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# Ireland's Neutrality Policy in World War II: The Impact of Belligerent Pressures on the Implementation of Neutrality

**Greg Spelman**

Interference by belligerent nations in the domestic affairs of neutral nations was one of the primary dangers to the viability of neutrality in World War II. At the outbreak of the war on September 1, 1939, the prime minister of Ireland, Eamon de Valera, promptly introduced the Emergency Powers Act the following day to safeguard this aspect of neutrality. Among other things, the Emergency Powers Act authorized the Irish Government to make the necessary provisions to secure and maintain public safety and protect the independence of the nation and has resulted in Ireland's World War II experience being referred to as the 'Emergency'. The Act suspended the democratic and legislative operations of the Irish Parliament and allowed Ireland to be governed by Emergency Powers Orders. These imbued the Government with extensive but undefined powers, so that it could respond to any contingency that may arise to threaten the nation's neutrality. While the democratic legitimacy of the Emergency Powers Act may have been questionable, it was designed to empower the Irish Government with the authority to employ measures that would diminish the likelihood of the belligerent governments having justification to violate Ireland's neutrality. De Valera believed that the passage of the Emergency Powers Act was necessary because Ireland's neutrality was precarious and bound to come under considerable pressure from belligerent states attempting to obtain concessions and advantages.<sup>1</sup> While Ireland was prepared for threats of this nature, the nation was unprepared for the kind of diplomatic and economic coercion exerted from the Allied coalition. Whether the belligerent

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<sup>1</sup> T. Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History* (Glasgow, 1985), p. 172; R. Fanning, *Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1983), p. 122.

pressures on Ireland manifested in an internal fashion, or the more overt external method favored by the Allies, they were designed to cause Ireland to transgress its policy of neutrality.

Censorship was one of the powers granted to the Irish Government by the Emergency Powers Act. It enabled Irish Military Intelligence (G2) to monitor information from postal and telegraphic sources in order to preserve the nation's security. Also, the Censorship Board censored weather reports and forecasts because of the potential military value that they provided.<sup>2</sup> While the Irish authorities assumed these powers, the primary justification for censorship was that it should ensure the belligerent states were portrayed impartially by the Irish press and were not provoked into violating Ireland's neutrality. To this end, publications of all kinds, plays, documentaries, films, records, and, in particular, the Irish press, were censored. This meant that opinions and editorials about the war, neutrality, and any subject of national significance were suppressed, along with inferences of war guilt and military aggression.<sup>3</sup> Irish censorship was a harsher and more comprehensive policy than that instituted by other neutral states, such as Switzerland and Sweden. However, unlike these neutral states, Ireland did not have its own foreign correspondents. Instead, it was dependent upon partisan British and American sources, such as Reuters, the British Press Association, the American Associated Press, and the United Press. These organizations had items marked for exclusive presentation in Ireland, which emphasized Nazi persecution of Catholics. Also, news, which portrayed the Allies in a poor light was not passed on to Irish news agencies at all. This bias of the Allied news sources was particularly evident in the revelations to the Irish media of atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese and the Nazis compared with the silence regarding acts of violence committed by the Soviets and the Americans. While Irish press sources were undoubtedly biased, Irish censorship was inordinate, intrusive, contrary to democratic freedoms, and, ultimately, had little direct impact upon the viability of Ireland's neutrality. The supposedly un-neutral sentiments of the Irish press would not have precipitated an

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<sup>2</sup> Fanning, *Independent Ireland*, p. 123; D. O'Driscóil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-1945: Neutrality, Politics and Society* (Cork, 1996), p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> T.P. Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow* (London, 1993), p. 524 and p. 574; R. Fisk, *In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality, 1939-1945* (Dublin, 1983), p. 162.

invasion of Ireland.<sup>4</sup> This decision would have been founded upon more strategic concerns such as, in the case of the British, acquisition of the treaty ports and, in the case of the Germans, the diversion of British forces during a concurrent invasion of Britain.

The primary role of censorship in Ireland was, in fact, to conceal the domestic agenda of the governing political party, Fianna Fail, which was suppression of the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The IRA imperiled Ireland's neutrality because it had the power to violate de Valera's guarantee that Ireland would not be used as a base for attacks against Britain. On January 12, 1939, the chief of staff of the IRA, Sean Russell, sent an ultimatum to the British Government demanding the removal of all military and civilian personnel and equipment from Northern Ireland within four days. When this period elapsed without compliance, the IRA initiated the S-Plan, sparking off more than 100 episodes of terrorism and sabotage in Britain and Northern Ireland between January 1939 and March 1940. IRA bombs exploded in public toilets, letterboxes, public telephones, post offices, cinemas, warehouses and railway stations. The campaign escalated in frequency and violence in December 1939, when two members of the IRA were sentenced to death in Britain for orchestrating a bombing in Coventry on August 25, which killed five people. IRA sabotage had the capacity to debilitate the British war effort by striking at vital components, including aircraft production, or at infrastructure such as railway tracks or power stations.<sup>5</sup>

The Irish Government responded more quickly and decisively than the British Government to this threat. On September 8, 1939, Gerald Boland was appointed Minister of Justice and immediately issued 70 warrants for the internment of suspected members and associates of the IRA. A raid launched the next day resulted in the arrest of half of the IRA's General Headquarters and by November, almost every IRA unit had had members arrested.<sup>6</sup> The Government's campaign was delivered a blow in December, when the Dublin High Court deemed the warrants to be contrary to the Irish Constitution and ordered the release of the internees. This was just a temporary setback and on January 5, 1940, the Irish Government amended the Emergency Powers Act to make it exempt from judicial review. From January 1940, the IRA was

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<sup>4</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 299.

<sup>5</sup> J. B. Bell, *The Secret Army: The IRA, 1916-1974* (Cambridge, MA, 1970), p. 145f; Coogan, *De Valera's Long Fellow, Long Shadow*, p. 523; Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 86.

<sup>6</sup> O'Driscoll, *Censorship in Ireland*, p. 169.

devastated by arrests and concentrated on survival, rather than sabotage and terrorism. This only encouraged the Irish Government to continue the suppression and in August 1940, it increased penalties for IRA activity, making offences such as treason, murder, terrorism, and sabotage, subject to the death penalty. Subsequently, in 1941, the IRA began to disintegrate and executed one of its members without trial and sentenced its chief of staff, along with two other members, to death for treachery. Throughout the Emergency, five members of the IRA were executed by order of special criminal courts, three more died on a hunger strike, over 500 were interned without trial, and thousands were arrested and detained for questioning.<sup>7</sup> By 1945, the suppression left the IRA bereft of a chief of staff, a general headquarters, and an army council.<sup>8</sup> The suppression was engendered because the Irish Government feared that the British Government would use the suppression of terrorism as the moral justification for an invasion of Ireland to seize the treaty ports. It was done to protect Ireland's neutrality and in accordance with the Irish Government's policy of ensuring that Ireland was not used as a base of operations against Britain.

Though the suppression of the IRA was crucial to the viability of Ireland's neutrality, it had the potential to muster sympathy and support behind the IRA and plunge the nation into another civil war. De Valera sought to avoid this dilemma with use of censorship. The Censorship Board compelled the Irish press to emphasize the murderous aspects of IRA sabotage and terrorism, with words such as murderer, terrorist, and assassin replacing more neutral words such as, killer, gunman, and republican, when describing members of the IRA.<sup>9</sup> Censorship was also applied to any information, which could engender sympathy for the IRA, including political justifications for its actions and hunger strikes, by interned members. Similarly the arrest, detention, trial, and execution of persons under the Emergency Powers Act or the Offences Against the State Act were censored, as was information about IRA members who were killed in skirmishes with police. The IRA attempted to circumvent censorship by distributing pamphlets and posters, but the Irish police too seized these. Thus, censorship was instrumental in protecting Ireland's neutrality from

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<sup>7</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 359f; T. Gray, *The Lost Years: The Emergency in Ireland, 1939-1945* (London, 1997), p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Bell, *The Secret Army*, p. 148.

<sup>9</sup> O'Driscóil, *Censorship in Ireland*, p. 240.

internal dissent and subversion, by withholding information about the suppression of the IRA and also denying the organization the public forum in which to air its political rhetoric, legitimize its actions, and turn public sympathy away from neutrality. While this was the primary function of censorship during the Emergency, of course it was not politically expedient for the government to advertise the fact.

The IRA also endangered Ireland's neutrality by its association with German spies. German agents arrived in Ireland between 1939 and 1941, despite persistent protests from the German Minister in Ireland, Dr Hempel, who feared that covert activities in Ireland might provoke de Valera to abandon the policy of neutrality, or incite Britain to invade the treaty ports. The most notorious of the German spies was Herman Goertz, who parachuted into Ireland on May 5, 1940. He remained at liberty for 19 months, but did not manage to make any significant reports to Berlin or coordinate action with the IRA against either the British or the Irish governments.<sup>10</sup> Aside from Goertz, the other nine German spies were arrested almost immediately upon their arrival in Ireland. Their missions were to send weather reports and other information to Germany, as well as forging links with the IRA to persuade it to commit sabotage in Northern Ireland, with the goal of preoccupying British troops who may have been utilized elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> The links between German agents and the IRA were very real. On May 24, 1940, Irish Military Intelligence agents raided an IRA collaborator's house and discovered *Plan Kathleen*. It was a rudimentary plan, formulated by the IRA, which, although not implemented, was designed to facilitate a German landing at Donegal and proclaim the liberation of Northern Ireland. Swift and decisive action by the Irish authorities, as well as ineptitude on the part of German intelligence (Abwehr), ensured that German espionage did not threaten Ireland's neutrality. Even Goertz concluded that these espionage missions were futile, as the IRA "had become an underground movement ... heavily suppressed ... I considered them worthless."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow*, p. 621; *Documents from the National Archives, Dublin, Relating to Ireland's Neutrality Policy*. Department of the Prime Minister (Taoiseach), 'German Agents: Internment, Release and Repatriation'.

<sup>11</sup> J. A. Murphy, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (Dublin, 1975), p. 104.

<sup>12</sup> Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow*, p. 621.

In addition to insulating Ireland's neutrality from domestic dangers, the Irish Government also took measures to protect its neutrality from external threats. In the months prior to the outbreak of war in Europe, de Valera consistently declared that the Irish Government would institute a vast system of recruitment to protect Ireland's neutrality. In 1938, Ireland's army numbered less than 20,000 troops<sup>13</sup> but by March 1940, it totaled 41,463.<sup>14</sup> After the collapse of the Low Countries in May 1940, de Valera announced the formation of a paramilitary police force, the Local Security Force. By June 6, 44,870 members had been recruited,<sup>15</sup> and within two months the figure exceeded 148,000.<sup>16</sup> These auxiliary troops combined with the regular army raised the Irish defense forces to 250,000 by the end of the war.<sup>17</sup> Despite this vast recruitment, the Irish army suffered problems that severely impaired its capacity to defend the nation. Due to the rapid expansion of the Irish army, many officers were promoted with only a modicum of experience and the most experienced officers were transferred to training rather than command positions. Only 20,000 of the 148,000 members of the Local Security Force were equipped with weapons and they were seriously limited in their ammunition.<sup>18</sup> The Irish army also suffered from a drastic shortage of essential modern military hardware, such as anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, automatic weapons, artillery, and mortars. Ireland's armored divisions, comprising twenty-nine light armored cars, some of which were twenty years old, were inadequate and obsolete.<sup>19</sup> Despite the huge recruitment drive, the Irish army could not defend the nation and protect its neutrality without the requisite arms and equipment.

The Irish navy was even less prepared for a war when hostilities commenced. Much of this could be attributed to the fact that, since the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, the Royal Navy had been responsible for the defense of Ireland's coasts. It was not until August 29, 1939 that the Marine and Coastwatching Service was established with responsibility for, among other things, defending Ireland's shores against invasion and patrolling Irish territorial

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<sup>13</sup> D. Parsons, 'Mobilisation and Expansion, 1939-40', *The Irish Sword*, 19 (1994), p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> D. Parsons, 'Mobilisation and Expansion', p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> B. Share, *The Emergency: Neutral Ireland, 1939-1945* (Dublin, 1978), p. 58.

<sup>16</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 160.

<sup>17</sup> T. P. Coogan, *Ireland Since the Rising* (London, 1966), p. 88.

<sup>18</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 246.

<sup>19</sup> Gray, *The Lost Years: The Emergency in Ireland, 1939-45*, p. 179.

waters. The Marine and Coastwatching Service immediately set about constructing a chain of 88 look-out posts along the 783 miles of Ireland's coastline. When neutrality was adopted on September 3, 1939, the Marine Service consisted of a former British gunboat, the *Muirchu*, and the equally obsolete ex-British Fisheries Protection vessel, *Fort Rannoch*. They were capable of preventing violations of Irish territorial waters by merchant vessels, but not warships.<sup>20</sup> By December 24, 1942, the Marine Service had acquired a mine planter, a training ship, and six motor torpedo boats. The motor torpedo boats were the only reasonably modern fighting ships, though they too had become obsolete by the time of their acquisition.<sup>21</sup> This rudimentary navy was quite inadequate to protect Ireland's 5,127 square miles of territorial waters and, consequently, there were numerous violations by both German and British ships. The Marine and Coastwatching Service was established in accordance with the Hague Conventions, which obliged Ireland, as a neutral state, to prevent any violations from occurring within its waters or ports. The Irish Marine Service, however, never had the capacity to fulfill this obligation.<sup>22</sup>

The problems faced by the Irish Air Force were typical of those faced by the other branches of the defense forces. By the end of the Emergency, the Irish air force constituted 102 aircraft, thirty-seven of which were training aircraft. Many of the others had been written off for lack of parts and, until the final months of the war, there were no aircraft of modern combat capability.<sup>23</sup> To further complicate matters, the Irish aircraft also suffered from a severe shortage of ammunition and fuel. The impotence of the Irish airforce was demonstrated on May 30, 1941 when the Luftwaffe bombed Dublin, killing thirty-four people, injuring 90 others, and destroying 300 houses. The 1923 Hague Rules of Aerial Warfare required Ireland to use all means at its disposal to prevent violations of Irish airspace by belligerent aircraft and to compel them to land once they encroached.<sup>24</sup> While both British and German aircraft were intercepted when they entered Irish airspace, for the most part, the Irish airforce was incapable of preventing this

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<sup>20</sup> D. Brunnicardi, 'The Marine Service', *The Irish Sword*, 19 (1994), p.83.

<sup>21</sup> D. Brunnicardi, 'The Marine Service', p.82.

<sup>22</sup> J. B. Scott, (Ed.), *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, 1918), p. 210.

<sup>23</sup> A. Quigley, 'Air Aspects of the Emergency', *The Irish Sword*, 19 (1994), p. 90.

<sup>24</sup> A. Roberts, and R. Guelff, (Eds.), *Documents on the Laws of War* (2nd ed.) (Oxford, 1989), p. 131.



from occurring.<sup>25</sup> Royal Air Force (RAF) aircraft frequently overflew Irish headlands and were able to penetrate deeply inland without obstruction. Similarly, German aircraft that bombed British convoys in the Atlantic operated from airfields in north-western France and returned to refueling bases in Norway by flying over Irish airspace.<sup>26</sup>

It was clear that the Irish armed forces were incapable of safeguarding the nation's neutrality against invasion by the belligerent states. After the collapse of the Low Countries, the secretary for external affairs, Joseph Walshe, and the head of Ireland's military intelligence, Colonel Liam Archer, met with the permanent under-secretary of the dominion's office, Sir Eric Machtig, on May 23, 1940, and proposed the idea of a joint defense strategy with Britain to counter a German invasion of Ireland. The next day, a British liaison officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley Clarke, traveled with Walshe to Dublin and met with the Irish Army's chief of staff, General Daniel McKenna, and the minister for the coordination of defensive measures, Frank Aiken, to further discuss military cooperation. They agreed to append a military attaché secretly to the office of the United Kingdom's representative in Ireland, John Maffey, who would liaise between Dublin and the British forces in Northern Ireland and advise the Irish Government on military matters. Also, in the event of a German invasion, Dublin would call for assistance from the general officer commanding (GOC) in Northern Ireland, Lieutenant-General Hubert Huddleston, who had a mobile column on standby to march south into Ireland. In the meantime, the Irish army would render airfields useless, enforce blackouts of Ireland's towns, suppress any IRA uprising and maintain radio communications with Britain. To facilitate this military cooperation, full details were exchanged about the numbers, deployment and equipment of the Irish army and the British troops stationed in Northern Ireland. However, McKenna made it expressly clear to Clarke that the British army would not be

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<sup>25</sup> The Irish ignored British aircraft overflying the Donegal shore of Lough Foyle which was necessary in certain wind conditions for flying boats to take off. Official sanction was never given, nevertheless, Ireland's passivity was in direct violation of Articles 40 and 42 of the 1923 Hague Rules of Aerial Warfare. It was not an occurrence of vital importance to the conduct of the war and, therefore, accession was more prudent than forcing a confrontation; Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War* (2nd ed.), p. 131; Fanning, *Independent Ireland*, p. 124.

<sup>26</sup> Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow*, p. 567; Quigley, 'Air Aspects of the Emergency', *The Irish Sword*, 19 (1994), p. 90.

permitted to enter Ireland unless and until the Germans invaded. The Irish hoped that this would never eventuate and expected the Royal Navy and the RAF to intercept and halt any invasion before it reached Ireland. These secret contingency plans were legitimized in June and July of 1940, when British intelligence discovered that Germany had made preparations for an invasion of Ireland.<sup>27</sup> Though proposed by the Irish authorities, the joint defense strategy was formulated in response to what seemed to be a real and imminent threat to Ireland of a German invasion. It was not designed to assist the British war effort, nor could it in any way, unless Ireland was forced by a German invasion to become a belligerent in self defense.

Just as contingency plans were put into place to defend against the prospect of a German invasion, they were also prepared to protect against the prospect of British occupation. 'General Defence Plan Number Two' was developed when Churchill's rhetoric against Ireland's neutrality became more vitriolic after the fall of France in June 1940. Irish fears were fuelled by London's persistent refusal to guarantee that Britain would not invade Ireland, along with British obstruction of the Irish Government's efforts to obtain arms. 'General Defence Plan Number Two' called for the Irish armed forces to slow down the British invasion to allow time for German reinforcements to arrive. The Luftwaffe was expected to arrive and neutralize the air advantage of the Allies and, to this end, the Irish army would concentrate defense on strategic airfields and ports. In December 1940, the commander of the Irish Army's second division, General Hugo MacNeil, which was responsible for combating a British invasion, met with the counselor of the German legation, Henning Thomsen, and discussed Irish military plans and the possibility of German assistance to Ireland in the event of a British invasion.<sup>28</sup> It is not clear whether MacNeil was acting upon his own initiative or under direction from superiors, though the latter seems more likely given his military status. Requesting and accommodating German assistance was not inconsistent with Ireland's neutrality policy, considering that contingency plans had already been made with the British. De Valera was sensitive to the adverse diplomatic and press damage that official interaction with Germany attracted and

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<sup>27</sup> *Documents from the National Archives, Dublin, Relating to Ireland's Neutrality Policy*. Department of External Affairs, Secretary's Office. 'Secretary's Notes to the Taoiseach'.

<sup>28</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 252.

so was not averse to covert negotiations. While there was certainly more extensive and detailed cooperation with Britain than with Germany, at the time, this cooperation was the result of the assessment of the probable eventualities, not out of any attempt to assist Britain. The Irish were determined to protect their sovereignty and, in order to achieve this, they formulated plans to defend the nation in concert with both Britain and Germany. Dublin was less candid in expressing its desire for German assistance, but obviously intended to make use of it.

Throughout the Emergency, the British Government used the loss of Allied shipping in the Atlantic to exert pressure on Ireland to relinquish the treaty ports. In the first two weeks after the commencement of hostilities, German submarine attacks resulted in the loss of twenty-eight ships (147,000 tons).<sup>29</sup> On October 14, 1939, a German submarine entered the heavily defended port of Scapa Flow in Scotland and sank the British battleship, *Royal Oak*, killing 786 of the crew. These losses prompted Maffey, on October 21, 1939, to request the port of Berehaven for use by Britain. The Royal Navy sought the Irish port because it was west of the British ports and, thus, was better protected from German submarines and could provide more prolonged escort for convoys into the Atlantic. British pressure for the relinquishment of the treaty ports escalated in November 1940, after the Royal Navy lost 245 vessels in the preceding four months. Churchill responded to these losses in a speech to the House of Commons on November 5, declaring: 'the fact that we cannot use the south and west coasts of Ireland ... is a most heavy and grievous burden, and one which should never have been placed on our shoulders.'<sup>30</sup> These comments sparked off press campaigns in the United States and Britain. An editorial in the *Economist* called upon the British Government to wrest back the ports by force of arms and there were numerous caricatures and cartoons parodying de Valera and Ireland's neutrality. On November 7, de Valera responded in a speech to Ireland's Parliament, asserting the sovereignty of Ireland and the right of its government to determine its own foreign policy. Maffey responded to Walshe that Britain would invade Ireland if it was deemed necessary to prevent Britain's defeat.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 114.

<sup>30</sup> Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow*, p. 558.

<sup>31</sup> Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow*, p. 558f; *Documents from the National Archives, Dublin, Relating to Ireland's Neutrality Policy*. Department of External Affairs, Secretary's Office. 'Secretary's Notes to Taoiseach'.

When de Valera refused to capitulate to this diplomatic and media pressure, Britain and the United States decided to pursue another course of action. On December 16, 1940, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Kingsley Wood, proposed reprisals against Ireland for the denial of the treaty ports and the concomitant British shipping losses. 'Plan A' was instituted by Britain in January 1941 and was designed to adversely impact upon the Irish economy, but not destroy it. Wood estimated that it would reduce Irish shipping by more than seventy-five percent below its needs. Plan A stopped the Irish from chartering their ships through Britain, along with a warning to other shipping nations to charter ships only to Allied nations and their 'co-operators'.<sup>32</sup> Under the plan, Britain also embargoed the export of certain essential commodities and items to Ireland and froze the nation's foreign reserves to ensure that these necessities could not be obtained elsewhere. As the sanctions began to take their toll, the secretary of the dominion's office, Lord Cranborne, informed Churchill of de Valera's concerns about the damage to Ireland's economy. The official British response insisted that the sanctions were an inevitable result of British shipping losses, not retribution for neutrality. However, correspondence between Churchill and Woods, in December 1940, indicated that the sanctions were employed to coerce cession of the treaty ports.<sup>33</sup> By May 1941, Allied shipping losses exceeded 485,000 tons with 228 ships sunk.<sup>34</sup> This prompted American president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to join with Britain in applying pressure on Ireland to relinquish the treaty ports, attributing responsibility to de Valera for the Allied losses.<sup>35</sup>

Despite de Valera's efforts to achieve autarky, the Irish economy was extremely vulnerable to these sanctions. Ireland had no mineral resources, no developed industries, did not produce enough grain to sustain domestic bread consumption, and was without a merchant fleet.<sup>36</sup> In 1941, prices for basic commodities soared as Ireland suffered shortages of tea, sugar, tobacco, bread, fruit, meat, feeding stuffs, and fertilizers. In order to combat this,

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<sup>32</sup> Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow*, p. 564.

<sup>33</sup> N. P. Quirk, *Sovereignty and Neutrality: Anglo-Irish Relations During World War II* (Unpublished dissertation, Brisbane, 1985), p. 75.

<sup>34</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 153.

<sup>35</sup> R. J. Raymond, 'David Gray, the Aiken Mission and Irish Neutrality: 1940-41', *Diplomatic History*, 9 (1985), p. 69ff.

<sup>36</sup> Gray, *The Lost Years*, p. 33.

the Irish Government introduced general rationing in June 1942. By 1943, Ireland's economy was reduced to twenty-five percent of its tea supply, twenty-two percent of its textiles, twenty percent of its gas, and peat became the common source of fuel because there was no coal available for domestic consumption.<sup>37</sup> Bicycles and horse-drawn carriages were increasingly used, as the lack of gasoline stopped private motoring altogether and reduced public transport services to a minimum. The scarcity caused by the sanctions resulted in huge increases in the incidences of malnutrition and tuberculosis in 1943.<sup>38</sup> As the Irish economy was strangled, unemployment soared, and young Irishmen fled to Britain to find employment in the war industries at a rate of 25,000 per year.<sup>39</sup> The British Government terminated economic treaties that were made at the inception of the war, and designed to be mutually beneficial, when sanctions were implemented. Economic sanctions were enacted to engender suffering in Ireland, which was expected to bring down the Fianna Fail Government, or to compel de Valera to retreat from the policy of neutrality. If the former of these possibilities eventuated, Churchill hoped that someone more amenable to the British position would succeed De Valera.<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, the British and American diplomatic and economic coercion only served to fuel Irish defiance and Ireland's diplomatic relations with the Allied governments to deteriorate. There was no effort to suppress the fact that the sanctions had been imposed, as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) still broadcasted and British papers continued to be sold in Ireland throughout the Emergency. In fact, de Valera exploited the British action to gain considerable support for his government and its policy of neutrality. Editorials criticizing de Valera for his comments were suppressed by the censor for exhibiting disloyalty to Ireland.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the Emergency, the American press made incessant allegations, which were supported by the American minister in Dublin, David Gray, that Ireland was infested with German spies. In 1944, Gray took advantage of the impending D-Day invasion to reiterate his accusation that the German legation used its radio transmitter to coordinate an espionage network in Ireland. The

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<sup>37</sup> C. J. Carter, *The Shamrock and the Swastika* (Palo Alto, 1977), p. 63.

<sup>38</sup> R. Dunphy, *The Making of Fianna Fail Power in Ireland, 1923-1948* (Oxford, 1985), p. 223.

<sup>39</sup> R. Dunphy, *Making Fianna Fail*, p. 226.

<sup>40</sup> Quirk, *Sovereignty and Neutrality*, p. 75.

<sup>41</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 170; O'Driscóil, *Censorship in Ireland*, p. 269.

allegation was clearly false, as the Irish Government in December 1943 had confiscated the radio and, by the end of 1942, all the German agents in Ireland had been captured and interned. In fact, in July 1942, Ervin Marlin, an agent of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), had exonerated Ireland of Gray's accusations. Nevertheless, the chief of the counter-espionage branch of the OSS in Europe, Hubert Will, visited Dublin to investigate the matter. He met with Walshe and the head of Ireland's military intelligence, Colonel Bryan, to discuss the possibility of information being leaked to Germany. Will was satisfied with the measures taken, which included, among other things, routing all postal, courier, telegraph, and telegram communications through Britain, where they were subject to the scrutiny of the British secret intelligence service. An additional measure imposed by the British required ships traveling to and from Ireland to obtain navicerts from British consuls. There was undoubtedly cooperation between the intelligence services of Ireland and the OSS, but this did not necessarily constitute a violation of Ireland's neutrality. Neither side divulged more information than was necessary, and cooperation became significant only on issues of counter-espionage.<sup>42</sup> These issues were of mutual self interest and were designed to verify that Ireland's neutrality was not being violated by Axis agents, not to assist the Allied war effort.

Gray's allegation of German spies running rampant in Ireland centered upon the German Legation's use of a secret transmitter. Hempel did, in fact, maintain a secret radio at the Legation, but Irish Military Intelligence had monitored it since early in the war. The German Minister in Dublin had used the transmitter to keep Berlin informed of the organization and deployment of Ireland's army divisions, airforce, and port defenses, as well as deficiencies in the Irish army, such as the lack of weapons. He also provided Berlin with information, which was often incorrect, about the location of munitions factories in Britain and information concerning, IRA contacts, British troop locations, and training grounds in Northern Ireland.<sup>43</sup> In 1941, after complaints from Maffey, Walshe advised Hempel that the Irish Government was aware of the transmitter and insisted that it only be used in emergencies. Hempel continued to use the transmitter, though he did keep his reports brief and infrequent, in order to avoid the

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<sup>42</sup> E. O'Halpin, 'Aspects of Intelligence', *The Irish Sword*, 19 (1994), p. 64.

<sup>43</sup> Carter, *The Shamrock and the Swastika*, p. 45.

impression that he was communicating with German vessels of war. Eventually, on December 21, 1943, the Irish Government confiscated the transmitter after having grown tired of Hempel's misuse. De Valera did grant Hempel a great deal of latitude with his use of the transmitter. This was probably because all postal, courier, telegraph, and telegram communications were routed through Britain and subject to the scrutiny of the British Secret Intelligence Service. It was certainly an advantage to the British, but one of geography and not of Ireland's making. Irish Military Intelligence's monitoring of Hempel's use of the transmitter was not an un-neutral or pro-British act, because the Hague Conventions bound neutral governments to exercise 'such surveillance as the means at its disposal' to prevent violations of the conventions from occurring in their waters.<sup>44</sup> Among other things, this involved ensuring that the transmitter was not used to communicate with belligerent vessels at sea or with German agents in Ireland. After numerous warnings from the Irish Government, Hempel refused to reform his use of the transmitter and, subsequently, had it confiscated. Dublin acted to protect Irish neutrality by ensuring that Ireland was not used as a base of operations against Britain, rather than to assist the British war effort. This position was reinforced when the Irish Government immediately ordered the removal of a Czech agent, working for the exiled Czech Government in London, who was posing as a waiter in the German Legation, the moment it became aware of him.<sup>45</sup>

Northern Ireland's membership of the United Kingdom caused some dilemmas for Ireland's neutrality. On the night of April 15, 1941, 700 citizens were killed, and immense destruction caused, when the Luftwaffe bombed Belfast. As the bombs rained down, the security minister of Northern Ireland, John MacDermott, called Dublin requesting assistance. De Valera immediately dispatched thirteen units of the Dublin fire brigade to help douse the flames devouring Belfast. The dispatch of the fire crews to Northern Ireland may have ostensibly appeared to have been a breach of neutrality, but the relationship between Ireland and Northern Ireland was a complex one. The Irish Constitution of 1937 claimed sovereignty over the Province of Ulster, which it considered to be forcibly and unjustly incorporated into the United Kingdom. Thus, the assistance in dousing fires in Northern Ireland

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<sup>44</sup> Scott, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907*, p. 214.

<sup>45</sup> Carter, *The Shamrock and the Swastika*, p. 29.

was not perceived in Ireland to be of assistance to the British, or a breach of neutrality, because many of those suffering in Northern Ireland were Catholics who considered themselves to be Irish and living under British rule by duress. The bombs had not distinguished between Catholic and Protestant, or Nationalist and Unionist. Hempel informed de Valera that he understood the Irish Government's position and did not register a protest about its response to the bombing of Belfast.<sup>46</sup>

The Irish Government's policy towards Northern Ireland remained consistent throughout the war. On 4 April 1941, the Northern Ireland Prime Minister, John Andrews, wrote to the British home secretary, Herbert Morrison, seeking to have conscription extended to Northern Ireland to fulfill the state's obligation of 'equality of sacrifice'.<sup>47</sup> Churchill was initially supportive of the measure, as conscription was already in place throughout the rest of the United Kingdom. But the governments in both Belfast and London underestimated opposition to the proposal. The Irish Government and the Catholic Church protested vehemently at what they insisted was conscription of people who considered themselves to be Irish rather than British. The Catholic bishops of Northern Ireland denounced Churchill's proposal of conscription and, with the Nationalist Members of Parliament, drafted an anti-conscriptionist pledge to be signed in all churches of Northern Ireland. On May 23, the Irish high commissioner in London, John Dulanty protested to Morrison, pointing out that the introduction of conscription would evoke resistance from nationalists and the imprisonment of opponents would inevitably exacerbate IRA violence. Despite this opposition to the proposal, Andrews, and four of his Ministers met with Churchill in London to persuade him to implement conscription. Churchill intended to support conscription until Morrison sought the opinion of the inspector-general of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), Lieutenant-Colonel Wickham, who had accompanied the Stormont contingent. Wickham admitted that Catholics would be disproportionately represented in conscription because they had less employment in the exempted occupations, which included engineering, aircraft production, and ship construction. He predicted that Catholics would flee conscription to Ireland, where they would be regarded as heroes, and this would deteriorate

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46 Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 498.

47 Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 512.



Protestant support for conscription as they were forced to bear the burden alone.<sup>48</sup> Wickham's analysis of the situation persuaded Churchill to relent and terminate the proposal. Though the Irish Government did protest against the recruitment of troops in a belligerent Union, it was a move that was consistent with its relations with Northern Ireland. Also, though the Irish Government was the most vocal opponent of conscription, the governments of Canada and the United States joined it. Nevertheless, ultimately, the British Government made its decision based upon the potential reactions in Northern Ireland, not the interests of the Irish Government. Churchill informed Dulanty that he was not interested in the adverse ramifications conscription would provoke in Ireland, because he was preoccupied by affairs elsewhere in the world.<sup>49</sup>

An even more problematic issue for the Irish Government was its policy for internment of belligerent aircrews and sailors in Ireland. On September 3, 1939, about ten minutes after Churchill announced that Britain had declared war on Germany, two RAF seaplanes set down in Irish territory. They were deemed to be 'distressed mariners' and were permitted to leave.<sup>50</sup> De Valera censored the incident, but protested to Maffey and warned that recurrences of the situation would not be tolerated. At this time, de Valera was informed that another RAF seaplane had landed in Irish waters earlier that morning with a mechanical problem. It escaped just as de Valera was informing Maffey that the aircrew would have to be interned. Despite de Valera's protests, these were not isolated incidents and Allied aircraft that landed in Clare, Sligo, and Donegal were refueled and allowed to continue on their way.<sup>51</sup> In 1943, Walshe acknowledged that the Irish Government's policy was to intern only servicemen engaged in acts of war, which he claimed was the common practice of neutrality.<sup>52</sup> However, the 1923 Hague Rules of Aerial Warfare did not allow for such a liberal interpretation of international law. They bound neutral governments to use all means at their disposal to intern belligerent

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<sup>48</sup> Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow*, p. 587.

<sup>49</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 512f.

<sup>50</sup> T. R. Dwyer, *Guests of the State: The Story of Allied and Axis Servicemen Interned in Ireland During World War Two* (Dingle, 1994), p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Carter, *The Shamrock and the Swastika*, p. 84.

<sup>52</sup> Carter, *The Shamrock and the Swastika*, p. 85.

aircraft and crews, "after having alighted for any reason whatsoever."<sup>53</sup>

Dublin's clarification of policy only encouraged the British Government to attempt to secure the release of its interned servicemen. In 1943, after four Allied servicemen were released to Northern Ireland on compassionate grounds, the British Government pressured the Irish Government to release all the internees. De Valera responded that Ireland's impartial neutrality policy would demand the release of all German, as well as Allied servicemen. Maffey and the Canadian High Commissioner in Dublin, John Kearney, proposed that the Irish Government apply the non-operational flight ruling, retroactively, to the interned servicemen. On October 18, 1943, the Irish Government acceded and twenty Allied airmen were released to Northern Ireland. This concession, and the success of the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, prompted Maffey to bring heavy diplomatic pressure to bear upon de Valera for the release of the remaining eleven servicemen. De Valera was determined to reaffirm the sovereignty of Ireland and informed Maffey that he would not yield on the issue. Maffey warned of 'unforeseeable complications' if the Irish Government remained intransigent.<sup>54</sup> De Valera was not prepared to suffer renewed deprivation from another wave of economic sanctions, in order to preserve an impartial neutrality in a war that was all but won. On June 15, 1944, the eight remaining Allied internees were secretly released to Northern Ireland.<sup>55</sup> Altogether, forty-five Allied servicemen were interned and later released, with an additional 228 others allowed to leave the country unobstructed.<sup>56</sup> In contrast, none of the 223 interned Germans were released.<sup>57</sup> Though extracted under duress, this was a clear violation of the conventions of neutrality that the Irish Government had invoked when establishing its neutrality policy in 1939.

American and British pressure on Ireland to renounce its neutrality increased as they gained the upper hand in the war in Europe. On February 21 and 22, 1944, the American and British notes were delivered to the Irish Government demanding, as a

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<sup>53</sup> Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, p. 131.

<sup>54</sup> Dwyer, *Guests of the State*., p. 179.

<sup>55</sup> Three of the remaining eleven had been released earlier on compassionate grounds.

<sup>56</sup> O'Driscóil, *Censorship in Ireland*, p. 103.

<sup>57</sup> *Documents from the National Archives, Dublin, Relating to Ireland's Neutrality Policy*. Department of External Affairs, Secretary's Office. 'Position of German and Japanese Nationals in Ireland During War'.

minimum, the expulsion of the Axis diplomatic and consular officials and, preferably, the severance of all diplomatic relations with these nations. Gray insisted that these officials were in a position to facilitate espionage in the lead up to Operation *Overlord*, the plan for the Allied invasion of landing at Normandy. On March 11, De Valera responded to the Note by stating: 'We have done all we could to prevent espionage directed against your interests and we can do and will do no more.'<sup>58</sup> Two days later, Britain retaliated by banning all travel to and from Ireland and, in April, withdrawing telephone services and imposing an embargo on the export of all newspapers to Ireland. The British Government claimed that the measures were not punitive, but were aimed at ensuring that information about Operation *Overlord* was not leaked from the German Legation. Roosevelt and the American secretary of state, Cordell Hull, wanted to implement further sanctions against Ireland, but acceded to the British position because the nation lay within the British sphere of influence. The American and British media campaigns vilifying Irish neutrality, which had long been accusing the Axis diplomats of facilitating espionage in Ireland, were given added impetus by the actions of the American and British governments. One opinion poll indicated that thirty-eight percent of Americans supported the implementation of economic sanctions against Ireland, with a further thirty-five percent advocating military intervention to ensure that the Irish Government capitulated.<sup>59</sup>

The American and British notes had more to do with embarrassing the Irish Government than with preventing the leaking of information. The Irish Government had already taken sufficient measures to ensure that the diplomats were not in a position to facilitate espionage. No vital information had been sent from Dublin throughout the war, no spy network existed and the IRA had been suppressed.<sup>60</sup> In 1944, the German Legation consisted of eight persons and the Japanese Consulate was comprised of three.<sup>61</sup> In contrast, the staff level of the British Office constituted three prior to the inception of the war.

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<sup>58</sup> Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow*, p. 601.

<sup>59</sup> J. Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question: 1917-1973* (Oxford, 1989), p. 252.

<sup>60</sup> Carter, *The Shanrock and the Swastika*, p. 81.

<sup>61</sup> *Documents from the National Archives, Dublin, Relating to Ireland's Neutrality Policy*. Department of External Affairs, Secretary's Office. 'Position of German and Japanese Nationals in Ireland During War'.

increasing to thirty-six in 1942 and seventy-seven by 1945.<sup>62</sup> The German Legation had no staff increase since the war began and accusations that it controlled an espionage network in Ireland were clearly ludicrous. All post, passenger ships, and communications were routed through Britain and were subject to Britain's Secret Intelligence Service's scrutiny. Subsequently, the German, Italian, and Japanese representatives did not send or receive diplomatic bags throughout the course of the war, nor did they engage couriers.<sup>63</sup> The radio transmitter in the German legation had been confiscated by the Irish Government months prior to the dispute, because de Valera was determined that it would not be used to provide intelligence to Berlin. The American and British notes only strengthened de Valera's resolve and made him even more committed to protecting Ireland's sovereignty and neutrality. His reversion to a stringent and independent application of neutrality was a result of his humiliation at his capitulation to American and British bullying over the issue of interned servicemen. De Valera was eager to reinforce the fact that Ireland was a neutral nation and that this neutrality did not end merely because the Axis was losing the war in Europe.

After Operation *Overlord* had been executed, Allied pressure continued to build upon Ireland to abandon its neutrality. On 30 April at 12:30 pm, Gray requested that de Valera allow him to seize the archives in the German Legation. The war had not ended and the German dictator, Adolf Hitler, was still alive, though he would commit suicide two hours later. Gray was eager to seize information, particularly pertaining to submarine warfare, before Hempel had the opportunity to destroy it. Walshe informed him that the Irish Government would not cooperate in such a fashion until Germany surrendered.<sup>64</sup> Collusion with the Allied nations over this issue, before the war had ended, would have been a clear violation of Ireland's neutrality.

Later that same day, De Valera and Walshe, against the advice of their advisers, called upon Hempel to express their sympathies for the death of Hitler. It was the same treatment that had been

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<sup>62</sup> *Documents from the National Archives, Dublin, Relating to Ireland's Neutrality Policy*. Department of External Affairs, Secretary's Office. 'Position of German and Japanese Nationals in Ireland During War'.

<sup>63</sup> *Documents from the National Archives, Dublin, Relating to Ireland's Neutrality Policy*. Department of External Affairs, Secretary's Office. 'Position of German and Japanese Nationals in Ireland During War'.

<sup>64</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 534f.

shown to President Truman upon the death of Roosevelt earlier that same month.<sup>65</sup> De Valera justified his action on the basis that international protocol demanded the act of courtesy upon the death of the head of state of a nation. He also argued that diplomatic protocol was shown to all nations, irrespective of whether or not the Irish Government agreed with their national policies. De Valera explained to the Irish minister in Washington, Robert Brennan, that Hempel, in contrast to Gray, demonstrated impeccable conduct throughout the war.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, de Valera's stance had little to do with Hempel's diplomatic decorum, which was certainly a stark contrast to Gray's, but was not as irreproachable as de Valera suggested.<sup>67</sup> De Valera's call upon Hempel was more likely to have been aimed at reminding Britain and the United States that Ireland was a sovereign nation and they had no right to expect capitulation from neutral states. He was sending the message that Ireland was neutral because it was the will of the Irish Parliament, not because Britain or the United States gave the nation permission.

Throughout the course of the war, the huge number of Irish citizens that had enlisted in the British forces embarrassed the Irish Government. Dominion Office memoranda in 1945 and 1946 estimated the figure to be approximately 40,000<sup>68</sup>, though 50,000 is generally regarded to be more accurate.<sup>69</sup> Seven of these Irishmen were awarded the Victoria Cross and even though Ireland was a neutral, this constituted the highest representation in proportion to population of any Commonwealth nation.<sup>70</sup> Despite this high representation and distinction of neutral citizens in a belligerent army, the enlistments did not violate Irish neutrality. The Hague Conventions distinguish between the conduct of governments and individuals and permit the enlistment of neutral nationals in belligerent armies, provided that the neutral government does not facilitate it.<sup>71</sup> There were no restrictions against Irish citizens enlisting in either the German or British armies, however, recruiting posters and agencies were forbidden in Ireland. As an additional provision to distance the enlistments

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<sup>65</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 535.

<sup>66</sup> The Earl of Longford, & T. P. O'Neil, *Eamon de Valera* (Boston, 1971), p. 411; Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 535ff.

<sup>67</sup> Carter, *The Shamrock and the Swastika*, p. 40; Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 158.

<sup>68</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p. 523.

<sup>69</sup> Dunphy, *Making Fianna Fail*, p. 281.

<sup>70</sup> Coogan, *Ireland Since the Rising*, p. 89.

<sup>71</sup> Scott, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907*, p. 134.

from the Irish Government, Irish citizens serving in the British army were required to dress in civilian clothes when on leave in Ireland.<sup>72</sup>

The Irish Government believed that proactive policies were necessary to avoid Ireland's neutrality being exploited to assist a belligerent. On numerous occasions Dublin was compelled by geographic and economic circumstances to demonstrate 'certain consideration' for Britain.<sup>73</sup> This does not mean that as some critics have suggested, on those occasions, Ireland violated its neutrality to assist Britain or that Ireland was 'benevolently neutral', a 'neutral ally' or exhibited 'secret benevolence' in its relations with Britain.<sup>74</sup> These epithets misrepresent the nature of Ireland's relationship with Britain. The inability of the Irish armed forces to protect its neutrality put the onus on the Irish Government to ensure that the belligerent states were not motivated to violate Irish neutrality. The Irish Government's suppression of the IRA, arrest of German agents, formulation of contingency military plans and confiscation of Hempel's radio were not designed to assist Britain or to hinder Germany in the war. In fact, they were designed to ensure that no nation capitalized on Ireland's neutrality, military weakness and geographical situation to use it as a base of operations or intelligence against another. On most occasions, these measures were implemented to protect Ireland's neutrality from Germany, but this was merely recognition of the geographical reality that Ireland was strategically positioned to hurt Britain, rather than Germany.

There were certainly occasions in which the Irish violated their neutrality, but these were exceptions that were not volunteered but extracted under extreme duress. The most damning of these violations involved the discriminate release of Allied servicemen from internment that was coerced with threats of renewed economic sanctions. Considering the extent of the pressure brought to bear by Britain and the United States, it is remarkable that Ireland did not violate its neutrality on more occasions. The historic ambiguity of the citizenship of the Catholic population, residing in Northern Ireland, also posed a dilemma to the Irish Government. The neutrality of Ireland was evidenced by the

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<sup>72</sup> Carter, *The Shamrock and the Swastika*, p. 64ff.

<sup>73</sup> The Earl of Longford & O'Neil, *Eamon de Valera*, p. 348.

<sup>74</sup> J. J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 244; Carter, *The Shamrock and the Swastika*, Acknowledgments; Dwyer, *Guests of the State*, p.23.

consistency with which this issue was dealt, as Dublin sent fire fighting crews to help douse fires in Belfast and protested against the conscription of residents of Northern Ireland.

World War II demonstrated that it was impossible to enforce the international laws of neutrality and, thus, it has become generally accepted that the Hague Conventions are obsolete. The dilemma with the international law governing neutrality was that it relied on self-restraint by belligerents. This left the neutrals in an extremely vulnerable position and inclined to compromise their neutral responsibilities in order to preserve their independence. The progression of World War II was evidence of this propensity: revealing that military might and strategic expediency were the paramount determinants of the continued existence of neutrality. As Germany achieved hegemony over continental Europe, neutral nations acceded to its demands, but when the Allies gained the ascendancy in 1943, the neutral nations made concessions to them. Ireland's maintenance of neutrality throughout World War II had more to do with the fact that the United States, Britain and Germany permitted it to exist, than with Dublin's adherence to the responsibilities of neutrality.

The Axis and Allies both formulated plans to invade Ireland that never eventuated because they were deemed to have been strategically unsound. With the dominance of the British navy and the proximity of British troops and airfields, the Axis could not have held Ireland against a counter-invasion that would have been assisted by the Irish. Britain ruled out seizure of Ireland's treaty ports because it would have devastated its goodwill with the American public and damaged the prospect of the United States joining the Allies. After the United States became a belligerent in December 1941, the pressure on Ireland to rescind its neutrality increased, even though the threat of invasion diminished. Though coercion was employed, it was in the form of diplomatic, economic, and media pressure which, ultimately, allowed the Irish Government to determine its own policy. Had this coercion become military, as in the case of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, Ireland's neutrality would have ended. The duress employed by Britain and the United States for Ireland to rescind its neutrality demonstrated that, when their existences were at stake, great powers did not respect the neutrality of their neighbours.

When assessing the integrity of the implementation of neutrality it must be kept in mind that neutrality is not defined merely by abstention from war, but by adherence to the rights and

responsibilities prescribed by international law and national neutrality policies. Thus, the viability of neutrality is dependent on more than just defense of the neutral state's territory, but also on resisting demands that are incompatible with the responsibilities of neutrality. The degree to which a neutral nation can achieve this is determined by its individual circumstances. Ireland was vulnerable because of the weakness of its armed forces and, subsequently, Dublin was compelled to make concessions to Britain to preserve its neutrality. But these were minor concessions and, for the most part, Ireland adhered to its policy of neutrality. A single violation (or even several violations) of a neutrality policy that is otherwise consistent does not annul that neutrality. Neutrality is only relinquished if violations become frequent and develop into a pattern - a pattern resembling alignment.<sup>75</sup>

It should be noted that no nation has ever been successful in conforming with absolute and complete adherence to the responsibilities of neutrality. Capitulation to the commitment of a minor violation was always preferable to the prospect of a total loss of independence that could follow punitive action. Nevertheless, it is consistency in policy implementation that determines the credibility of the appearance of the propriety of neutrality. Aberrant lapses of policy occurred when states were subjected to internal or external pressures which jeopardized the continued existence of that state if the policy of neutrality was adhered to. In this sense, the consistency of a neutrality policy was largely determined by the vacillation in pressures exerted on a state, whereas the intention behind that policy lay exclusively with the sovereignty of the state. Ireland's neutrality policy was formulated with the intention of conforming to the Hague Conventions and its implementation in regard to this objective was largely, but not always, successful.

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<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, belligerent states can cite any violation as justification for punitive action against the neutral nation. However, such transgressions may justify but never motivate foreign policy which is invariably dictated by strategic considerations; S. Lindberg, 'Are We Counting our Chickens?' *Yearbook of Finnish Foreign Policy*, 12 (1984), p. 6.