

Dáil Debate on Neutrality Bill

Eoghan Murphy TD, 6th March 2015

I think there is an air of unreality about this debate. We are not a neutral country and we never have been and I think saying otherwise is ridiculous.

Neutrality as a position has been, historically, almost impossible. And if we thought that by putting neutrality in our constitution would mean we would not be influenced, we are kidding ourselves. We live in a wider world.

I am involved with several peace organisations and was previously involved with the UN. I am always interested when people think neutrality is an intrinsic good, and they tend to equate it with peace, human rights, and independence. I think that is a misperception.

Assuming impartiality to belligerents doesn't account for genocide and atrocities: we would have to take no stance. I think that is irresponsible. When an aggressor seeks to dominate a weaker party unjustly, passivity is not a noble good.

But that is not an argument for intervention either. Rather it recognises that you may need to become involved in some way. Before the Iraq War people marched on the streets; and when we facilitated the movement of troops that wasn't a neutral stance either.

We are having this debate at an interesting time. We may be seeing an end to Westphalian era: the demise of the concept of the nation-state and with it concepts like neutrality.

We may in the future be called upon to become involved in a peace-enforcement operation in Ukraine, and that means you are not militarily neutral. But such an operation may be vetoed at the UN by Russia. We should thus look at getting out of the triple lock.