

Unneutral Ireland: An Ambivalent And Unique Security Policy

Article



Transformed beyond recognition? The politics of post-neutrality

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Abstract

The transition from neutrality to post-neutrality has been debated by constructivists and rationalists alike as a seemingly logical and unproblematic move: the end of the Cold War and the widening of the security agenda in a globalizing world have meant that a state-centric approach to security is no longer viable or desirable. The former neutrals are subsequently reconfiguring their security policies to reflect this development and contributing to European and NATO security initiatives, and at the same time contributing their own unique 'soft security' experiences and practices. This article aims to problematize this seemingly smooth move from neutrality to post-neutrality by examining the discourses deployed to facilitate this change. Arguing that there is a politics of post-neutrality at work, it draws attention to how identity is being reconstituted in the process of European integration and identity-formation, and how discourses on changing forms of security cooperation are facilitating the discursive dissemination of an inevitable logic that neutrality in any form will eventually be abandoned.

Keywords

discourse, European security, identity, narrative, neutrality, normative power Europe

Introduction

In the post-Cold War world, neutrality was widely expected to face a 'death by irrelevance' (Cox and MacGinty, 1996: 122-3). The bipolar structure that allowed neutrality to exist had disappeared (Gärtner, 1996: 608-9) and traditional military threats no longer dominated the security agenda: the sovereign state alone could not manage the wider range of security threats that now characterized the globalized world. Neutrality belonged to the era of bloc tensions, territorial sovereignty and conflict between states – immigration, terrorism, environmental and economic insecurity, disease and intra-state war now occupied the security agenda. Indeed, since the 1990s, the label *neutrality* has gradually disappeared from official discourse (Goetschel, 1999: 115). Finland, Austria and Sweden

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