Foreign Policy Analysis as Discourse: the deconstruction of the concept of Irish neutrality and the “unneutral” thesis using International Relations theories.

Abstract
Using key concepts of discourse theory (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002); (Torfing 1999); (Laclau and Mouffe 1985), this paper examines Irish neutrality as a subject and practice that exists meaningfully in the academic literature on Irish neutrality and in the wider print media commentary on Irish neutrality. The paper conceives of the literature on Irish neutrality authored by Salmon (1989) and McSweeney (1985) as separate discourses on Irish neutrality which are analysed using an international relations (IR) theory framework in order to provide empirical evidence of the implicit and explicit theoretical assumptions underpinning the two discourses on Irish neutrality. Broadly characterizing Salmon’s Unneutral Ireland discourse as “realist” and McSweeney’s Irish Neutrality discourse as “social constructivist”, the paper argues the disparate IR approaches inherent in each analysis of Irish neutrality produce different, competing concepts of Irish neutrality and have particular consequences in terms of each thesis’ claims as to the determinants of Irish neutrality and evaluations of Irish neutrality’s credibility and validity. Given that the IR theoretical assumptions underpinning the different concepts and analyses of Irish neutrality are themselves open to question, the paper concludes with the corollary that Irish neutrality is an essentially-contested concept, that the academic and the media discourses constitute a political struggle over the content of the concept and that the neorealism that underpins the ‘unneutral’ thesis articulated by Salmon (1989), FitzGerald (1998), Kearsley (1998), Raymond (1984), MacGinty (1995) and Doherty (2002) is both contingent and hegemonic in this political struggle. The emancipation of the concept of Irish neutrality from hegemonic neorealist constraints and the concomitant unravelling of the “unneutral” thesis broadens Irish neutrality’s conceptual base and paves the way for a more nuanced analysis and evaluation of the ‘rationality’ of public attitudes to Irish neutrality.
Introduction
The problem that gave rise to this paper was a noticeable bias in the Irish media discourse on Irish neutrality, which, upon closer examination, relied upon a particular strand of academic literature that claimed to objectively analyse Irish neutrality and concluded that Ireland’s neutrality is a myth. Trusting in the “unneutral” discourse on Irish neutrality would pose three fundamental and problematic questions for a student of public opinion on Irish neutrality: (1) why study public attitudes to a foreign policy phenomenon that did, or does not exist, (2) what should be the academic yardstick for evaluating the ‘rationality’ of public attitudes to Irish neutrality and (3) why study public attitudes to Irish neutrality at all, given that the ‘unneutral’ literature ignores public opinion as a variable in its analysis and conception of Irish neutrality? These academic questions are thrown into sharper political focus given that the ‘unneutral’ discourse is a factor in the struggle over content of the concept of neutrality identified by several scholars, specifically, elite attempts (1) to re-define the concept so that it is rendered meaningless or non-existent; (2) to ignore public concepts of neutrality; (3) to ignore public support for (non-elite concepts of) neutrality; and (4) to conflate public and government concepts, despite empirical evidence of a divergence – ostensibly for the purpose of achieving further European integration in the field of security and defence. These political discourses are reconstituted in debates preceding referendums in Ireland in which a proportion of Irish citizens have repeatedly voted to rejected EU Treaty proposals due to perceived threats to Irish neutrality (Sinnott 2001).

The Irish government concept and the Irish public concept(s) of Irish neutrality have diverged in a fundamental way over the past thirty years (Keatinge 1996: 111) (Keatinge 1984: 100) (McSweeney 1985: 118). As Keatinge (Keatinge 1984: 32) explains:

the official concept is broadly consistent with most government statements since 1961, and is normally referred to as ‘military neutrality’, to indicate it is above all a matter of not belonging to an existing military alliance. Given the long-term commitment to European integration however, it is essentially limited and ultimately negotiable. A more far-reaching concept is contained in formulations found...among the public at large. In this view neutrality is seen as a basic principle of all Irish foreign policy, and the concept may be conveniently labelled ‘fundamental neutrality’.
“The divergence between the concept of ultimately negotiable military neutrality, as practiced by governments whatever their rhetoric, and the concept of fundamental neutrality as advanced by the pro-neutrality lobby, has been an important development of the early 1980s, which should not be ignored” (Keatinge 1984: 118) because “according to a central strand of democratic theory, the policy preferences of ordinary citizens are supposed to form the foundation for government decision-making” (Page and Shapiro 1992: 1) (Sobel 2001: 3). From a normative democratic perspective therefore, it is important to highlight the fact that there appears to be evidence that the Irish government, in common with other governments of European neutral states, is not reflecting the public concepts of neutrality or policy preferences in the formulation and discourse of state foreign policy.2

Fanning identifies a universal divergence of government and public opinion on neutrality in European neutral states in the wake of the end of the Cold War: “in Ireland, as in the other neutral states of Europe….a credibility gap is opening between the preferred options of the foreign policy elites and their respective publics” (Fanning 1996: 147). In Austria, elite moves to drop neutrality articulated through Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel’s discourse on Austria’s future membership of NATO, are said to meet with strong opposition (BBC 2001 5th November). Swedish political elite ambition, exemplified in the former Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson’s statement predicting NATO membership for Sweden, is also said to be constrained by public attachment to neutrality (Dahl 1997). Thus, McSweeney’s summation of the Irish situation appears to mirror that in other European states: “while there appears to be strong domestic attachment to the ideal of Irish neutrality at present, the official policy continues to be one of expediency, leaving open the possibility that Ireland may join a defence community in the future” (McSweeney 1988: 208).

1 This paper is written from a poststructuralist (quasi-cosmopolitan) perspective. The poststructuralist approach emphasises the contingency of meaning and argues the impact of words (the signifiers) derives from the social values given to them (the signified) and the rules determining their meaning.  
In Ireland, the main vehicle for the elite-led attempts to de-legitimate or ignore neutrality is the so-called “unneutral” thesis, encapsulated in Salmon’s *Unneutral Ireland*, which set out to test “whether the Irish interpretation and understanding of these concepts [neutrality/nonalignment] are legitimate” (Salmon 1989: 2) and concluded that “Ireland certainly is, and has been ‘unneutral’” (Salmon 1989: 311). The ‘unneutral’ discourse³ is prevalent in academic journal articles and monographs, and in public discourses through the media, including radio interviews and newspaper articles. The following selection of journal article, book and newspaper article titles (emphasis added) illustrates the pervasive elite-led discourse that Ireland’s neutrality is not ‘real’, but a ‘myth’:

- *Neutrality and the Irish Republic: myth or reality?* – Salmon, 1984
- *Unneutral Ireland* – Salmon, 1989
- *A myth of ‘traditional neutrality’ developed from the Irish decision to be a non-belligerent in the Second World War* – FitzGerald, Irish Times, 21/11/1997
- *Casting off the imaginary cloak of neutrality* – Collins, Sunday Tribune, 23/03/2003
- *Our sham neutrality has finally been exposed* – Collins, Sunday Tribune, 30/03/2003
- *Wartime neutrality theoretical rather than real* – FitzGerald, Irish Times, 29/01/2005

The ‘unneutral’ thesis is recycled through several generations of academic literature; the following academic works published in the Eighties, Nineties and present decade directly quote the conclusions of *Unneutral Ireland* and several echo its analytical approach, that is, the construction of a concept of “classic(al)” neutrality (Salmon 1989: 5); (FitzGerald 1998: 13) and derivative claims that Ireland is ‘unneutral’ due to a failure to measure up

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³ The terms ‘analysis’/‘thesis’ and ‘discourse’ are interchangeable since the academic texts examined in this paper are conceived of as ‘discourses’. The full title of Salmon’s thesis on Irish neutrality is “Unneutral Ireland: A Unique and Ambivalent Security Policy”, which will be referred to throughout this paper as *Unneutral Ireland* or ‘the Unneutral discourse’; McSweeney’s analysis of Irish neutrality appears in the form of several chapters in an edited volume entitled “Ireland and the Threat of Nuclear War: the question of Irish Neutrality”, and will be referred to in shorthand as *Irish neutrality* or ‘the Irish neutrality discourse’. This paper focuses on the texts of these two books and also incorporates text from two journal articles, written by Salmon and McSweeney respectively. Given the ‘new-comer’ status of poststructuralism and discourse theory in foreign policy analysis, Political Science and IR (Cochrane 1999: 121-122), many readers may be unfamiliar with the approach, so in order to emphasise the paper’s focus on the selected texts as discourses, reference to the authors of the texts are avoided and instead the texts as discourses are expounded in the guise of third person entities. The key signifiers and statements in the texts will be highlighted in bold.
Referring to *Unneutral Ireland*, MacGinty claims “Trevor Salmon has convincingly outlined how, since independence, Ireland has failed to fulfil the criterion for a credible neutrality policy” (MacGinty 1995: 129). Quoting Salmon, Kearsley argues “‘the Irish’...‘deviate from the traditional characteristics of neutrality so much so that ‘...even the appellations ‘messy’, ‘qualified’, and ‘limited’ neutrality are inappropriate’” (Kearsley 1998: 172). In an article entitled *The Origins, Development and Present Status of Irish ‘Neutrality’*, with a noteworthy use of inverted commas around the word ‘neutrality’, FitzGerald refers to “Professor Trevor Salmon’s...seminal work *Unneutral Ireland*” (FitzGerald 1998: 12) and uses key arguments underpinning the ‘unneutral’ thesis to contend that “it is at least questionable whether Ireland can properly be described as having been ‘neutral’, because the scale of assistance given secretly to Britain was scarcely compatible with the concept of neutrality under International Law” (FitzGerald 1998: 13). Demonstrating direct support for the methodology and analytical approach underpinning the ‘unneutral’ thesis, FitzGerald concludes, “it will be evident from what I have said that Irish neutrality does not conform to the classic definitions of neutrality. Nor is the Irish situation similar to that of other European neutral states such as Switzerland, Austria and Sweden, which, in their different ways, have had much more clear-cut concepts of neutrality than Ireland has demonstrated since the state was founded” (FitzGerald 1998: 18). The most recent academic work referencing *Unneutral Ireland* sees Doherty arguing “during World War Two Ireland’s neutrality was extremely benevolent towards the allies to the extent that it is doubtful whether Ireland should be described as neutral or simply non-belligerent” (Doherty 2002: 13).

What are the consequences of the relative hegemony of the ‘unneutral’ thesis in the discourse on Irish neutrality? For one, laying claim to the ‘truth’ through a seemingly objective and empirical analysis of sets of variables that are said to constitute the ‘true’, ‘classic’ and ‘genuine’ concept of neutrality and drawing the ‘evident’ conclusion that Irish neutrality has never existed, establishes a hierarchy over the opposite viewpoint that Irish neutrality does exist and the other academic analyses that offer an alternative set of variables argued to constitute the Irish neutrality concept. Second, by corollary, it casts those who argue that Irish neutrality exists and those who support its existence as ‘non-
rational’. Indeed, some elites that promote the ‘unneutral’ thesis also characterise public opinion supporting Irish neutrality as ‘confused’ (FitzGerald 1996). Despite noting the lack of data supporting such hypotheses, significant elite academic and public discourses variously characterize public attachment to Irish neutrality as ‘emotional’ (Keatinge 1972: 439, 440), (Keatinge 1978: 73) (Keatinge 1973: 174), ‘sentimental’ (McMahon 1999) and ‘contradictory’ (Sinnott 1996). Therefore, the deconstruction of the ‘unneutral’ thesis not only demonstrates the contingency of the realist concept of Irish neutrality, but also problematises the concomitant elite disparagement of public support for the concept.

Aims, approach and methods

The aim of this paper is to reverse the ‘violent hierarchy’ (Derrida 1976: 41) of the Unneutral Ireland thesis over the Irish neutrality thesis by deconstructing the ‘classic’ concept of neutrality that forms the basis of Unneutral Ireland’s analysis and conclusions on Irish neutrality.4 The deconstruction is facilitated by juxtaposing the analyses of Irish neutrality in Salmon’s Unneutral Ireland (1989) and McSweeney’s Irish Neutrality (1985) in a Derridian binary. Relying on Hyland’s premise that “questions can be raised about the acceptability of a norm or principle by demonstrating that on analysis the principle is only meaningful against a background of theoretical assumptions that are themselves questionable and open to debate” (Hyland 1995: 22), an evaluative framework of International Relations (IR) theory is used to help to distinguish the underlying assumptions of the ‘unneutral’ (Salmon, 1989) and ‘neutral’ (McSweeney, 1985) discourses with a degree of paradigmatic clarity and consistency.5 An analysis of the IR theoretical assumptions underpinning each discourse is coupled with an

4 The ‘violent hierarchy’ is a forced inequality. “The second term in each pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first, a fall away from it” (Barbara Johnson (1981) quoted in Zehfuss, 2002: 197). Deconstruction seeks to reverse the privileged position of one concept over the other; in a looser sense of the term, a hierarchy is evident at the micro-level with the qualitative and quantitative dominance of the Unneutral Ireland discourse over the Irish neutrality discourse, but also at the meta-level of IR theory in the discipline of International Relations, with the neorealism paradigm privileged over social constructivism.

5 Deconstruction aims not at making meaning transparent but at making visible the presuppositions of the statements (Zehfuss, 2002 #25: 204). This paper posits that the underlying assumptions of the Unneutral Ireland and Irish neutrality discourses correspond closely to IR theory assumptions and concepts, which
examination of the methodological approaches used in the construction of each discourse’s concept of neutrality and each set of variables or factors offered as determinants of ‘neutrality’ and ‘Irish neutrality’. The process of identifying the IR assumptions and approaches draws on Vasquez’ method of operationalising the realist paradigm which helps determine whether a scholar is guided by three fundamental neorealist assumptions (Vasquez 1998). The Vasquez codeframe used to pinpoint examples of realist assumptions in the Unneutral Ireland discourse in turn helps to identify the examples of binary opposite social constructivist assumptions in the Irish neutrality discourse. The notion of Spivak’s strategic essentialism (Spivak 1993) underpins the selection of the examples of texts argued to embody IR theoretical assumptions in each analysis of Irish neutrality, in order to emphasis the fundamental differences between the Unneutral Ireland neorealist and the Irish neutrality social constructivist approaches and conceptions of Irish neutrality.

The discourse theoretic approach employed in this paper demands a critical reflexive examination of each discourse’s claims to ‘truth’, and highlights the Unneutral Ireland discourse’s attempts to de-legitimate the social constructivist concept of Irish neutrality, which helps to demonstrate the contingency of the Unneutral Ireland thesis and to reverse the violent hierarchy of the Unneutral Ireland thesis over the Irish neutrality thesis. The discourse theoretic approach also helps to highlight how the different conclusions drawn on Irish neutrality are contingent on the model, approach and IR theoretical worldview underpinning each discourse on Irish neutrality. As a result, Irish neutrality is emancipated from hegemonic neorealist conceptual constraints and is established as an essentially contested concept. Paradigmatic space is cleared for the

constitute the discourse theory ‘rules’ that govern the two competing discourses on Irish neutrality and the meaning of each discourse’s concept of Irish neutrality.

6 The variables argued to constitute each discourse’s concept of neutrality correspond to discourse theory ‘chains of equivalence’.

7 The discourse theoretic approach does not seek to ‘climb inside the head’ of the authors of these texts – for example, whether the authors would agree with the arguments or interpretations of the texts or whether the authors are considered realist or social constructivist academics is of no concern. The question is whether the extracted texts focusing on key concepts in the analyses of Ireland’s neutrality broadly correspond to one particular set of IR theory assumptions or approach than any other, because these links would demonstrate the contingency of the Unneutral thesis’ realist analysis of Irish neutrality, and
reception of the social constructivist analysis of Irish neutrality and the consideration of
public opinion as a legitimate variable of the concept of Irish neutrality which is
particularly important given divergence between public and government/elite concepts of,
and attitudes to neutrality.\footnote{8}

In relation to the process of mining the IR theoretical assumptions underpinning the two
discourses on Irish neutrality, it is important to note that there is much debate over the
definition and content of the distinct IR theoretical traditions (Kegley 1995: 3); (Zacher
and Matthew 1995: 137); (Zehfuss 2002: 3, 7), and that International Relations theories,
and in particular, the two approaches discussed in this paper, neorealism and social
constructivism, exist in relation to each other (Rosenthal 1995: 324). Indeed, Social
Constructivism is posited by some in binary opposition to realism, for example,
McSweeney characterises what is “identified as ‘social constructionist’ in its approach”:

\begin{quote}
this perspective can be illustrated by particular studies relevant to international security, which
employ a \textit{common rejection of key tenants of realism}, a subscription to a broadly sociological
approach, and a common emphasis on the reflexive, cognitive element in the determination and
explanation of actors’ behaviour (McSweeney 1999: 106).
\end{quote}

Taken together, realism and liberalism (including structuralism/ Marxism) and the
derivative mainstream theories of neorealism and neoliberalism have dominated the
discipline of International Relations (IR) for the last fifty years (Smith 2001: 225). In
particular realism and the realist paradigm has been dominant amongst the three theories
(Smith 2001: 226); (Vasquez 1998: 42); (Burchill 2001: 70); as Burchill puts it, “the
language of realism has largely become the language of International Relations” (Burchill
2001: 86). Smith argues a “major factor supporting the dominance of realism has been
that it seems to portray the world we common-sensically understand. Thus, alternative
views can be dismissed as normative or value-laden, to be negatively compared with the
objectivity of realism” (Smith 2001: 225). However, many argue the realist paradigm

\footnote{8 The demand for the inclusion of public opinion as a variable in the concept of neutrality should not be
confounded with reification of public opinion. The issues of the ‘rationality’ of public opinion on foreign
policy and the ‘worthiness’ of accounting for public attitudes to Irish neutrality are separate questions.}
offers relatively poor theoretical explanations of international relations; as Vasquez surmises

it is quite sobering that of 7,827 hypotheses tested in the field, of which over 90 percent are realist, only 157 realist hypotheses failed to be falsified, and, of these, over two-thirds were trivial. This means that since 1956, only 48 realist hypotheses have done proportionally better in satisfying the criterion of scientific importance. In other words, it cannot be claimed that [the realist paradigm’s] assumptions might be able to produce more important findings than a paradigm that rejected them (Vasquez 1998: 149).

Vasquez concludes that his analyses “present arguments and evidence for abandoning the realist paradigm and working to construct a nonrealist alternative” (Vasquez 1998: 382). It is possible that the dominance of realist academia generally has contributed to the lack of interest in public opinion on foreign policy and the lack of critical analysis of the literature on Irish neutrality and the ‘unneutral’ thesis in particular.

Drawing attention to the IR assumptions where appropriate, this paper will highlight (1) the differences in approaches employed in each of the respective *Unneutral Ireland* and *Irish Neutrality* discourses, i.e. neorealism vs. social constructivism, objective vs. normative, explanatory vs. constitutive; (2) the differences in the nature of their concepts of neutrality i.e. a ‘true’, measurable, fact vs. a possible, flexible, process; wartime vs. peacetime concepts; passive vs. active concepts; (3) the difference in emphasis placed on variables common to each concept i.e. defence capabilities, sovereignty, law; (4) the conceptually different but nominally similar variables i.e. identity, discourses; and (5) the variables exclusive to each analysis that have a significant role in drawing conclusions on Irish neutrality’s existence and credibility i.e. the neorealist factors of balance of power, protective umbrella, and the primacy of military power vs. the social constructivist factors of identity, discourse and public support. The following table summarises the essential differences between the ‘unneutral’ thesis and Irish neutrality in terms of IR theoretical assumptions, epistemology, ontology, methodology and conceptual variables in the two analyses of Irish neutrality:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Unneutral Ireland thesis</th>
<th>Irish neutrality thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author</strong></td>
<td>Trevor C. Salmon</td>
<td>Bill McSweeney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IR theory/approach</strong></td>
<td>neorealism</td>
<td>social constructivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology</strong></td>
<td>foundational</td>
<td>“qualified” foundational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
<td>positivist/rationalist</td>
<td>constructivist/reflexivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td>empiricist</td>
<td>quasi-empiricist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
<td>objective/descriptive</td>
<td>normative/interpretative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Actors’/‘variables’ emphasised</td>
<td>States and decision-makers / material and military capabilities, balance of power, protective umbrella, sovereignty, international law</td>
<td>State and non-state actors, including publics, pressure groups, NGOs / identities, elite discourses, interests, perceptions, norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hierarchical position</strong></td>
<td>hegemonic/mainstream</td>
<td>subjugated/alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic School</strong></td>
<td>Security studies</td>
<td>Critical security studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Neorealist ‘external’ versus social constructivist ‘internal’ factors**

The two approaches employed in the *Unneutral Ireland* and *Irish neutrality* discourses are firstly differentiated through the *Unneutral Ireland* neorealist concern with exogenous, structural ‘external’ factors (tangible power potential – military power, balance of power and protective umbrellas) that are assumed to determine the possibilities of state action and neutrality, which contrasts with *Irish neutrality*’s social constructivist attention to internal factors (and intangible power ingredients – national image, public support and discourse) as important determinants of neutrality and in their capacity to influence ‘external’ factors. Burchill explains the Realist analytical reification of external factors; “as a key to understanding the behaviour of states, the distribution of power in the international system overrides consideration of ideology or any other internal factor” (Burchill 2001: 92). The neorealist concepts of “balance of power” and “protective umbrella” flow from the different manifestations of the distribution of power. The *Unneutral Ireland* discourse posits these neorealist factors at the top of the pecking order of its determinants of neutrality; for example, it is argued that “neutrality relates as much, if not more, to factors such as location, strength, and the balance of power as to aspiration and law” (Salmon 1989: 23). The discourse implicitly deliberates on the
external constraints on the Irish state with regard to its ability to be neutral: “there is always the question of how ‘free’ any decision by a small, weak state really is in an interdependent world, and particularly for a state like Ireland …” (Salmon 1989: 7) and claims, “Irish non-belligerency was only really possible because of strategic factors outside the Irish government’s control” (Salmon 1989: 125). In common with the neorealist disregard for ‘internal’ (‘non’ or ‘sub’-state) factors (Vasquez 1998: 52), the Unneutral Ireland discourse fails to consider ‘internal’ factors such as public opinion, which are key determinants in Irish neutrality’s social constructivist conceptualisation of neutrality. The approach in the Irish neutrality discourse also exhibits the social constructivist assumptions that internal and external factors are mutually constitutive, offering a concept of neutrality that gives weight to the ability of ‘internal’ factors to influence external factors: “neutrality is an accomplishment, not a fact, and it depends on a multitude of factors outside the control of a neutral state – such as geography, resources, belligerent needs and strategies – and on many within its control which can be used to manipulate the external factors” (McSweeney 1985: 12).

Objective/descriptive versus normative/interpretative approaches
The Unneutral Ireland approach to analysing Irish neutrality is essentialist and empirical, and it uses the terminology of scientific ‘objective’ enterprise - it constructs a ‘classical’ ‘model’ of neutrality consisting of ‘sets of variables’ with which to ‘measure’ Irish neutrality. These variables, the reader is led to believe, naturally ‘emerge’ (Salmon 1989: 11) or can be extrapolated (Salmon 1989: 2) from an examination of the neutrality of other European states. Practising positivist scientific methodology, the Unneutral Ireland thesis examines empirical data in the form of defence capability inventories and trade figures in its evaluation of Irish neutrality, which feed into its ‘evidence’-based arguments and ‘demonstrable’ conclusions on Irish neutrality. The following passages illustrate the type of language, appealing to objectivity and logic, used in the Unneutral Ireland discourse as part of an attempt to claim ‘truth’ and achieve hegemony for the conclusion that Ireland is ‘unneutral’. The Unneutral Ireland thesis starts with a conceptual analysis aimed at identifying the true nature of neutrality” (Salmon 1989: 2); the discussion in this and the preceding chapter makes it possible to identify the most significant variables associated with neutrality… in chapter five, these variables will be applied specifically to Ireland in the years of its great test, namely the period of the Second World War (Salmon 1989: 52).
The analysis of these [“neutral”] states' [Austria, Sweden and Switzerland] policies and attitudes leads to an extrapolation of their essential position, which, taken together with the key characteristics of neutrality and non-alignment identified in the previous chapter, forms the basis of a model against which the Irish case is examined in subsequent chapters (Salmon 1989: 44). The application of the variables, suggests that such orthodoxy [that Ireland is neutral] must be questioned. At best, evidence in support of it is equivocal (Salmon 1989: 5).

The discourse theory premises that “all meaning is fluid and all discourses are contingent, it is objectivity that masks contingency and, in doing so, hides the alternative possibilities that otherwise could have presented themselves. Objectivity can therefore be said to be ideological” (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002: 37) underpin the need to expose the type of language used and the methods and ideology embedded in the discourse of ‘objectivity’ employed in the Unneutral Ireland analysis of Irish neutrality. Exposing this use of language as an attempt to gain hegemony, in tandem with pinpointing an analytical dependence on a particular set of IR theoretical assumptions, helps to demonstrate that the ‘unneutral’ thesis is not objective science, fact or truth as is claimed, but is contingent, ideological neorealism.

“Critical international theory is not only concerned with understanding and explaining the existing realities of world politics, it also intends to criticise in order to transform them. It is an attempt to comprehend essential social processes for the purpose of inaugurating change, or at least knowing whether change is possible” (Devetak 2001: 163). Engaging in this critical enterprise, the Irish neutrality discourse identifies the hegemony of neorealism and seeks to counteract its objectivity, conceived as ‘sedimented power’ (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002: 38):

although realism proper, in the discipline of international politics, is only one among competing intellectual perspectives, emphasizing the balance of power as the central factor in stability and change, in fact it is often advanced as a legitimization of existing relations, as a justification of the existing system, defining any attempt at reform or change as impossible or misguided” (McSweeney 1985: 180-181).

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9 The academic work at the more reflexive end of the critical international theory/social constructivism continuums is sympathetic to poststructuralist/discourse theory approaches.
10 Laclau and Mouffe distinguish between the objective and the political in order to stress that, although everything is contingent, there is always an objective field of sedimented discourse – a long series of social/political arrangements (in this case, the realist chain of equivalence constituting the Unneutral concept of Irish neutrality) that we take for granted and therefore do not question or try to change. Secondly, they recognise that not all actors have equal possibilities for doing and saying things in new ways and for having their rearticulations accepted (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002: 55).
Irish neutrality’s reflexive approach to Irish neutrality rejects the acceptance of the ‘reality’ of neorealism and elite discourse on Irish neutrality, and advocates normative change, attributing non-state actors agency in the achievement of this goal; it argues that a convergence of interest and virtue is a necessary condition for the successful implementation of a foreign policy conceived as a moral imperative. Where such convergence does not occur, it is the duty of mass movements and public opinion to create it and to oppose realism in its unacceptable form – often masquerading as realpolitik” (McSweeney 1985: 180)

It criticises the “sizeable body of feeling, innuendo and unargued comment in the writings of some politicians, journalists and historians who are clearly unhappy with Ireland’s ambiguous position” and asks “by what reason are we therefore invited to join a military alliance? There are other possibilities which are not presented and there is the moral dimension which is ignored” (McSweeney 1985: 4-5). In contrast to the Unneutral Ireland discourse claims to objectively analyse the ‘given’ neutrality of other European states (states that “are commonly identified as neutral or non-aligned in the literature”, that are “universally regarded as such” (Salmon 1989: 43)) in the formulation of a ‘genuine’ concept of neutrality, the Irish neutrality discourse refers to other neutral states in order to argue for a new normative concept of neutrality, it prompts Neutrals to evaluate the policy of neutrality in terms of its ability to “serve the cause of peace” (McSweeney 1988: 209), highlighting the distinctive concerns of the two competing IR neorealist and social constructivist theoretical approaches.

Booth acknowledges that the traditions of several decades of security studies “involved ‘telling it as it is’ – ‘it’ being a realist account of the purported state(s) of the world” (Booth 1997: 84). The Unneutral Ireland discourse adheres to this neorealist practice of ‘telling it as it is’ in its explanation of why Ireland is ‘unneutral’ and uses realism’s

11 Here normative is not referring to either of “the two classic meanings of the term ‘norm’…norms are identified by regularities of behaviour among actors…behaviour of a particular kind…which gives rise to expectations as to what ought to be done” (Hurrell 2002: 143) but is here understood as ethical and moral considerations. The meaning is conceived of in binary opposition to neorealism’s “emphasis on power and interest” which gives rise to “skepticism over moral concerns in international relations. Ethical considerations and objectives, realists typically argue, must be subordinate to “reason of state” (raison d’état)” (Donnelly 2000: 10-11). McSweeney, from the outset, acknowledges his position as a “student of the politics of peacemaking”. He explains his academic discipline “starts from certain moral assumptions which function to direct the progress of work and the selection of evidence” (McSweeney 1985: 3)
empiricist epistemology through its production of a ‘classical’ model of neutrality and use of economic and military data as evidence supporting the ‘unneutral’ thesis. The *Unneutral Ireland* discourse operates from the neorealist, positivist premise that the ‘reality’ it presents in measuring Irish neutrality against its model of ‘genuine’ neutrality and the conclusion it draws that Ireland is ‘unneutral’ are unquestionably the ‘truth’; the following passage illustrates the sense of the *Unneutral Ireland*’s ‘explanatory’ mode and its methodological-based ‘truth’-claims:

the Irish, then, have consistently and significantly **failed to measure up** to the principal prerequisites ‘of’ or ‘for’ neutrality...“despite the shibboleth of neutrality, and the **claims** of the Irish themselves, Ireland has never been **truly** neutral” ... “the concept of Irish neutrality” is not saved “since (as has been clearly established and demonstrated) genuine neutrality is not to be equated with mere non-belligerency, or non-alliance membership...moreover, even if the concept of ‘military neutrality’ were compatible with neutrality as properly understood (which it is not), the equation of ‘military neutrality’ with neutrality *per se* is singularly inappropriate in the Irish case, because of its totally inadequate, unilateral defensive measures and effort....this **confusion** is also reflected in recent suggestions regarding ‘active neutrality’...the notion of ‘active neutrality’ involves a **contradiction in terms** and a disregard for the **established meaning** of the concept (Salmon 1989: 309-311).

*Unneutral Ireland*’s neorealist assumption that the empirical is the only ‘reality’ worthy of analysis contrasts with *Irish neutrality*’s social constructivist premise that discourse and perception matter in the construction and explanation of ‘reality’. The *Irish neutrality* thesis draws on the sociological premise of W. I. Thomas in its analysis of neutrality; “if people perceive things as real then they are real in their consequences” (McSweeney 1985: 119) when talking about ‘the capacity to change perception into reality’ that it claims influenced government tactics on neutrality and related matters. The difference in the neorealist and social constructivist approaches can also be seen in the use and concept of elite discourse on Irish neutrality: the *Unneutral Ireland* discourse employs elite statements, taken as ‘givens’ with their effects assumed, in attempts to analyse the credibility of Irish neutrality, whereas a constitutive and sociological concern is evident in *Irish neutrality*’s **critical** perspective of elite discourse and its conception of discourses as struggles to change perceptions.

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12 i.e. “the way to determine the truth of statements is by appeal to these neutral facts” (Smith 2001: 224-249).

13 although *Unneutral Ireland* does briefly question the nature of politicians’ statements (Salmon 1989: 97) a meta-theoretical critique of meaning is absent.
Following the critical social constructionist research agenda (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002: 210), the Irish neutrality discourse seeks to demonstrate that a hierarchy is established that de-legitimizes other forms of knowledge and truth claims regarding neutrality in public debate. It refers to the negative “image of neutrality popularized by all the major military powers” and argues their “tacit, multilateral agreement to downgrade neutrality has undoubtedly succeeded in lowering its status and making it difficult for an aspiring neutral to win public support at home and international recognition abroad for a policy often seen as ‘indifferent’, ‘self-centred’, ‘opportunist’, ‘short-sighted’” (McSweeney 1985: 7), and identifies that “EPC…functions to create a climate which will gradually persuade the other NATO members to drop their fears of US reaction and NATO weakness and to move gradually through stages towards a defence alliance” (McSweeney 1985: 133). It argues “the process of manipulating public opinion to accept policies defined by bureaucratic and political elites is increasing in the West, particularly through the recruitment of the media, over which governments have a measure of control which is hidden, subtle and effective” (McSweeney 1985: 132). For example, it demonstrates how certain claims made by elites or the Irish government in relation to Irish neutrality “can be a \textit{ploy to distort} the term” (McSweeney 1985: 182) and how several of these claims amount to “a crude tactic to abandon neutrality by defining it beyond the bounds of possibility” (McSweeney 1985: 183). The Irish neutrality discourse further acknowledges the power of discourse to achieve substantive change, for example, referring to three routes to the realisation of a concept of ‘active’ neutrality, the Irish neutrality discourse argues “these three possibilities of diplomacy, while they are mainly about talk and symbols, are nonetheless significant in preparing the necessary ground, flying the necessary kites for more concrete achievements” (McSweeney 1985: 188).

\textbf{Neorealist vs. social constructivist concepts of neutrality}

Of crucial importance to the deconstruction of the ‘unneutral’ thesis is an understanding of the foundational and anti-foundational approaches to the nature and content of the concept of neutrality produced in each discourse on Irish neutrality. The Unneutral Ireland discourse argues Ireland is ‘unneutral’ on the basis of a claim to have identified
the ‘true’ nature of neutrality (Salmon 1989: 2) which it is claimed, is inherently negative and ‘passive’: “the classical view has been that the ambience, and indeed definition, of neutrality ‘cannot be given without invoking the concept of the negative’, and that ‘political passivity was the main characteristic’ of neutrality” (Salmon 1989: 26). By contrast, the Irish neutrality discourse regards Ireland as neutral (McSweeney 1985: 186) and proposes a concept of ‘active’ neutrality that “relates to a wide range of activities and skills and requires active public participation” (McSweeney 1985: 202).

The latter concept of neutrality is open-ended in nature: “neutrality, though it is fashioned and conditioned by history, is not merely a historical question; it is also a possibility…” (McSweeney 1985: 118); it is argued the concept is constantly evolving: “it must grow and be creative if it is to survive” (McSweeney 1985: 182). Neutrality is conceived as a multi-faceted concept and “its political character as a process and an achievement” (McSweeney 1985: 186). The social constructivist understanding of the concept of active neutrality argues it “is not a fact, but an accomplishment. That is to say, it is more like child-rearing than childbirth, like trade rather than a trade agreement. This may seem obvious to some, but the static, objective idea of neutrality is very pervasive (McSweeney 1985: 182). This pervasive static, objective concept of neutrality is promoted in the Unneutral thesis; from a seemingly objective but de facto ideologically neorealist analysis it is claimed, “what had emerged as the essence of neutrality was abstention, the inviolability of neutral territory, and impartiality. Each of these aspects had associated with it a number of rights and duties” (Salmon 1989: 11)...including impartiality, the recognition of neutral status by belligerents, the disavowal of external help, the freedom of decision and action in the political economic and military spheres…” (Salmon 1989: 79-80). This realist perspective leads to the view that the concept of ‘active neutrality’ “is not neutrality, and the notion of ‘active neutrality’ involves a contradiction in terms and a disregard for the established meaning of the concept” (Salmon 1989: 311). The Unneutral thesis’ hegemonic claims to an ‘established meaning’ of the concept of neutrality is therefore demonstrably contingent when juxtaposed with the social constructivist concept of active neutrality, and this establishes neutrality (and Irish neutrality) as an essentially-contested concept. Therefore
it is more accurate to describe Unneutral Ireland’s concept of neutrality as a neorealist conception of neutrality that is contingent, rather than the ‘established’ concept, or as it is claimed, the only ‘genuine’ concept.

The distinct IR theoretical approaches employed in the two discourses also throw up differences over wartime and peacetime concepts of neutrality. As mentioned above, the Irish neutrality discourse argues the static, objective idea of neutrality is very pervasive, “indicated particularly by the weight given to the legal definition or the wartime function of neutrality” (McSweeney 1985: 182). It conceptualises neutrality as a peacetime policy: “for it is only an involved, active, peacetime neutrality which will contribute to a reduction of the tensions leading to war and to the creation of the conditions at home which may mitigate its effects” (McSweeney 1985: 12), whereas the Unneutral discourse denies this concept on the grounds of international law strictures. Driven by a static essentialist concept of neutrality, Unneutral Ireland argues, “there is more confusion in the use of the word ‘neutrality’, which is not an appropriate description for a peacetime policy, but is widely used as if it were. Such problems are extenuated when one is seeking to classify states whose official policy is non-participation in alliances in peacetime, aiming for neutrality in the event of war” (Salmon 1989: 42). Articulating a neorealist legal positivism, it is argued, “it is of major significance that, contrary to the cited literature and much Irish opinion, there is a clear distinction to be drawn between the Irish position(s)…and the requirements both of the classical theory of neutrality, as understood by international law and convention” (Salmon 1989: 118) whereas in Irish neutrality’s view, linked to its conception of neutrality as a process and accomplishment rather than a ‘fact’, “international law is a poor guide to the accomplishment of neutrality strategy” (McSweeney 1985: 13):

the fact is that international law is only a minor factor determining the possibility of neutrality. It has been clear from the First World War – and all the more so from the second – that the successful declaration of neutrality depends almost entirely on the political will expressing the consensus of the people and secondly, on the capacity of a nation to accomplish its neutrality (McSweeney 1985: 11-12).

The principal role of the public in Irish neutrality’s conception of neutrality is a key distinction in the two competing neorealist and social constructivist concepts of
Neutrality, which will be examined in the wake of an analysis of the IR theory-based differentiating factors argued to influence the capacity of a state to accomplish neutrality.

Neorealism in Unneutral Ireland
Having established the IR theoretical assumptions underpinning the general nature of each author’s concept of neutrality, it is necessary to examine in detail the content of each concept of neutrality. This section focuses on the criteria Unneutral Ireland uses to assess Irish neutrality (“the first set of variables proposed at the end of Chapter Three, namely the rights and duties of neutrality; the recognition of Ireland’s status by belligerents and others; the disavowal of external help; the freedom of decision and action” (Salmon 1989: 122)) and shows how these criteria are based on neorealist concepts and assumptions. Although it is claimed Irish neutrality also falls down on other (including post-World War II) factors such as ideology (Salmon 1989: 282); involvement in economic sanctions (Salmon 1989: 281); partiality (Salmon 1989: 127); Irish citizens joining the British army (Salmon 1989: 130) and EEC membership (Salmon 1989: 71-75, 281), each are refuted by drawing on other analyses of neutrality (McSweeney 1985: 11); (Keatinge 1984: 97); (Switzerland 2000: 2); (Keatinge 1984: 148); (Keatinge 1996: 110) and do not merit attention here because they fall outside the neorealist archaeology of the ‘unneutral’ thesis.

Donnelly (Donnelly 2000: 8-9) summarises the main assumptions of Realism: Realists conceive of world politics as a realm of competing interests defined in terms of power (Smith, 1986: 219-221) in which states are instrumentally rational (Mearsheimer, 1994: 9). States are conceived as unitary actors (Dunne and Schmidt 2001: 30) and the realist state-centric assumption posits that states are the most important actors in world politics (Keohane, 1986: 164-165). According to Realists, the international system is anarchic (Mearsheimer, 1994: 10) and international interactions are essentially conflictual in nature (Schweller, 1997: 927) because power and its pursuit by individuals and states is ubiquitous and inescapable (Smith, 1986: 219 – 221). Realism is characterised by its ‘power assumption’, that states seek power and calculate their interests in terms of power (Keohane 1986: 164 – 165). Realists have a one-dimensional view of power as military
power (Dunne and Schmidt 2001: 151) and emphasise the primacy of balance of power politics (Wayman and Diehl, 1994: 5). These primary neorealist assumptions - the unitary state as the most important actor, power conceived primarily as military power, and the balance of power dictum - can be identified in Unneutral Ireland’s analysis of Irish neutrality and, importantly, they underpin the “disavowal of external help” and “due diligence” criteria that are used to conclude that Ireland is ‘unneutral’.

The state-centric actor assumption
The Unneutral Ireland analysis of Irish neutrality satisfies the first two neorealist assumptions identified in Vasquez’ codeframe:

The first two assumptions of the realist paradigm are that nation-states are the most important actors for understanding international relations and that the sovereignty of nations makes domestic politics different from international politics. Given this emphasis on the nation, it is reasonable to expect that a scholar who accepted the first two assumptions of the realist paradigm would study primarily nation-states and neglect other actors, since these non-national actors would be of only minor importance. Therefore, in order to see if a scholar employs the first two assumptions, one simply examines the actors he or she studies (Vasquez 1998: 52).

Evidence of adherence to the realist assumption that state-level analysis is the most important to consider is inherent in the emphasis on recognition by belligerent states as a criterion of neutrality (Salmon 1989: 79), the claims that Britain’s refusal to formally recognise Ireland’s neutrality (Salmon 1989: 115, 137-138) rendered Ireland ‘unneutral’ (Salmon 1989: 307) (which was really Churchill’s refusal recognise the legitimacy of the Irish state (Fisk 1985: 120-121)) and the overall approach of examining only the behaviour of other states (as opposed to non-state actors) as variables in the assessment of Irish neutrality (Salmon 1989: 307). The Unneutral discourse also conceives of the state as a unitary actor given that it refers throughout only to the so-called concept of “the Irish” and fails to differentiate, identify or consider ‘sub’-state levels of analysis.

The primacy of military power, measured empirically
The hierarchy and nature of factors embedded in Unneutral Ireland and Irish neutrality’s concepts of defence are diametrically opposed. The Unneutral Ireland concept of defence prioritises military power in contrast to Irish neutrality’s interpretation that “the essence of the defence of a smaller nation, in the long-run, is not military hardware put
(sic) peace-time planning, negotiation and commitment” (McSweeney 1985: 14).

Unneutral Ireland argues

while economic independence and political freedom of action are indispensable props to neutrality, **even more crucial**, although not entirely separate, is the question of defence. It is essential to credibility and independence that a state has the physical ability to defend its territory (including if appropriate, its territorial waters) its interests, and its neutral rights (Salmon 1989: 53).

Unneutral Ireland’s analytical approach to Irish neutrality embodies the neorealist concept of power as principally military power – “realists have a one dimensional view of power as military power – it is reduced to counting the number of troops, tanks, aircraft and naval ships a country possesses in the belief that this translates in the ability to get other actors to do something they might not otherwise do” (Dunne and Schmidt 2001: 151) – seen in the devotion of a large part of the Unneutral thesis to the provision of defence expenditure figures, inventories of military equipment and Defence Forces personnel numbers (Salmon 1989: 108 – 114, 130 – 136, 158 – 164, 193 – 201, 241 – 250). These data are presented as ‘evidence’ in its assessment of Ireland’s failures in respect of its ‘due diligence’ and ‘disavowal of external help’ criteria of neutrality. The Unneutral discourse also provides sets of military inventories ostensibly measuring the capabilities of other neutral states in order to comparatively evaluate ‘the Irish’ exercise of neutrality. However, this neorealist, empirical analytical strategy is problematic in two respects. Despite the acknowledgement that, “of course, statistics alone cannot answer the question of whether these efforts are ‘enough’ – indeed it is almost impossible to answer”¹⁴ (Salmon 1989: 55), this ‘statistical evidence’ is still used to draw the conclusion that Ireland is ‘unneutral’. Alternatively, the Irish neutrality thesis prioritises peace-time planning, negotiation and commitment components of defence over military hardware and argues “to use Swiss or Swedish military expenditure as the standard for dismissing the possibility of territorial defence in Ireland is inappropriate. We do not have their problems, their geography, their military traditions” (McSweeney 1985: 14).

¹⁴ the Unneutral concern centres on the issue of conscription as a distorting factor in comparative analyses rather than the meta-theoretical question of whether defence is primarily about the accumulation of military hardware.
‘Balance of power’, ‘protective umbrella’

The primacy of an empirically measurable military concept of power underpins the neorealist concepts of ‘balance of power’ and ‘protective umbrella’ which in turn provide the basis for Unneutral Ireland’s neutrality criteria of ‘due diligence’ and ‘disavowal of external help’. The Unneutral discourse claims “that a basic condition of neutrality is the existence of a balance of power. Today, it has been argued that this condition is met…” (Salmon 1989: 34) and argues the existence of Swedish neutrality in practice depends on the balance of power concept:

- neutrality is a function of the balance of power and can only exist in circumstances of such a balance. Although by the late 1960s and 1970s many felt that this basic condition of Swedish neutrality was ‘in a process of dissolution’, an alliance balance has been crucial to Swedish policy. It has been given a particular twist and importance by the concept of the ‘Nordic balance’ and the position of Finland (Salmon 1989: 47).

Introducing its concept of ‘due diligence’ as a determinant of neutrality, the Unneutral discourse argues:

Contrary to the argument of Fisk that an ‘authentic policy of neutrality’ merely involves a ‘desire to maintain the country’s commercial life’, to ‘safeguard its political integrity’, while ‘taking only minimum defence precautions’, genuine neutrality (as has been demonstrated earlier) demands much more. A concern to defend diligently a neutral state’s rights, for example, is an integral requirement of a policy ‘for neutrality’ and ought, therefore to have been a significant factor in the defence policy of Ireland” (Salmon 1989: 108).

It claims “Ireland was clearly not in a position in 1939 to exercise, by any reasonable interpretation, ‘due diligence’ in the protection and maintenance of neutrality rights, nor indeed was it capable of adequately fulfilling neutral duties. It was relying on the sufferance and forbearance of others” (Salmon 1989: 110). Citing ‘evidence’ of Irish Defence Expenditure Figures and various military inventories (Salmon 1989: 132) the Unneutral discourse concludes, “with respect to ‘due diligence’ the Irish clearly defaulted” - “that is not neutrality” (Salmon 1989: 136).

Based on the same neorealist assumptions that demand the balance of power concept and empirical defence inventories as respective conditions and measures of neutrality, Unneutral Ireland’s concept of an “implicit ‘protective umbrella’” (Salmon 1989: 307) is used to support its argument that Irish neutrality fails to satisfy the criteria of ‘disavowal of external help’ (Salmon 1989: 54, 79-80). It is hypothesised, “the real
question is whether the Irish reservation was sufficient to save their policy of neutrality. Preparations for and expectations of help certainly ran counter to the principles underpinning a policy ‘for neutrality’, as followed by Austria, Sweden and Switzerland” (Salmon 1989: 144 – 145). Using the ‘statistical evidence’ (Salmon 1989: 111) of Irish Defence Expenditure (Salmon 1989: 112) the Unneutral discourse concludes, “the Irish relied on a protective umbrella supplied by the British” (Salmon 1989: 114). In a journal article assessing Irish defence policy, the same realist link between Irish defence expenditure figures and an alleged reliance on a protective umbrella is made: “these figures for defence spending suggest that Ireland is implicitly relying on Britain and NATO” (Salmon 1979: 467). It is argued “during the war there was no consistent Irish disavowal of external help, particularly in relation to the question of preparing for, and expecting, assistance from others in the event of an attack. There still remained a belief in the protective umbrella” (Salmon 1989: 145).

The Unneutral discourse also asserts, “for the whole of the post-war period there has been an implicit reliance upon the British and NATO umbrella” (Salmon 1989: 307), whereas the social constructivist perspective questions this classic neorealist argument; the Irish neutrality discourse takes issue with the “protective” notion of the ‘umbrella’ concept and the presentation of it as something that Ireland could take action to escape from:

The frequent assertion today by critics of neutrality that we ought to pay for the shelter given us is taken to be self-evident, though it rests on unstated assumptions…that NATO is not threatening Ireland but protecting her, rather as Churchill did in the Second World War; that Ireland desires NATO’s protection and, logically, could do something to escape from it if she wished (McSweeney 1985: 10).

History reveals the illogical nature of the neorealist ‘protective umbrella’ argument: the most obvious fact refuting this notion is Britain’s inability to protect Belfast City in the north of Ireland, let alone any city the Republic of Ireland during the Second World War - “if the British could not even defend Belfast and protect these people, how could they possibly have guaranteed Dublin’s safety under air attack if Eire had allied herself to

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15 An investigation into the practice of these paragon neutral states would demonstrate that they, too, failed this neutrality criteria, for example, Sweden had “made secret preparations for co-operating with the West in the event of Soviet aggression and neutrality failing” (Karlsson 1995: 39).
It was known that Britain had no intention of protecting Ireland (Fisk 1985: 191, 210); (Carroll 1975: 81) and was extremely hostile to Irish neutrality (Duggan 1985: 220); (Fisk 1985: 114); (Dwyer 1977: 98); (Carroll 1975: 142 - 143): Churchill’s attempts to place an economic ‘squeeze’ on trade and supplies in order to undermine public support for Irish neutrality and regain the Ports (Fisk 1985: 293, 313-315); (Dwyer 1977: 146, 214); (Carroll 1975: 87, 123), his refusal to supply arms to Ireland (Duggan 1985: 177); (Fisk 1985: 160); (Dwyer 1977: 102, 129, 142, 146); (Carroll 1975: 114) and British threats to invade Ireland (Fisk 1985: 250, 257, 285); (Duggan 1985: 40, 57, 185, 188); (Carroll 1975: 67) are all well-documented examples of this hostility which refute any notion of British “protective” measures Unneutral Ireland posits as grounds for declaring Ireland ‘unneutral’.

Social constructivism in Irish neutrality

Having already identified major differences in the nature and content of the two competing concepts of neutrality put forward in the two discourses, there remains the final task of drawing attention to the elements of neutrality prioritised in Irish neutrality’s social constructivist assumption-based analysis of Irish neutrality that are either entirely absent from Unneutral Ireland’s neorealist analytical framework (public opinion, interest groups) or, despite sharing the same nominal label (e.g. identity), are ontologically and epistemologically distinct.

Identity, interest groups and public opinion

Unneutral Ireland offers a static, zero-sum ‘given’ concept of identity as part of its argument that Ireland is ‘unneutral’ - “Ireland has undoubtedly enhanced its distinctive identity vis-à-vis Britain over the years, but it must be said that this has only been, to some extent, at the cost of identification with ‘the Twelve’. That is no help to an aspirant neutral” (Salmon 1989: 309) - in contrast to the Irish neutrality discourse that sees identity as a multi-level, over-lapping, constitutive concept and conceives of its sociological nature. Reflecting a classic tenant of social constructivism, the Irish neutrality discourse characterises neutrality as part of the identity of the Irish state and of the Irish people: “in popular understanding it [Irish neutrality] was felt to be a general
attitude to war and military alliance which was a feature of the identity of the state in international affairs and a continuing commitment of Irish governments” (McSweeney 1985: 119) and it argues for an understanding of the importance of neutrality as “an element of a people’s identity - however inconsistent it may be with the reality of foreign policy” (McSweeney 1985: 118). The Irish neutrality discourse identifies an important characteristic of Irish neutrality as a value for the Irish public: “Irish neutrality since the Second World War was not simply a policy conducted by government; it was also a value, fostered by government, which acquired some moral and cultural significance among the people” (McSweeney 1985: 118) - an element of neutrality that the neorealist paradigm does not recognise or account for. Ultimately, Irish neutrality’s social constructivist approach provides the opportunity to articulate truths at various levels of analysis and it can reflexively distinguish between the (mostly neorealist) analyses of Irish neutrality in the academic literature and the dynamics of Irish neutrality at the sub-state or public levels of analysis – as it is put, “academics...should remember that theirs is a truth about government, not about Ireland” (McSweeney 1985: 118).

Unlike realists who assume domestic politics can be separated from foreign policy analysis (Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff 2001: 64) and exclude public opinion from foreign policy (Page and Shapiro 1992: 38, 383), the Irish neutrality thesis considers the role and influence of public opinion, movements, interest groups and industrialists in its analysis of neutrality (McSweeney 1988: 209). An important aspect of the social constructivist account of neutrality is the implication of public opinion in its analysis of neutrality; it casts the public as a bulwark against neorealism and realpolitik (McSweeney 1985: 180), as active participants in its concept of neutrality (McSweeney 1985: 202) and the expression of public consensus as the key to a successful declaration of neutrality (McSweeney 1985: 12). The Irish neutrality discourse talks of strengthening “the domestic base of neutrality” (McSweeney 1985: 197) and argues “while theoretically, defence needs to be assessed in relation to the actual forces capable of infringing neutrality... neutrality can only be protected by a combination of symbolic

Unneutral Ireland alludes to public opinion once in reference to an opinion poll (Salmon 1989: 310) mainly to propound public ignorance over the ‘true’ concept of neutrality.
and political strategies based on organised resistance and spoiling tactics – and, ultimately, on the well-publicized will of government and people to resist and spoil” (McSweeney 1985: 13). The Irish neutrality discourse also affords lobby groups and peace movements an active role in its analysis of neutrality: “the defence commitments of EPC is a goal opposed in some practical respects by a European lobby which could be strengthened by too hasty a move towards its realisation” (McSweeney 1985: 133); (McSweeney 1985: 14). It refers to the potential influence of peace organisations within the EC (McSweeney 1988: 209) and conceives of them as agents in foreign policy and neutrality; “the peace movements must also consider…how they will be able to transform their foreign policy from traditional to active neutrality” (McSweeney 1988: 209).

Conclusion
The post-Cold War elite-led move to shun neutrality identified by scholars

serves to emphasise the importance of deconstructing the ‘unneutral’ thesis because it continues to be used by elites as a vehicle to undermine Irish neutrality and, by corollary, public adherence to the concept. This paper has demonstrated that the ‘unneutral’ thesis is based on a broadly (neo)realist worldview it has pinpointed the neorealism in Unneutral Ireland excerpts that articulate its epistemology, ontology and methodology, the nature of its concept of neutrality, the variables or content of Unneutral Ireland’s constructed neutrality concept, and in particular, those variables upon which Irish neutrality is said to have floundered. The paper has also re-conceptualised the alleged objectivity of the ‘unneutral’ thesis as contingent, ideological neorealism. In sympathy with Vasquez’ call for nonrealist, alternative explanatory analyses (Vasquez 1998: 382), this paper argues Irish neutrality’s broadly social constructivist framework yields a more nuanced, sophisticated and analytically fruitful account of Irish neutrality. The emancipation of Irish neutrality from neorealist constraints has highlighted the importance of a multi-level analysis of foreign policy and, given the divergence between
elite and public opinion on neutrality in Europe, the importance of conceiving of public opinion as a legitimate variable in the conception and analysis of neutrality.
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