

CFSP WATCH 2005 – IRELAND – by Yvonne Campell and Ben Tonra¹

1. What are the priorities for your government in CFSP in 2005? What are the key issues for your country in 2005 (especially with regard to the negative referenda on the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands; after the recent EU enlargement and on behalf of the perspective of the upcoming accession round(s))?

The Irish Government remains committed to improving the coherence and effectiveness of the CFSP in 2005 and continues to insist that the pursuit of Ireland's foreign policy interests is "greatly enhanced" through participation in it. Peacekeeping, crisis management and conflict prevention remain a priority for Ireland as a "concrete expression of our commitment to international peace and security". The aims and objectives of ESDP are deemed to relate to matters which both Ireland and the UN value and which allow Europe to play a role in the world "for defined purposes and within defined limits". The Irish government intends "to play a full and active part" in the EU's ESDP, but stresses that it will not assume any binding mutual defence commitment. Deployment of troops and assets and participation in EU crisis management operations will continue to be decided, it is emphasized, on a case-by-case basis, consistent with the Irish Constitution, law and long-standing political practice. Participation in any EU common defence can only be agreed by a constitutional referendum.

A "major priority" of the Irish Government was the UN Millennium Review Summit in September 2005. It was and is still argued that "the EU has a vital role to play" on measures such as the recasting of the UN's human rights machinery, the proposed Peace Building Commission; the enshrining of the principle of responsibility; and the restoration of momentum in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dermot Ahern, was one of the five envoys charged with the task of helping to prepare for the September Summit and, in that capacity, held numerous meetings with his EU and non-EU colleagues.

Speaking at that Summit on 14 September 2005, the Taoiseach stated that "Ireland's support for the UN is unwavering..... at the very centre of [Irish] foreign policy" since the UN is, and will remain, "fundamental to the pursuit of global justice, prosperity and security." The Taoiseach expressed disappointment at the lack of agreement on all of the Secretary-General's proposals for reform. In particular, the Taoiseach regretted the failure to make progress on strengthening the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, (of which Ireland was its first signatory), and to conclude a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. Globalisation or rather its "dark side" was highlighted as the context within which people needed to consider the necessity of UN reform and implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals. According to the Taoiseach, (reflecting a broad consensus in Ireland), the links between development, security and human rights are clear and inescapable. The Irish Government prioritised the promotion and protection of human rights through the proposed Human Rights Council and promised to reach the UN target of 0.7% of GNP in ODA contributions by 2012. The Irish Government plans to double its spending on the fight against HIV/AIDS to €100 million; improve the speed and effectiveness of response to major humanitarian emergencies; support the UN in creating the new fund to promote democratic values throughout the world, and promote trade, investment and technology transfer.

Concerted international action or "effective multilateralism" continues to be advocated to address challenges, such as the proliferation of WMD, international terrorism, the reconstruction of Iraq,

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intrastate conflict and the Middle East.. Cooperation with its EU counterparts through the CFSP is increasingly considered to be a particularly effective form of multilateralism, which allows Ireland ,to punch above its weight.' The Irish government intends to promote the disarmament and arms control agenda at the Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2005 and enhance its bilateral relations with a broad range of countries in addition to its relations with its EU partners.

Irish participation and priorities in the CFSP have been linked with the fate of the European Constitution. A period of "active engagement" has commenced on the European Constitution, via a series of public meetings organized by the National Forum on Europe and a new website www.europeanconstitution.ie. An associated White Paper has also been published. The 28th Amendment of the Constitution Bill (26 May 2005) enabling the ratification of the proposed Constitution has been published in advance of a referendum, though a date has not been set for its proposal to the general public. The Constitution is deemed to be "a good deal for Europe and a particularly good deal for Ireland" by the government and main political parties and one that allows Europe to make a "constructive contribution to peace and security".

Complementarity between the EU and UN is emphasized and critics of ESDP are reminded that the UN Secretary General and Secretariat have welcomed recent EU developments. Treaty safeguards are highlighted. It is noted, for example, that the extension of the Petersberg Tasks must be conducted "in accordance with the principles of the United Nations"; any decision to launch a Petersberg task operation requires a unanimous decision of the Council; Ireland is not obliged to join in structured cooperation; assistance in the event of the solidarity clause being invoked may be in civilian form and none of the provisions "shall prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States"(Article 1. 41.2). Again, and finally, the so-called triple lock continues to apply i.e. Irish legislation requires that any decision to send troops overseas on a military mission requires the authority of the Government, an explicit parliamentary decision and formal authorization from the United Nations.

Public sensitivity, however, remains a consistent factor – despite Eurobarometer polls showing a narrow Irish plurality in favour of EU cooperation in this field. Officially, the argument is that Ireland's commitment to the UN and international law is so profound that Ireland is unwilling even to countenance acting overseas without the formal authorization of the UN. More pragmatically, however, the Government judges that there is insufficient public support to sustain international peacekeeping that does not have UN authorisation. Ireland's veto over all EU military/defence-related issues has proven less significant than the veto that the 'triple lock' gives to the UN Security Council over Irish peacekeeping.

The Irish government maintains that none of the Constitutional Treaty provisions are incompatible or a threat to Ireland's policy of "military neutrality", but rather represent a compromise among 25 Member States, 19 of whom are members of NATO. This has failed to reassure those who consider the association with NATO members to be indicative of increased 'militarisation' or 'militarism' in the EU.

Support remains from all sides for enlargement. The "Day of Welcomes", when the ten new Member States joined the EU on 1 May 2004 during the Irish Presidency, has remained one of the highlights of the Irish Presidency. Indeed, Ireland's experience of recent enlargement has been overwhelmingly positive. Estimates suggest that since opening up the labour market fully from day one, approximately 50,000 new Polish workers alone have come to Ireland. Concerns about job losses, relocation, low cost producers, a race to the bottom and an undermining of social systems have been aired, but are linked with globalisation more often than with EU enlargement. Rejection of the Nice Treaty initially was linked more so with lack of information and concerns about ESDP developments than with enlargement. When the focus shifted to the big picture in Nice II, arguments in favour of enlargement

resonated more deeply with the Irish electorate (e.g. help them in the way we were helped) and that-coupled with a significantly higher turnout – won the second referendum.

A broad consensus exists in Ireland in favour of honouring the Union's commitments to Turkey, Croatia and the other countries of the Western Balkans. The prospective EU memberships of Bulgaria and Romania have already been welcomed and Irish diplomatic missions have been opened in both States. However, the Irish government has made it clear that accession negotiations are "not a one-way street." Commitments need to be honoured in full by prospective partners in a sustained way, over time. There are no pre-determined outcomes. Croatia's cooperation with the ICTY is cited as particularly important, though Croatia's application is seen as less problematic than Turkey. The Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, along with the other EU Foreign Ministers, made their decision to open negotiations with Croatia on the basis of a report that was issued to the General Affairs and External Relations Council by Ms Del Ponte. The limits of enlargement not only in terms of cultural differences, but also security implications are increasingly debated, especially since the opening of negotiations with Turkey.

The Irish Government, as well as the Joint Oireachtas (parliamentary) Committee on European Affairs does not see that negotiations with Turkey and with Croatia are linked. The Committee on European Affairs undertook the initiative to visit Turkey and conduct a series of meetings with Government and political representatives, NGOs, and representatives of minority communities, Christian churches, businessmen, journalists and academics. Its report echoed the Government's support of negotiations with Turkey from 3 October 2005, if Turkey continues to deliver on its commitments, including its signature of the Protocol to the Ankara Agreement of Association.

Calls have been made also in favour of an "informed public debate" across the Union and across Turkey on the EU membership for Turkey and on future enlargement. Negotiations are expected to be "lengthy – perhaps lasting for 10 to 15 years" and complex with "wide-ranging implications for the Union and for Turkey". Ireland has congratulated the Government of Prime Minister Erdogan on transforming Turkey, but considers full implementation of reforms as "the key to progress", necessitating "detailed monitoring", particularly in relation to the development of the zero tolerance policy on torture and ill-treatment, the normalization of relations with Cyprus and the development of reforms guaranteeing freedom of expression, freedom of religion, women's rights, trade union rights and the rights of minorities, including, the Kurdish population. Although the UN is considered to have the lead role in the search for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem, the EU enlargement process is acknowledged as providing an impetus also.

2. Does your country adopt a more pessimistic or optimistic stance regarding the ratification crisis of the Constitutional Treaty? How might the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands influence the ratification debate in your country and also have an impact on the outcome of the referendum?

The Irish Government has adopted a relatively optimistic stance and has played down the degree to which the two negative referenda (French and Dutch) constitute a crisis. There has been a lot of disappointment among official circles at the results, given the time and effort put into ensuring that the Constitutional Treaty negotiations progressed and concluded successfully during the Irish Presidency. The Taoiseach even received the award of European of the Year from the European Movement in Ireland for his work during the Presidency. However, rejection of the European Constitution by the people of France and the Netherlands – two founding members of the EEC – did not produce the same degree of shock about the level of disconnect between elites and citizens as did the Nice rejection in Ireland in 2001. Failure to secure an agreement on the Financial Perspectives at the June European Council in 2005 caused, perhaps, more official despondency but the Government has been

keen to encourage people to use the period of reflection agreed at the Council to remain calm, "hold our nerve" and produce a balanced package that can accommodate the variety of interests of Member States and restore the trust of Europe's population in the EU and in its Institutions.

Speaking at Humboldt University on 2 July 2005, the Taoiseach sounded an optimistic note saying, "Europe will overcome the challenge through leadership and determination" and cautioned against over-reaction and pessimism. He warned that "if Europe begins to pull in different directions we will lose out dramatically in the face of all the challenges that we face." It was a time to listen and find the collective wisdom to chart the course ahead, with France and Germany playing a crucial role. Ireland would consider why the Dutch and French voted against the Constitution and would proceed in time with its referendum. According to the Taoiseach, the voters' key concerns and at the root of the current "climate of fear" were economic issues. He emphasised that EU enlargement was a major opportunity for the Union and that the real challenge to Europe arose from globalisation and the rise of the Asian economies. Revitalisation of the European economy was the core response and challenge, though the Taoiseach did not wish to deny the complexity of the situation or the challenge ahead.

The Government remains firmly of the view that the European Constitution is strongly in the interests of Ireland and the EU. Preparations are thus continuing for the ratification of the European Constitution by the target date of November 2006. Since the publication of the 28th Amendment of the Constitution Bill (26 May 2005) and the resumption of Oireachtas business, debate has commenced in the Dáil on EU matters with a view to further debate in the near future. The Referendum Commission is also expected to be established shortly.. The Constitution continues to be supported by the two main opposition parties – Fine Gael and Labour – the main employers' organizations, the trade union movement, the Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of the EC (COMECE) and numerous NGOs. Those opposed to it are those opposed to the Nice Treaty under the banner of "The National Campaign against the European Constitution", though the Green Party has yet to decide its position.

It is too early to speculate on the precise implications of the No votes since they are still being absorbed. Arguably if the UK had voted No ahead of an Irish referendum, this would have had far greater and more immediate implications given the common language, border and cultural similarities. Recent Eurobarometer polls have shown that despite increased coverage of European issues during the Irish Presidency and the Convention, there was still poor understanding of the Constitution and the EU. Analyses after Nice II indicated that active and lively debate on television, radio and in newspapers was the way to stimulate awareness, while the early establishment of the Referendum Commission contributed to the distribution of factual information on both sides. The Communicating Europe Initiative (CEI), established in 1995 to raise awareness about the EU and to improve the quality and accessibility of public information on European issues, continues to provide funding for projects.

Careful attention was paid to the precise wording of the 28th Amendment to the Constitution Bill, which would allow the State to ratify the European Constitution and would ensure the compatibility of EU with Irish law. It would also in a small number of cases (e.g. structured co-operation) require prior Oireachtas approval of proposed actions or decisions by the State under the European Constitution. The prohibition on Irish participation in a common defence, inserted by the second referendum on the Nice Treaty, would be carried forward. While the wording was subject to consultations with Fine Gael and Labour, this is unlikely to prove sufficient to temper the concerns of those who oppose many of the ESDP articles. Nor are they convinced that there will be sufficient time and resources for the Referendum Commission.

The Government has launched a booklet entitled *Ireland and the European Union: Identifying Priorities and Pursuing Goals 3rd Edition*, which sets out Ireland's key national objectives in the EU for the coming period and considers the implications of some of the Constitutional provisions. Launching it, the Taoiseach referred to the rejections of the Constitution in France and Netherlands as a "significant development", which highlighted the "need for Governments to explain and inform". The booklet argues that Europe is "intensive, comprehensive and vital to our economic, social and political interests". Ireland in Europe is described as "a winning combination" and citizens are urged "to recognise the historic changes that have taken place in the EU over the past decade and to understand what Ireland has contributed to and gained from the EU." It is intended to circulate the publication as widely as possible, including to libraries, schools and to the social partners.

Already the debate has become polarized as before. While opposition to neoliberalism is a factor in the Irish debate also, it is markedly less so than in some other Member States, perhaps because of the perceived and real successes of the Celtic Tiger. Sensitivity over sovereignty (small state influence), defence/neutrality (understood as indicative of independence) and control (linked with lack of information/ democratic deficit) remain key issues in Ireland. It will remain to be seen if the increased debate can cancel out the fears caused by the negative referenda elsewhere. Media coverage is slight, depending on the current affairs issues dominating the headlines, so it remains to be seen whether public opinion has been swayed by the arguments on one side any more than the other. Without a date for the referendum, it seems there is no urgency to know.

3. National Perceptions and Positions with regard to CFSP/ESDP Issues in 2005

Please describe key positions and perceptions in your country with regard to EU foreign policy, taking into account:

**The perceived success and/or failure of CFSP/ESDP (e.g. taking into account current developments like the current ratification crisis of the Constitutional Treaty);
The role of the EU in crisis management e.g. in Congo, Georgia, Darfur;**

The extent to which one considers the CFSP/ESDP a success or failure depends generally on one's overall interpretation of the nature of the EU. If one is convinced that the EU is a super-state in the making with militaristic, imperialist ambitions, then the developments in CFSP/ESDP, including its so-called 'peace' missions, are deemed to be part of this endeavour and any successes are attributed to other external actors (e.g. the UN). If one is convinced that the CFSP is a necessary evolution of European political cooperation and ESDP an integral part of it, then developments in CFSP are welcomed and hailed as successful. Perception matters considerably in Irish politics in relation to CFSP/ESDP, since developments continue to be interpreted through the prism of military neutrality, however that is perceived or defined. The recent negative referenda in France and the Netherlands, though influenced by other factors, have been interpreted by some in Ireland as evidence that people in those States are similarly opposed to the elitist, militaristic development of CFSP/ESDP.

The Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Defence, Department of Taoiseach and the Irish Defence Forces have interpreted the CFSP/ESDP developments favourably, each for slightly different reasons. The Department of Foreign Affairs has embraced the developments not only for assisting Ireland to realise its commitment to peace-keeping and crisis management, but also because the missions in the Congo, Darfur and Georgia have contributed to international peace and security and provided concrete reference points in the domestic debate about CFSP. Ireland's participation in the EU has generally been viewed as a more effective means of increasing Ireland's voice at other international fora, including at the UN. It is this latter benefit and the extent to which involvement

CFSP/ESDP enhances Ireland's ability to forge alliances and retain flexibility within the EU, which appeals to the Department of An Taoiseach.

Participation in peace-keeping and crisis management remains a "major source of pride" for Irish people generally and to the Defence Forces themselves. The Defence Forces are particularly keen supporters of ESDP developments, not least because it allows them more leverage vis a vis the Department of Defence and more opportunities for improvements in training, procurement and experience. Cooperation between the Defence Forces and the Garda Síochána (police-force) is also facilitated and links have been forged and strengthened with like-minded nations e.g. Sweden and Finland.. Department of Defence officials welcome ESDP developments also as a means of enhancing their policy remit. For instance, a new section – International Security section – has been created within the Department of Defence, the establishment of which coincided with the increase in ESDP developments in the late 1990s.

The Irish commitment to the RRF remains double-hatted with the UN Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS). Complementarity between the EU and UN is emphasised by the Defence Forces and relevant Government Departments for pragmatic and principled reasons. During the Irish Presidency, the Defence Forces held a two-day seminar on how to improve the synergy in crisis management between EU and UN forces as a pragmatic means of realising the Joint EU-UN Declaration on Crisis Management. In total, including peace support operations in Liberia and the DRC, Ireland had 830 troops overseas at the end of 2003, which was the highest level of participation since withdrawal from the Lebanon in 2001. Successful deployment of the Irish troops to Liberia has been attributed "in no small measure" to the increased investment in capabilities and training in the Defence Forces in the past few years, including APCs linked with ESDP commitments. 2004 proved one of the busiest for the Defence Forces in recent times, with 440 troops serving at different times in the UN's UNMIL force in Liberia.

Missions in the Congo, Darfur, Georgia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have been considered useful sources of experiences from which lessons can be learned. Ireland participated in the first EU-led operation – Operation Artemis – in the Congo, but was unable to participate in the Macedonian mission because of the lack of a UN mandate. Ireland's contribution of five personnel at HQ level in Operation Artemis was deemed a success, and lessons were exchanged with the EU partners and the UN during Ireland's Presidency of the EU. Ireland has also supported the Union's intention to extend the mission in Darfur and support the expansion of the African Union's Mission there. In December 2004, a contingent of the Permanent Defence Force was despatched for a period of one year for service with EUFOR, the EU-led Mission/Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is acknowledged, however, by experts in the field that these missions were small and thus may not herald as much success as initial reactions suggest.

Media coverage of the CFSP/ESDP missions remains poor and so the level of public support for EU specific missions is difficult to gauge. The perceived or real link with NATO continues to be problematic. For example, questions have been raised in the Oireachtas about the links forged with Washington, notably the visit of the Irish Chief of Staff, Lt. General Sreenan to the US from 28 March to 1 April 2005 during which he visited General Richard B. Meyers, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. Defended by the Irish Minister of Defence, Willie O'Dea, as a traditional courtesy call and means by which CHODs discuss matters of mutual interest, two of which he named being EUFOR in Bosnia and KFOR, the Green Party considered it indicative of the erosion of Irish neutrality. This erosion is deemed to be illustrated most obviously by the provision of stop-over facilities in Shannon for US troops flying to Iraq.

The perceived impact of EU enlargement on CFSP/ESDP;

The economic implications of enlargement are discussed more often than the CFSP/ESDP implications. Practitioners/experts are concerned about the institutional implications of enlargement; the associated lack of coherence, lack of consistency across the pillars, inefficiency in reaching decisions, heterogeneity and the potential danger of a multi-speed Europe. This last concern and the alleged desire of the EU to become a "world power" (quoting Prodi) is mentioned more frequently in public discussions than the others, but the other concerns are regularly debated in official circles and among academics/experts. Determination to ensure that the influence of small states is not diminished in an enlarged EU may explain the increased efforts made by the Irish government to link up with fellow non-aligned States and to open embassies in new Member States. The Irish Presidency was keen to use its profile to forge greater links and develop bilateral relations since it does not wish to be part of a permanent block.

Keen to temper the perception that the Union is adversely impacted upon by enlargement, the Government has issued statements praising the new Member States on their contributions to discussion, including their contribution to the European Council in June 2005, though it ended without agreement on the Financial Perspectives. Their willingness to compromise and their support for the concept of a Europe based on solidarity has been deemed "striking and encouraging" by the Taoiseach. The Irish Government and main political parties maintain that the Constitution helps to minimise the adverse impact of enlargement on CFSP/ESDP. Without it, the Government and main political parties maintain that the perception and the reality of an enlarged EU would be of a fragmented Union. Such a Union would prove inefficient and ineffective in terms of meeting the key challenges of the 21st century, associated with globalisation, and could lose the necessary legitimacy to ensure that Europe remains at peace and prosperous.

The view of the European Security Strategy (ESS) as an instrument for enhancing coherence in the EU's security policy; how does your country view the ESS and which issues are of particular importance?

The Irish Government and the main political parties continue to support the ESS as a means of enhancing coherence in CFSP and providing a "coherent framework for the Union's engagement with the wider world" since it "commits the Union to adopting a holistic approach to security issues." To a considerable extent, Irish foreign policy has long been influenced by the analysis underpinning the ESS i.e. that the challenges facing the international community are manifold – ranging from regional conflict to failed states to lack of sustainable development - all of which are exacerbated by globalisation and necessitate concerted action by the international community to tackle their root causes. The multilateral system of collective security, enshrined in the UN, continues to be seen as the primary means for addressing these threats, particularly the threats of international terrorism, proliferation of WMD and failed states.

The Irish administration participated actively in the negotiation of the ESS and considered it an appropriate response to "the considerably changed international security environment where the threat of terrorism has increased and where the consequent management of such threats is very important" (Defence Annual Report 2004). The reference to the UN and multilateralism helped to secure Ireland's support for the final draft and a broad political consensus supports the implementation of the Action Plan on Terrorism and the Strategy on the Non-Proliferation of WMD – both of which are offshoots of the ESS.

Critics have expressed and continue to express concern about the analysis and recommendations made in the ESS. The priorities, which include combating WMD and terrorism, are deemed to be

influenced more by a hard security agenda than by an holistic understanding of security. Reference in the first draft to pre-emptive engagement and in the final draft to preventive engagement caused and still causes some alarm since it is said to echo the pre-emptive strikes endorsed in the US National Security Strategy (September 2002). The desire to act before a crisis occurs has been interpreted by some as evidence of the Union's desire to undertake action along the lines of the Iraq war. Critics would have preferred the UN MDG agenda to inform Europe's security strategy. The references to the UN and to "effective multilateralism" in the document are not deemed to be sufficiently strong to oblige Member States to refer interventions to the UN.

Public awareness of the Strategy remains slight. Solana's passionate defence of it at the National Forum on Europe during the Irish Presidency received considerable media coverage, but since then the strategy has been seldom mentioned in the popular media.

European Neighbourhood Policy and its implications;

The European Neighbourhood Policy has been welcomed since June 2003 as a way of squaring the circle – providing security for the surrounding region without extending membership of the Union – thus reducing the Union's dependency on enlargement as a security policy.

Media attention has focused on the government's use of the policy to consider developments in the Ukraine, but also in Belarus and Uzbekistan. Measures considered vis a vis Uzbekistan have included an embargo on the export of arms and military equipment and a continued re-orientation of the TACIS programme towards democracy and human rights. Javier Solana's role, together with the Presidents of Poland and Lithuania, in facilitating negotiations between the opposition and the government in Ukrainian politics has been acknowledged and welcomed.

Using bilateral and EU access, the Irish government has sought to persuade Belarus to avoid imposing regulations on the movement of children still adversely affected by the 1986 Chernobyl incident and who benefit from recuperation in Ireland. On the Dáil record, the government has argued that Belarus is now an immediate neighbour of the EU and as such, it has the opportunity to be an active partner of the Union in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, provided it reverses its present policies and embarks on fundamental democratic and economic reforms to bring the country closer to European common values.

Moldova continues to be a state in which many NGOs in Ireland are interested. The Government has been careful, however, to avoid committing itself to support for Moldova's future EU membership. The limits of the EU may soon be seen to have been reached, depending on how this enlargement is absorbed.

Ireland continues to support the wider Europe initiative, a common position on Iran and the Euromed process. The Government and its EU partners firmly believe the quartet roadmap remains "the best framework for the achievement of a lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." The Government has conveyed its concerns on settlement activity directly to the Israeli Government on many occasions and supports the clear position of the EU that the parties must comply with international law, and that no party should take any unilateral measure which prejudices questions relating to final status. The EU will not recognise any change to the 1967 borders other than those negotiated between the parties.

The creation of battle groups and their role for ESDP.

Agreement was reached at the Brussels European Council in June 2004, during the Irish Presidency, on the new headline goal 2010 and the so-called battlegroups concept. Ireland has supported developments since then, including the military capabilities conference on 22 November 2004 and the battle group co-ordination conference on 11 May 2005, at which initial offers and commitments by relevant Member States were confirmed.

Although the Irish Government welcomed the concept, main political parties and the UN, Irish participation in the Battlegroups remains a sensitive issue, not least because of the use of the term 'battlegroup' itself. Those critical of it see it as highly militaristic and another excuse to increase military expenditure and equipment. The Irish Government maintains that these battlegroups simply give effect to the concept of an effective rapid reaction force, but that Irish participation is thus far constrained by outstanding "legal and constitutional" issues. An interdepartmental committee of experts has been established to address these difficulties. Since first meeting in December 2004, the committee has established three sub-groups to address the policy, legislative and operational issues arising. It is expected that their study will be completed in October 2005, whereupon it will be submitted to the Minister for Foreign Affairs for consideration prior to its submission to the Government. Pending the outcome of that study and a Government decision, it is impossible to state what Ireland might contribute in terms of capability. In a recent statement in the Dáil (29 September 2005) the Minister for Defence, Willy O'Dea, indicated that it might be necessary to amend relevant legislation so as to facilitate full Irish participation in any proposed Battlegroup. This leaves open the question as to whether Ireland will successfully negotiate its participation in a Battlegroup – bearing in mind the fact that the Government remains committed to the maintenance of the 'Triple Lock' on any Irish participation in an overseas military operation. Moreover, only the largest of the main opposition parties has indicated any desire to change this situation – while both of its potential coalition partners are at least equally committed to the Triple Lock as the present government.

Even if these legal issues are addressed, a political barrier is likely to remain i.e. considerable opposition and/or insufficient public support. Although reassurances have been given that there are no plans to increase the size of the army or the defence budget, recent Dail questions have sought reassurances about the ambitions of the EU as much as the practicalities of the ESDP. In defence of the concept, the Government has referred regularly to the support of UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, for the battlegroups concept. This has not silenced the critics who maintain that neutrality is being progressively undermined. A Finnish Euro-sceptic MEP, Esko Seppanen, received a warm response from several members of the National Forum on Europe when he argued that the battlegroups was "all about the militarisation of the Union." This was countered by others who argued the EU was "overwhelmingly benign".

The Minister for Foreign Affairs has assured the Oireachtas (parliament) that Ireland fully supports strict arms controls and is working within the EU and at a number of international fora to develop such controls, including an international arms trade treaty. Ireland was actively involved in the establishment of the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports and is involved in discussions on the possible reinforcement of the code. At UN level, Ireland with other EU Member States has participated in negotiations in June 2004 which concluded with agreement on an international instrument on the tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons. The GAERC on 3 October 2005 agreed that binding standards, consistent with the existing responsibilities of states under relevant international law, would be critical in tackling proliferation. The Minister for Foreign Affairs has recently been criticized by some activists and development NGOs for not being sufficiently vocal on the issue.

3. The Constitutional Treaty and its future – National perceptions concerning a ‘plan B’?

The Government maintains that the Constitution “offers the best available way forward for the European Union” but has not set a date for the referendum. It remains opposed to filleting the Constitution and attempting to give it piecemeal effect. The Taoiseach supports the view of Commission President Barroso, who spoke at the National Forum on Europe in June 2005, that there was no Plan B because renegotiation would not necessarily lead to a better deal. Rather there was a Plan D – dialogue, democracy, discussion. The general consensus has been in favour of a period of reflection, as agreed by the European Council in June 2005. Speaking at a session of the National Forum on Europe on 20 October 2005, the Minister for Foreign Affairs requested that Europeans use the period of reflection “to galvanise the EU to continue delivering real benefits for our people”. The areas highlighted, in particular, for delivery were the economy, Europe’s role in the world, the upcoming WTO negotiations, and development cooperation. Development of the CFSP and the success of the Darfur and Balkans missions were cited also.

Opposition parties – Labour and Fine Gael – have suggested that there may be an argument for introducing the non-controversial elements or democratic elements e.g. national parliaments’ protocol, subsidiarity protocol, opening of the Council meetings etc. Those opposed to the Constitution consider it a “lame duck” or “dead”, but disagree on where to go from here. Some prefer withdrawal completely and others renegotiation. It may be argued that the absence of a Plan B – the take it or leave it approach- is part of the problem for citizens and this has been suggested by some public representatives.

Official positions on the Constitutional Treaty provisions on CFSP / ESDP and external relations?

The Government supports the CFSP/ESDP and external relations provisions in the Constitution. In particular, it supports the decision to extend the Petersberg Tasks, to include increased references to civilian crisis management, to retain unanimity as regards deployment of troops and sovereign control over matters with military implications. The Union Minister of Foreign Affairs is supported also as a means of enhancing the coherence of the Union’s CFSP and the CFSP and external relations dimensions of the Union. The main opposition parties –Fine Gael and Labour – share this view to a greater or lesser extent. Fine Gael supports an opt-in mutual defence pact, which seems similar to that agreed, and the removal of the domestic triple lock. Labour, its primary potential coalition partners in the next election, supports military neutrality and the triple lock. It is unclear how this would affect the approach to the Constitution were these parties to form the next Government, especially if the Green party were included which strongly supports neutrality and actively endorses the ‘Triple Lock’.

Opposition exists to some of the defence articles, notably structured cooperation and mutual defence. Even those supportive of the Constitutional Treaty have expressed some concern about the degree of accountability regarding delegated Petersberg Tasks and the interaction between the European Council President and the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs. Opponents consider that the major changes proposed should not be implemented now and they are very critical of the decision to establish the European Defence Agency prior to the Constitution’s ratification. It is argued, despite statements to the contrary from the Government, that this will be used to pressurise states to increase defence expenditure at the expense of other budgetary priorities (e.g. health and education). A security strategy minus the Constitution – one focused on civilian crisis management and the Millennium Development Goals – has been proffered as an alternative by some (e.g. The Peace and Neutrality Alliance - PANA).

4. Constitutional Treaty or some version of 'Nice Treaty Plus'?

Describe (briefly) the position of your country on the following key issues and the possibility of their realisation without a Constitutional Treaty as a 'plan B', 'C' or 'D':

External Representation: What is the final position of your country on the European foreign minister and the President of the European Council? Will / should there be a post resembling that of the Foreign Minister based on the Nice Treaty (something like an enhanced High Representative)? How could this be realised?

The final position of the Irish Government on both the European Foreign Minister and the President of the European Council was and is one of support. The Union Minister for Foreign Affairs received more support from the outset, though the name did not. There was some concern that the combination of a European Council President and UMFA would cause confusion.

Since the government is cautious about picking and mixing elements of the Treaty, it is not likely to support a Union Minister for Foreign Affairs without its being part of a broader package. No specific suggestions have been communicated at this time. Focus during the period of reflection has been on the "big picture".

Basic structures of the European External Action Service have already been developed. Now that the Constitutional Treaty might not enter into force, is your government in favour of developing such a body in order to support the High Representative?

The Irish government continues to support the European External Action Service in principle. Therefore, it might be open to the development of the basic structures to support the High Representative. The vast majority of politicians and experts appreciate the need for strong backup to ensure effective implementation of policies and decisions at EU level and in support of the role of the High Representative. It is not likely to provoke much opposition in the media or complicate debate, unless introduced with a series of ESDP or defence provisions.

Decision-making: Does your country opt for an extension of qualified majority voting in the field of CFSP? Will the Nice provisions be sufficient for an efficient CFSP/ESDP decision-making within the enlarged EU?

The government and main opposition parties support a limited extension of QMV in the field of CFSP, but were strongly opposed to its extension in ESDP where there would be military implications. Efficiency on procedural matters is valued and sought, but where it proves sensitive, the Irish government wishes to retain unanimity. Structured cooperation and delegation of the Petersberg Tasks are seen as offering increased efficiency without compromising Member States' sovereignty. Critics are not so convinced, though the Government points to its success in including an obligation for the Council to be informed of developments in structured cooperation and in Petersberg actions. The Nice provisions will be deemed sufficient but not ideal for an enlarged Union, but may be preferable to difficulties caused domestically by the introduction of the Constitution rules by stealth.

Crisis management: What is the official position on expanding the Petersberg tasks and making reference to tasks that involve military resources? Which regions does your country consider as particularly promising for EU crisis management?

The official position is one of support for the expansion of the Petersberg Tasks. These are seen to be in line the changed nature of conflicts and peacekeeping, notably the need for robust responses or peace-enforcement. Resource demands are set to follow and there is concern in some quarters that

the European Defence Agency's operations might lead to pressures for increased Irish defence expenditure.

However, arising from changes under the 2004 Defence White Paper equipment has been improved of late with the purchase and acquisition of 25 additional Mowag APCs, completed in September 2004, bringing the total to 65. Ireland's contribution to the Helsinki Headline Goal continues to be double-hatted with its contribution to the UN Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS) and Shirbrig – of which Ireland is an observer.

Although the Government has decided that Ireland will take part in the European Defence Agency, participation in specific projects will be for national decision on a case-by-case basis. Participation in the Agency remains a point of some political controversy.

Defence: What is your country's position towards the establishment of the civilian-military cell at the EUMS? Was your government in favour of creating a full-fledged operational EU headquarters?

The Irish government supported the establishment of the civilian-military cell in the EUMS since it has been seeking to marry the civilian and military aspects of crisis management. Marriage of the civilian and military aspects of crisis management was a priority during the Irish Presidency and is one which the government shares with its like-minded colleagues in Finland, Sweden and Austria. The Irish Government has sought to improve Ireland's civilian crisis management capacity with an inter-Departmental audit of assets and capacities in Ireland that could be used to respond to humanitarian emergencies abroad.

Marrying the "soft power instruments" for conflict prevention, crisis management and peace promotion activities is seen to give 'added value' to the Union. An interdepartmental working group on emergency planning also supports the work of the task force and encompasses all Departments with lead roles in the various Government emergency plans and those key public authorities, including the Defence Forces, which plan to support such activities. This working group, which is chaired by the office of emergency planning, assists in carrying out studies and oversight of emergency planning structures and processes. It is also a forum for the discussion and sharing of information as well as providing strategic guidance to all those involved in emergency planning. The lead responsibility for specific emergency planning functions remains with the relevant Government Departments, as do the budgetary and resource management requirements. Emergency plans are co-ordinated by the various lead Government Departments at a national level and through the local authorities - including the fire service, the Health Service Executive and the Garda divisions - at local and regional levels..

The government was wary, if not opposed, to a fully-fledged operational EU HQ. There was concern that agreement on the EU HQ would exacerbate the political difficulties faced by the Government on this question.

Is your country in favour of realising provisions such as the permanent structured cooperation even without the Constitutional Treaty? What measures would be preferred?

The government would prefer to keep variable geometry to a minimum, particularly in the foreign policy arena. Structured cooperation would be problematic in an Irish context and would have been accepted only as part of an overall package. It was debated thoroughly during the Convention and was only agreed with some difficulty following the insertion of limiting clauses. Ad hoc delegation of specific Petersberg Tasks would likely be preferable than a permanent inner core seeking to improve its higher end military capabilities in an EU context.

Would your country support the creation of core groups inside or outside the EU in CFSP/ESDP if the Constitutional Treaty finally failed?

The Government would likely not support the creation of such core-groups. If these became likely, then they would be concerned to have as much shared accountability and control as possible and would certainly insist upon retaining absolute sovereign control on a case by case basis as to whether Ireland would participate or not. The development of either an ad hoc or an institutionalised 'Directoire' would be opposed.

5. Mapping of Activities in CFSP-related Research

Please indicate major experts, universities and research institutions working in the CFSP field in your country.

Academic Discipline:

The academic discipline of international relations remains comparatively underdeveloped in Ireland. Only University College Dublin (UCD) and Dublin City University (DCU) offer academic structures for the study of international relations with a new school of Politics and International Relations (SPIRE) in UCD and a relatively new Centre for International Studies in DCU. At UCD, there is a Jean Monnet Chair in EU Foreign, Security and Defence Policy (held by Dr. Ben Tonra) and, at DCU, public funding has been provided for major research into Irish security and defence policy (coordinated by Dr. John Doyle).

Overall, the field is divided into political science and modern history with little attention to the EU as a discrete international actor. IR is usually found in undergraduate and taught graduate programmes. European Studies is available in TCD, UCC and UCL and there is some suggestion that a Masters in Defence Studies will be available at NUI Maynooth for officers in the Defence Forces with a view to encouraging more training and development in line with best practice.

Several younger Irish security and defence analysts are currently working in UK think-tanks, which may signal further development in the future. The Institute for International Integration Studies (IIIS) in Trinity College Dublin, established by former EU Commissioner Peter Sutherland, is emerging as a useful forum for discussions on international relations.

Think tanks:

The Institute of European Affairs (IEA) is the main policy institute in Ireland on European affairs with access to key policy-makers and experts. It seeks to analyse the issues, options and implications of European developments for Ireland without prescribing courses of action. A study group within the IEA is dedicated to CFSP/ESDP and it convenes seminars, hosts guest speakers, addresses associated foreign policy issues with other dedicated groups (e.g. US-EU group, Balkans group, New Neighbourhood group), publishes analytical texts on CFSP/ESDP, and circulates regularly a newsletter on CFSP/ESDP to key policy-making constituencies. The IEA is also part of the TransEuropean Policy Studies Association (TEPSA).

The European Movement is a coalition of advocates for EU membership. These tend to play an influential role during referenda. The movement acts as an advocacy coalition for Irish membership of the EU and plays a role during referenda campaigns providing information on Irish EU membership – including the implications of CFSP/ESDP.

The National Forum on Europe:

Unique to Ireland is the National Forum on Europe, which facilitates regular debates on the various aspects of the EU, including security and defence. Chaired by Senator Maurice Hayes and directed by Anne Barrington, (who is on secondment from the Department of Foreign Affairs), the forum was established to facilitate public debate after the rejection of the Nice Treaty by the Irish electorate. Guests are invited to address the Forum, and the public are invited to regional and national meetings on topics ranging from Defence to Justice and Home Affairs.

Please feel free to add specific remarks on your country (e.g. on the relation between national foreign and security policy and CFSP, on costs/benefits of one country's membership in the EU with regard to CFSP/ESDP)

Neutrality

Neutrality continues to be the prism through which Irish security and defence policy is interpreted and formulated. Neutrality is also viewed by many as indicative of Ireland's independence and capacity to take sovereign decisions. The peculiarity of Ireland's "military neutrality" sets it apart from the likes of Austria, Finland or Sweden, and yet they all confront similar pressures and share many sensitivities. Debate on CFSP/ESDP is complicated by an overlapping and often overheated debate on whether or not Ireland is neutral and what this means. While the Fine Gael (main opposition) leader and his foreign affairs spokesman have openly stated that Ireland was not and is not neutral but "merely unaligned", the Labour and Green Party leaders, his potential partners in government, defend neutrality to a greater or lesser extent. Despite robust responses in the National Forum on Europe to allegations that the EU is being militarized and Irish neutrality is being consequently eroded, debate on CFSP/ESDP does not seem to have advanced significantly.

(Déjà vu) Nature of Debate

There has been some evidence of change in debate on some issues and from some participants, notably the smaller opposition parties of Sinn Féin and the Green Party. While there is still a tendency to exaggerate threats (e.g. European army, superstate, imperialist power) and use emotive language, more attention has been paid to the text of treaties and Constitution than was previously the case. The participation of members of the Green Party in the Convention on the Future of Europe may have contributed to the decision of the party to choose to vote internally on whether or not the party should oppose Ireland's ratification of the Constitution.

According to the Taoiseach, the phrase – Uniting Visions, Values and Citizens- used at a major Conference held in Croke Park on 27 September 2005 summarised the nature of the challenge facing the Union. The Taoiseach has been particularly anxious to counter the allegation that the EU is a superstate in the making and to focus on "the big picture" rather than the specifics of the Constitution. To date, this has not prevented political polarisation. The strategy of focusing on the bigger picture and general context seemed to work in the second Nice referendum, but it could be interpreted by more than a few peripheral groups as a means of avoiding the details.

The Forum Exception (?)

A unique model of structured public engagement is the National Forum on Europe, chaired by Senator Maurice Hayes, which has elicited generally positive comment. The Forum has been charged by the Taoiseach with leading the public debate during the reflection period, (see www.forumoneurope.ie). Senator Hayes addressed the Constitutional Affairs Committee in Brussels recently (15 September 2005) and set out the Forum's purpose and role in providing a public space within which political views and analyses of all shades can be offered on the European Union, and on Ireland in the Union.

Full membership of the National Forum on Europe is limited to parties and groupings represented in the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament). From its inception, the Forum was designed to be representative and inclusive, defined and open. The number of members for each party reflects voter support but with more favourable treatment for smaller parties. This disproportionate representation of the smaller parties is seen as an important element in the success of the Forum, given the role played by these parties in the 'no' vote on the Nice Treaty in 2001. There is also a Special Observer Pillar, which consists of the social Partners, groups active in previous EU referenda, registered political parties not represented in the Dil and political parties from Northern Ireland.

Formal plenary sessions, regional meetings and competitions for young people are some of the means used to facilitate debate and increase public awareness of the issues and debates. The Youth programme of the Forum has been broadened to include two Youth Conferences and collaborations with the civil society organisations represented on the Special Observer Pillar with a view to encouraging a European dimension in major meetings and regional events. One measure of success recounted by Senator Hayes at the EP was a recent poll, which recorded that the Forum was recognised by 38% of people of whom 72% found it a useful source of information. A Eurobarometer poll in September 2005 showed also an increased awareness of the European Constitution.

The Forum could be credited with the more informed debate among some sectors i.e. specific clauses are debated or rejected (structured cooperation), rather than possibilities (European army). Yet, a tendency found in other countries remains i.e. the national media tends to focus on a national angle or to query the speakers on domestic related issues.

Financial Perspectives

The Irish Government has defended CAP against criticism and has been keen to safeguard the October 2002 agreement on the CAP. The absence of EU Member State agreement on the Financial Perspectives is not only disappointing in itself, but it could also complicate the debate about the EU. Farmers, traditionally supportive of the EU, could be swayed to vote against the Constitution. Yet if CAP reform does not progress, many development NGOs may lose faith in the potential of the Constitution to improve the EU's capacity to pursue a better deal for developing countries.