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TOWARDS A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY FOR IRELAND

By

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DECLARATION

I have read and understood the Departmental policy on plagiarism.

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education.

Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines what Ireland can learn from countries of similar population size in Europe as it attempts to form its long-awaited National Security Strategy. It focuses on what steps or missteps have been taken by Denmark and Finland at Defence Policy level, identifying threats, enabling themselves to counter them, and how involved society is in the protection of the state.

Despite recognition of the need for a National Security Strategy for many years, there is not a sense of urgency in creating one. As the war in Ukraine is over three years old, and old alliances Europe had with the US are unstable, there is a new gravity to this lack of such a strategy. A National Security Strategy is there to provide guidance to political policy makers when considering this important area. At the same time, we, as a country, tend to compare ourselves with the UK when we should be comparing ourselves to countries our own size.

The methodology is a mixed comparative analysis of Ireland, Denmark and Finland in terms of historical contexts, threat analysis and current defence policies, and how society interacts with the military in the three countries. This has been added to with in depth interviews with a Finnish Brigadier General, Head of Personnel with the Finnish Defence Forces, and author of an analysis of the Comprehensive Security Model, and a second interview with a member of the Royal Danish Defence College.

The findings are that for society to become more involved in the protection of the state, there must be an awareness of contemporary threats to the country, and what they could mean to everyday life if some of those threats are carried out.

Abbreviations

CoDF	Commission on the Defence Forces
CHoD	Chief of Defence
CNI	Critical National Infrastructure
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSIP	Critical Seabed Infrastructure Protection
CSM	Comprehensive Security Model
DF	Defence Forces
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FCMA	Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
IMF	International Monetary Fund
J2	Directorate of Military Intelligance
JEF	Joint Expeditionary Force
LOA 1/2/3	Level of Ambition 1/2/3
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NORDEFCO	Nordic Defence Cooperation
NSS	National Security Strategy
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
PDF	Permanent Defence Forces
PSO	Peace Support Operations
RDF	Reserve Defence Forces
SEA	Security Environment Assessment
SUPO	Finnish Intelligence Service
TPNW	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

The complexities of the modern technological world often leave societies struggling to keep pace with change at so many levels, from financial crashes to pandemics to massive political changes.[1] And defence and security policies, and their implementation can currently find themselves even more adrift of what contemporary needs are. Especially given the opaque nature of hybrid or grey-zone conflict, or even non-linear warfare. [2]

The definition of when a nation is in a state of war or conflict has been increasingly difficult to determine, some argue, since the arrival of Vladimir Putin to power in Russia. In Keir Giles' book "Russia's War on Everyone: And What It Means for You", he quotes a counterintelligence officer from Northern Europe who says: "Russia does not think about warfare in binary terms like we do in the Western World – they don't consider there to be some dramatic event when countries are suddenly at war...that they hold a lower bar for that". [3]

Ireland now needs to recalibrate the hierarchy of roles for the Defence Forces (DF) [4], which have traditionally been to Defend the State against armed aggression, Aid to the Civil Power,

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1 World Economic Forum, 'Will a global recession accelerate geopolitical fragmentation?', 30 March 2023 (https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/03/geopolitical-fragmentation-extremism/) (2 Dec 2024).

[2] Hybrid warfare is defined as conflict that blends conventional and unconventional methods, including cyber, disinformation, and economic pressure, while Non-Linear Warfare is defined as disrupting the traditional battlefield, making it difficult to distinguish between combatants and civilians or between times of war and peace. GlobalSecurityReview.com http://bit.ly/41SHXRh

[3] Keir Giles: *Russia's War on Everyone: And what it means for you* (London, 2023), p. 20

[4] The Irish Defence Forces will be referred to as 'DF' throughout.

International Peacekeeping, Maritime Security/Fishery Protection, and Ceremonial. [5]

Cottey (2022) argues that "core features of Ireland's security environment and policies have not been fundamentally altered by the Ukraine war," however, as he states there is a greater awareness of the threats, and as such, we need to look at the appropriate neighbours from a defence policy perspective, to find key examples of change. [6]

This thesis will explore how we should look at specific examples of transformation in comparable nations in Europe to see what we can learn when it comes to forming a National Security Strategy. Using a comparative analysis of Denmark and Finland, it asks how Defence Policy has been formed in countries where there are histories of multi-party coalitions in government, and how the countries developed the militaries societal position over the decades and how this informed Defence Policy and National Security Strategy. Therefore, the central thesis question is "how should Ireland recalibrate its Defence Policy to meet the evolving security landscape?"

Buckley and Martin state in their essay *Irish Air Corps: Towards 2052;* "While it is difficult to predict where future strategic shocks will emanate from, recent events reinforce the

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[5] Óglaigh na hÉireann'/Irish Defence Forces, 'What We Do'(n.d.) (https://military.ie/en/what-we-do/#anchor-1)

[6] Defence Review 2022 – A Celtic Zeitenwende, Prof Andrew Cottey (https://military.ie/en/members-area/members-area-files/20221130_dfreview_finaldraft.pdf) (20 Nov 2024)

perspective that maintaining a well-trained and equipped DF provides Ireland with multi-domain resilience in an ever-changing global security order". [7]

The initial decision by the Irish government to move to Level of Ambition 2 (LOA 2) [8] as outlined in the Commission on the Defence Force Report (CoDF) [9] is defined as "building on current capability to address specific priority gaps in our ability to deal with an assault on Irish sovereignty and to serve in higher intensity Peace Support Operations". [10]

But five years on from announcing plans for a National Security Strategy, the new Programme for Government has announced another review. [11] The reasoning for the particular comparative approach of this thesis contends that we are in the habit of comparing ourselves to the wrong countries, learning inappropriate lessons, and judging ourselves incorrectly in Defence and Security matters. Often public organisations, projects and cost of living etc. in Ireland are compared to the UK.

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[7] Niall Buckley and Raymond Martin, "Irish Air Corps: Towards 2052", in '*The EU, Irish Defence Forces and Contemporary Security',* edited by Carroll, J · O'Neill, M.G. · Williams, M *(2023, Palgrave Macmillan) p.109*

[8] LOA 2 Level of Ambition 2 – see Annex for more details

[9] The Commission on the Defence Forces was established in December 2020 to "consider and recommend the appropriate structure and size of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) and the Reserve Defence Force (RDF)" and a longer-term vision beyond 2030. It published a 210-page report in Feb 2022 recommending major structural changes, increased defence spending, and setting out 3 Level of Ambition criteria for government to choose.

[10] The Irish Examiner, 8 Feb. 2025; The Sunday Business Post, 23 Feb. 2025

[11] TheJournal.ie, 'Incoming Government kicks National Security Strategy can further down the road', 18 Jan 2025.

We share the same language, have open trading links and a good cultural understanding of the UK. Over one third of our exports go to the UK, total trade between the two countries is worth over €103 billion, and there are over 520,000 Irish-born people living in England and Wales. [12]

However, in 2023, the UK had a population of 68.3 million to Ireland's 5.2 million, and UK GDP was €2.7 trillion to €507 billion for Ireland. [13] Many comparisons give an entirely false view of two similar countries, in terms of population size, economic power, and history.

Unbalanced comparisons continue into the Defence and Security arena and create false territory from which to draw data comparisons. The UK has 148,000 permanent members of its armed forces, with another 29,570 in its Reserve Forces. [14] The strength of the Irish Permanent Defence Force, in early 2024 was 7,451 personnel.[15] The Reserve Permanent Defence Force, at the time, was 1,420. [16]

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[12]Government of Ireland, 'Ireland's relationship with Great Britain', (n.d.)(*https://www.ireland.ie/en/greatbritain/irelands-relationship-with-great-britain/#:~:text=Economic%20relations&text=Ireland%20was%20the%206th%20largest,Ireland%20and%20our%20nearest%20neighbour)* (12 Nov. 2024)

[13]UK Office of National Statistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2023; CSO https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2023/keyfindings/ ;Business Ireland, July 2024, (https://www.businessireland.uk/business/is-the-uk-richer-than-ireland/#:~:text=The%20UK's%20GDP%20per%20capita,than%20Ireland's%20%C2%A3500%20billion.) (12 Jan 2024)

[14]House of Commons *https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7930/*

[15]*The Irish Examiner* Oct 2024

[16]*The Irish Times,* June 2024

This thesis posits the best approach is comparing Ireland with European neighbours of similar size, albeit from different historical and geographical backgrounds – one a NATO founder, and the other traditionally non-aligned until shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The benefits of this approach are multifaceted: we analyze how a country of similar population and economic strength operates (Ireland be stronger economically, but weaker when it comes to defence and security).

Denmark has a population of 5.9 million according to 2024 figures, its economy was worth €422 billion in 2022, and it was one of the 12 founding members of NATO in 1949. [17] Finland has a population of 5.5 million as of 2024, an economy worth €283 billion, and has been traditionally non-aligned since the end of the Second World War, until the Russian invasion of Ukraine. [18] Austria or Switzerland had the potential to be examined as they are both neutral, but their populations approach twice that of Ireland's, and Malta and Cyprus are too small to use as effective comparisons.

Finland makes for a more interesting study than Sweden as it has a 1340-kilometre border with Russia and has had to thread a fine line in dealing with Moscow, and deal with Russian hybrid threats since 2015. [19]

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[17] IMF Report Denmark, https://shorturl.at/rXYs2

[18] Finland key stats, https://www.statista.com/topics/6910/key-economic-indicators-in-finland/#topicOverview

[19] Carnegie Politika, 'Securing Borders After a Breach of Confidence: Russian Finnish Relations,5 Sept. 2024. (https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2024/09/russia-finland-border-security?lang=en) (2 Nov. 2024)

The approach taken is one of comparative analysis, highlighting the significance of contrasting approaches, combined with interviews with those with specialist knowledge, and a review of current literature on the subject.

Without understanding how external threats to Ireland and Europe are evolving, we cannot form a Security Policy predicated on a current strategic analysis. Without learning how similar European neighbours have agreed domestically on what are priorities for National Security, our varied body politic cannot move forward on what is becoming an increasingly important issue.

Chapter 2 examines Denmark and Finland's historical and geopolitical background from the Second World War to the turn of the century, compared with Ireland. Denmark being occupied by the Nazis despite being neutral in the Second World War, and for the Finns fighting "The Winter War" against the Soviet Union. [20]

Chapter 3 examines Threat Analysis, and the Development of Defence Policy across the three countries, with one threat all three countries are facing in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, now involving differing levels of threat, direct or hybrid, from Moscow's forces or proxies, such as shadow fleets and cyber attackers. [21]

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[20]David Murphy, The Finnish-Soviet Winter War 1939-40: Stalin's Hollow Victory (Oxford, 2021)

[21]European Parliament briefing, 'Russia's 'shadow fleet': Bringing the threat to light', Nov 2024 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/766242/EPRS_BRI(2024)766242_EN.pdf) (18 Jan 2025); Threat assessment, The cyber threat against Denmark 2024. (Sept 2024) Centre for Cyber Security, København. www.cfcs.dk/globalassets/cfcs/dokumenter/trusselsvurderinger/en/cfcs---the-cyber-threat-against-denmark-2024.pdf

A key takeaway in policy terms that is examined, is how Denmark has managed to approve a 10-year Defence and Security Policy that involves the agreement of 10 political parties in their parliament or *Folketing*. [22]

Finland's Defence Policy comparison covers the rapid move from non-aligned country which had to deal with the influence of Moscow, to rapidly becoming a member of NATO when the Ukraine War began, and the strong public backing it received. [23]

The matter and nature of neutrality here cannot be ignored, but has been extensively covered by others, especially in contemporary Ireland, which has seen a lot more informed dialogue about it. [24]

Chapter 4 is titled "The Military in Society/Society in the Military" and compares how other countries and societies view their Armed Forces and adopt a "whole of society approach" to protecting the state. But importantly it is not a one-way street and the public in Denmark and Finland feel it normal, or a duty to be involved in the defence and security of their country in some shape. That "National Resilience" forms a key part of the Finnish Character is central to their approach and success. This is especially important if a government wishes to get "buy-in" from the public.

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[22] Danish Defence and Security Policy https://um.dk/en/foreign-policy/foreign-and-security-policy-2023

[23] NATO.org, 'Finland joins NATO as 31st Ally' 4 Apr 2023 (https://www.nato.int/cps/po/natohq/news_213448.htm) (20 Nov 2024)

[24] Conor Gallagher, *Is Ireland Neutral?* (Dubin 2022), Prof Dame Louise Richardson, 'Report to An Tánaiste' in *Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (Dublin) 2023, p.12 Contested Areas*

This also examines how Reserve Forces are built and maintained, compared with Ireland, the philosophy of large-scale mobilization of trained civilians if needed, and the involvement of civilians in roles such as cyber defence. The mixed method approach interviewing those directly involved, or very familiar with these issues in these countries, along with a review of current literature and studies gives a more tailored approach to the Irish National Security Strategy question.

Select interview were carried out with experts in each country's defence field, including Finish Brigadier General Vesa Valtonen, Chief of Personnel, Defence Command, PhD, and Adjunct Professor at FNDU Puolustusvoimat, who has written on 'The Finnish Comprehensive Security Model' with academic Minna Branders, Doctor of Administrative Sciences, National Defence University, Helsinki and an interview Dr Iben Bjørnsson of the Royal Danish Defence College. [25]

Having set the context and outlining the research question, in Chapter 2, we move to the key incidents in each country's history that have influenced their cultural mindset when making national security decisions.

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[25] Vesa Valtonen and Minna Branders, *Tracing the Finnish Comprehensive Security Model: Nordic Societal Security Convergence and Divergence, 2021* Edited by Sebastian Larsson, Mark Rhinard

Chapter II

The Historical and Geopolitical Context Shaping Defence Policy

This chapter examines how the experiences of the three countries under review, during and since the Second World War, have had different impacts on how they have approached their own security and defence.

Ireland, Denmark and Finland have been to one degree or another, part of the so-called "Special Status States", and were often not part of the discussions on European Defence Policy at EU level.[26] This has been changing significantly in the past two years or more since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Denmark, which is a NATO member, held a referendum and voted to opt in to the defence aspects of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the EU, while Finland's change in stance was arguably more dramatic, and, with widespread public support, it asked to join NATO, and was subsequently admitted, along with Sweden, after being neutral since 1955.[27]

As stated, the purpose of this thesis is to gain an insight into the best practices carried out by countries with comparative populations, when it comes to forming their respective National Security Strategies, choosing one in NATO since its formation, and the other traditionally non-aligned until very recently.

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[26] European Council on Foreign Relations, 'Ambiguous alliance: Neutrality, opt-outs, and European defence' 28 June 2021 (https://ecfr.eu/publication/ambiguous-alliance-neutrality-opt-outs-and-european-defence/#summary) (Nov 2023)

[27] BBC News, 'Denmark votes to drop EU defence opt-out in 'historic' referendum', 1 June 2022 ; AP News, Timeline of Sweden and Finland joining NATO https://apnews.com/article/sweden-turkey-nato-timeline-hungary-fe9560e80b1a43c4037eea7c6f5176bd

Denmark and Finland have smaller economies than Ireland at present, but spend considerably more on defence, 2% of GDP and 2.1% GDP respectively, compared to 0.2% of GDP in Ireland, according to the European Defence Agency.[28] They have also approached the issues of national security very differently than Ireland has, for historical, cultural and social reasons.

Finland is now targeting a Defence Budget of 3.3% of GDP, with Denmark looking at spending more than 3% of its GDP on Defence. Far beyond the NATO aim of 2% for member countries. Ireland is now indicating it will increase its spending dramatically to reach 1.4% of GNI (Gross National Income), which would be a figure of approximately €3 billion per annum. [29]

To understand why any potential comparisons between Ireland, Denmark and Finland may be of use in the formation of a National Security Strategy, we must first revisit the formation of the military and defence organisations in the three countries and how they have been formed in contemporary times. Finland faced an invading force, was not occupied during the Second World War. Denmark was occupied during the Second World War, and Ireland only became an independent state from 1922, so it was either a colony, part of the British Empire, or occupied, depending on your view.

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[28] European Defence Agency, Defence Data 2023-2024 https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/brochures/1eda---defence-data-23-24---web---v3.pdf)

[29] DefenseNews.com, 'Finland eyes defense-spending boost well past NATO mark', (27 Dec 2024) https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2024/12/27/finland-eyes-defense-spending-boost-well-past-nato-mark/ (1 March 2025); Euronews, 'Denmark to boost defence spending by €6.7bn over next two years' (19 Feb 2025) https://www.euronews.com/2025/02/19/denmark-to-boost-defence-spending-by-67bn-over-next-two-years (1 March 2025); *The Irish Times*, (28 Feb 2025)

As we shall see, direct involvement in war can have a significant psychological effect when forming a security strategy for your state, and indeed, how much significance you give such a security strategy in the first place. [30]

As Kivimäki writes referring to the Finnish concept of resilience: "The Finnish memory culture of 1939–1945 presents an interesting case of how the de facto lost wars against the Soviet Union have been shaped into cornerstones of national history and identity that continue to play a significant role even today". [31]

For Denmark, it was the Nazi invasion of the 8th of April, for Finland, it is the concept of *sisu* or resilience, and for Ireland, it can be argued that a kernel of our neutrality policy grew from our desire not to be in the shadow of our former colonial masters (the UK), or in a military union with the United Kingdom, i.e.: NATO.[32]

We now look at the circumstances faced by the three countries during conflicts and geo-political tensions in the 20th Century in particular, and where this has led in terms of Defence and Security Policy, beginning with Ireland.

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[30] Palle Roslyng-Jensen, '*Conspiracy, Guilt and Rationality: The Memory and History of the German Military Occupation of Denmark on 9 April* 1940', in *Northern European Overture to War, 1939-1941, History of Warfare, Volume: 87,* (2013) at p. 465; David Murphy, *The Finnish-Soviet Winter War 1939-40: Stalin's Hollow Victory* (Oxford, 2021) p.5; Interview with Finnish Brigadier General Vesa Valtonen, via Zoom link to Helsinki, 22 Jan 2025

[31] V. Kivimäki. (2012). Between Defeat and Victory: Finnish memory culture of the Second World War. Scandinavian Journal of History, 37(4), 482–504. https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2012.680178

[32]Ireland was invited to join NATO in 1949, but Irish Govt papers at the time show it refused based on the UK still controlling the 6 counties in Northern Ireland, saying it would be "entirely repugnant and unacceptable". https://www.difp.ie/volume-9/1949/reply-to-united-states-government-regarding-nato-membership/4861/#section-documentpage

Ireland

Eoin Kinsella outlines in 'The Irish Defence Forces 1922-2022' how the Irish DF essentially came about through the evolution of the Irish Volunteers into the standing army of the revolutionary government.[33] As Kinsella posits, Defence was one of the first four ministries established by the Dáil when set up in 1919, but the political importance of a Minister of Defence is reflected in how infrequently there been a standalone senior minister. [34]

1 February 1922 is seen as a very important date in the history of the Irish Army, as it was then referred to. It saw the first public appearance of a regular unit of the new force, marching through Dublin city centre on its way to accept handover of Beggars Bush Barracks from the British Army prior to the official formation of the State on 6 December 1922.[35]

A major role the National Army had to play was during the Civil War in 1922 that followed the War of Independence. [36] It was a relatively short conflict, lasting 18 months, but resulted in over one thousand dead, as those who opposed the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty took up arms against former comrades.

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[33]Eoin Kinsella, The Irish Defence Forces 1922-2022: Servant of the Nation (Dublin 2023) p. 11.

[34]Tony Kileen was the last senior Minister for Defence, with no other portfolio in 2010. Since then, the role has been added to another brief such as Taoiseach or Tánaiste, or as a junior minister. *Irish Examiner*, 11 April 2024

[35]Thomas Mohr, "Law and the foundation of the Irish State on 6 December 1922" Irish Jurist 59 (2018): 31–58. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26431266.

[36]National Museum of Ireland, The Irish Civil War https://shorturl.at/1v7my; James Langton, *The Forgotten Fallen: National Army soldiers who died during the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 2019)

The bloodshed was because of the six counties of the Northeast of the island, remaining under British control, and having to swear an Oath of Allegiance to the British Crown, as part of the independence agreement for the remaining 26 counties of the 32.

From the early part of the 1930s, as other European nations were building up their militaries, Ireland's numbers had dropped down to below 6,000 for most of the decade, despite our obligations under the Hague Convention of 1899 and 1907 for neutral states to be able to prevent belligerents using neutral territory and conduct military operations on such territory - a topic we will return to in Chapter 3.

It can be observed that Ireland slowly changed its security priorities from the position it was in before the Second World War, which were internal threats, to external threats during "The Emergency". [37] Post Second World War priorities were demobilization and reduction of personnel numbers, in 1955 Ireland was accepted into the United Nations, and began its first Peacekeeping Operations for the UN, firstly with unarmed observers in the Lebanon in 1958 and then a large force of nearly 700 men sent to the Congo in 1960. It was seen as a way of revitalizing the DF, along with carrying out an international Peace Support Operation role, (PSO). [38]

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[37] The period during the Second World War was declared a state of emergency and legislation to that effect was introduced in the Dail in September 1939. The act gave sweeping powers to the government, including strong censorship of the press, along with internment. It gave rise to the popular phrase "The Emergency" as the description of the war period in Ireland. Kinsella, The Irish Defence Forces 1922-2022 p 133

[38] Kinsella, The Irish Defence Forces 1922-2022, pp 180-97

After the Second World War and prior to joining the EEC in 1972, the main role of the Irish Naval Service (INS) would have been to "Patrol our territorial waters and cover our principal harbours" along with Maritime Patrols and Fishery Protection. [39]

That remained, but with much more access to our waters when Ireland joined the EEC, the Naval Service was required to patrol our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and Ireland received European funding for the naval vessels LÉ Emer, Aoife and Aisling to carry out Fishery Protection. [40]

As will be analyzed in the next chapter, it can be argued that the official stance of "Protecting Ireland against armed aggression" includes from cyber-attack, international criminal gangs, terrorism, and increasingly maritime aggression in the form of Russian Naval and "research" vessels from so called "shadow fleets" off our waters.[41] International Peacekeeping, and force protection for such deployments, remain a high priority for Ireland.

Contemporary Defence Policy, as we shall examine in the next chapter, has also to accommodate EU Battlegroup operations with a rapid reaction capacity to emerging crises or conflicts. [42]

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[39] Office of the Minister for Defence, memorandum for government, 19 June 1967 (NAI, 98/6/194)

[40] LÉ, The L.É. before the ships names means Long Éireannach or Irish Ship, https://www.military.ie/en/who-we-are/naval-service/the-fleet/

[41] *Irish Times,* 14 Jan 2025; European Parliament briefing, 'Russia's 'shadow fleet': Bringing the threat to light', Nov 2024

[42] EU Battlegroups were established as part of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). They are usually composed of 1500 personnel each and form part of the EU's military rapid reaction capacity to respond to emerging crises and conflicts around the world. https://www.eurocorps.org/readiness/european-battle-group/

The experienced Russia watcher Keir Giles writes about "a pronounced gradient across the Continent [of Europe] in terms not only of understanding the challenge from Russia, but also the seriousness with which measures are taken to withstand it". [43] In this regard, the age of "Regional Security" that Ireland lived under for many decades, whereby the State believed it was very far from a possible Cold War European conflict zone, and also not a strategic target for any superpower, ended a number of years ago, but in this argument, was either not understood by the powers that be, or acted upon. As Giles argues, "how seriously you take the threat from Russia has always depended on how close you are to it...the farther west in Europe you go, the easier it has always been to take the view that this is somebody else's problem". It should come as no surprise that Ireland has been accused of "free riding" on other European countries defence policies and strategies. [44]

Now an individual country must add the complexities, and unpredictable nature of the Trump US Administration to the mix. [45] The respective histories of all three countries, in the 20th century, have helped form the stance that politicians and their societies have taken in shaping contemporary Security Policy, along with civil involvement with the military and preparedness, as we see in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

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[43] *The Irish Times* Nov 23rd, 2024. Keir Giles

[44] Politico - "Ireland's the ultimate defense freeloader" May 28, 2024

[45] At this point US President Trump's comments have raised doubts about his commitment to the trans-Atlantic alliance.This has encouraged European NATO members to massively increase their defence spending along with the EU planning a €800 billion increase in defence spending among the 27 member countries.https://apnews.com/article/trump-rutte-nato-russia-ukraine-6607c88c1015de0923f9d4b138546364

Denmark

Nazi occupation of Denmark despite the country being neutral in the Second World War, has played a major role in the subconscious of the Danish people in the second half of the 20th Century. The country was invaded and overrun in a matter of hours as part of "Operation Weserübung", with German forces also attacking Norway in the same day.[46] Denmark's forces held out for a matter of hours before surrendering, as Denmark's King Christen X did not want to see Copenhagen decimated along with a huge loss of civilian life after German He111 aircraft threatened to bomb the city, and so he ordered a cessation of fighting.[47]

Meanwhile Norwegian troops were able to fight on for two months, with the aid of a counteroffensive by Allied Forces. [48] "Never again a ninth of April" became a slogan adopted by some of the country's main political parties, the Social Democrats, the Moderate Liberals and the Conservatives, to mark the day Denmark was invaded, and then occupied until the defeat of Germany in 1945. [49]

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[46] Operation Weserübung was a major joint air-land and sea operation in the Second World War, aimed at securing vital minerals in Scandanavia, such as Swedish iron ore by rail to Narvik in Norway to be loaded onto ships bound for Germany crucial to their war effort. Douglas C Dildy, 'Denmark and Norway 1940: Hitler's boldest operation' (Oxford, 2007), p 12.

[47]Douglas C Dildy, *'Denmark and Norway 1940: Hitler's boldest operation'* (Oxford, 2007), p. 36

[48]Bernard O'Connor, '*Do It Well and Do It Now: Sabotage in Denmark during World War Two'* (2013), p.7

[49]I. William Zartman, "Neutralism and Neutrality in Scandinavia." The Western Political Quarterly 7, no. 2 (1954): 125–60. https://doi.org/10.2307/442454.

Almost nine years to the day of their invasion, and capitulation at the hands of Nazi German forces, Denmark became one of the founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), on the 4th of April 1949.[50]

As Palle Roslyng-Jensen writes: "In Danish collective and individual memory and in Danish historiography there are few events that have been given continuous attention for 70 years. The German military occupation of Denmark on 9 April 1940 has achieved this distinction."[60]

However, Denmark has never been afraid to plot its own course and joined NATO under three conditions - no NATO bases, no nuclear warheads from other members and no Allied military activity on Danish territory. [52] As well as being a founding member of NATO, Denmark was also a founder of The Nordic Council in 1952, along with Iceland, Norway and Sweden. [53]

Denmark's overseas territories have proven important for NATO purposes, with early warning radar stations and submarine communications on the Faroe Islands from the 1960s,

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[50]NATO, *'Denmark and NATO'*, n.d. (https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/declassified_162357.htm) (2 Dec 2024)

[51]Palle Roslyng-Jensen, '*Conspiracy, Guilt and Rationality: The Memory and History of the German Military Occupation of Denmark on 9 April* 1940', in *Northern European Overture to War, 1939-1941, History of Warfare, Volume: 87,* (2013) at p. 465

[52]NATO, 'Membership but on three conditions', n.d. (https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/declassified_162357.htm), (17 Oct 2024)

[53] The Nordic Council is the official body for Nordic inter-parliamentary co-operation. Formed in 1952, it has 87 members from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

along with Greenland being the home of a US Air Force base at Thule where another Early Warning Radar Station was set up. [54]

The issue of the US potentially buying Greenland from Denmark has come up several times under the presidency of Donald Trump. Once during his first term in office in 2019 led to a sharp rebuke from the Danish Prime Minister at the time, Mette Fredericksen, who called the idea "absurd". President Trump then cancelled a state trip to Denmark. We shall return to this in the next chapter addressing the development of Defence Policy. [55]

In what seemed to be a coincidence, the Danish Government then announced a big increase in defence spending for Greenland, which the Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said was worth a "double digit billion amount" in krone, or at least $1.5bn (£1.2bn). [56]

It remains to be seen whether President Trump has any real intent on purchasing or "acquiring" Greenland, but his provocative statements have added to the air of uncertainty surrounding European security, and European NATO members have vastly increased their defence spending. [57]

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[54]NATO, 'NATO and Denmark', n.d. (https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/declassified_162357.htm) (2 Dec. 2024)

[55]The Guardian, 21 Aug 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/21/trump-state-visit-cancellation-over-greenland-shocks-danes

[56]BBC News, Denmark boosts Greenland defence after Trump repeats desire for US control 24 Dec 2024, (https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgzl19n9eko) (27 Dec 2024)

[57] NATO, '*Secretary General welcomes unprecedented rise in NATO defence spending'* 15 Feb 2024 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_222664.htm (21 Jan 2025)

Interviewed on January 21st, 2025, Dr Iben Bjornsson, Assistant Professor, at the Department of Strategy and War Studies at the Royal Danish Defence College said this of the strategy to ally itself very closely to the US:

"What has shocked and almost numbed Danish politicians right now, is that Denmark has pursued this very clear National Security Strategy of 'please the US' for almost the last at least 25 years and Europe was less important as long as we are on the good side of the US, and now we are finding out in these new circumstances, this is not helping us".

But Denmark's membership of NATO has been the cornerstone of its security and defence strategy through the second half of the 20th Century. [58] Bjornsson says, "we have a sense of we are a small country, and we can't defend ourselves and we need big strong friends."

In a move that has some comparisons to Finland's seismic decision to join NATO, which we shall discuss in Chapter 3, Denmark changed its position from having an opt-out from the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), in the months after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This decision did not rock the European continent in the same way, but the opt-out had

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[58]Česnakas, Giedrius (editor), Juozaitis, Justinas (editor), '*European Strategic Autonomy and Small States' Security',* (London, 2023), p.139

been in place for 30 years, and in effect meant Danish troops did not take part in most EU military missions, and a referendum was passed by 67% of voters. [59]

Finland

A significant characteristic of how Finland has positioned itself in geo-political terms in the 20th Century and again into the 21st Century has come about because of its conflicts with Russia/the Soviet Union, and with Russia again after the fall of the USSR in the mid 1990's. Going further back to 1809, Finland was under the control of Sweden, then was an autonomous region of Russia, and then declared independence during the Russian Revolution.[60]

There were two interesting political strategies that have impacted Finland to great degrees in the 20th Century: the policy of 'Russification' and the policy of 'Finlandization'. The first was the term (Russification) given in the early part of the 20th century, as Russia sought to exert its extremely large, and sometimes unpredictable, influence on smaller neighbouring states.[61]

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[59]Denmark had negotiated a so-called defence reservation as part of its membership of the EU, allowing it to opt out of military missions and for 30 years took no part in most European defence and security initiatives. It could not attend EU Defence meetings, vote on initiatives or partake in them, until this point; CSDP – Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union sets out the EU's framework in the field of defence and crisis management, including defence cooperation and coordination between Member States. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/shaping-common-security-and-defence-policy_en; BBC News, 'Denmark votes to drop EU defence opt-out in 'historic' referendum', 1st June 2022, (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61644663) (14 Nov 2024)

[60] Reuters.com *'A brief history of Finland's and Sweden's strained ties with Russia',* 12 May 2022, (https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/brief-history-finlands-swedens-strained-ties-with-russia-2022-05-12/)(12 Nov 2024)

[61]David Murphy, *The Finnish-Soviet Winter War 1939-40: Stalin's Hollow Victory* (Oxford, 2021) p.5

While the second phrase (Finlandization) was the strategy of maintaining close ties and good relations with Moscow but also being seen by some as a form of submission, while trying to remain independent.[62] Finland was concerned about Russian intentions, and it proved correct to be, as the August 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Russia and Nazi Germany placed Finland within the Soviet "sphere of influence".

The Secret Supplementary Protocols of the pact between Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany felt referred to Finland and other states on the Baltic Sea as 'districts', and new spheres of interest were carved up along borders of four rivers between what would become USSR and German controlled territory.[63]

Finland's refusal to sign a "mutual assistance treaty" with the Soviet Union led to The Winter War of 1939-1940. It is referred to as "Stalin's Hollow Victory", as the Soviets deployed a force of around 450,000 at first against the much smaller country, which could muster a maximum of 300,000 during the entirety of the war. The Soviet numbers later swelled to over 760,000, along with 6,500 tanks, versus 32 outdated Finnish tanks.[64]

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[62]Holmila, A., & Ahonen, P. (2022). The good, the bad and the ugly : The Many Faces of Finlandization and Some Potential Lessons for Ukraine. Zeithistorische Forschungen, 19(3), 560577. https://doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok-2473

[63] Wilson Centre, *'Secret Supplementary Protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact, 1939', n.d.(*https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/secret-supplementary-protocols-molotov-ribbentrop-non-aggression-pact-1939) (27 Dec 2024); AtlanticCouncil.org,*'What the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact tells us about today's war in Ukraine',* Aug 21 2023 (https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/molotov-ribbentrop-pact-ukraine-war/)(27 Dec 2024)

[64]Murphy, The Finnish-Soviet Winter War 1939-40, p.5. & p.43

It was not thought that Finland could hold out for long, but 105 days of fighting followed, and the Finns inflicted severe damage on the Soviet forces, including through the use of *motti* encirclement tactics of smaller units broken from Russian columns.

A point that is worth making is that at this time in the Second World War, Finland was alone as a nation of just under four million, fighting a population of over 170 million people.[65] Finland today has a population of 5.5 million while Russia has a population of 144 million according to the UN.[66] The reality of the massive and powerful neighbour has never really changed for Finland, regardless of who is in power in Moscow and what name is given to the form of political control and governance there.

In a prescient speech to the CSIS in Washington in 2007, the Finnish Minister of Defence Jyri Häkämies said "given our geographical location, the three main security challenges for Finland today are Russia, Russia and Russia. And not only for Finland, but for all of us". Such a viewpoint and level of preparedness is examined in more detail in the next chapter. [67]

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[65] Oxford Bibliographies, *'Finland in World War II',* 22 Sept 2021 (https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199791279/obo-9780199791279-0208.xml#:~:text=Finland%20was%20aligned%20with%20the,War%20(1941%E2%80%931944) (2 Dec 2025)

[66] United Nations Population Fund, *Russian Federation Overview,* n.d.(https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/RU) (4 Dec 2025)

[67] Finnish Ministry of Defence, *'Minister of Defence Jyri Häkämies at CSIS in Washington',* 6th Sept 2007 (https://www.defmin.fi/en/topical/speeches/minister_of_defence_jyri_hakamies_at_csis_in_washington.3335.news?663_o=10#d68049c6) (22nd Jan 2025) Centre for Strategic and International Studies think tank.

After The Winter War ended in a negotiated peace settlement, Finland agreed a form of alliance with Nazi Germany against Russia, during the Interim Peace Accord, but did not become part of the Axis Powers, during 'The Continuation War'. [68] This was the period of conflict when Germany had invaded the USSR in mid 1941, and Finnish forces moved to regain lost territory.

Ultimately, as Finland came to an agreed armistice with Moscow, it lost approximately 10% of its territory to the Soviet Union in September 1944 and had to relocate around 400,000 residents and pay $300 million in war reparations. Finland was also forced into accepting a special position where it could not join a Western military alliance (as part of the Paris Peace Treaties of 1947). [69]

The contemporary comparisons of the Russian invasion of Ukraine are hard to avoid, from the belief that Russia can expand its borders by force, to the idea prior to the First World War that major powers could determine what countries were within their "spheres of influence" and divide and control smaller countries as they wished.[70] The biggest reflection comes in the form of the Soviet Union then, and Russia now, believing it would annihilate the much smaller population, or ill-prepared country (as it believed in the case of Ukraine), yet still fighting for over 100 days in Finland, and over three years since the 2022 Ukrainian invasion.

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[68]Murphy, *The Finnish-Soviet Winter War,* pp 90-91

[69]"Treaty of Peace with Finland, 1947." The American Journal of International Law 42, no. 3 (1948): p. 203–23. https://doi.org/10.2307/2213959.

[70]Atlantic Council,' What the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact tells us about today's war in Ukraine', Ann Marie Dailey, 21 Aug. (2023 https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/molotov-ribbentrop-pact-ukraine-war/) (20 Dec. 2024)

Finland's success in holding Soviet forces at bay for 105 days until a peace settlement, helped form a psychological profile or cultural narrative about resilience as Murphy asserts and is a key element of the modern definition of *sisu* or grit, stoic determination and resilience in that culture. Chapter 3 examines the culture of resilience and preparedness.[71]

Finland's geographical position as well as its political one, led to it in part being forced into adopting the policy of neutrality in the 1950's by the Soviet Union.

It only joined the United Nations in 1955, signed a Free Trade Agreement with the EEC in 1973, joining the European Free Trade Association in 1986 (Raunio & Tiilikainen, 2003) and ultimately the EU in 1995.[72]

It did, however, join the Nordic Council in 1955, (previously mentioned as being founded by Denmark and three other countries in 1952). It could be argued that although this grouping had three NATO members, its aim was to improve the Nordic Region and make people want to live and work there, and so was an acceptable forum for Finland to join, between the USSR and the West, and maintaining its neutrality. [73]

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[71]Murphy, *The Finnish-Soviet Winter War 1939-40,* p.92

[72]Leruth, B. (2022). Experimental differentiation as an innovative form of cooperation in the European Union: Evidence from the Nordic Battlegroup. *Contemporary Security Policy*, *44*(1), 125–149. https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2022.2143890

[73]Nordic Council, *'About the Nordic Council',* n.d. (https://www.norden.org/en/information/about-nordic-council) (2 Dec 2024)

This brings us to the second international policy that shaped Finland through the later part of the 20th Century – so called 'Finlandisation'.

The term was first coined in Germany in the 1960s – *Finnlandisierung* – and referred to Russia having an abnormally large influence over a country, in part because Finland chose to adapt its own policies to suit those of the Soviet Union, and in as much as was possible, remain independent.

Some say this kept Soviet troops from crossing the border and heading for Helsinki, while others suggest it was "collaboration" and "accommodation" or possibly even appeasement.[74]

Prior to this period, however, Finland had already signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) with the Soviet Union in 1948, forming the basis for their bilateral relations between 1948–1992. 'Neutrality After 1989: New Paths in the Post-Cold War World', edited by Naman Karl-Thomas Habtom, maintains that the combination of neutrality and a treaty with communist USSR was portrayed as both a necessity and a virtue.[75]

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[74] Holmila, A., & Ahonen, P. (2022). The good, the bad and the ugly: The Many Faces of Finlandization and Some Potential Lessons for Ukraine. Zeithistorische Forschungen, 19(3), 560577. https://doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok-2473; Forsberg, T., & Pesu, M. (2016). The "Finlandisation" of Finland: The Ideal Type, the Historical Model, and the Lessons Learnt. Diplomacy & Statecraft, 27(3), 473–495. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2016.1196069

[75] Neutrality After 1989: New Paths in the Post-Cold War World, edited by Naman Karl-Thomas Habtom. Bristol 2024

The former President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, was considered by some, as a kind of "Putin-whisperer", as he was the closest Western head of state, who had some form of insight into the Russian President, especially after former German Chancellor Angela Merkel (who had been the lead negotiator between the EU and Russia) had left office.[76] Niinistö served from 2012 to 2024, and was said to have nurtured a relationship with Putin over the course of a decade.

This adds to the contention that the delicate method Finland has employed when dealing with Vladimir Putin, makes the country a more interesting study than Sweden, alongside the fact that it has a 1340-kilometre border with Russia and has had to face with Russian hybrid threats such as Syrian refugees being bussed to their border and allowed walk or cycle across it, since 2015. [77] Ultimately its distance from continental Europe and its 1340 kilometre border "binds it to Russia" (Doran Feldman, 2023, INSS).[78]

In terms of military doctrine, Finland's development of Total National Defence during the 1950s and 60s has probably been the most important evolution for the country's security during the Cold War and beyond. Rather than a rigid dogma, there is an argument that political realism along with geographical and historical factors, combined to form the concepts of *Total*

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[76]*The New York Times,* 13 Feb. 2022 *https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/13/world/europe/ukraine-russia-finland-sauli-niinisto-putin-nato.html*

[77] Carnegie Politika, 'Securing Borders After a Breach of Confidence: Russian-Finnish Relations,5 Sept. 2024. (*https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2024/09/russia-finland-border-security?lang=en)* (2 Nov. 2024)

[78]From Soft Power to Hard Power: Finland's Security Strategy vis-à-vis Russia (1992-2022) Doron Feldman Tel Aviv University

and *Territorial Defence,* as opposed to *Total War* of The Second World War. As an indication of very different priorities to Ireland, Finland, after a decade of reorganisation, had 15 divisions combat-ready, or close to it, while NATO had 10, and the Soviet Union had close to 60.[79]

From 1960, the Finnish Defence Forces were given specific peacetime functions to help preparedness, a function and culture that exists to this day. They included: to promote the defence preparedness of the nation by administering military training and by promoting activities that improve physical condition and increase the citizen's will to defend his country.

"Pragmatism became the principle" is the argument of "Tracing the Finnish Comprehensive Security Model", co-authored by Brigadier General Vesa Valtonen of the Finnish Armed Forces, and interviewed on 22 Jan 2025, with "Preparedness Chiefs" leading high-level inter agency planning to improve Total Defence solutions where all of society was prepared to fight to maintain the country's existence. [80] The most important development that changed this approach was the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and then Finland's entry into the EU, enabling it to improve its security collaboration with the West, and move away from an idea of "militarization of society".

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[79]Pekka Visuri, *'Evolution of Finnish Military Doctrine 1945-1985'* (Helsinki 1990), p.34 - 37 https://www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/119958/FDS%201%20OCR.pdf?sequence=2

[80]Tracing the Finnish Comprehensive Security Model Vesa Valtonen and Minna Branders file:///C:/Users/obyrnec/Downloads/Tracing%20the%20Finnish%20Comprehensive%20Security%20Model_24_11_02_16_21_27.pdf

Modern Finnish Defence doctrine is based on the Comprehensive Security Model (CSM), which we will investigate in further detail regarding contemporary Threat Analysis and Defence Policy in Chapter III.

In essence, the three countries had different requirements from their militaries after The Second War. Ireland was still trying to establish itself as a state, twenty-three years after its foundation, and needed to survive economically. It also had no taste for joining a military alliance that had its former colonial master as a central pillar. Denmark was only beginning to recover from the existential shock of being invaded and occupied, and sought to make sure that could never happen again, while Finland was in a place between the West and the Soviet bloc, and was determining its own way to exist with a neighbour to the East which was a threat but they had to tolerate, but not submit to. Finland had to rebuild its post war economy and society, but always balance the need to deal with its eastern neighbour and prevent them from contemplating annexing the country.

But alongside the size of the countries' population, there are other similarities that we can examine in the next chapter, including Finland's neutrality having parallels to that of Ireland's, and Denmark's non-alignment within EU Defence and Security architecture, mirroring aspects of Ireland's approach to the same area within Europe.

Chapter III

Threat Analysis and development of Defence Policy

While there may be similarities between Ireland, Denmark and Finland when it comes to population and to a certain extent, the economic output, the countries face very different forms of 'Threats to the State', and the degree thereof. It may be said that they vary from occasional disruption to fishing grounds in the Atlantic seaboard of Ireland, all the way to the possibility, as Finnish military leaders saw it, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, that their country along with the Baltic States, would be next in line for invasion by Russian forces.

Brig Gen Vesa Valtonen recounted for this thesis, that at the time of the Russian invasion, he was a Brigade Commander, and they raised their defence levels and called up more reservists, and put in their NATO membership application, because in his words, "in the worst case scenario, if Ukraine collapsed immediately, which country would be next...it was us".[81]

This chapter seeks to examine what the contemporary risks are to each of the three countries (real risks, perceived, and perhaps not yet envisaged) and how they have formed their Defence Policy, and a National Security Strategy in the case of Denmark and Finland. [82]

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[81]Interview with Finnish Brig Gen Vesa Valtonen, via Zoom to Helsinki, 22nd Jan 2025

[82]Denmark Foreign and Security Policy, https://um.dk/en/foreign-policy/foreign-and-security-policy-2023; Finland's new "Security Strategy for Society", https://www.defmin.fi/en/topical/press_releases_and_news/finland_s_comprehensive_security_reinforced_through_new_security_strategy_for_society.14801.news#d68049c6

It investigates how risks to Denmark and Finland have been identified in the 21st century, and as they have changed, how those countries have adapted their approaches, but not simply in terms of higher Defence Budgets and more military capability, but also in terms of what decisions their governments and societies have taken at strategic level or at the very local level that can be replicated or adapted for Ireland.

How these policies have been formed and then changed and updated is also a key point for a country such as Ireland, where the Security Environment Assessment which was part of the Defence Policy Review 2024 stated "Ireland is not immune to the type of threats facing partners and other nations who support the rules based international order. Government Defence policy must therefore respond to this dynamic situation".[83]

Ireland Threat Analysis

The threats to the state from the 1970s to the mid 1990s came mostly from internal paramilitaries. Personnel numbers were massively increased during the late 1970s, and as Eoin Kinsella writes in "The Irish Defence Forces 1922-2022", "the scale of Defence Forces

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[83] Security Environment Assessment, Defence Policy Review 2024, p 12-22, July 2024,www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/300417/bef2a6de-42ad-4af3-a6ae-73d1ef917704.pdf

operations within Ireland reached levels not seen since the Emergency".[84]

Numbers were increased in response to the Troubles and seem remarkable now. [85] The Permanent Defence Forces numbers increased from just over 8,000 in 1969 to over 13,500 ten years later. In fact, in 1977, they reached a high of 14,771, nearly twice the current number.

Armed escorts for "cash in transit" shipments were a regular duty for the DF, especially in more rural towns during the 1980s and 1990s, but the policy ended in 2014.[86] It represented a different form of threat to the state, either by armed criminal gangs or paramilitaries. Fundamentally, it was not an external threat posture.

Following the 9-11 attacks in the US, the Directorate of Military Intelligence (J2) undertook a greater involvement in intelligence gathering on individuals in Ireland, who may have had an involvement in extremism or espionage here.[87] However, there remains a potential for duplication and potential blind spots between Military Intelligence and Garda (police) Intelligence if there are not clear lines of who is responsible for what.[88]

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[84] Kinsella, *The Irish Defence Forces* 1922-2022, pp 212-15; "The Emergency" The period during the Second World War was declared a state of emergency and legislation to that effect was introduced in the Dail in September 1939. The act gave sweeping powers to the government, including strong censorship of the press, along with internment. It gave rise to the popular phrase "The Emergency" as the description of the war period in Ireland. Kinsella, The Irish Defence Forces 1922-2022 p 133

[85][104]"The Troubles" - the term used to describe the long running conflict in primarily in Northern Ireland between paramilitary forces and British security forces, resulting in sectarian killings and attacks, lasting nearly three decades and resulting in the deaths of over 3,500 people.

[86] The Journal.ie, 29 Nov 2014

[87] *The Sunday Times*, 16 Feb 2025

[88] *The Irish Times,* 3 March 2025

The Security Environment Assessment (SEA), carried out as part of the Defence Policy Review 2024, gives us an insight into the current areas of concern for the State. The document states that "the SEA has regard to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and also covers the increased strategic competition between states, as well as cyber, hybrid, maritime security, critical infrastructure, espionage, space, terrorism, organised crime, civil unrest, climate, energy security, critical raw materials, emerging disruptive technology, arms control and the need for broader and deeper cooperation with partners". [89]

One example of such an incident is the May 2021 major cyber-attack on the Health Service Executive (HSE), by a criminal gang based just outside of Moscow, which caused massive impact on several hospitals. [90] No ransom was paid, despite a demand for $20 million, but the attack had long-lasting consequences, costing over €100 million at the time, with a further €650 million needed on security upgrades.

Ireland's Maritime Security has come to the fore of the public's mind over the last few years, ever since the Russian Navy first said it would be carrying out major "live fire" exercises in our Exclusive Economic Waters to the southwest in January 2022. The risk to our Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) in maritime terms has perhaps never been higher. In recent months, a new maritime security unit has been set up at the Department of Defence to look at ways to address

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[89] Security Environment Assessment, Defence Policy Review 2024 – page 13-14

[90] RTE News 14th April 2021 https://www.rte.ie/news/health/2021/0514/1221537-hse-cyber-attack/, HSE Report into 2021 Cyber Attack, https://www2.hse.ie/services/cyber-attack/what-happened/

maritime threats and risks and to develop Ireland's first National Maritime Security Strategy.[91] The issue with this approach is a piecemeal approach to National Security Strategy, rather than one that encompasses all five domains.

Russian Naval and research vessels have had to be escorted from our waters in the past months. [92] Our waters contain critical energy and data communications cables on the seabed, amid concerns that Russian vessels could be "listening in" to data cables or carrying out sabotage.

Finland has already suffered because of what are thought to be Russia's "Shadow Fleet" of ships which have evaded sanctions through use of third-party ownership. [93]A power cable and several data cables were damaged, and anchor drag marks were found on the seabed in late 2024. [94] NATO Operation 'Baltic Sentry' was set up as a direct result of such actions, and to protect critical national infrastructure. [95]

Another such ghost ship, which often travel with their maritime transponders turned off, was discovered off the southwest coast of Ireland recently, by the Irish Air Corps.[96]

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[91] RTE News, 21 March 2025, https://www.rte.ie/news/2025/0321/1503209-new-maritime-security-unit/

[92] *The Guardian*, 16 Nov 2024

[93] CBS News, 30 Dec 2024 https://www.cbsnews.com/news/finland-undersea-cables-sabotage-russia-linked-ship-dragged-anchor/

[94] EU Parliament briefing: Russia's 'shadow fleet': Bringing the threat to light (Nov 2024) https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/766242/EPRS_BRI(2024)766242_EN.pdf

[95] NATO Baltic Sentry https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_232122.htm

[96] *The Journal*, 20 March 2025 https://www.thejournal.ie/a-russian-linked-ship-was-spotted-by-irish-military-dropping-its-anchor-near-an-undersea-cable-6654906-Mar2025/

This remains an urgent area to address as more than 95 percent of international data and voice communications go through fiber optic cables on the world's seafloors, according to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. [97] According to Dr Jason Power of the University of Limerick in times of conflict or tension, disrupting undersea cables could cripple communication and commerce, creating chaos without a direct military attack. [98]

Energy Security remains a priority topic in the face of Climate Change and extreme weather conditions, but also contentious in terms of planning issues around wind power or potential Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) terminals. The Strategic Environment Assessment (Section 2.3.5) highlights Climate Change as an International and a National driver of instability and indicates that the Defence Forces can similarly expect more extreme conditions when deployed internationally, while there will also be increased demand for military support domestically for disaster relief responses. [99]

The Assessment in the Defence Policy Review quotes the Hybrid Centre of Excellence in Helsinki definition of hybrid threats as "actions conducted by state or non-state actors, whose goal is to undermine or harm a target by combining overt and covert military and non-military means." The SEA notes the potential for the spreading of disinformation not just in Ireland but overseas in countries where Ireland's DF personnel may be deployed on peacekeeping duties.

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[97] NOAA Submarine Cables https://www.noaa.gov/submarine-cables

[98] RTE Brainstorm, 20 Nov 2024 https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2024/1120/1481913-undersea-cables-data-internet-ireland-europe-sabotage-military-attacks/

[99] Strategic Environment Assessment, Defence Policy Review 2024 (25 Jan 2025)

In section 2.3.10 the SEA notes that regarding Civil Unrest, there is a trend for protests to become more confrontational and to develop into violence internationally, and that Ireland is not immune from this trend. International Criminal Organisations are considered a genuine threat, as there are increasing records of transnational drug gangs landing contraband on our shores and using our waters for a mothership to offload to smaller vessels.

The threat of Terrorism both domestic and international, is assessed as moderate, according to the SEA report within the Defence Policy Review 2024 (Section 2.3.8) - 'an attack possible but not likely.' Such attacks include left- and right-wing violent extremism. [100]

One area that has not been mentioned in Ireland's context, but perhaps should be, is the potential disturbance, or even danger from GPS interference. There has been a recorded increase in incidents of Russian Electronic Warfare causing dropouts in GPS coverage over the Baltic Sea region and beyond. [101]

There are a series of redundancy systems built into commercial flights, so airlines at present don't seem overly concerned. But there was a report of this happening for the first time over the Atlantic in December 2024, and it leads back to two problems areas for Ireland: the lack of Primary Radar, and the lack of military interceptor jets. [102]

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[100] Defence Policy Review 2024, Government of Ireland, 14 August 2024;); National Security, Dail Eireann Debate, 23 January 2025 https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2025-02-05/811/ (24 March 2025)

[101] Keir Giles, Who Will Defend Europe? (London, 2024) pp 158-9; *The Guardian*, 22 April 2024

[102] aero-space.eu, 'Navigating the Atlantic: First Ever GPS Jamming on Commerical Flights,, 20 June 2024, (https://aero-space.eu/2024/06/20/navigating-the-atlantic-first-ever-gps-jamming-on-commercial-flights/) (21 March 2025)

Irish Defence Policy

There is an argument that contemporary Irish Defence Policy has had two main aims: the security of the state, and the fulfillment of our UN Peacekeeping mandates. Both have become difficult to fully complete due to static investment, which has in part led to dropping recruitment and retention numbers. [103] A booming economy has added to the difficulty for many employers and our Defence Forces are no different, although there are signs of some "green shoots" as 2024 was the first year that the strength of the force grew in seven years when discharges were taken into consideration.

Prior to this, some of the most significant developments in Defence Policy have been Ireland signing up to the EU's Defence mechanism, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in 2017, and joined its first missions, which were training and maritime surveillance.[104]

As Lt Comdr Mike Brunicardi articulates in Defence Review 2023, Ireland has developed its National Defence Policy but continues to have no National Security Strategy (NSS), and that such a strategy is needed to establish the "Ends, Ways and Means" for Ireland to ensure its sovereignty.[105]

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[103] RTE.ie, Defence Forces say retaining members remains 'difficult', 18 March 2025 https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2025/0318/1502584-defence-forces/ (18 March 2025)

[104] *Irish Times,* 6 March 2018; PESCO https://www.pesco.europa.eu/about/

[105] Brunicardi, Securing Ireland's Future: Advancing National Security and Defence through a Comprehensive Five-Doman National Security Strategy, Defence Forces Review 2023

He quotes DuMont in identifying the key NSS blocks – an endorsement by the Head of Government, accurate reflection of national values, clear articulation of national interests, identification of future challenges, risk and threat assessment, overview of required resources, effective timeframe and basic implementation guide.[106]

Having gone out for public consultation in 2019, the NSS document has now been sent out for review once more, rather than being finalised. [107] But this could give us a chance to optimize the strategy at a time when the security landscape has begun to change yet again with considerable speed.

One PESCO project we have recently signed up to, which could be of direct advantage to us is the Critical Seabed Infrastructure Protection project (CSIP) which will develop capabilities based on a shared underwater policy and can be tailored to specific national requirements.

However, it is still in its "ideation" phase, with a Project Execution Year of 2035 and no fixed Project Completion Year. [108]

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[106] DuMont, "Elements of National Security Strategy", Strategy Consortium 2019

[107] *The* Journal, Jan 2025, https://www.thejournal.ie/national-security-programme-for-government-analysis-6596865-Jan2025/

[108] Critical Seabed Infrastructure Protection CSIP, PESCO, https://www.pesco.europa.eu/project/critical-seabed-infrastructure-protection-csip/

Currently the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is becoming more important and central to European Defence. [109] Initially set up with roles for coordination of peacekeeping, conflict prevention and consolidating member security, it now has more of a concentration on security and defence missions & helping to develop Maritime and Cybersecurity Strategies for example.[110]

Ireland's experience of EU Battlegroups has been largely positive despite political dissension amongst some groups. After becoming fully operational in 2007 Ireland participated in the Nordic EU battlegroup in January 2008 and is currently part of the German led EU Battlegroup from 2025-'27.[111] They are usually composed of 1500 personnel each and form an integral part of the EU's military rapid reaction capacity to respond to emerging crises and conflicts around the world.

Modern variations of the question: "why do we need an army?" continue. Political debates over what are the contemporary security threats to Ireland can often be framed in the context of "who will be invading us?", and through the historic prism of the Second World War when there was a fear of invasion by Nazi forces, or even British forces [112] as opposed to examining contemporary external security threats to the state.

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[109] CSDP What we do: policies and actions https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/what-we-do-policies-and-actions-0_en#8829

[110] EU Maritime Security Strategy - https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/maritime-security_en

[111] EU Battlegroups, Eurocorps.org, https://www.eurocorps.org/readiness/european-battle-group/

[112] Neutrality and the Triple Lock: Motion [Private Members Motion] Dáil Eireann, 29 May 2024

By far the most significant development in Defence Policy in recent years has come because of the findings of the Independent Commission on the Defence Forces published in February 2022 and the High-Level Action Plan that followed in July of the same year. [113]

The Commission spent over a year determining structure, capabilities, and staffing for the Permanent Defence Forces (PDF) and the Reserve Defence Forces (RDF) to the period beyond 2030. Ultimately it concluded that there was a disconnect between stated policy, resources, and capabilities. It made numerous recommendations with increases in capability development such as additional naval vessels, primary radar and the potential for fighter jets, along with new Command and Control structures which could have impactful effect with a new Chief of Defence position (CHoD) and Service Chiefs for land, air, and maritime.

The Commission gave three basic or stark choices for the sitting government. Remain at Level of Ambition 1 (LOA 1) *(see Annex I)*, the current capability, LOA 2 enhanced capability, or LOA 3 conventional capability - "Developing full spectrum defence capabilities". The Government approved a move to LOA 2.

However, by the time the Programme for Government was agreed after the November 2024 General Election, there was a decidedly more urgent feeling to national defence and security.

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[113] Commission on the Defence Forces www.military.ie/en/public-information/publications/report-of-the-commission-on-defence-forces/report-of-the-commission-on-defence-forces.pdf; Detailed Implementation Report, https://www.military.ie/!F54TGA

Rather than saying they would examine the possibility of moving to LOA 3 once LOA 2 has been achieved, the government now says it wants to move to LOA 3 "as soon as economically possible" and "based on similar (sized) countries".[114]

Tanaiste and Minister for Defence Simon Harris said Ireland's defence budget should reach the highest level possible of around €3 billion p.a. in the years ahead, and that he instructed officials in the Department of Defence to prepare a "more aggressive procurement strategy" for acquiring new military capabilities for the Defence Forces, including interceptor jets, as well as radar and sonar capabilities. [115] At this point it is also necessary to define what kind of military structure and organisational lines we employ – the primary task of the DF is the security of the state, so by definition, it is a territorial force. [116]

But one of the very important roles the DF carry out is that of peacekeepers, and occasionally in UN Chapter 7 peace enforcement, so does this require a form of expeditionary force capability, depending on the mission requirements?

The Detailed Implementation Plan stresses the "need to be flexible and responsive throughout the implementation process, so that we can quickly respond to new priorities that may emerge." [117]

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[114] Programme for Government, p.143, 15 Jan 2025

[115] *RTE News*, 22 Feb 2025; *RTE News*, 28 Feb 2025

[116] A Territorial Force in Ireland's context is structed in terms of manpower and Capability Development to protect the state, while an Expeditionary Force in the contemporary context would be a force that is structured and deployed to fight or carry out peacekeeping roles, or humanitarian support in a third country or region.

[117] Detailed Implementation Plan for the Report of the Commission of the Defence Forces, Nov 2023, p. 3.

Already, as previously stated, the DF contribute to the EU Battlegroup, which are now available in a Military Rapid Response Operation form from the start of 2025, for operations lasting from 30 to 120 days in a radius of 6,000 km from Brussels. [118]

The other major development in recent months has been Cabinet moves to remove the Government policy termed the "Triple Lock", which requires a UN Security Council resolution, along with approval from the Cabinet and the Dáil before more than 12 members of the Defence Forces can be deployed overseas. The argument given has been that Russia, China, the US, or any of the permanent members of the Security Council can block a new resolution giving effect to a new UN peace mission. The last new full peacekeeping mission was to the Central African Republic in 2014 (MINUSCA) with a Justice Support Mission in Haiti in 2017 (MINUJUSTH).

Nine Army Rangers (ARW/IRLSOF) deployed to Kabul with two senior diplomats to help evacuate 26 Irish citizens during the fall of the country to the Taliban in 2021, but no more could be deployed.[119] The new legislation, if passed, will allow up to 50 personnel to be deployed overseas, without UN mandate. [120]

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[118] EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/milex24-shows-eus-military-capacity_en#:~:text=From%201st%20January%202025%2C%20the,of%206%2C000%20km%20from%20Brussels

[119] The Army Ranger Wing is the Special Operations Force of the Defence Forces whose roles include Securing of vital objectives, Long Range Patrolling, Intelligence Gathering, Counterinsurgency and Hostage Rescue. https://www.military.ie/en/who-we-are/army/arw/

[120] *Irish Times, 27* Aug 2021; Tánaiste secures government approval to reform the Triple Lock 4 March 2025 https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/60436-tanaiste-secures-government-approval-to-reform-the-triple-lock/

This issue brings debate about Irish neutrality. However, this thesis is not examining the question of military alignments, but what, if anything, Ireland can learn from similar sized countries, in terms of security and defence policy leading to a National Security Strategy. This study examines how best to improve security of the nation, so it can have continuity, in the event of crisis. It is however, interested in the prevalent mood of rearmament in Europe, and how it will impact Ireland in terms a National Security Strategy.

In March 2021, the EU published its Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, to bring about a High-Level assessment of joint threats, and developing new ways to defend EU citizens. [121] In 2024, the European Commission appointed Andrius Kubilius, its first ever Commissioner for Defence and Space, who prepared the EU's White Paper on Defence, identifying seven priority areas to focus on for each state to vastly improve European defence

capability. [122] These include air and missile defence, artillery systems, ammunition and missiles, drones and anti-drone systems and strategic airlift. The issue of recruitment and retention is one that militaries across Europe are having to struggle with. Apart from Poland, which has a standing force of nearly 300,000 non-conscripts, most European countries are struggling to find people to make up their defence forces.

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[121]EU Strategic Compass https://www.strategic-compass-european-union.com/

[122]EU Defence White Paper https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/white-paper-for-european-defence-readiness-2030_en

Poland now wants to train 100,000 volunteers per year to back the professional army and Territorial Defence Force, according to Prime Minister Donald Tusk. [123] Patrick Bury argues that the UK may need to introduce a hybrid force that blends professional forces with highly selective national conscription, there is not the argument or taste for conscription in Ireland. [124] But there may be a place for more active selective Reservists with special skills. We'll return to this in Chapter 4.

Denmark Threat Analysis

The current standout threats for Denmark have moved from the focus of the Cold War where they emanated from the USSR, as a member of NATO, to wider risks from Islamic extremist terrorism after 9-11. Denmark then returned their concentration to Moscow under Vladimir Putin's reign, especially after his invasion of Ukraine in 2022, when European sanctions against Russia were enacted, and Danish arms donations to Ukraine began – more on that below.

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[123] CNN 11 March 2025, https://edition.cnn.com/2025/03/11/europe/poland-100000-volunteers-military-training-intl/index.html

[124] Bury, P. (2024). The End of the All-Volunteer Force: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying about Recruitment and Love Selective Conscription. *The RUSI Journal*, *169*(7), 34–42.

Denmark faces threats to Critical National Infrastructure along with Ireland. It was one of several countries which tightened security around energy pipelines after the alleged sabotage of the Nord Stream pipeline in the Baltic Sea in 2022 [125] and which has continued with suspicious activity by a Chinese vessel. [126] Danish Defence is supporting NATO's Baltic Sentry and increasing its surveillance of the waters surrounding the country using aircraft, ships and coastal radar. [127]

According to the Centre for Cyber Security in København, the threat of both Cyber Espionage and Cyber Crime is "Very High", primarily from Russia and China, with 2023 seeing "more ransomware incidents in Denmark and across the world than ever registered". [128]

One of the more surreal forms of threat at present could come from the United States, as President Donald Trump has insisted the US needed Greenland to guarantee "peace of the entire world" and that its waterways had "Chinese and Russian ships all over the place". [129]

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[125] EuroNews - Nord Stream: Norway and Denmark tighten energy infrastructure security after gas pipeline 'attack' - 28 Aug 2022 https://www.euronews.com/2022/09/28/norway-and-denmark-tighten-security-around-energy-infrastructure-after-pipeline-attack (16 Feb 2025)

[126] EuroNews - Denmark and Norway continue to investigate damaged cables in Baltic Sea 21 Nov 2024 https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/11/21/denmark-and-norway-continue-to-investigate-damaged-cables-in-baltic-sea (9 March 2025)

[127] Danish Defence Forces, 'Danish Defence supports increased NATO monitoring of critical infrastructure', 27 Jan 2025 (https://www.forsvaret.dk/en/news/2025/the-danish-defence-supports-increased-nato-monitoring-of-critical-infrastructure/) (25 March 2025)

[128] Threat assessment, The cyber threat against Denmark 2024. (Sept 2024) Centre for Cyber Security, København. www.cfcs.dk/globalassets/cfcs/dokumenter/trusselsvurderinger/en/cfcs---the-cyber-threat-against-denmark-2024.pdf

[129] BBC News 'Vance scolds Denmark during Greenland trip' 29 March 2025 https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cr525e49m2do

US Vice President JD Vance visited the territory without invitation, but said the US would not use military force to take the island from Denmark. This has left both Greenlanders and Danish politicians uneasy, so the plans of an ally since the Second World War are now counterintuitively, increasing felt in the "Threat" column.

Defence Policy:

Danish Defence Policy has moved from a "non-provocative" stance and "flying low" during the Cold War, Dr Iben Bjørnsson of the Royal Danish Defence College contends (in interview for this thesis), to one where they were heavily represented in NATO and UN missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. After the turn of the millennium, there had been rhetoric that Denmark had not been participating enough and had let her allies down, and there was a sense of "making up" for détente during the Cold War, according to Bjørnsson.

The Danish military at this time converted from a National Defence to an Expeditionary Force (as defined above) and was focused on making contributions to international missions. And while this resulted in savings, the cuts resulted in a lack of a cohesive national defence according to Bjørnsson. This is a thought-provoking point for the Irish DF, while it is not an expeditionary force by nature or doctrine, elements must be made available for EU Battlegroups, which are a Rapid Reaction Force and has a mandate to travel up to 6000km from Brussels.

National Security Strategy

Dr Bjørnsson says Denmark has kept on the good side of the US and been the US's closest ally, and this ties in to why we they sent big contributions to Afghanistan and Iraq, and that security issues in Europe were less important for the past 25 years. But this has not stood to them with Trump making claims on Greenland and has left relations with the US "very much up in the air right now".

One of the more remarkable accomplishments from the Irish viewpoint, is how multiple Danish political parties can come together to agree Defence and Security Strategy for the country. Bjørnsson says that ever since the post Second World War period, it has been the goal to have as many political parties as possible on board when it comes to the Defence Law, so they have been relatively stable.

Again, the Chapter 2 experience of conflict leads to a more collective approach to security, and certainly more prioritizing of it. As opposed to Ireland, a country at the edge of the Atlantic, which was not invaded or occupied in the Second World War but fought a Civil War before that. The current agreement from 2024 to 2030 has more parties contributing to it and speaks to the situation in Ukraine with the €24 billion agreement reflecting the need to build-up Danish Defence quicker than previously expected, along with a new model for conscription extending the conscription period to 11 months service with up to 5000 conscripts yearly and full gender equality.[130]

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[130] Danish Defence Agreement 2024-2033 https://www.fmn.dk/en/topics/agreements-and-economi/agreement-for-danish-defence/

Danish aid to Ukraine since the beginning of the war has been significant and amounts to approx. €7 billion in military support and another €693 million in civilian contributions, according to the Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. This has placed them 4th overall in international rankings in terms of donor countries for military aid, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy's 'Ukraine Support Tracker', 12th for Humanitarian donations, and 18th for financial donations. [131]

Denmark has become part of alternative defence arrangements, amongst them the Joint Expeditionary Force, and NORDEFCO, the Nordic Defence Cooperation organisation. Their approach to both could be worth examining in Ireland's case, in so far as any adaptations would not lead to a military alignment. Denmark is also a member of the Northern European Joint Expeditionary Force, set up by the UK, and as Finland and Sweden are in NATO now, it forms an important "sub-set" of NATO as per Giles ("Who Will Defend Europe?" 2024). But where NATO requires consensus to act, JEF countries can individually quickly decide to participate in a mission, such as a quick response to damaged gas and communications cables in the Baltic Sea in October 2023. [132]

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[131] Kiel Institute for the World Economy – Ukraine Support Tracker
https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/

[132] Joint Expeditionary Force, history of, https://jefnations.org/about-the-jef/history-of-the-jef/ ; Giles, Who Will Defend Europe? pp 128-9

NORDEFCO which is a non-command Defence cooperation body consisting of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. [133] It focuses on cooperation, policy and joint training. However, a unified Nordic air defence known as the Joint Nordic Air Command, has been established since March 2023, and has created a combined command structure, for over 250 aircraft, along with flexible basing and intelligence sharing. [134]

The Danish Defence organisation has 16,000 personnel overall and is made up of five services, as well as High Command. [135] The Army comprises 7000-9000 professional troops, excluding conscripts undergoing basic training. And internationally they have deployments to Latvia, Iraq and The United Kingdom (support for Ukraine).

The Navy retains 3,000 personnel. The Danish Air Force also has approximately 3,000 personnel, while the Arctic Command and Special Operations Command have another 2,000 troops collectively. The Reserve component has approximately 44,000 personnel available for mobilization. Denmark has also been part UN's first peacekeeping missions since the first operation in 1948 - United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). [136]

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[133] Georgetown Security Studies Review, Breaking the Ice: The Prospect of a Joint Nordic Military https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2024/01/18/breaking-the-ice-the-prospect-of-a-joint-nordic-military/

[134] Reuters, Nordic countries plan joint air defence to counter Russian threat, 24 March 2023 https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/nordic-countries-plan-joint-air-defence-counter-russian-threat-2023-03-24/

[135] Danish Defence https://www.forsvaret.dk/en/organisation/army/; DefenceAdancement.com https://www.defenseadvancement.com/resources/danish-armed-forces/#:~:text=As%20of%202021%2C%20Denmark%20maintains,reserve%20personnel%20available%20for%20mobilization.

[136] Danish Defence – Middle East ceasefire monitoring, (n.d.) https://www.forsvaret.dk/en/roles-and-responsibilities/International-operations/the-middle-east---untso/ (28 March 2025)

Finland Threat Analysis

The Finnish Government has been conducting National Risk Assessments since 2015, and also Regional Risk Assessments for 16 areas with finer detail. The National Risk Assessment for 2023 outlines several threats and breaks them down into three areas: Global; Society; Individual. [137] Societal threats are defined as: the use of military force against the country, political, financial, and military pressure, mass influx of migrants, disruption to water supplies/health security/information and communication networks/the financial system/public economy/continuity of transport/energy supply/food supply.

The overall motto is "Securing the Functions Vital to Society", and this is the underlying approach that Finnish Defence policy takes – identifying what are the vital mechanisms needed to ensure the continuation of the State's way of life, what are the risks to them in multiple forms of threat event, and how to counter them.

The National Risk Assessment states that Russia is increasingly ready to violate the sovereignty of other states.

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[137] Finland Ministry of the Interior, National Risk Assessment 2023, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164629/SM_2023_6.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

The risk assessment in Finland differs to Ireland. It is longer (97 pages), much more detailed and offers more potential solutions to identified risks. The 41-page National Risk Assessment – Overview of Strategic Risks from the Government of Ireland, is a very broad-brush approach to a range of potential problems, but does not offer solutions, nor does it go into regional detail. The Strategic Environment Assessment within the Defence Policy Review is an 11-page document with specific areas that it focuses on. Finland's risk assessment also outlines the areas different administrative branches and other parties must be prepared for.

The Finnish Intelligence Service SUPO says the most likely threat of terrorist attack continues to come from lone operators or small groups advocating far-right or radical Islamist ideology, with the current threat level set to the third level of "Elevated" on a five-point scale. [138]

Russia is not the only potential malign actor in the region, according to the Finland Government Defence Review 2024. [139] China has plans for the Baltic Sea countries. "Russia's confrontation with the West is felt in Finland's neighbouring regions especially through broad-spectrum influencing that target critical infrastructure for example. China has also stepped up its influencing attempts in Finland and in Finland's neighbouring regions."

It is worth noting that Finland has signaled it will pullout of an agreement banning the use of anti-personnel mines.[140] Their reasons being Russia's use of such weapons in Ukraine.

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[138] Finnish Intelligence Services terrorist threat report, https://supo.fi/en/terrorist-threat-assessment

[139] Reuters 18 Dec 2024 https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/finland-considering-exiting-anti-personnel-landmine-treaty-minister-says-2024-12-18/

[140] Reuters 18 Dec 2024 https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/finland-considering-exiting-anti-personnel-landmine-treaty-minister-says-2024-12-18/

Finland's move from Total Defence to the Comprehensive Security Model has been an "evolution of the threat scenarios after the Cold War", as Brig Gen Valtonen puts it, when total war itself wasn't the obvious scenario when they entered this millennium.[141] They moved from preparing for every threat (as with a total war) to the most probable threats, and Valtonen counts them as cuts to energy supplies, to catastrophes, and making sure the ministries of the Interior, or Finance, or Transport do their preparedness training. This also meant private companies (which provide more and more of these services) would participate more in joint preparedness planning.

There are approximately 22,400 salaried personnel in the Finnish Defence Forces, and conscription has been the model for 170 years, with updates in line with societal needs. Call ups to the Army take place from the age of 18 (both male and voluntary female), and last from 6 to 12 months depending on the skills being learned. They then become part of the Reserve Army, which is 280,000 strong, along with a potential to call up 850,000 basic trained soldiers.

20,000 reservists are trained each year, with basic reservists being on call until the age of 50, and specialists and leaders until 60, but this may change to 65. Valtonen says this has previously been regularly asked "is this still valid?" but because of Ukraine, no one asks that anymore. The budget has been raised, and the order for 5th generation F35 fighters still seems on track [142] and new orders are in place for naval vessels.

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[141] Interview with Finnish Brig Gen Vesa Valtonen, via Zoom, 22 Jan 2025

[142] Finnish Air Force update re F35 order (https://ilmavoimat.fi/-/katsaus-f-35-hankkeen-tilanteeseen?languageId=en_US)

But Valtonen says they are trying to get out of the "trench warfare" frame of Ukraine and try to avoid the type of attrition warfare as Russia has the resources to do that as long as it wants.

Perhaps the most significant policy approach is "in Europe no country can do it by itself, and that small countries must share burdens."

Threat Analysis Comparison

Ireland has started slowing moving from Age of Geographic Regional Security, to realising there are security risks in not spending enough on protecting your own state. Issues of neutrality inevitably become entangled with increased defence spending even if there is public agreement that the policy will not change.

Denmark moved jarringly at first, from hesitancy within EU Security policy, and an expeditionary footing for NATO international missions, to territorial defence, and now to wider Baltic and Nordic defence cooperation.

Finland has been very proactive for decades in terms of knowing where the threats are to its society, and in turn nearly all Finnish society is willing to play a part in its protection. This may also come from a cultural and historical background of fighting several conflicts during the 20th century, operating under existential threats, and dealing with contemporary menaces from your Eastern neighbour.

*See Comparative Threat Matrix on page 53.

Recommendations

Threat Assessments need to be more comprehensive, and should be one strategic document that covers all areas, from security risks, to energy risks, to economic risk, and more, and break down what areas of administration and private sector have responsibility for these sectors, how they should exercise together, and what form their solutions should take. This information should be made public, as far as possible, and involve public preparedness, as we'll discuss in the next chapter.

Threat Matrix for Ireland, Denmark & Finland

Country		**Ireland**	**Denmark**	**Finland**
Likelihood scale:	**Form of Threat:**			
Certain - 100% likely / almost 100% likely	Increased Air Activity	Likely (4)	Likely (4)	Certain (5)
Likely - likely to happen/ will probably happen	Hybrid Action at Border	Unlikely (1)	Unlikely (2)	Certain (5)
Possible	Increased Naval Activity	Likely (4)	Likely (4)	Likely (4)
Unlikely	Cyber Attacks	Possible (3)	Likely (4)	Likely (4)
Very Unlikely	Increase in Disinformation	Likely (4)	Likely (4)	Likely (4)
	Full Invasion	Very Unlikely (1)	Unlikely (2)	Possible (3)
	Damage to Marine Infrastructure	Possible (3)	Possible (3)	Possible (3)
	Threat to Energy Supplies	Unlikely (1)	Possible (3)	Possible (3)
		TOTAL: 21	**TOTAL: 26**	**TOTAL: 31**

Chapter 4

Military in Society / Society in the Military

Finland's former military intelligence chief Pekka Toveri says "Finland doesn't *have* a defence force. Finland *is* a defence force." [143] This says a great deal about how civil society sees itself as part of the nation's security. This chapter examines how the three countries under focus integrate military and society, and how it can be done naturally.

The Irish DF, and the role of national security has a complex place in Ireland. There is a lot of respect for the DF, but that has been damaged by findings of the Independent Review Group - Defence Force Perceptions and Experience Survey (2022) where 88% of female respondents reported that they have experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment, compared with 17% of male respondents. [144] This followed the groundbreaking Women of Honour RTE Radio 1 documentary by Katie Hannon. [145]

The Commission on Defence referenced that the "Defence Forces are rightly held in high regard in Ireland, and various barometers of public trust in institutions have, over the years, consistently placed the organisation to the forefront in this regard, there are credible indications

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[143] Giles, "Who Will Defend Europe?" p 166

[144] *The Irish Times*, 31 Dec 2019, Final Report to the Minister for Defence, Independent Review Group, 2022, *The Irish Examiner*, 29 March 2023

[145] RTE Radio 1, Women of Honour documentary, 23 Oct 2021, (https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/women-of-honour/) (17 Feb 2025)

of morale issues". [146] One such issue the Commission found is "a lack of a clear basis for valuing the Defence Forces." This returns us to the question that is asked in some quarters "why do we have an army if we are neutral?" or "why would we think about spending more money on defence if we are neutral?" [147]

The motto or tagline that is attached to a lot of DF publications is "Defend, Protect, Support", but some may not see a need for the role of "defender", and only see the DF in their "support" roles. Now is the time for their "protection" role to be understood.

Educational approaches for connecting with society can be through three areas: defence colleges with courses open to the public, research and development partnerships with universities and industry, and though museum exhibits displaying the history and operations of a country's military. Ireland has a UN Training School (UNTSI) with a very high reputation but is not set up to teach defence and security courses for the public.[148]

Several universities offer Masters in connected areas, including Maynooth, UCD and the University of Galway, but not in the same format as those in Denmark, or Finland. Denmark's Royal Danish Defence College offers both Professional Military Education (PME) courses such

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[146] Commission on the Defence Forces, 8.2.3 Morale, p 92

[147] *The Irish Times*, 2 Jan 2025

[148] UN Training School, https://www.military.ie/en/who-we-are/army/defence-forces-training-centre/the-military-college/un-training-school-ireland/

as Arctic Security Studies to those serving in the military, but also to selected civilians in the Danish Defence Health Sector and civilians working with the Department of Defence or Emergency Management Agency. [149]

Finland runs "elite National Defence Courses" four times a year, "typically made up of members of parliament and personally invited individuals in position of leadership in various sectors of the economy and critical infrastructure, branches of government, the media, scientists, academics and influential cultural figures" (Giles, 2024).[150] These courses are three and a half weeks long and seen as important and prestigious. The National Defence University also offers Finnish citizens who have a bachelor's degree from a civilian university, the chance to study for a Masters in Military Science.[151]

Ireland is providing early-stage funding for Defence Technology Research, where the Air Corps, Naval Service, and Ordnance Corps can work with colleges and technological universities around the country on several projects. The Research, Technology and Innovation (RTI) Unit, which is a joint unit of the Department of Defence and the DF has been in operation since 2021, and is developing an ecosystem with academia and industry, but this takes time.[152]

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[149] Royal Danish Defence College, About Us, https://www.fak.dk/en/about-us/

[150] Keir Giles, Who Will Defend Europe? (London, 2024)

[151] *The Irish Times*, 26 Feb 2022: Finnish National Defence University https://maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu.fi/en/the-degrees-we-offer

[152] Research Ireland, Defence Researchhttps://www.researchireland.ie/news/defence-force-technology/; RTI Unit https://www.military.ie/en/public-information/defence-research,-technology-and-innovation-rti-unit/

Waterford Aerospace Centre was recently established between Waterford Airport and South-East Technological University and will specialize in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and link to the Air Corps and industry.[153] Denmark has a National Defence Technology Centre made up of universities and technology institutes collaborating on defence technologies.[154]

The use of museums can have a significant role in conveying the history and importance of a country's military to the continued existence of their society in some cases. The DF have four small museums at barracks around the country, but some are only open infrequently. The permanent "Soldiers & Chiefs" exhibit at the National Museum at Collins Barracks has won awards and probably has the highest number of visitors, albeit a substantial number would be from overseas, and doesn't venture far into the 21st century in terms of content. [155] Areas of contention may remain, such as in documenting and displaying involvement in the Civil Way, and involvement in agreements that were contentious such as PfP and even PESCO, but without providing information and educational material, the public will rarely hear what our involvement is about.

Denmark's approach is different (and can be compared to that of the Imperial War Museum in London). Their exhibits cover over 500 years of military history in the country, all the way up

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[153] *The Irish* Independent, 1 April 2025

[154] National Defence Technology Centre, Denmark: https://www.en.nfc.dk/

[155] Defence Force museums https://www.military.ie/en/public-information/defence-forces-museums/

to their involvement in Afghanistan, and onto an exhibit entitled "Game Changer? Drones in War." [156] This conveys a combination of academic, current affairs and the historian's approach in the explanation of how a country's modern military must operate.

The Military Museum of Finland is part of the Finnish National Defence University, with exhibitions that span wars fought centuries ago to hybrid actions and modern-day crisis management, with over 143,000 people visiting it every year.[157]

To understand why you have a defence force and what they do, a certain degree of military pedagogy is required, and unfortunately, this can be lacking in Ireland. The Irish DF have been one of the most discussed but least understood public service organisations (Kinsella 2023). But perhaps there is an inflection point at present, in terms of information received and understood in Irish society.

In the article "Becoming a warring nation: the Danish 'military moment' and its repercussions", by Mads Daugbjerg & Birgitte Refslund Sørensen, there is the argument that Denmark moved from liberal political stances, and peacekeeping roles, to an "activist" foreign policy throughout the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan missions. [158] But it retained public support in regular opinion polls.

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[156] Danish Military Museums https://en.natmus.dk/museums-and-palaces/danish-war-museum/exhibitions/game-changer-drones-in-war/

[157] Military Museum of Finland: https://sotamuseo.fi/en/about-us

[158] Daugbjerg, M., & Refslund Sørensen, B. (2016). Becoming a warring nation: the Danish 'military moment' and its repercussions. Critical Military Studies, 3(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2016.1231994

In Ireland, one of the DF roles is to be an "Aid to the Civil Power". In quite simple terms, in Finland, society aids the military, and is very much part of it, through massive Reserve numbers, and continuous training of members of the government, the public and private companies. In Ireland, the military aids society, and while it can create a lot of debate about its role, it tends to be an arm of the public service that is least understood (Kinsella, 2023) and has very low Reserve strength.

In Denmark, conscription has been along "selective" lines, and according to Politico.eu (March 13, 2024) compulsory military service applies to men over the age of 18, in Denmark, but as there are enough volunteers, not all young men are conscripted, and a lottery is held instead.

One method of revitalizing the connection between society and the military is through redesigning the concept of the Reserve Defence Force, how it will operate, who it hopes to attract, and where it should physically place its centres.

In Jonathan Carroll's fine analysis of the Army Reserve in EU, The Irish Defence Forces and Contemporary Studies (2023), his point is that in its current form, it does not bring anything "meaningful or unique" to the Irish defence framework. And they should focus on expensive to maintain specialist skills, such as in IT, medical, engineering and logistics, that could train, operate and deploy with the Permanent Defence Force, as the Commission on the Defence Forces recommends. [159]

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[159]Jonathan Carroll, "The Reserve Defence Force Revitalizing the Irish Army Reserve Post-Commission on the Defence Forces: Moving from the Single Force Concept to a Total Force Policy" in Jonathan Carroll, Matthew G. O'Neill, Mark Williams (eds) *The EU, The Irish Defence Forces and Contemporary Studies* (Cham, Switzerland, 2023) pp 123-51 at p. 125

As the Irish economy is close to full employment, at time of writing, he makes two very valid points; reservists often cannot commit too much of their civilian careers, and the military cannot compete with those in lucrative permanent jobs, so the Reserve component makes better financial sense. And when you add in the fact that Ireland is the only country in Europe where military reservists are expected to serve in an unpaid capacity, we are not making it easy for those who would otherwise be interested in serving. Richardson argues in the same publication as referred to above, that there should be employment protection for Reservists, and employer engagement to educate them about the benefits of their employee's reserve service and potential absence from work.

According to the Reserve Defence Force Regeneration and Development Plan (RDFRDP), a Third Line Reserve will be made up of specialists. It remains to be seen whether the three different, and separate lines of reserves will miss an opportunity to mix the experience and skills of the First Line Reserve (FLR) with the other reservists. [160] The positioning of Reserve units and their training facilities close to urban areas, and population centres will have an influence.

Security analyst Declan Power has advocated focusing on colleges and "related areas to offer short service contracts, particularly in specialist areas like engineering, IT, medical-related disciplines and so on." [161]

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[160] First Line Reserve – ex DF 2020, the FLR strength was just 274 personnel, 236 of whom were privates. Only 3 were officers. Department of Defence, "Tabular Statement: Substantive Strength of the Second Line Reserve," December 31, 2020 - Army Reserve 1524 effective personnel

[161] *The Irish Examiner,* 5 June 2024

This could be a similar approach to the US Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)[162], where the ROTC programme will help pay for college tuition, while the student takes part in short military courses, without a post college commitment, or the University Officer Training Corps in the UK[163] (or its equivalents with the Royal Navy or RAF).

When are the DF seen in Ireland? Depending on who you ask, you may get several forms of answers, from parades to ceremonial occasions, UN missions or time of extreme weather events, such as the recent Storm Eowyn, when Air Corps helicopters were needed to bring ESB crew to remote locations to help restore power. A prominent example of their Aid to the Civil Authority (ATCA) role was during Covid 19 when the DF and Reserve formed a Joint Task Force (JTF) known as Operation Fortitude to support government departments and agencies. [164]

The sight of the DF on the streets of our main cities can be so rare that it can set off rumours and be used for disinformation purposes, such as when images from a planned exercise or event were used on social media, claiming they had been deployed on the night of the Dublin riots in November 2023. Even established media were fooled by anonymous social posts.[165] This links back to the need for greater training on how to spot disinformation as in the Finnish approach.[166]

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[162] US ROTCwww.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/what-rotc-programs-are-and-how-they-work

[163] UK University Officer Training Corps www.army.mod.uk/learn-and-explore/about-the-army/corps-regiments-and-units/university-officers-training-corps/ (Note – similar university courses are run in connection with the UK RAF and Royal Navy)

[164]Operation Fortitude https://www.military.ie/en/who-we-are/army/covid-19-joint-task-force-jtf-/#:~:text=In%20the%20case%20of%20COVID,range%20of%20requests%20for%20support.

[165]*The Irish Independent* 3 December 2023

[166]*The Irish Times,* 26 Feb 2022

The public has become used to national grid operator Eirgrid publishing a 'Winter Outlook'[167], which examines the demands on the electricity system that year, alongside inherent risks and challenges from geo-political pressures to the weather, to outages at power stations and on interconnectors. It would be ideal if the media and the public could become familiar with both the National Risk Assessment, and the Strategic Environment Assessment, and that they are both delivered in a form that is easy to understand, and do not provoke panic or fear, but become part of daily life, as in the case of Finland, where preparedness is their watchword.

The study Nordic Societal Security [168] edited by Sebastian Larsson, concludes there are different forms of societal security in the four countries, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark, with Norway and Sweden taking it up officially to the highest degree, while Finland has a preferred notion of 'Comprehensive Security', and Larsson determines that there is almost no formal adoption of the approach in Denmark.

Another informative piece of research was that carried out after Denmark contributed to the NATO mission to Afghanistan. In the article "In Denmark, Afghanistan is worth dying for: How public support for the war was maintained in the face of mounting casualties and elusive success" .[169]

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[167] Eirgrid, Winter Outlook 2024-25, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://cms.eirgrid.ie/sites/default/files/publications/EirGrid-Winter-Outlook-2024-25.pdf

[168] Larsson, S., & Rhinard, M. (Eds.). (2020). Nordic Societal Security: Convergence and Divergence (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003045533

[169] Peter Viggo Jakobsen & Jens Ringsmose, 'In Denmark, Afghanistan is worth dying for: How public support for the war was maintained in the face of mounting casualties and elusive success' in *Cooperation and Conflict*, May 2014, DOI: 10.1177/0010836714545688

Jakobsen and Ringsmose explain how, much to successive Danish governments own surprise, they have succeeded in maintaining the highest level of public support. Their conjecture is that the initial broad popular support was built upon as the Danish government changed from promoting long term goals of "winning" to short term strategic goals, combined with a collective political voice speaking with one voice to a passive media.

A study on Diversity in the Danish Armed Forces in 2012, shows that the military is respected in Danish society but was lacking in both female participation and minority populations. [170] The 2004 Defence Agreement (the multi-party approach referred to in Chapter 3) established "Armed Forces Day" to systematically inform, assess, and induct young Danes into the armed forces.

The Danish Home Guard [171] operates on a voluntary (and unpaid) basis and is part of the national defence of the country. There are just over 13,400 active volunteers and 30,000 in the reserve force, and main roles include support to armed forces with training and exercises, along with host nation support for other NATO forces in Denmark. Some of their other roles include support to police and customs. Their permanent role guarding Danish waters could be a form of template for the DF in Ireland, such as Coast Watch, or advanced Navy Reserve (Second Line) operations to a limited degree.

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[170]Schaub, Pradhan-Blach, Salling Larsen, Kuhnel Larsen Centre for Military Studies, University of Copenhagen

[171]Danish Home Guard https://www.hjemmevaernet.dk/en/about-us/

Finland's Defence Force "protects" the people of Finland, its society, and maintains its ability to function. Ireland should pivot publicly more to this role.

In interview with Gen Valtonen, he outlined how Finland's constitution states that all Finns are obliged to defend their country, and all males are obliged to do military service, so the Total Defence model is "in-built", and this leads to a strong connection to the military, when every young man, his father and grandfather has done their military service, and since 1995, women have done the same on a voluntary basis. He says the families understand this is a natural part of society, and he believes that this is the biggest difference with Sweden or Denmark, or other parts of Europe, especially Germany. [172]

Valtonen also states that 80% of Finns asked in a yearly survey, say they would participate in a war against Russia if required. This contrasts with a YouGov poll in the UK in early 2024 which showed almost a quarter of British adults aged 25-49 saying they would not defend the country if it were about to be invaded. [173]

Valtonen theorizes that there is a high level of respect and prestige for the Finnish military partly due to them being visible in society all the time, and adds that there is great demand for the high-level National Defence Courses, with people almost queuing for them ("we are a bit peculiar but I'm happy with that").

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[172] The Bundeswehr had approx. 500,000 military personnel during the Cold War, with compulsory service beginning in 1957 and ending in 2011. https://www.bundeswehr.de/en/about-bundeswehr/history/cold-war#:~:text=The%20importance%20of%20the%20Bundeswehr,would%20never%20have%20been%20feasible.

[173] Keir Giles, "Who Will Defend Europe?" p 115

This is a good point to examine the concept of "Preparedness" which has been a staple of the Finnish mindset, and which the EU has now come to embrace and wants to promote across the community. It is an example of how the military is seen in society. Speaking at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in May 2022, the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs said they were perhaps one of the few European countries who still have a tradition of building bomb shelters, for all its citizens, up to the level of a nuclear war. "It's in our legislation that we have to. If you visit Helsinki, you can find a lot of those installations".

The Finnish government has the clear message "when something extraordinary happens, it may transform your everyday life" and so wants its citizens to be ready to face 72 hours without help from authorities. [174] Finns are encouraged to be ready to cope with long power and water outages, long disruptions in internet or banking services, major storms or even pandemics or military conflict. The potential risks they should prepare for are not played down.

The concept of "72 Hours - could you cope on your own?" includes knowing what type of food to store; how to protect your communications and cybersecurity; and the idea of "psychological resilience".[175] Including courses for stress management for high pressure situations. Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway updated their own versions of an "In case of crises or war" pamphlet shortly after Russian invaded Ukraine. [176]

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[174] Finnish govt guide to preparing for incidents and crises: https://www.suomi.fi/guides/preparedness/how-do-i-prepare-for-incidents-and-crises/what-does-preparedness-mean?a=77c9#home-emergency-supplies-for-at-least-3-days

[175] Finnish govt Home Emergency Food Supply guide https://72tuntia.fi/en/home-emergency-food-supply/

[176] BBC News 18 Nov 2024: https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cjr4zwj2lgdo

The EU Commission followed the Nordic example this year with its Preparation Union Strategy including developing minimum preparedness criteria for essential services, enhancing stockpiling of critical equipment and materials, encouraging the public to maintain 72 hours of supplies, and strengthening civil-military cooperation. [177]

The EU Preparedness Strategy received very little attention in Ireland, again a reflection of how far we see ourselves from threats, even when the strategy includes extreme weather events or natural disasters, such as Storm Eowyn in late January 2025 when approximately 730,000 homes, farms and businesses lost power. [178]

A country's military will reflect the best elements of its society only if the best elements of its society are fully aware of it and invested in it. As such, Ireland and its DF need to navigate this path and are showing signs of doing so. The country is becoming more aware of the roles the DF is taking on, in the current geopolitical and security environment to protect the country and its citizens, and what its citizens can do in response to support it.

[177] EU Preparation Union Strategy https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_856

[178] ESB Press Release, 2 Feb 2025

Chapter V

Conclusions

A common phrase in Chinese culture is: “A crisis is an opportunity riding a dangerous wind”, and as such, there are opportunities in the current upheaval in our defence and security sector and we should think in terms of not losing these opportunities. This thesis has sought to determine what lessons, if any, can be learned from two countries of similar population size in Europe, when devising Ireland’s National Security Strategy.

The research has found that Denmark has advanced collective political decision-making abilities when it comes to national security, while Finland has both advanced decision making, and full societal involvement in terms of preparedness.

A National Security Strategy is there to help inform political policy – some parts of it will be political, some public, some strategic, but there needs to be a greater public understanding of what security threats face the country, and in turn, why we need to develop such a strategy. This then allows the body politic to openly discuss and determine what is and what is not required.

At the political level there is a requirement for a full-time Minister of Defence at Cabinet level, and not one who shares a number of portfolios. Also at political level, there is a need for a major step forward involving all elected political parties and groupings to change past behaviour and try to establish a tradition or pattern of discussing national security and reaching consensus as in Denmark.

This needs to become everybody's responsibility or as close as it can be, as happens in other European states. Work would have to be done at a public level for this to gain traction.

When it comes to the amount of money that goes on Defence Spending and how it is spent, there is a lesson from Denmark that can stand Ireland in good stead. A lot of emphasis is placed on defence "spending", but as Keir Giles points out, that is a measure of input, and not a measure of output. Denmark publishes where its 2% on Defence spending goes since 2014, as this has specific rules around not just how many ships, aircraft, land vehicles, and personnel they have, but how many are *available* and *deployable*. Such an approach in Ireland would be seismic, where state, and semi-state organisations tend to stay quiet about underperforming, but it would make the Defence Forces and the Department of Defence the most open organisations in the State, in an unforseen way.

There is a definite need for a Five Domain National Security Strategy, not just a piecemeal Maritime Security Strategy, followed by strategies that cover the areas of Land, Air, Cyber and Space, regardless of the urgency of threats to our National Maritime Infrastructure. This approach can lead to problems and delays combining separate strategies into one cohesive national plan at a later stage.

Recommendations at this point would also include a clearer policy of chain of command for Ireland's maritime issues as soon as possible. The Maritime Security Strategy should provide this, but is behind schedule, however as mentioned earlier, and should ideally be part of a five-domain strategy.

The State should prepare itself for more Regional Defence Co-ordination that encompasses Ireland – for example, an Eastern Atlantic Critical National Infrastructure Group (Naval and Air assets from Norway, Denmark (via Faroes and Greenland), Iceland (Coast Guard), UK, Ireland, France, Spain, and Portugal.

And a way of becoming a closer and more integrated part of the European Security Architecture that prioritizes national security and continuity of the domestic economy in the event of serious (but sometimes unattributable) attacks on communications or energy infrastructure. This can be in line with our EU commitments rather than under a military umbrella if required but using defence assets.

The Cophenhagen School of Security Studies from the 1990s refers to "the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats" (Waever 1993, 23). There can be a sense that the continuity of your society is a given thing, and that security and protection of the state are optional extras. This needs to be discussed, explained, and the population make informed choices about what they want to protect, and how they can, if they choose to, help protect themselves.

Preparedness needs to become a real public concept here that is understood in its many forms, and not one that is just talked about after a serious weather event. Ireland should adopt Finnish style preparedness courses for all of society, and these could be led by Defence Colleges or the Civil Defence, in conjunction with the Dept of Defence.

A National Defence College would enable the teaching of defence and security studies at an academic level, as well as at a practical level of understanding for those in key areas of society, from political, to administrative, to the energy sector, communications, media, cultural and more. Building connections between the DF and third level colleges through ROTC/University Officer Training Corps approaches would be very useful. The Civil Defence could also be an alternative, but not a duplication in some third level institutions.

The Civil Defence carries out international exercises such as mountain fire-fighting training along with the Air Corps and other agencies, flood defences, radiation monitoring, and these are very welcome and needed. However, there is an opportunity here for large scale National or Regional Preparedness exercises, involving First Responders, DF, Civil Defence, energy companies, communications, hospitals, PSMs, airports, ports and the public, with a view in particular to giving the public a role, or a better understanding of what to do, or what to expect (or perhaps what not to expect) in the event of a major emergency. As the Civil Defence was established in the 1950s because of the fear of nuclear disaster, it could become the lead agency for disaster preparedness at a local level, under the aegis of the EMEA and the Dept of Defence.

We should choose more countries to compare ourselves against, and ones that are closer in stature and approach (the Nordic countries can compare themselves to each other – we must create a new comparison matrix). If time had allowed, this thesis would have been enhanced by further interviews with those directly involved in security and defence in Ireland at present.

Other areas to consider for future study include “Intelligence Gathering in Ireland” and the need for greater delineation of roles between current agencies (An Garda Siochana and Military Intelligence), and the possibility of a fully independent Irish Intelligence Agency (Gníomhaireacht Faisnéise na hÉireann perhaps).

A detailed study on how to make the Reserve Forces more appealing to join and produce better results for the DF is necessary, along with research into understanding and countering threats to our Peacekeeping troops due to disinformation. This is an increasing issue for UNIFIL forces for example given the extremely high tension in Gaza, Lebanon and wider region.

And a more historical investigation of comparative defence policy and threat analysis for all European non-aligned states from post Second World War countries to today.

Ultimately as both countries in this thesis study concluded, there are limits to the amount of protection a small state can provide for its citizens, in an age of sub-threshold and asymmetrical hybrid attacks.

Ireland needs to find a way to successfully ally itself with European partners on domestic security while remaining non-aligned if the population wishes that to be the case, but ultimately to be in a position to protect its citizens and the state’s way of life as threats increase and the forms such threats take change in nature.

Interview Biographies

Brigadier General Vesa Valtonen - Chief of Personnel (J1), Finnish Defence Forces, Commander of Pori Brigade 2021-2023, Docent, National Defence University 2020 - present, Doctoral degree in military sciences, National Defence University, 2010, Decorations include: Commander's Badge of the Lion of Finland (SL K), Order of the Lion of Finland 1st class

Dr Iben Bjørnsson - Assistant Professor, Institute for Strategy and War Studies, Royal Danish Defence College. Areas of research include: The Cold War, Danish Territorial Defense, NATO, Civil Defense and Civil Preparedness, Psychological Warfare and Defense, Hybrid War and Total Defense

Annex I - Graphs

Defence spending as GDP 2020 - 2028

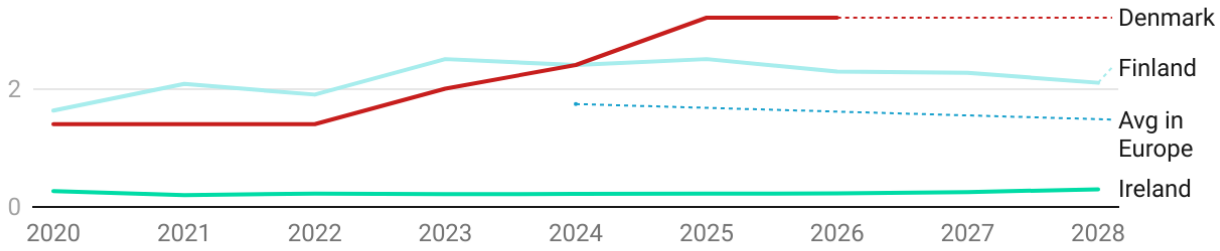


Chart: Ciaran O'Byrne • Source: EU Commission / Dail debate / Danish Ministry of Defence / Finnish Ministry of Defence • Created with Datawrapper

Active military personnel 2020-24

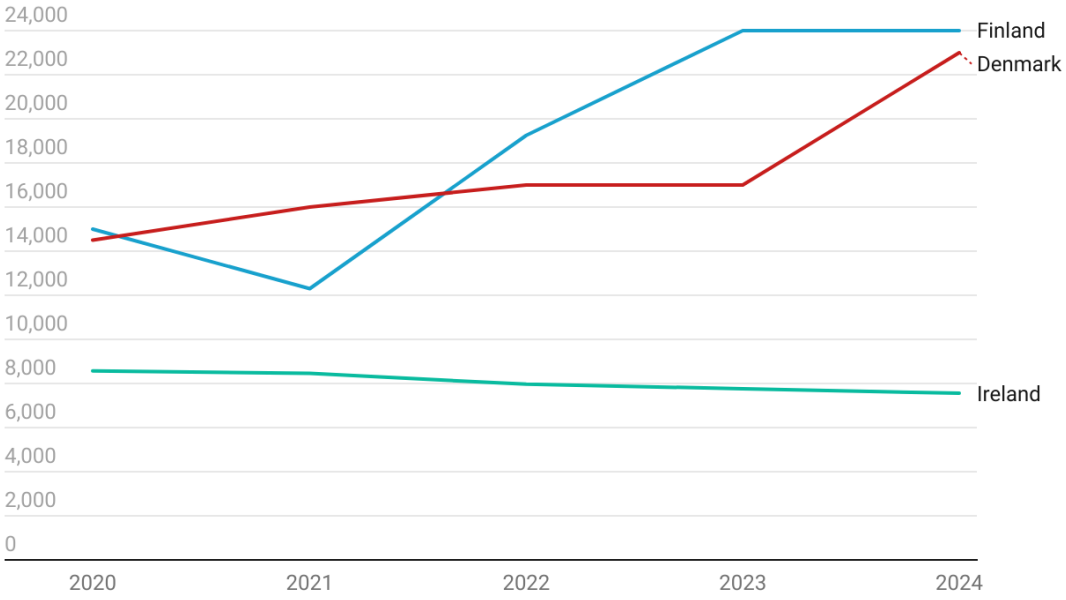
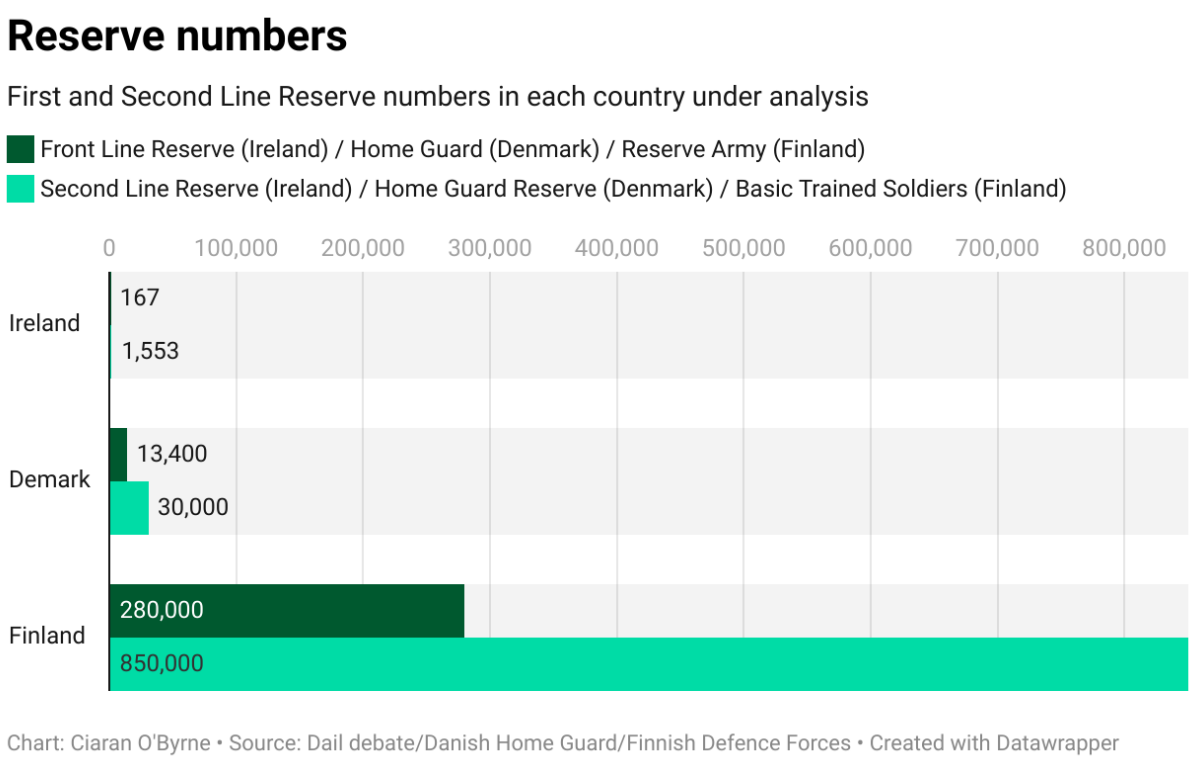
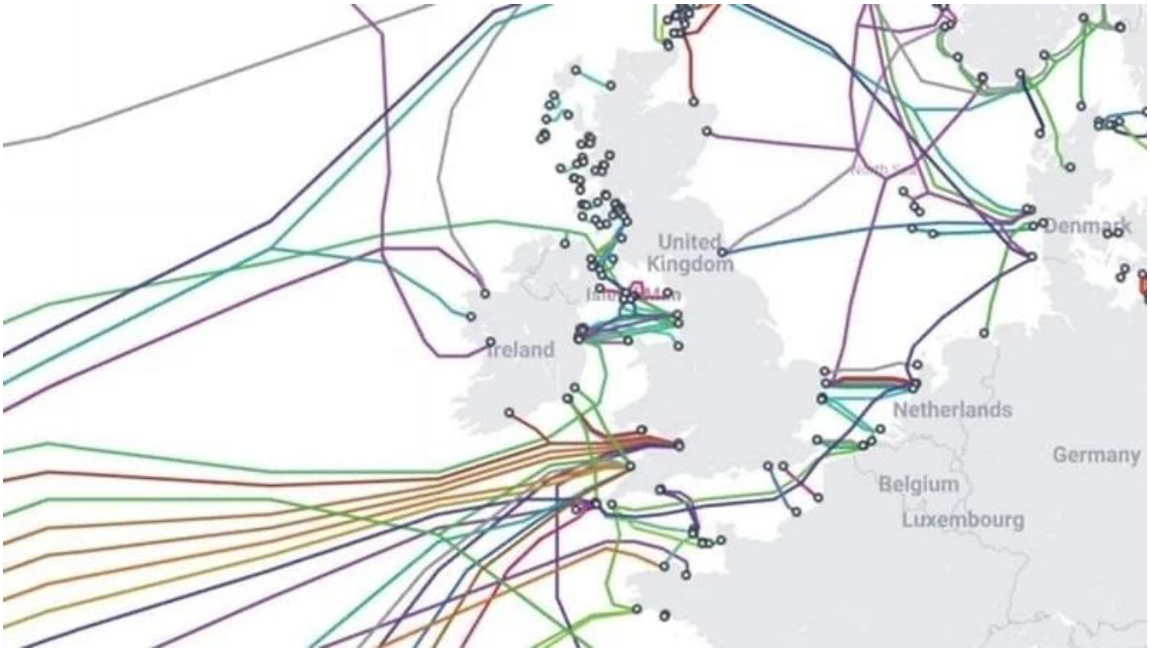


Chart: Ciaran O'Byrne • Source: Dail debate/ Danish Armed Forces/ Finnish Defence Forces / IISS European Defence Agency • Created with Datawrapper



Critical Maritime Infrastructure - Undersea data cables in or around Irish waters



Approx. 75% of all cables in the Northern Hemisphere pass through or near Irish waters. Image: TeleGeography

Annex II

Interview questions

(Questions are asked of both countries, but some are country specific)

1 - What part does post Second World War/Cold War history play when it comes to forming Defence and Security Policy?

2 – Without going into detail, how would you describe how Finland has moved from the model of Total Defence to the Comprehensive Security Model?

3 - How does conscription work, and how does the active Reserve model work?

4 – Can you outline how Finland/Denmark sees current threats to it, and how this has changed over recent years?

5 – What impact has the war in Ukraine had on Defence Policy?

6 - How does society view the military, and see the role civilians should play in state protection?

7 – What level of respect or prestige is there for the military in your country?

8 – Ireland is seeing increased Russian activity in its EEZ. Your country is advanced in dealing with this. What advice might you pass on?

Annex III

LOA – Level of Ambition

The Commission on the Defence Forces created a framework focused around three tiers of level of ambition (LOA) to frame the capability requirements for a 21st century Defence Forces.

They are LOA 1 current capabilities - where "core capabilities will not keep pace with the increasingly challenging security environment".

Level of Ambition 2 (LOA 2) enhanced capability, "Building on current capability to address specific priority gaps in our ability to deal with an assault on Irish sovereignty and to serve in higher intensity Peace Support Operations". Main acquisition - primary radar, coastal radar and associated systems.

Level of Ambition 3 (LOA 3) conventional capability - "Developing full spectrum defence capabilities to protect Ireland and its people to an extent comparable to similar sized countries in Europe". Main acquisitions: a squadron of combat aircraft and bringing INS up to 12 naval vessels.

At the point of its publication, the government chose LOA 2, with an objective of reaching it in 5 years, by 2028, launching the High-Level Action Plan, also adding that it would consider the possibility of LOA 3 at that point. The 2025 Programme for Govt then said it would move to LOA 3.

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Bjørnsson, Dr Iben, Assistant Professor, at the Department of Strategy and War Studies at the Royal Danish Defence College via Zoom (21 Jan 2025)

Valtonen, Brig. Gen. Vesa, Finnish Armed Forces, Chief of Personnel, Defence Command, PhD, and Adjunct Professor at FNDU Puolustusvoimat via Zoom (23 Jan 2025)

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