

2 Neutrality, Neutralism, and Nonalignment in the Early Cold War

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When all is said and done, neutrality is by no means the easiest foreign policy. It is easier to obey than to stand on one's own feet. Neutrality cannot be pursued passively and there is no simple formula which will always and unfailingly give the desired answer regardless of situations and circumstances.¹

— Urho Kekkonen, 1965

Introduction

The early years of the Cold War were a period of fundamental changes in Europe, and the neutrals were part of that process. At the height of World War II (WWII), neutral Europe was made up of Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Switzerland, Sweden, and Turkey (plus the microstates of the Vatican, Lichtenstein, Andorra, and San Marino).² However, in 1949, Portugal became a founding member of NATO, Turkey joined in 1952, and Spain dropped most references to neutrality in the 1950s.³ At the same time, Finland was neutralized—or “Finlandized”—through a security treaty with the Soviet Union (1948). Austria accepted neutrality as an informal condition to end the Allied occupation (1955), and Yugoslavia, albeit not formally neutral, became a standard bearer for the Nonaligned Movement (NAM), which it helped create in 1961.⁴

I will repeat here my claim that neutrality is a fuzzy concept.⁵ It has many meanings and is, as constructivists put it, “what states make of it.”⁶ At the same time, neutrality is also deeply rooted in realism. The policies of neutrals have as much to do with geopolitics as with Great Power configurations. At its most fundamental level, neutrality is the idea of remaining in harmony with those who are in conflict with each other. In international relations, it denotes remaining at peace with states that are at war. From this fundamental logic of neutrality, many implications follow, which are explained elsewhere.⁷ In this chapter, I will focus on the idea itself and various strains of the neutrality debate for the first 20 years of the Cold War. The aim is to show with concrete examples how the concept developed theoretically and what that meant for the global politics of the Cold War.

The chapter will first outline how the end of WWII was a critical moment, hostile to the idea of neutrality but innovative regarding its conceptualization.

While in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, neutrality was mostly treated as a legal term under international law, the Cold War broke the neat categories, introducing the neologisms “neutralism” and “nonalignment” that began haunting both superpowers. In the second part, the chapter will outline the political predicaments Europe’s neutral and nonaligned states found themselves in, arguing that their neutral paths depended heavily on individual circumstances, which in turn informed their judgments about what their version of neutrality allowed them to do and what not.

The following pages will pull together different strains of the fragmented neutrality debate, attempting to structure the terminology and offer a narrative understanding of conceptual developments. That is not to claim neutrality was perceived at the time in a coherent manner or that there was an agreement about the way the different terms were used. The framing this chapter proposes should help to understand how neutrality was embedded in the early Cold War and how it related to its politics.

Post-War Neutrality: Unwanted and Reframed

As WWII drew to a close, the fault lines of the post-war order remained blurry for several years. When the first institutions of the new order were created, it was anything but clear that it would transform into a contest between the superpowers. One only needs to appreciate the famous picture of the Bretton Woods delegates M. S. Stepanov (USSR), John Maynard Keynes (United Kingdom), and Vladimir Rybar (Yugoslavia) in discussion on July 6, 1944,⁸ when the idea of the delegates was still to create a global economic infrastructure to rebuild the devastated Eurasian continent (Figure 2.1). Only a few years later, the USSR and the United Kingdom would end up on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain and Yugoslavia somewhere in between. Retrospectively, the effort to include the communist regimes in the post-war financial system might seem blue-eyed, but at the time, it was attempted in all seriousness. The great split was not a given.⁹ After all, George Kennan’s “Long Telegram” was still two years away, and so was Churchill’s “Iron Curtain speech.”

Bretton Woods is also instructive regarding the nations that were *not* invited. Obviously, Germany, Italy, and Japan, but also Europe’s WWII neutrals, were missing and so was the still colonized part of the world. Most of Central and Southeast Asia (except for the Philippines) was absent, and the entire African continent was represented only by Egypt, Ethiopia, and Liberia. The new world order was planned almost exclusively by the colonial victors of WWII. This was even more true for the United Nations (UN), the other pivotal institution of the post-war order. To be invited to its founding conference in 1945, a country had to fulfill at least one of two conditions: either be a signatory to the UN declaration of 1942—which set up the wartime alliance against the Axis Powers in the first place—or have declared war on them before March 1945.¹⁰ The irony for the neutrals was, in the words of historian J. M. Gabriel, that those who “had remained at peace now had to declare war



Figure 2.1 USSR, United Kingdom, and Yugoslavia delegates, Bretton Woods Conference, New Hampshire, USA.

Source: United States Office of War Information in the National Archives/World Bank. License: CC BY NC-SA 4.0.

Note: From left to right: M. S. Stepanov (USSR), J. M. Keynes (United Kingdom), and V. Rybar (Yugoslavia).

in order to join an organisation intent upon abolishing war and preserving peace!”¹¹ Only Turkey followed suit, declaring pro forma war on Germany “on time” in late February. The other neutrals remained committed to their policies and were hence not invited to San Francisco.

Unsurprisingly, the early UN was born hostile to the idea of neutrality, enshrining *radical internationalist* ideas, as Gabriel calls it.¹² The French delegation even proposed a passage in Chapter I (Article 2) of the Charter that membership was incompatible with permanent neutrality, thus attempting to exclude countries like Switzerland as long as they had neutrality statutes on their legal codes. The suggestion was only dropped because the other delegations agreed that the current Charter formulation was sufficiently clear to that extent. Consequently, legal scholars argued for years that neutrals could not become members of the UN.¹³ However, realpolitik soon trumped legal dogmatism as the first WWII neutrals, Afghanistan, Iceland,¹⁴ and Sweden were accepted into the UN in 1946.¹⁵ It was certainly helpful that none of them had “hard” neutrality clauses in their constitutions. They had been neutral in the previous war only by virtue of not fighting in it.

Around the same time, a reframing of neutrality began that introduced a major shift in the way the concept would be discussed for much of the Cold War. Classic neutrality was a (European) tradition born from maritime law, with earliest traces going back to the *Consolato del Mare*, a thirteenth-century

collection of maritime trading practices, outlining accepted norms of commerce in the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁶ Together with practices for neutrality on land—formulated a few centuries later—a body of neutrality norms emerged that, over time, became international customary law and even treaty law.¹⁷ That process culminated in the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, which were the largest-ever attempts at multilateral codification of the laws of war, peace, and neutrality. During this development, neutrality had mostly been treated as a commercial, military, and most of all, a legal issue concerning states that happened to be at peace with both sides of a third-party war. Neutrality in this sense was a concept open to all states at all times on an ad-hoc basis. In fact, the neutrality law of the Hague Conventions was written for cases of “occasional neutrality” of any small or great power. “Permanent neutrality” of the sort Switzerland started practicing after 1815—promising to *never* join a war on anyone’s side—was an exception at the time, reflected in the fact that the Hague Conventions do not even mention the duty of neutrals to remain outside of military alliances during peace times. Rarely had neutrality been treated as a permanent issue outliving the existence of war. Even less commonly was it discussed as an ideological issue. This changed in the late 1940s when the term “neutralism” took root, and neutrality suddenly came to be conceptualized as a third “-ism” among the rivaling social dogmas of the twentieth century.

The novelty of neutrality as an “-ism” can be traced through Google’s *Ngram Viewer*, a software able to statistically analyze all the words inside the millions of English language books the company has scanned over the past two decades (Figure 2.1). It plots a search term on a time axis against its frequency of appearance using a yearly count of n-grams. The application has its shortcomings,¹⁸ but it can function as a useful heuristic to approximately understand a concept’s prevalence in the English language.¹⁹ Searching for “neutral country” shows the term appeared most often over the past 200 years around the time of general wars (or shortly thereafter), like the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War, and of course the First and Second World Wars. “Neutralism” and “non-alignment,” on the other hand, were almost unknown to the English language before 1945. They only emerge in the dataset to a significant degree after WWII and then grow rapidly in popularity in the 1950s (Figure 2.2).

It is often assumed that “neutralism” and “nonalignment” are synonymous and that both hark back to the emergence of the decolonized world as an international political actor, especially the so-called Afro-Asian block.²⁰ While it is true that Western commentators often spoke of nonalignment *as* neutralism after the founding of the NAM in 1961, the Ngram graphic clearly reflects that the concept of “neutralism” appeared before that. In fact, it first became popular as a term to describe political sentiments in the West. Ironically (considering later developments), one of the first instances in which “neutralism” was used in a major newspaper was in 1916 by a British journalist describing the popular sentiment of the Americans toward Europe during the First World War. The unnamed journalist explicitly came up with this term to distinguish the “popular attitude” of US citizens from their government’s official

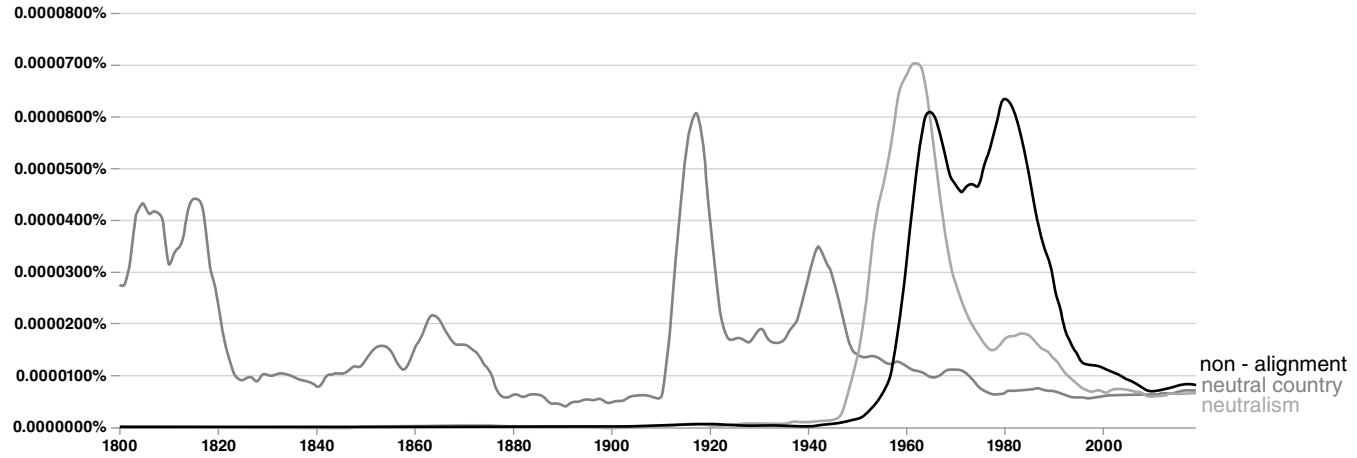


Figure 2.2 Usage of the terms “neutral country,” “neutralism,” and “non-alignment” over time.

Source: Google Ngram Viewer, <http://books.google.com/ngrams>.

policy of neutrality.²¹ However, the concept only took off in popularity after WWII to describe anti-alliance tendencies in Eurasia's former Great Powers that had just been brought into Washington's security fold, most importantly Britain, France, Germany, and Japan. The first *New York Times* article featuring it in a title was published in the summer of 1950, and the first thorough treatment in an English language academic journal dates to 1951. Both referenced political forces on the left and right of the political spectrum in France and West Germany that opposed political or military alignment with the United States while not falling in line with Soviet goals for Europe either.²² Similar forces existed also in Japan, where the political left kept advocating against the security arrangement with the United States and for a neutrality policy until the early 1960s.²³ This might explain why the NAM countries opposed that framing—neutrality, like neutrality, were both inherently European concepts and thereby colonial language. Both terms were also connotated negatively in the United States and the USSR, as the next section will show. Babaa and Crabb, discuss this point in a 1965 publication as follows:

Nonalignment and neutralism tend to be used synonymously, except when the latter denotes “neutrality” in its legal or ethical connotations. To avoid such connotations, a majority of nations in this group prefers nonalignment as the term best describing its viewpoints and policies toward the great powers.²⁴

Hence, by the mid-1950s, there were three interrelated, yet distinct concepts floating in the ether of foreign policy vernacular: *classic neutrality* in the sense of permanent peacetime neutrals that would not join military alliances but might have clear ideological preferences, *neutralism* as a political inclination to oppose not only alliance making but also refusing the ideological and morally connotated dichotomy between Western capitalism and Eastern communism, and *nonalignment* as a term preferred by the recently decolonized states of Asia and Africa plus Yugoslavia to distance themselves from both terms while not committing to the dichotomy either.

US Attitudes Toward Neutrals and Neutralism

In the United States, views about neutrality were ambivalent. There were politicians, diplomats, and military leaders for and against neutrality as a way to achieve foreign policy goals. From the summer of 1945 to the fall of 1946, the State Department under James F. Byrnes developed plans for a neutral Germany,²⁵ General MacArthur advocated for a neutralized Japan until the early 1950s, and President Eisenhower was inclined to ponder the neutrality of Germany and ultimately signed off on the one for Austria. George Kennan, the State Department maverick, was even publicly speaking about the benefits of a neutral belt between NATO and the Soviet sphere—including a neutralized Germany—as late as 1955, shortly before West Germany's integration into the alliance.²⁶

At the same time, voices dismissing neutralization as unrealistic or even communist plots to subvert US interests were never in short supply. Especially after the founding of NATO (1949), and the US-Japan alliance (1951), some strategists worried about political forces that could break the young coalitions. In 1952, Daniel Learner, a social scientist (and IR spin doctor), published a study of British and French neutralist tendencies, revealing typical contemporary disdain and distrust toward them in his framing:

Neutralism indicates a failure of shared purpose in the America-centered Free World coalition, which today stands opposed to the Soviet-centered Comintern coalition in the struggle for world power. The failure is this: that people who were counted as members of the Free World coalition, in fact decline to identify themselves with it and to share its purposes. Neutralists are those who refuse to join either coalition.²⁷

Lerner immediately psychologizes the issue, offering a dubious explanation for these political minority tendencies:

The psychological mechanism underlying neutralist sentiment is neither apathy nor apoplexy, but ambivalence. Ambivalence is the inability to make a satisfying and durable choice between alternatives. When this inability to choose persists against all considerations of greater good or lesser evil in an actual situation, a new conception of reality may be internalized which ignores or denies the need to make a choice at all.²⁸

Lerner's worries were shared by the hawks of the foreign policy establishment, who had a hard time reconciling the idea that there might be political tendencies that were not communist but would still refuse US leadership to confront that threat. In 1955, the National Security Council (NSC) requested a report from the State Department on "Neutralism in Europe." Although this remarkable analysis introduces a useful distinction between neutralism and classic (permanent) neutrality—depicting the latter as a government policy or status not necessarily opposed to US strategic goals—it picks up on Learner's framing of neutralism, describing it as a "psychological tendency" leading to a "disinclination to cooperate with U.S. objectives in the cold war and in a possible hot war."²⁹ This was seen as a serious problem since the report also described the stubborn anti-American neutralism as being "on the rise" (inside political parties and intellectual circles abroad). The historian Jussi Hanhimäki succinctly summarized that what the hawks

worried about was that the success of neutrality would encourage Europeans into thinking that the USSR's talk of peaceful coexistence was for real; that there was indeed a strong case to be made for cooperating, if only in a limited fashion, with the USSR.³⁰

In most of Western Europe and Japan, pro-neutralist forces were not able to win over the political process, and even the two Germanies ended up inside the Cold War alliances. The decolonized world, however, was another story. The Bandung Conference of 1955 was the first time a major multilateral conference on economic and—in a limited manner—security issues took place outside and without Euro-American colonial powers. While the main emphasis of the final communiqué was about the empowerment of former (or ongoing) colonies, it did not mention the East-West split of the Cold War. It did not even make reference to either capitalism or communism. Importantly, one of the ten final principles of the conference included the “abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers” and the “abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries.”³¹ As such, the conference placed itself outside of the Cold War framework and included the kernel for the future NAM. Importantly, ever since Bandung, what the Afro-Asian countries opposed was not alliances *per se* (another principle of the conference explicitly respects “the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively”) but the two coalitions of the superpowers.

To most policymakers in the United States who wanted to confront the USSR with strength, the neutralist sentiments of the decolonized world were perceived as blue-eyed at best and camouflaged communism at worst. Especially after some limited comeback of classic neutrality in the mid-1950s, and some positive remarks by President Eisenhower about the ability of neutrals to serve as mediators, John Foster Dulles, his secretary of state, felt it necessary to dispel in unequivocal terms the impression that the United States had a favorable view of neutralism. In 1956, at a much-cited foreign policy address, he described neutrality as a notion

which pretends that a nation can best gain safety for itself by being indifferent to the fate of others, (...). This has increasingly become an obsolete conception and, except under very exceptional circumstances, it is an immoral and short-sighted conception.³²

Ironically, Dulles used the very same speech to argue against himself when the neutralist tendencies came from the other side of the Iron Curtain. “We also think it prudent to help Yugoslavia, so long as it remains determined to maintain genuine independence.”³³

It took the United States until the late 1950s to dispel most worries about neutralism in its sphere of influence. West Germany joined NATO in 1955, and Japan revised and cemented its security alliance with the United States in 1960. However, in 1961, the official formation of the NAM in Belgrade showed that the problem had merely shifted, not disappeared. This left many Americans puzzled to the point where it took Hans J. Morgenthau, one of the most prominent international relations scholars at the time, to explain this

“most pervasive trend in world politics” in a *New York Times* article.³⁴ As a lifelong observer and commentator on neutrality,³⁵ Morgenthau possessed a nuanced view of the phenomenon, outlining several motivations for states to join the NAM. His conclusion, however, was typical for the father of modern realism and revealing about the popular framing of neutralism inside the bipolar contest between the superpowers:

(...) neutralism is but a function of the power of the United States. Neutralism, like peaceful coexistence, is for the Soviet Union but a stepping stone towards communization. A nation can afford to be neutralist, not because this is what the Soviet Union wants it to be, but because the power of the Soviet Union is not sufficient to absorb it into the Soviet bloc. (...) For neutralism in the cold war, like neutrality in a shooting war, depends upon the balance of power. It is a luxury which certain nations can afford because the power of one antagonist cancels out the power of the other.³⁶

Soviet Attitudes Toward Neutrals and Neutralism

Moscow, too, was ambivalent when it came to neutrality. While there were important Soviet strategists like Maxim Litvinov, a former foreign minister and ambassador to the United States who, in 1944, internally promoted the idea of setting up a neutral belt between the USSR and the US-British alliance (made of Norway, Denmark, Germany, Austria, and Italy), there is, in the words of historian Vladislav Zubok, little evidence that “this idea had ever received serious hearing in the Kremlin.”³⁷ Especially during the Stalinist era, the top ranks of the Soviet leadership were staffed with people who, for ideological reasons, thought genuine neutrality in the epic struggle between historical forces was unfeasible. In an argument similar to the one Dulles would make a decade later, Andrei Zhadanov, a close confidant of Stalin, remarked at the founding of the Communist Information Bureau in 1947 that the division of the world into two hostile camps with the Soviet Union representing the forces of peace and the United States those of imperialism was irrevocable and that neutrality in this situation was utterly impossible. States that still tried to be neutral were obviously displaying malevolent inclinations.³⁸

Nevertheless, the USSR became at times supportive of neutral solutions, especially when they aligned with its goal of hindering European West integration and the spread of NATO. The most prominent examples were again Germany and Austria. Although only for the latter did neutrality become the solution to ten years of occupation, the idea of a neutral and unified Germany was not only entertained but actively nourished by Moscow between 1952 and 1955.

Historians are still divided on whether the Soviets were ever serious about a unified but neutral Germany—especially Stalin’s early design, offered in the so-called “Stalin Notes.” The Sovietologist, Peter Ruggenthaler, concluded Stalin’s

offer was but a “propaganda ploy” to subvert the Western alliance by playing mainly to the German public.³⁹ He and others who studied Soviet archives interpret the complete lack of records that would attest to Moscow’s serious planning for a neutral Germany as well as contradictions in Soviet statements as indicative of the proposal’s dishonest nature.⁴⁰ For instance, the later Austrian chancellor, Bruno Kreisky, who was one of the delegates in Moscow when the negotiations over Austria’s neutrality took place, recounted that Anastas Mikoyan, a long-served official, and politburo member, had very clear ideas about the limits of neutrality policy: “Neutrality,” Mikoyan reportedly said,

was guaranteed solely by that piece of paper on which it was declared. A small state was aware of the consequences that would result from infringement of the treaty. For a large state of the magnitude of a reunited Germany that same piece of paper might easily become obsolete.⁴¹

As such views were neither uncommon nor unreasonable, the “ploy-thesis historians” view Stalin’s offer as intended to sow discord inside Germany but not as a proposal Moscow would have followed through.

Other researchers disagree. Wilfried Loth still judges that precisely “because Moscow knew that the Western powers did not want to negotiate, they wanted to create pressure by mobilizing the (West) German public.”⁴² Michael Gehler, who wrote the most comprehensive study about the connection between the Austrian and German neutrality proposals, agrees that the initiative was probably a serious—yet poorly executed—attempt at creating a more Soviet-friendly central Europe without a hard contact line between the two blocks.⁴³ He argues that reducing the neutrality offer to a question of honesty misses the point that Stalin (and after him other Soviet leaders) had several good reasons for the offer, only one of which was propaganda, and that it was a risky, yet pragmatic proposal. In fact, the American, French, and British addressees of the note saw it that way, too, as they discussed its content seriously. Had Konrad Adenauer, the West German chancellor, not been categorically against the idea, negotiations might well have moved forward.⁴⁴ Finally, there is real-world proof of Soviet attitudes in the form of the Austrian case. When discussions about its troop withdrawals in return for Austrian permanent neutrality finally were negotiated, in the spring of 1955, Moscow took a leap of faith and accepted the word of Vienna’s delegation that Austria would “out of its free will” declare neutrality since the Austrian’s did not want the policy imposed on them as part of the soon-to-follow State Treaty. That design of Austria’s grand bargain finally took shape when the other three occupation forces signed off on it—much to the chagrin of Adenauer, who still believed neutralization meant sovietization. When Austria, in the end, lived up to its promise and really did declare neutrality right after the Soviet troop withdrawal, Khrushchev interpreted the solution as a great strategic victory.⁴⁵

With the benefit of hindsight, the neutral framework was not a bad one. Contrary to Adenauer’s fears, the USSR never intervened in Austrian internal

politics, the country was not divided, and Vienna became one of the few international cities of the Cold War, serving as a hub for conferences, spies, and a plethora of multilateral organizations. The two German states, in contrast, became a hard and dangerous border. It is no coincidence that the first real European crisis of the Cold War happened over Berlin, not Vienna.

However, these observations should not lead to the conclusion that the USSR harbored any genuine appreciation for neutrality. Stalin, and later Khrushchev, were just as opposed to indigenous neutralist sentiments in their core sphere of influence as the United States turned out to be in the territories it controlled. Case in point; only a year after the successful neutralization of Austria, Hungary went through a political change that brought forces to power trying to democratize and follow the Austrian example by ditching the Warsaw Pact and declaring neutrality. This was utterly unacceptable to Khrushchev, who ordered the Pact to invade and stamp out the opposition to communist rule.⁴⁶ Similarly, Tito's split with Moscow and his newly found love for nonalignment was a point of great contention and fierce opposition by the Kremlin as long as Stalin was alive.⁴⁷ Alvin Rubinstein argued that even after the Soviet change of heart years later, it never lost its suspicions about Yugoslavia's potentially hostile nature to the USSR's version of socialism.⁴⁸ The same is true for Finland. Stalin was highly distrustful of Helsinki's drive toward neutrality as a means to gain political distance from Moscow and enjoy more freedom in foreign and domestic policymaking than Eastern European states had. Hence also Finnish-Soviet relations only relaxed under his successors—albeit with ups and downs.⁴⁹

The Cold War Neutrals and the Dictates of Necessity

Neutrals, as so often, could not put much hope in the benign understanding of the dominant powers for their aspirations and predicaments, which were, after all, very diverse. Looking at the situation from their perspectives, we find a variety of reasons for the adoption of neutrality (or nonalignment) and just as many interpretations of what that meant.

Sweden, for instance, had not been part of a war for nearly 150 years when the Cold War started but had also never written neutrality into its constitution or laws. It was—and would remain—only a foreign policy principle. Certainly, Swedish leaders like the long-served elite diplomat and Foreign Minister Östen Undén understood the value of the policy very well. Although he had been an ardent advocate for global collective security through the League of Nations in the 1930s, he was utterly disillusioned and forced to abandon the approach when the League started falling apart in 1936.⁵⁰ Henceforth, Undén advocated for neutral solutions to buffer the Great Powers, even going as far as suggesting to NATO in 1955 to accept the Soviet design for a reunified but neutral Germany.⁵¹ Ideologically, however, it became quickly clear on whose side Sweden would be neutral on. West integration began early: first economically through Sweden's participation in the Marshall Plan, the OEEC, and its

(unofficial) adherence to COCOM export controls. Militarily, too, Stockholm was never ambiguous about its preferences. Despite strong public support for the neutrality policy, it was well understood that Sweden was building up its defenses against the USSR, not the West, or as Michael af Malmberg put it “anyone with the slightest acquaintance with Swedish military planning (...) knew that there was never talk of more than one enemy.”⁵² It was an open secret—and after 1950 even welcomed by the US State Department—that Sweden’s domestic defense strategy was built for putting up resistance against a hypothetical Soviet attack to buy time for Western support to come in. Especially after the failure of the Nordic Defense Union and the Danish and Norwegian decisions to join NATO, Sweden’s pro-Western neutrality was more or less set in stone.⁵³ However, in case of wars between third parties, Stockholm’s official security credo remained “non-participation in alliances in peacetime with a view to neutrality in war” until well into the next millennium. In this regard, Sweden came to play the role of a neutral shield to the Western alliance, much like Finland was forced to serve the same purpose to the USSR. Hence, both had little dogmatic qualms about joining the UN (Sweden in 1946, Finland for external reasons only in 1955). Neither viewed their pragmatic neutralities as standing in the way of participating in an international organization made of both superpowers.

Switzerland’s view of its neutrality was another story. Although like the Swedes, the Swiss had been a founding member of the League of Nations and were also quickly integrated into the Western economic system through the same mechanisms (especially the Marshall Plan), they understood their neutral obligations in a much more legalistic way. Already in November 1945, they drew the same conclusion as the French: UN membership, a government report proclaimed, was not impossible but highly difficult to reconcile with constitutional neutrality.⁵⁴ That assessment only grew more pessimistic over time. Influential legal voices inside the Federal Administration started arguing in the early 1950s that if international organizations

(...) are of a political nature, participation is only possible if they have a certain universality. The main representatives of the political groups in question must take part, in particular both parties to a possible conflict. (...), Switzerland must avoid taking sides.⁵⁵

Since Switzerland also judged the UN to be the club of the winners of WWII—the occupied former Axis Powers were not part of it yet—it could hardly be called “universal” from Berne’s perspective. Parliament and the voting population agreed, and Switzerland refrained from joining the UN until well after the end of the Cold War (in 2002). Nevertheless, Berne happily provided the Palais des Nations, in Geneva, the former premises of the League of Nations, as a second seat to the new organization. This promised economic benefits to the city and diplomatic prestige for the country, although it also created the somewhat paradoxical situation that Switzerland did not take a seat at the UN

negotiating table while still hosting venues for it. The Swiss attitude contrasts strongly with that of the soon-to-follow new neutrals—Austria, Finland, and Ireland⁵⁶—all of which joined the UN on December 14, 1955, as part of a Great Power package deal admitting four Eastern European communist states in return for 12 non-communist countries.

Austria is particularly interesting in this respect because it had regained its sovereignty less than two months prior. For several years, the main obstacle to Austrian independence had been the Soviet objection to ending the Allied occupation. Only in the spring of 1955 did a window of opportunity open when Moscow signaled its willingness to let go of Vienna in return for its promise to become a neutral (i.e., not a NATO member). The deal was struck in the so-called Moscow Memorandum of April 15, in which the country's top diplomats promised Austria would immediately "make a declaration in a form that commits Austria internationally to exercise perpetual neutrality of the kind practiced by Switzerland."⁵⁷ It was a point of considerable importance to the Austrians that neutrality was not imposed on them externally but that they could choose neutrality out of their free will. Hence, the State Treaty of May 15, 1955, between all Allied Powers and Austria that ended the occupation does not mention neutrality at all. Nevertheless, Vienna dutifully lived up to its promises, enacting a constitutional law of neutrality on October 26—the (supposedly) first day without foreign troops on its soil. Interestingly, despite the clear understanding that Austria would follow the Swiss model, Vienna, with the blessing of the United States and the USSR, immediately opted for joining the UN.

Ireland, too, was eager to participate in the multilateral organization. Like Austria or Sweden, it had few legal concerns, since its neutrality had been relatively young and mostly policy based. Although Eamon de Valéra, the leader of Sinn Féin and future Taoiseach proposed Irish neutrality as early as 1920, as a way to appease the British (promising Ireland would never endanger British security) only when the United Kingdom entered WWII in 1939, de Valéra officially declared Irish neutrality for the first time.⁵⁸ He did so not out of sympathy for Germany but because it would have been unthinkable for the independence leaders to join a war on the side of the power that still colonized the northern part of "their" island. Irish wartime neutrality was first and foremost a form of political pragmatism, conditioned on national political feelings toward the British, not on ideological or cultural affinities toward the concept itself. Hence the Irish leadership contemplated joining NATO in 1949 but connected the accession question to a unified Ireland, which the United Kingdom and the United States rejected,⁵⁹ leaving Dublin little option but to continue an uneasy neutrality policy. Only when de Valéra came back to power in 1957 and brought with him Frank Aiken as his foreign minister did the latter reinvigorate a sense of political purpose in Irish neutrality as a way of bridging the East-West gap at the UN, especially in questions of common interest. Most importantly, as explained in Chapter 5 by Mervyn O'Driscoll, Aiken capitalized on Irish neutrality at the UN to increase the security of small neutral states by proposing a pathway to nonproliferation.

While Irish neutrality was the outcome of an attempt at maintaining an arms-length distance from the United Kingdom, Finnish neutrality came to serve the same purpose toward the USSR. For Helsinki, too, neutrality was nothing it chose out of enthusiasm for the principle, but it was a direct result of the geopolitics of WWII. After losing parts of its territory in the Winter War (1939–40), Helsinki capitalized on the German attack against the USSR, re-joining the fray in the Continuation War (1941–44) on the Axis side. As such, Helsinki ended up as one of the losers of WWII, had to accept dictated terms of peace from the Soviet side in 1947, and, a year later, was forced to sign an “Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance,” which gave the USSR strong leverage over Finnish security. Article 1 of the treaty obliged Finland to resist any third-party attempt at attacking the Soviet Union through Finnish territory and receive Soviet help to do so. Article 2 allowed for consultations with the USSR to establish if the treaty would be activated and Article 4 prescribed “not to conclude any alliance or join any coalition directed against the other High Contracting Party.”⁶⁰ The treaty became the core of what in the West came to be referred to pejoratively as “Finlandization.” Although Finland was spared from joining the Warsaw Pact, the treaty made sure it was off-limits to NATO, and ear-marked for military cooperation with the USSR should an attack through its territory occur—thereby securing Moscow’s north-western flank.

The treaty and Finland’s vulnerability vis a vis the USSR put Helsinki in a special geopolitical pickle for the entirety of the Cold War. In response, the country’s strongman leader, President Urho Kekkonen (1956–82), developed a neutrality policy aimed at preventing the treaty from being activated in the first place and a foreign policy “to remove tension from Europe with lasting effect.”⁶¹ Kekkonen and his diplomats understood Finland’s neutrality first and foremost as a (compelled) security guarantee to Moscow, which meant its own security depended on the absence of serious threats to the USSR. Hence, Helsinki was keen on diplomatic activities reducing tensions among the superpowers and it was antagonistic to anything that might upset them. This was most obvious in the process for creating the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, but,⁶² as Tapio Juntunen shows in Chapter 7, it had already been its guiding principle during the NPT negotiations. In fact, Kekkonen was probably the most “realist” of all neutral leaders when it came to connecting the dots between neutrality and nonproliferation. In a 1964 speech given at a dinner in honor of Yugoslavia’s Josip B. Tito, he stated explicitly:

Although in this situation primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace belongs to the great power (sic) in whose hands are the most terrible means of destruction of our time, no state should underestimate its opportunities for affecting the cause of world peace—for or against. The neutral and non-aligned states in particular can by their own example demonstrate that open-minded and constructive co-operation across the front lines of the Cold War and ideological differences is not only possible, but in accordance with the vital interest of all parties.⁶³

Cognizant of the fact that any action by the neutrals might backfire, Kekkonen's idea of Finnish neutrality was an attitude of prudent helpfulness to Great Power de-escalation. To him, neutrality politics meant first and foremost not doing harm to the superpower constellation, which required an active neutrality as expressed in the initial quote of this chapter.

His guest, however, might not have entirely agreed with Kekkonen. Tito, too, had been connecting the dots between a neutral position—nonalignment in his case—and disarmament, but he had different ideas about the role of non-aligned states in challenging the superpowers. After breaking publicly with Stalin in 1948—something unthinkable for Finland—he formulated a first attempt at a neutral position when the Korean War forced his hand. The Associated Press reported a speech of his on June 1, 1950, in which he called Yugoslavia “the only neutral and independent country that has no obligations toward either East or West” and that he intended to remain outside “any bloc.”⁶⁴ Hence, Yugoslavia, which was a Non-Permanent Security Council Member at the time, abstained from voting on Resolution 82 about the Korean peninsula, which served as the basis for the US and UN interventions in the unfolding war. Some researchers assessed that nonalignment and Tito's interest in the developing world go back to these early days when, for the first time, Yugoslavia interacted closely with Egypt and India in the Security Council.⁶⁵

The nonaligned ties grew deeper between 1954 and 1956 when Tito, Nehru, and Nasser met several times and started formulating common policy positions, rooted in the final declaration of the Bandung Conference and a shared understanding of nonaligned and decolonized interests. Most insightful is a joint declaration published after a meeting between the three leaders on the Yugoslav Island of Brioni on July 19, 1956—less than a month after Dulles' dismissive statement on neutrality—holding that

[t]he division of the world today into powerful blocs of nations tends to perpetuate these fears. Peace has to be sought not through divisions, but by aiming at collective security on a world basis and by enlarging the sphere of freedom and the ending of the domination of one country over another.

All three men also clearly connected their nonalignment with the question of nuclear and conventional disarmament, because right after that passage, the statement continues that

progress towards disarmament is essential in order to lessen fears of conflict. This progress should be made primarily within the framework of the United Nations and to include both nuclear and thermonuclear weapons and conventional armaments, and adequate supervision of the carrying out of the agreements made. (...) fissionable material should in future be used only for peaceful purposes and its further use for war purposes should be prohibited. The three Heads of Government are deeply interested in full and equal cooperation among nations in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy.⁶⁶

The statement also discusses the German question and peace in the Middle East. It serves as a good example of how intimately the founders of the NAM contemplated the dissociation from the “block mentality” of the early Cold War with the desire to reign in also the threat of nuclear weapons—at least officially. Marko Miljković, in Chapter 10, explains how at the same time, Tito remained highly ambivalent about the domestic Yugoslav nuclear program,⁶⁷ and we know today that also India eventually went a different route. However, in the mid-1950s, the Brioni statement was an uncontroversial position paper that the (future) leaders of the NAM could rally behind. Within weeks, Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia and President Sukarno of Indonesia also affirmed their commitment to the Brioni declaration.⁶⁸ The meeting and the understanding it produced was doubtlessly an important step toward the formal inauguration of the NAM five years later in Belgrade.

The Return of Neutral Principles to World Politics

In short, despite the suspicions and distrust of the superpowers toward neutrality and neutralism, the 1950s became the decade when the principle—in its various garments—returned to the world stage. And that had not only to do with the gradual strengthening of the nonaligned idea. To a significant part, it was also due to the enduring reality of international armed conflict—the thing the UN sought to finally abolish. Just like its precursor, the League of Nations, the UN, too, could not bring an end to warfare. The Korean War was a watershed moment in this respect, when, due to the absence of a Soviet veto, the UN itself became a belligerent facing off Soviet-backed North Korean forces and, ultimately, mainland Chinese forces in the second phase of the operation. The war brought back not only unilateral assertions of neutrality—the Swiss informed the UN within a month that as a neutral and non-member, it did not wish to make any public declarations about it⁶⁹—but gave birth to the first post-WWII, UN-sponsored, multilateral neutrality initiative. In 1953, after two years of negotiations, the “Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission” (NNSC) and the “Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission” (NNRC) were formed as a result of an armistice agreement to serve as its supervisory bodies. The agreement mandated that each side (the UN and communist China) would choose “their” neutrals to sit in the committees and that for the NNRC an additional fifth “umpire” would sit in the commission—a neutral among neutrals, so to speak. The UN chose Switzerland and Sweden, while China opted for Poland and Czechoslovakia. For the NNRC, both parties agreed to choose India as a tiebreaker. This was a major success for Indian diplomacy and the first time in Colonial Europe’s history a non-European state would serve a neutral function in an ad-hoc international commission. It also became a successful arrangement. While the NNSC, which was made only of the two Western and two Eastern neutrals, was deadlocked soon after its inception, the NNRC successfully implemented its mandate, largely thanks to the role of the Indian umpire.⁷⁰ Nehru’s success in offering India’s impartial arbitration in the Korean War was part of its road to Bandung.

Furthermore, in 1956, the UN would itself incorporate a neutral principle into its catalog of activities through the newly invented “peacekeeping”—which was not only a new term for international law but also uncharted terrain for the UN. Peacekeeping mandates were only created in reaction to the Suez Crisis and came to demand that UN “Blue Helmets” were (a) accepted among all parties of a conflict, (b) neutral and impartial, and (c) that they would use force only for self-defense. All three conditions were necessary to be recognized as an impartial task force—as opposed to a belligerent, as was the case in the Korean War.

The practical realities of armed conflict and the operational challenges in dealing with them re-introduced neutral principles into the post-war order and provided new diplomatic space for the neutral idea. By the early 1960s, the Great Powers and the UN had come full circle, beginning to embrace again even “neutralization”—the act of externally imposing a neutral and usually also demilitarized status of certain plots of land. U Thant, the third UN secretary-general even saw a clear connection between neutralization and non-proliferation. In a 1962 speech, he explained,

(...) The reality is that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union will deliberately seek a nuclear war, though they may be plunged into one by accident, and the sensible course is to try to prevent accidents by limiting the arms race and reducing the areas of dispute. Neutralization of certain areas seems to be a welcome trend in international negotiations. In 1955, the great powers, including the Soviet Union, signed a treaty which neutralized Austria. In 1960, they signed a treaty neutralizing Antarctica. A year later they were prepared to guarantee the neutralization of Laos. The importance of neutralization does not lie solely in the creation of buffer states, valuable though that is. Neutralization is a form of territorial disarmament, a partial dismantling of the great military machines whose destructive powers have now become so terrifying. Each act of neutralization, therefore, is a kind of pilot project for the comprehensive disarmament that alone can rid the world of fear and suspicion. These are among the great issues of the 1960s which were never thought of when the United Nations was founded.⁷¹

That even neutralization made a comeback in the 1960s was unexpected, but for Laos,⁷² Cambodia,⁷³ and even Vietnam,⁷⁴ neutral solutions were either agreed on or discussed seriously. Although they failed to contain and end the wars in Indochina, they inspired a new wave of research⁷⁵ and were some of the intellectual precursors in Southeast Asia to an initiative that followed in 1971, spearheaded by Malaysia, and one of ASEAN’s first coordinated multilateral foreign policy concepts, the so-called “Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality” (ZOPFAN). Although the initiative angered Indonesia, which had been one of the five founding members of the NAM and viewed ZOPFAN as a rival concept, the policy nevertheless became a pillar of ASEAN’s joint foreign policy for roughly a decade.⁷⁶

Conclusion

The early Cold War order was a hostile place for neutrality. Both superpowers distrusted it greatly and only gave support to neutral solutions or neutralist sentiments when those were either undermining their opponent or when other options would have been too costly. However, the concept did not go away, it only shifted forms. Permanent neutrality, the way Switzerland had practiced it, used to be exceptional in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when most states only practiced occasional neutrality like Sweden or the USA before 1941. They were neutral (sometimes) by virtue of not joining certain wars. The Cold War transformed this, largely eliminating the occasional version, making permanent neutrality the normal meaning of the word and the abstention from joining one of the superpower alliances its hallmark. While this did not imply ideological, political, or economic neutralism, it did determine the military options of Europe's neutrals.

Second, the reframing of political tendencies to avoid the bipolarity of the Cold War as “neutralism” and “nonalignment” was a genuinely new phenomenon and the outcome of the new way international conflict was being thought about. Since the nature of conflict always determines the nature of neutrality, a system in which war is not only a political state of affairs of people violently fighting each other but also denotes a “cold” ideological struggle, it is only natural that concepts emerge to describe actors trying to avoid commitment to either. “Neutralism” became the term used foremost by Western powers to describe such sentiments, most often in a negative way, since no ideologically committed actor could possibly view non-commitment in a positive light—a trend repeating today.⁷⁷ “Nonalignment” emerged as the preferred description the decolonized world (and Yugoslavia) chose for its attempts at maintaining friendlier ties to both sides than the other side would have thought appropriate. Finally, the neutral idea experienced a popular revival in the 1960s, after some actors like the UN and the United States, but also the leaders of aspiring neutrals themselves, found use in the concept again.

Notes

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- 3 Glennys J. Young, “Spain and the Early Cold War: The ‘Isolation Paradigm’ Revisited,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 24, no. 3 (2022), 46.
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- 7 Pascal Lottaz, “The Logic of Neutrality,” in *Permanent Neutrality: A Model for Peace, Security, and Justice*, eds. Herbert Reginbogin and Pascal Lottaz (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020); Pascal Lottaz, “The Politics and Diplomacy of Neutrality,” *Oxford Bibliographies in International Relations* (2022).
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- 9 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 108.
- 10 Jürg Martin Gabriel, *The American Conception of Neutrality after 1941: Update and Revised 2nd Edition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 70.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Jürg Martin Gabriel, *The American Conception of Neutrality after 1941* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 226.
- 13 Howard J. Taubenfeld, “International Actions and Neutrality,” *The American Journal of International Law* 47, no. 3 (1953), 385.
- 14 Iceland had still been in a loose union with Denmark at the beginning of WWII when the government in Reykjavik declared its neutrality. It was invaded and occupied in 1940 by Britain, and later US troops took over the island. The semi-independent government of Iceland never declared war on the Axis.
- 15 Angela Kane, “Neutrality in International Organizations I: The United Nations,” in *Neutral Beyond the Cold: Neutral States and the Post-Cold War International System*, eds. Pascal Lottaz, Heinz Gaertner, and Herbert Reginbogin (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022), 92–93.
- 16 See Thrassyvoulos Mitsidis, “Consolato del Mare, the Medieval Maritime Code and its Contribution to the Development of International Law,” *Revue Hellénique de Droit International* 22, no. 1 (1969).
- 17 Stephen C. Neff, *The Rights and Duties of Neutrals: A General History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
- 18 Most limitingly, one cannot distinguish between different meanings of words. For instance, since the term “neutral” also has various meanings in everyday language it, a more precise proxy for its meaning in international relations is necessary. That, however, might result in undercounts of the concept. Nor can we be sure the dataset is complete since the sources are not listed. The dataset also includes only books and not academic journals or popular magazines.
- 19 See also Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., “Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books,” *Science* 331, (2011): 176–82, DOI:10.1126/science.1199644.
- 20 See, for instance, the conceptual framings of Henry William Brands, *The Specter of Neutralism: The United States and the Emergence of the Third World, 1947–1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Sandra Bott et al., eds., *Neutrality and Neutralism in the Global Cold War between or Within the Blocs?* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1–14.
- 21 The first instance known to the author stems from a British correspondent in the United States” “What America Thinks: ‘Neutralism’ as a Policy. How Allied Criticism Strikes the States,” *The Manchester Guardian*, March 7, 1916.
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- 26 Michael Gehler, *Modellfall für Deutschland? Die Österreichlösung mit Staatsvertrag und Neutralität 1945–1955* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2015), 1155–58.
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- 28 *Ibid.*, 684. Lerner suggested firmer and more positively connotated public messaging to resolve the issue.
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- 30 Jussi M Hanhimäki, "Non-aligned to what? European neutrality and the Cold War," in *Neutrality and Neutralism in the Global Cold War: between or within the blocs?* eds. Sandra Bott, et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 21.
- 31 Principle 6, "Final Communiqué of the Asian-African Conference," April 24, 1955. http://www.cvce.eu/obj/final_communique_of_the_asian_african_conference_of_bandung_24_april_1955-en-676237bd-72f7-471f-949a-88b6ae513585.html.
- 32 *New York Times*, "Dulles Declares Neutrality Pose Is Obsolete Idea," June 10, 1956.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 *New York Times*, Hans J. Morgenthau, "Critical Look at the New Neutralism," August 27, 1961.
- 35 Morgenthau was an international lawyer who already in the 1930s observed and wrote about European neutrals. See Hans J. Morgenthau, "The End of Switzerland's Differential Neutrality," *The American Journal of International Law* 32, no. 3 (July 1938); Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Problem of Neutrality," *University of Kansas City Law Review* 7, no. 2 (1938): 109–28; Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Resurrection of Neutrality in Europe," *American Political Science Review* 33, no. 3 (June 1939).
- 36 Morgenthau, "Critical Look at the New Neutralism."
- 37 Vladislav Zubok, "The Soviet Attitude towards the European Neutrals during the Cold War," in *The Neutrals and the European Integration 1945–1995*, eds. Michael Gehler and Rolf Steininger (Vienna: Böhlau, 2000), 31.
- 38 Mark Kramer, "The USSR and Cold War Neutrality and Nonalignment in Europe," in *The Soviet Union and Cold War Neutrality and Nonalignment in Europe*, eds. Mark Kramer, Aryo Makko, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021).
- 39 Peter Ruggenthaler, "The 1952 Stalin Note on German Unification: The Ongoing Debate," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, no. 4 (2011): 209.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 Bruno Kreisky, *Zwischen den Zeiten: Erinnerungen aus fünf Jahrzehnten* (Berlin: Siedler, 1986), 461. As translated and cited in *ibid.*, 199.
- 42 Private correspondence with Wilfried Loth. April 21, 2023. See also Wilfried Loth, "Die Entstehung der 'Stalin-Note.' Dokumente aus Moskauer Archiven," *Schriftenreihe Vierteljahresheft für Zeitgeschichte* 84 (2002); Wilfried Loth, "Die deutsche Wiedervereinigung 1952/53," in *Eine andere deutsche Geschichte 1517–2017*, eds. Tobias Winnerling and Christoph Nonn (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2017).

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- 45 Zubok, “The Soviet Attitude,” 36.
- 46 See Csaba Békés, “The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Declaration of Neutrality,” *Cold War History* 6, no. 4 (2006).
- 47 Andrei Edemskii, “Soviet-Yugoslav Relations, 1948–1955,” in *The Soviet Union and Cold War Neutrality and Nonalignment in Europe*, eds. Mark Kramer, Aryo Makko, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Lanham: Lexington, 2021).
- 48 Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 308.
- 49 Kimmo Rentola, “Soviet Attitudes to Finnish Neutralism, 1974–1989,” in *The Soviet Union and Cold War Neutrality and Nonalignment in Europe*, eds. Mark Kramer, Aryo Makko, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Lanham: Lexington, 2021).
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- 52 Mikael af Malmborg, *Neutrality and State-building in Sweden* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 152.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 149–57.
- 54 The Federal Council quickly commissioned reports by military and legal experts on the subject. Their findings were published on November 14, 1945. The report by Dietrich Schindler on the relationship between the UN Charter and Swiss national law and the neutrality principle came to a mixed conclusion. See «Schweizerische Konsultativkommission zur Prüfung der Satzung der Vereinten Nationen. Berichte der Experten vom 14.11.1945» in *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, dodis.ch/54229. 1945.
- 55 Rudolf Bindschedler, “Der Begriff der Neutralität,” in *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, 1954. Dodis.ch/9564. The quote is part of the “Bindschedler Report” outlining the principles of Switzerland’s Cold War neutrality. The Federal Council never officially endorsed the report, but it became so widely circulated and referenced in the administration that it was called the “Bindschedler Doctrine.”
- 56 Ireland was also neutral in WWII, but since it had only gained its independence from Britain in the 1920s, the policy was barely 30 years old when Dublin joined the UN.
- 57 “Memorandum über die Ergebnisse der Besprechung zwischen der Regierungsdelegation der Sowjetunion und der Regierungsdelegation der Republik Österreich.” As published by the University of Luxemburg’s CVCE institute for contemporary history https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/memorandum_uber_die_besprechungen_der_sowjetunion_und_osterreich_15_april_1955-de-63977731-04e8-4657-87fa-1d48c3ea6a18.html.
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- 59 *Ibid.*, 36.
- 60 “The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance between The Republic of Finland and the union of Soviet Socialist Republics,” in *Containing Coexistence. America, Russia, and the “Finnish Solution,” 1945–1956*, Jussi M. Hanhimäki (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1997), 207–09.

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- 62 Thomas Fischer, *Neutral Power in the CSCE – The N+N States and the Making of the Helsinki Accords 1975* (Baden-Baden: Nomos for the Austrian Institute for International Affairs, 2009).
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