@vu.nl.

10. If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is John Hogan, an assistant professor of international relations at the Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact John Hogan at j.hogan@vu.nl or at +353872278396.

11. Statement of Consent

I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study and provide consent for the processing of the research data that is collected derived from my participation.

Your Signature:

Date:

Your Name (printed)

12. Consent for recording

- I agree to have this interview recorded for the research project 'Strategic Narratives in Ireland's Defence Forces'. Stichting VU, represented by John Hogan, is responsible for recording your interview; you can withdraw your consent for recording your interview by a verbal request at any time.

Signature of person obtaining consent:



Date: 01/06/2025

Printed name of person obtaining consent:

John J. Hogan

Assistant Professor of International Relations at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam