

Chapter 9

Neutrality: Engaged, Credible, and Useful

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ABSTRACT

The concept of neutrality has evolved over time, with various definitions emerging since the 19th century. Initially, neutrality was associated with non-participation in foreign wars and military conflicts. However, after the onset of the Cold War, the focus shifted towards non-participation in military alliances. In the context of “engaged neutrality,” neutral states should also take principled positions. Neutrality does not imply value-neutrality, and in times of conflict, neutral states must condemn serious human rights violations, genocide, and warfare. However, neutral states are not compelled to adopt the stances of great powers or alliances. Unlike alliances, they do not pose a threat to major powers. Engaged neutrality, therefore, stands in contrast to mere detachment. It signifies active involvement whenever feasible and abstention when necessary. This approach can constitute a valuable contribution to mediation and de-escalation during periods of escalating international tensions.

INTRODUCTION: EXPLORING THE MEANING OF NEUTRALITY

What does neutrality actually mean? There are many definitions for them that have evolved since the 19th century. This article provides eighteen different definitions of neutrality that have developed over history. The demise of neutrality has been much exaggerated. Although some neutral states disappear in some historical periods, this paper demonstrates that new types emerge. Neutrality was always a response to both conflict and polarization. This paper also discusses the historical cases when neutral states emerged and have been created.

This article shows that the demise of neutrality has been much exaggerated. Principled stances of neutrality, always and everywhere, are reactions to conflict and polarization. As long as those conditions exist, so, too, will neutrals. One point has been lost in the debate. Historical examples are bipolarity during East-West Conflict and Cold War, unipolarity after the end of the Cold War

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Neutrality

Great Power competition or multipolarity between US, China, Russia, multipolarity before World War I. The new double polarizations between US and China on the one hand and West-Europe and Russia on the other show the ongoing relevance of neutrality.

The concept of neutrality has evolved over time, with various definitions emerging since the 19th century. Initially, neutrality was associated with non-participation in foreign wars and military conflicts. However, after the onset of the Cold War, the focus shifted towards non-participation in military alliances. (see Gärtner, 2023a) Neutrality, while not a prerequisite for peace, has historically served as a means to avoid involvement in wars triggered by military alliances. This includes refraining from making promises to aid other states in times of external threats or attacks. Consequently, neutral states cannot join alliances like NATO, which require explicit obligations to provide assistance. Neutrality encompasses three key aspects: non-participation in military alliances, absence of foreign troops on neutralized territory, and refraining from involvement in foreign wars.

Switzerland (1815) and Belgium (1839) are well-known examples of neutral states, with several Great Powers recognizing their neutrality and territorial integrity. The legal definition of neutrality was further established through the Hague Peace Conferences in the early 20th century (1899, 1907), which codified customary neutrality practices. It's important to note that neutrality does not exclude defensive security arrangements and guarantees. While Switzerland relied solely on its own defense, Belgium had "hard" security guarantees. Striking a double-agreement in 1870, the British government signed two treaties, one with France, promising military support to Paris (and Brussels) should Belgium be invaded by Prussia, and in turn, with Prussia, promising aid to Berlin (and Brussels), in the case of a French breach of Belgian neutrality. This two-way security agreement played a crucial role in maintaining Belgium's territorial integrity during the Franco-Prussian war and influenced Britain's entry into the First World War. (Gärtner and Lottaz, 2023)

Neutrality also could have had a significant impact on international relations, as demonstrated by King Edward VII's advice to Austria-Hungary 1907 to adopt neutrality and prevent the outbreak of World War I. (Abbenhuis, 2014, p.172) If Austria had accepted this offer, World War I most likely would not have happened. It is highly improbable that Germany had gone to war against Russia without Austria's backing.

Although classic neutrality declined during the Second World War and the establishment of global collective security under the UN, new forms of neutral behavior emerged during the Cold War. Decolonized states in Asia and Africa distanced themselves from the bloc mentality through the Nonaligned Movement, while countries like Finland and Austria declared their neutrality under the consent of the military blocks. While neutrality was proposed but ultimately abandoned by Japan and Germany, they opted for tight military integrations instead.

Despite Berlin's initial negative reaction to the Stalin note of 1952, which proposed an alliance-free Germany, suggestions for a neutral Central Europe, including Germany, persisted for many years (see Gärtner, 2018). George F. Kennan, in 1956–57, advocated for a neutral Central Europe as the only viable way to reunify Germany and referred to Central Europe as the "in-between zone." Additional proposals came from US Senators Hubert H. Humphrey and William F. Knowland, who initiated a bipartisan effort during the same years to establish a European buffer zone, coinciding with the withdrawal of US and Soviet troops from Germany and the Warsaw Pact countries. Over time, this buffer zone could have integrated with the existing neutral states of Austria, Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland. Similar ideas were put forth by Hugh Gaitskell, the chairman of the British Labour Party. Unfortunately, the plans were thwarted by the Cold War's conclusion. In a classified meeting in 1958, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles asserted that the US and the Soviet Union concurred that a unified, neutral Germany

Neutrality

could not be controlled, and thus, unification should not be a US policy objective (Gärtner, 2017a, pp. 173-182. See also Gehler, 2015).

In contrast to this, Austria swiftly emerged as a model for the concept of a Central European Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ), an idea that gained traction through the Rapacki Plan (named after a Polish foreign minister). This plan called for military disengagement from the blocs and the prohibition of nuclear weapons within the participating states. It envisioned Poland, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, and the FRG as neutral states, mirroring the terms of the Austrian State Treaty, which reinstated Austrian independence and prohibited the country from possessing or experimenting with atomic or major weapons. However, due to the concept of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), the plan remained unimplemented, though it was never fully shelved.

The conclusion of the Cold War brought about a decline in global alliance formation. The Warsaw Pact transformed into the smaller and weaker Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), while NATO grappled with an identity crisis well into the 2000s. Nonetheless, today, we witness a reversal of this trend with a growing polarization in security policy.

In these circumstances, Balance of Power concepts are regaining relevance. According to realist theory, smaller and medium-sized states face three options: they can join an alliance and align with a Great Power (bandwagoning), opt for “balancing” (typically reserved for major powers), or adopt a more effective strategy of neutrality. Neutrality serves as a realist tool for managing military conflicts in an imperfect world where universal peace remains an aspiration rather than a reality, and the security dilemma persists.

Choosing between bandwagoning and neutrality comes with concerns of entrapment in a great power conflict or abandonment in case of an attack by a Great Power. When the specter of a great power conflict looms, neutrality may be the more rational choice, offering greater maneuverability. During periods of détente or when no great power conflict is anticipated, neutrality allows neutral states to play a role in offering good offices, mediation, peacekeeping, and acting as diplomatic meeting places for the international community.

Mutual defense obligations stand as the cornerstone of any alliance, making them a pivotal aspect. Neutrality and alliances share an inverse relationship. As the significance of collective defense obligations, activated in response to an attack on a member state’s territory, intensifies, the relevance of neutrality diminishes. Conversely, when alliance commitments become obsolete, neutrality loses its imperative status. Neutrality, essentially, signifies non-membership in an alliance, adhering to both constitutional and international laws.

For neutrality to garner respect from major powers, a neutral state must fulfill two critical conditions. First, the status of neutrality must exude credibility and predictability. This implies that a neutral state should unequivocally communicate its neutrality, even during peacetime. It should not pose any threat, such as aligning with an alliance perceived as hostile by one side or indicating such an intention. Credibility is also bolstered by the fact that the neutral state maintains an armed capability. For instance, US President Dwight Eisenhower only accepted Austria’s neutrality on the condition that Austria could defend itself with its armed forces. Second, a neutral state must demonstrate its utility, either by acting as a buffer state or by offering valuable services and functioning as an intermediary in the broadest sense. By fulfilling these criteria, a neutral state can secure robust security guarantees. Notably, no neutral state in Europe has faced an attack except during the aftermath of the World Wars when non-neutral states were also victims of aggression.

Neutrality

Since the Cold War era, neutral states have undertaken both roles. On one hand, they have served as buffer states. With Finland and Sweden's announcement in 2022 of their intent to join NATO, they opted for alliance membership over neutrality. This transition relinquished their buffer state status vis-à-vis NATO, which was recognized by both the Soviet Union and Russia. Consequently, Russia categorizes them as potential adversaries. Upon joining NATO, Finland will be considered part of NATO's eastern flank, effectively becoming a frontline state with forward-deployed military assets.

As Finland and Sweden abandon their buffer state roles, Russia has already indicated its perception of them as potential threats, designating them as frontline states in the event of a NATO-Russian conflict. Former Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky astutely grasped this dynamic during the Cold War, intensively working to host numerous international organizations in Vienna. This strategic move showcased Austria's utility and served as a practical deterrent against nuclear attacks (Lottaz and Gärtner, 2023).

NATO sometimes portrays neutral states as "free-riders" relying on NATO's defense. However, this argument often overlooks or dismisses the significant contributions of Austrian peacekeepers in conflict zones. Proportionally, Austria deploys more peacekeeping troops than most NATO countries, including Finland and Sweden.

On the other hand, neutral states play a pivotal role in providing "good offices." They offer their territory and mediation services to prevent and resolve conflicts, serving as facilitators or intermediaries to maintain economic and diplomatic interactions. Austria currently stands as the sole non-aligned, nuclear-weapon-free state in the European Union, possibly alongside Ireland, enabling it to engage on an equal footing with non-nuclear weapon states and non-aligned states in the global South.

Historically, the neutral and non-aligned states of Europe have assumed this role within the framework of the CSCE process since the 1970s. Great powers indeed desire established neutrality to be respected by other major powers.

In the context of "engaged neutrality," neutral states should also take principled positions. Neutrality does not imply value-neutrality, and in times of conflict, neutral states must condemn serious human rights violations, genocide, and warfare. However, neutral states are not compelled to adopt the stances of great powers or alliances. Unlike alliances, they do not pose a threat to major powers. Engaged neutrality, therefore, stands in contrast to mere detachment. It signifies active involvement whenever feasible and abstention when necessary. This approach can constitute a valuable contribution to mediation and de-escalation during periods of escalating international tensions.

Definitions of Neutrality

As a political concept, there is no universally accepted definition of what neutrality actually means. It is most commonly understood as not taking sides in international conflicts—albeit this shallow definition is also the root of the misperception that neutrals are politically apathetic, which they are not. Neutrality has been defined under international law before World War I, but only as the relationship of third parties to belligerents during hot shooting wars. This understanding, too, is often quite invalid for political analysis because it leaves out peace-time neutrality and creates a binary world in which a state is either a belligerent, or a neutral, and nothing in-between, which rarely aligns with reality, as visible in Switzerland's support of EU sanctions against Russia while refraining from sending Weapons to Ukraine.

During the Cold War, the common understanding of neutrality shifted: from non-participation in foreign wars to non-participation in military alliances, spurred most prominently by the foreign policies of Sweden, Finland, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, and Yugoslavia—and to some degree the nonaligned

Neutrality

movement. States that mention neutrality in their foreign-policy principles or even constitutions, such as Switzerland, Austria, Ireland or more recently Turkmenistan, Serbia, Moldova, and Mongolia, simply promise to always keep to the basic laws of neutrality in any future conflict, especially when it pertains to active military involvement.

Beyond what neutrality is, there are deep, pervasive misunderstandings about what it does and why various states embrace the strategy. Most widespread is the allegation that neutrals are passive and lethargic in their foreign policies. The opposite is true. Maintaining an independent policy that does not align with the wishes of belligerents (be it in a shooting war or a trade war) is exceedingly difficult and requires constant engagement with all conflict parties. This was true for Spain, Sweden and Switzerland during WWII, and it is true today for countries like India, South Africa, or Latin America which are in exchange with Russia, Ukraine, and the West to balance their nonaligned way through this war. (Lottaz and Gärtner, 2023)

From the vantage point of the belligerents, neutrality looks wrong-headed, short-sighted, selfish, and sometimes outright evil. After all, they are willing to fight a war for what they believe is right. For instance, what cause could be more noble and just than halting the spread of communism in Vietnam, or finding and destroying these Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq?

If the cause of war is viewed in moral terms, neutrals come under immense pressure to cave to belligerents' demands, just as George W. Bush argued during the war on terror: "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." This logic is not much different from the argumentation of the Athenians in the Peloponnesian wars, over 2000 years ago, who told the neutral Melians that not becoming their military ally was tantamount to being an enemy to Athenian power and had therefore to be destroyed (which they indeed were).

A second assumption is that neutrality equals weakness and pacifism. However, a functioning neutrality policy is usually a sign of strength, as it was for the United States during its 150 years of neutrality. Neutrals have to be strong enough—militarily and ideologically—to withstand the criticism and threat from all sides of a conflict to maintain their independent positions, as the pressure on India to take sides shows.

In sum, neutrality means non-participation of the state in a war or armed conflict (conflict, armed) between states or recognized parties in a civil war as well as the non-membership of a state in a military alliance; it includes the prohibition for a neutral state to place its territory at the disposal of foreign troops for stationing or for carrying out acts of war. In particular, the permanently neutral state may not enter into military alliances (also not with other permanently neutral states) or, as a matter of principle, enter into any agreements on collective defense or collective security with defense obligations. (see Neuhold/Hummer/Schreuer, 1991, p. 477).

Neutrality has never been a necessary condition for peace, but it has historically avoided one of the possible causes of war, namely participation in military alliances ready for war. Liberal thinkers such as Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Immanuel Kant, and Woodrow Wilson saw the existence of military alliances as a threat to peace and a potential precursor to war. Theorists of realism on the one hand tend to regard alliances as part of the balance of powers to maintain peace. Liberals (liberalism), on the other hand, have always pointed to the danger of escalation of the polarity of military alliances.

Neutrality enables a state to remain neutral at the moment when a war between other states does not take sides and does not intervene militarily. In this way, it prevents that a small war turns into a conflagration - as in the Balkans in 1914, and it prevents what Pascal Lottaz (2022) calls "joining the wrong side".

Neutrality

Narrow definitions of neutrality under international law see merely the “impartiality between belligerents” (Oppenheim, 1912, Vol. I, para. 293. See also Lottaz, 1922a). This traditional definition sees neutrality as merely the non-participation in wars or in a particular war. This occasional neutrality is therefore the (legal) status of a state between third states, where the state takes an impartial attitude towards the belligerent (warring) parties. If joining military alliances is not included in the definition, in peacetime all states are neutral. One goal of this type of neutrality is to reduce the uncertainty about the behavior of a state over a longer period of time or in an occasion. Since the beginning of the Cold War the emphasis of the definition of neutrality shifted from the view of neutrality as non-participation in foreign wars and military conflicts to the non-participation in military alliances. The member states of an alliance pledge, individually and collectively, not to allow members, if they are threatened by states outside the alliance threatened or attacked by states outside the alliance, to come to their aid, including by military means. It is precisely the provisions on nonparticipation in a military alliance that prohibit a neutral state from membership in NATO, since its founding treaty contains an explicit obligation to provide assistance (Article V). Just as neutrality means non-alignment, non-alignment means the renunciation of alliance membership. Neutral states take an uncompromising position between rival alliances which do not necessarily have to be involved in open hostilities, but have a conflict- and tension-laden relationship to each other. Neutrality seeks to avoid involvement in wars of alliances (“entrapment”), but risks being left alone in an emergency (“abandonment”). The power of the neutral states thus also consists in not having to submit to instructions from alliances.

In order to avoid abandonment, a neutral state must meet two conditions. The status of neutrality must first be credible and predictable. Second, the neutral state must be useful. Credibility means that a neutral state can must communicate its neutrality unambiguously even in peacetime. In order to demonstrate usefulness, a neutral state may fulfill the function of a buffer state or offer good offices in a liberal sense and act as a mediator in the broadest sense.

Neutrality Was the Anomaly of the Cold War Blocs

Often neutrality is described as a child of the Cold War. This assumption is not historically or politically correct.¹ The neutrality has its historical roots in the Thirty Years' War, in the Napoleonic Wars and even partly in the 16th century (Battle of Marignano in 1515). The Swedish neutrality policy dates back to the 19th century. The beginning of the neutral status of Finland and Austria falls in the time of the Cold War, which was not constitutive for their neutrality. It eluded the formation of the bloc. Finland concluded a so-called friendship and cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union in 1948. It was intended to avoid unforeseen conflicts with Moscow through a variety of contacts with Moscow. Some opponents of neutrality sometimes pejoratively referred to the cooperation agreement as Finlandization, which was meant to express a dependence of Finland on the Soviet Union. In fact, the emphasis on neutrality after 1955 was a means for Finland to gain more leeway within the Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union. After the Prague Spring of 1968, the Soviet Union deleted the term neutrality from all bilateral treaties. from all bilateral treaties because it was afraid of setting an example. (Rainio-Niemi, 2017, pp. 21-25)

Austria's Neutrality Law of 1955 guaranteed Austria's independence and brought about the withdrawal of all occupation troops of the victorious powers.² The legal origin of Swiss and Austrian neutrality lies in the Hague Conventions V and XIII of 1907, which explicitly contain another point: non-participation in war. At the outbreak of war non-participating states should be able to declare themselves neutral - from which a right to territorial integrity is derived, because “the territory of the neutral powers is inviolable”.

Neutrality

From a political point of view, neutrality was not part of the Cold War but its anomaly. The Cold War was characterized in Europe by the formation of blocs, and neutrality was the exception. The formation of blocs was connected with the affiliation to an alliance, neutrality meant freedom from alliances. The idea of neutrality, of not participating in future confrontations in a divided Europe, found great support among the population of those states.

During the early years of the Cold War bloc formation the superpowers (Great Powers) showed strong reservations about the principle of neutrality. Despite these initial reservations about neutrality the two superpowers became in the course of the Cold War more flexible towards their understanding of neutrality. Eventually, both were looking for pragmatic case-by-case solutions within the framework of bipolarity. Therefore, they were also interested in not losing the opportunity to cooperate with any of the established or emerging neutral states. This eventually gave rise to two different interpretations of neutrality: one of the West and one of the East. These were based on informal checklists that defined what a “genuine” neutral state characterized. Key points on the U.S. list were that a neutral state should be armed, democratic, and free-market oriented. The advantages of neutrality from the Soviet point of view consisted in the central requirement that neutral states spend less on defense and should spend more on social concerns. (See Rainio-Niemi, 2017) Credibility is also underscored by the fact that the neutral state is armed. U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower, for example, agreed to Austrian neutrality only on the condition that it be defended by Austria “with all means at its disposal,” i.e., also armed. (Gärtner 2017a, pp. 155-161)

The neutrals were able to contribute to conflict mitigation by offering good offices, mediation, but also peacekeeping troops (peacekeeping). Within the framework of the CSCE process the so-called N+N states formed a loose association of neutral and non-aligned states countries that did not belong to any of the two alliances NATO or the Warsaw Pact. They then also took on a mediating and bridging function between the blocs. Neutrality was also explicitly included as an option in the chapter on the principles of intergovernmental relations of CSCE members. Participating States “also have the right to belong or not to belong to international organizations, to be or not to be a party to bilateral or multilateral treaties, including the right to be or not to be a party to an alliance or not to be a party to an alliance; likewise, they have the right to neutrality”.

Not belonging to one of the blocs during the East-West conflict had a realistic as well as an idealistic dimension. It was realistic in that it wanted to preserve its political independence in a bipolar environment. Moreover, Switzerland and Austria, together or separately, formed a neutral bar between the two blocs. Sweden, as a non-NATO member, maintained the Nordic balance. The neutral states acted idealistically because they wanted to reduce tensions between the two blocs by acting as mediators and offering good offices. For this purpose, the neutral and non-aligned states found an excellent framework in the CSCE. The neutral states rejected violent conflict resolution and pledged not to participate in them unless they themselves were the target of a violent attack become. They actively participated in peacekeeping operations of the United Nations.

With both the realistic and idealistic dimensions, the neutral states moved outside the security dilemma and also tried to reduce it. They acted as buffer zones which, however, could have only limited effect in view of the highly armed military alliances. Through their mediation activities (mediation; third party), they tried to establish more trust between the blocs and thus to reduce the security dilemma. Their existence in itself permanently signaled the possibility that an order in Europe was also conceivable without blocs. It was precisely this visible alternative that was not always pleasant for the leading states of the alliances, since they wanted, indeed had to present membership in their own bloc as the best option.

Neutrality

After the Austrian Neutrality Law³ in Article I, Paragraph (1) has made a commitment to neutrality it defines neutrality in paragraph (2):

- (1) “For the purpose of permanently asserting its independence vis-à-vis the outside world and for the purpose of maintaining the inviolability of its territory, Austria declares of its own free will its perpetual neutrality. Austria will maintain and defend this neutrality with all means at her disposal.
- (2) In order to safeguard these purposes, Austria will not in the future enter into any military alliances and will not permit the establishment of military bases of foreign states on its territory.”

The Neutrality Law thus contains the prohibition of joining a military alliance and forbids the permanent stationing of foreign troops on Austrian territory. It is precisely paragraph two on non-participation in a military alliance that prohibits neutral states from membership in NATO, since its founding treaty contains an explicit defense obligation. Likewise, the European Union (EU) would turn into a military alliance if it demanded obligatory military assistance from its members, which would no longer be compatible with neutrality. The Lisbon Treaty of the European Union⁴ does oblige Member States to provide a Member State with “all the assistance and support in their power in the event of an armed attack on it.” It does not affect “the specific character of the security and defense policy” of individual member states, however. (Article 42/7)

Engaged Neutrality

Neutrality has a traditional and a modern face. A traditional understanding of neutrality of staying out or sitting still no longer meets modern challenges of security and peace and peace. Was the deliberate keeping out of conflicts between the pacts by neutral states during the Cold War was often a successful policy during the Cold War, it seems downright anachronistic in the 21st century. Critics rightly point this out. But they are only hitting at the backward-looking traditional interpretation of neutrality. Traditional notions of neutrality advocated not only equidistance between the blocs, but occasionally neutrality in economic matters as well, and they even emphasized an incompatibility of neutrality with membership and cooperation in the United Nations. Modern neutrality has long since emancipated itself from such positions.

A modern understanding of committed neutrality must not, of course, mean sitting still in the sense of passively staying out of the conflicts of the present conflicts, but it also means maintaining relations with all parties to the conflict with all parties to the conflict. This is all the more true because this behavior could not prevent adverse security consequences for the neutral state occur, the effect of which could even be intensified by “sitting still.” Neutrality, if it is to continue to have meaning and generate peace and security policy benefits, must orient itself to the new peace and security policy requirements and thereby prove its political appropriateness and flexibility. Having said this, the concept of neutrality has indeed already undergone a tremendous process of change in recent years.

Engaged neutrality does not mean staying out where possible and interfering where necessary, but the other way around: interfering where possible and staying out only where necessary. (Gärtner, 2016, 2017ab) “Engaged neutrality means active participation in international security policy in general and in international peace operations in particular.”⁵ Neutrality in this understanding, requires engaged participation in international crisis management and in cooperative security. In this way, engaged neutrality distinguishes itself from an understanding that confuses neutrality with doing nothing and staying out of it.

Neutrality

Neither neutrality defined in terms of international law nor neutrality defined in terms of security policy means an impartial position between democracy and dictatorship and dictatorship, between the rule of law and arbitrariness, between the observance of human rights and their violation, and between right and wrong.

For opponents of neutrality however, this attitude is too little. It is only “for us or against us”. Therefore, the phase of unipolarity of the USA after 1990 until about 2010 was difficult for neutral states. In a hegemonic unipolar system (hegemony) there is little room for neutrality. Thucydides already observed in the description of the Melier dialogue during the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta that the attitude of the Melians “friend with you, but enemy with no one” was too little for the Athenians. They destroyed Melos.

Types of Neutrality

From the idea of neutrality developed into different types (see Gärtner, 2023b, 49-57):

- **Neutrality in political-historical tradition** is a very strong version of neutrality, but it is not based on international law. Sweden’s neutrality originated in 1814, but Sweden was not sovereign prior to its separation from Norway in 1905. The Soviet Union accepted Finnish neutrality after 1955 because it had negotiated a 1948 friendship treaty with Finland.
- **Permanent neutrality** mostly based on international law. It is the strongest version of neutrality. The neutrality of Switzerland has a long tradition and was established with the recognition by the victorious powers after the Napoleonic Wars 1815 under international law. Austria’s neutrality is based on the Neutrality Law of 1955. Austria has declared its neutrality to vis-à-vis the United Nations and all states with which Austria has had diplomatic relations. On top of that, Austria’s neutrality is constitutional law. Permanently neutral states must prove their credibility and usefulness even in peacetime. Turkmenistan’s neutrality was confirmed by the UN General Assembly in 1995. In this sense permanent neutrality is a technical term alluding to the external element of a permanent neutrality having the consent and blessing of (a part of) the international community in contrast to self-declared permanent neutralities that lack explicit international recognition.
- In contrast to permanent neutrality **occasional neutrality** applies only in military conflicts. This type of neutrality is for other states not reliable and predictable. Therefore, neutrality in peacetime is a condition for reliable neutrality. One also speaks of the pre-effect of neutrality. This includes a declaration that the neutral state will not be a party to war in the future.
- There are forms of **neutrality based on bilateral treaties**. In 1980, for example, Malta and Italy signed a bilateral neutrality treaty that has permitted the presence of Italian troops since 1983. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1938 paved the way for Irish neutrality after the civil wars.
- **Self-declared neutrality** is weak because it is based on a national constitutional or parliamentary decision. This can be changed again domestically, as happened in Ukraine in 2014. The neutrality of Moldova and Serbia also fall into this category.
- **Integral Neutrality** is the most comprehensive version of neutrality. It includes not only the military, but also the economic and ideological dimensions. In Switzerland, this is called “sitting still.” This passive neutrality has never prevailed in its ideal form.
- The interpretation and implementation of neutrality of Turkmenistan as **positive neutrality** comes close to integral neutrality Turkmenistan was also supported by a UN General Assembly resolu-

Neutrality

tion in 1995; it is a member of loose organizations such as ECO, OIS, CIS. Ireland also occasionally refers to its neutrality as “positive.”

- To hide in case of war (**hiding**), is the most common form of neutrality. It is similar to the occasional neutrality.
- **Hedging** is a policy of protecting vital interests in order to gain more independence from the influence of large and major powers.
- **Differential neutrality** is in contrast to integral neutrality selective, with the exception of, for example, economics, values, or war in the neighborhood. Even participation in the imposition of sanctions can be optional.
- **Qualified neutrality** was used by the United States during World War II as an argument against strict impartiality by neutral states.
- **Non-alignment** does not mean membership in a military alliance. The Non-Aligned Movement was more flexible in its relations with the great powers in terms of their support, in contrast to the neutral states
- **Neutrality without sovereignty** is possible in individual cases. This is a neutral political entity without full jurisdiction over its territory. Examples include Luxembourg in the 19th century, when it was ruled by the King of the Netherlands. Norway was under Swedish rule after 1814 until its separation in 1905 neutral. Another example is Portuguese Macau during World War II.⁶
- **Neutralism** is often used synonymously with neutrality. However, it is not a legal term.
- **Active neutrality** is in contrast to a passive integral neutrality a policy that pursues a strong commitment in international organizations and in the Middle East. It was a policy of Austria during the 1970s.
- **Engaged neutrality** means political and military engagement whenever possible, and staying out of it only when necessary. Engaged neutrality lies at the other end of the spectrum, which begins with integral neutrality Engagement includes peacekeeping missions within the framework of the UN, but also EU and NATO partnerships with a UN mandate for Chapter VII. Neutral states not only host international organizations, but also host international negotiations and of summit meetings. They engage in disarmament initiatives (for example, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons).⁷
- **Neutral zones** would bind neutral states to a common treaty based on international law. Historical analogies were the proposals by George Kennan (and others) in the 1950s that would have included Germany and the Central European ” states in between” of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Austria, which was already neutral. These neutral zones can be linked to nuclear-weapon-free zones. Here there are existing treaties that could serve as models. Again, Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki made such a proposal for the Central European states as early as 1957.

For Pascal Lottaz (2023, 4), “neutrality is always and everywhere a reaction to conflicts be they hot wars, cold structural conflicts or potential future wars.”⁸ Potential future foreign wars are also the basis for the commitment to “permanent neutrality”. “Occasional neutrality” would apply to both current wars as well as for a frozen cold war This does not mean that a neutrality policy of countries or institutions would be solely determined by conflicts alone, but external conflicts are decisive for such a policy.

Lottaz (1922b) defines neutrality thus “as the military non-interference of an actor in a conflict of third parties, especially as regards interstate conflicts “⁹ Therefore, neutrality policy means coordinated international activities of those actors who wish to remain or remain outside of third parties.

CONCLUSION

The persistence of neutrality as a diplomatic stance has been consistently underscored throughout history. Neutrality is not a mere ideological choice but an intrinsic response to conflicts that persist across the globe. Not even the two World Wars or the forty years of the Cold War could get rid of neutrality, nor did the thirty years of US-unipolarity. On the contrary, although wars usually terminate some neutrals, they always generate new ones: The Napoleonic wars and the Congress of Vienna of 1815 created Switzerland's and Belgium's neutrality. The First World War destroyed the latter but, in turn, created Denmark and Norway as neutral states. The Second World War destroyed those (and many more) but gave birth to Irish, Spanish, Portuguese, and Turkish neutrality. The Cold War did away with the last three, but gave rise to the neutrality of Austria, Finland, and Yugoslavia—and the entire nonaligned movement, too. The current one war over Ukraine is no exception; it has given rise to neutral policies in roughly two-thirds of the world. (Lottaz and Gärtner, 2023)

It is worth noting, that neutrality is a pretty good security guarantee. There were almost no attacks on neutral states: e.g. Belgium since 1839 until World War I, Sweden and Switzerland since 1815. Neutrality was violated almost only during big wars: e.g. Belgium in World War I and II, Laos and Cambodia in the Vietnam War. The targets of the attacks were not the neutral states but hostile alliances or big powers. Neutral states would stand in the way of the attacker. Exceptions are e.g.: Mexico 1847, Hawaii 1895 that have been assaulted by the US. Ukraine before the Russian attack in February 2022 was not credibly neutral. It was not a NATO-member but had since 2014 NATO-membership in its constitution. Also the NATO summit in Bucharest of 2008 promised Georgia and Ukraine membership, without a time frame, however.

There can be no neutrality between democracy and dictatorship, between a constitutional state and despotism, between the adherence to human rights and their violation. There can be no neutrality between the condemnation and the tolerance of human rights violations, between right and wrong, or between democratic and authoritarian forms of government. Even during the Cold War, Austria remained firmly grounded in the community of western values. Nonetheless, neutrality allows for a crucial advantage in the debate on these values. It releases neutral states from geopolitical and alliance-related considerations. Western democratic constitutional states need to detract from their values time and again due to pragmatic considerations. Neutral states have no global geopolitical interest that would lead it to establish military bases in or deliver weapons to authoritarian states that neglect human rights and constitutional values. They are also not limited by alliance obligations in its fight for democracy, human rights, and constitutional states everywhere. The CSCE during the Cold War could be a model, as it helped, through its commitment to human rights and civil liberties in its documents, conferences, and statements, to bring about the softening and eventual elimination of totalitarian communism after fifteen years. However, a reassessment of neutrality is necessary. The old Swiss concept of “sitting still” should definitely become a thing of the past. Neutrality must be engaged. This means engagement as much as possible and staying out as much as necessary. Neutrality cannot mean “staying out of it”, but rather demands an intense involvement in international crisis management. Neutral states have the advantage that they do not have global geopolitical interests or close obligations of alliance. Neutral state need to take utilize these advantages and possibilities which result from its engaged neutrality policy. The state of neutrality itself already implies that from the outset neutral states do not maintain a hostile attitude during conflicts.

Successful neutrality is anything but “fence-sitting.” Engaged neutrality means taking an active role for one's own interests and the interests of all conflict parties—being omnipartial, as Pascal Lottaz puts

Neutrality

it, rather than impartial. (Lottaz and Gärtner, 2023) Today, the question of whether nonalignment is long gone or having a resurgence is moot. When it comes to neutrality, there are really only two questions that matter: First, which neutrals will leave the stage, and which ones will be born? Second, will the neutrals play a constructive role in the new global conflict, or will they be relegated to the margins? For better or worse, if history is of any guidance, neutrality is here to stay.

Multilateralism, readiness to talk, and global partnership have priority for the neutrals. The use of force must remain the exception. Priority setting is important. There is a significant difference between a policy, which orients itself along the lines of the abovementioned principles, and one that primarily supports military intervention, arms build-up, military alliances or sanctions outside the United Nations. Neutrality and nonalignment was always the attempt to stay out of great power competition and geopolitical blocs. This behavior is based on the idea that the thinking in blocs, blocs the thinking!

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ENDNOTES

¹ Grimm's dictionary of 1889 defines neutrality as follows: "neutrality means such a performance that between two warring parties the third behaves in such a way that he lives at peace with both and does not accede to either before the other, nor does he concede any favor or advantage.

² Agreement Concerning the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in the Event of a Land War, concluded at The Hague, October 18, 1907.

³ Austrian Neutrality Act, Federal Constitutional Act on the Neutrality of Austria, 26 Oct. 1955 (BGBl 1955/211).

⁴ Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, 2007.

⁵ Summary: "Austrian Security Strategy: Security in a New Decade - Shaping Security," 2011.

⁶ This idea comes from Pascal Lottaz.

⁷ Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

⁸ The original version reads: "Neutrality is always and everywhere a reaction to conflicts, be they hot shooting wars, cold structural conflicts or potential future warfare".

⁹ The original version reads: Neutrality is "an actor's military noninvolvement in third-party conflicts, especially in interstate wars".