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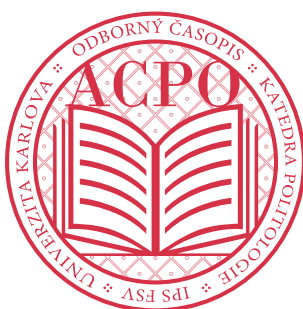
Neutrality in Perspective:
The European Neutral States' Integration Priorities and Cooperation in Security and Defence[1]

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Abstract:

The peculiarities of transformation of five European countries' (Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Finland and Ireland) foreign policy strategies of neutrality and non-alignment have been analyzed. It has been documented that neutral European states pay considerable attention to security and defence strategies, the main purpose of which is to protect their territorial integrity and neutral status. It has been emphasized that modern neutrality of these European states has transformed under the influence of integration processes (neoliberal approach). We reflect on the transformation of neutral states' models of foreign policy with simultaneously retaining the international prestige associated with neutrality. The neutrality of these European states is inferior to an active position in the international arena, which ensures their contribution to global problem-solving, as well as to maintaining peace and security in the world. The article is situated in the relations with the perceived security and economic benefits of neutral states that come with cooperation and regional and international integration.

Key words: *neutrality; non-alignment; Switzerland; Austria; Sweden; Finland; Ireland; integration*

Relevance of the scientific research

Neutrality and non-alignment are among the oldest but still relevant state strategies in the international arena. Nowadays, these strategies are embodied in the foreign policy of many countries, including in Europe (Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Finland and Ireland). None of these countries belongs to military alliances (namely NATO) but all are members of the EU (except Switzerland), which has a military assistance clause for its member-states. Changes in the international environment and the global problems of today make it necessary for these countries to develop the most effective foreign policy course. Therefore, it is important to study the effectiveness and prospects of such strategies as a positioning mechanism of the states and means of protecting their national interests.

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Changes in international relations system in the late 20th and early 21st century have led to the evolution of understanding and implementation of neutrality concepts in the European states' foreign policy. The conflict of the bipolar world (Cold War) has given way to active interaction between countries and international organizations in political, economic, security and other spheres.

A new awareness has emerged among politicians, policymakers, researchers and analysts regarding recent changes in the international and European security environment, the emergence of a vast number of challenges and threats to national, regional and international stability. They refer to the expansion of the security concept and point to a more complex picture of cross-border threats: the perception of Russia as a threat after its annexation of Crimea in 2014; the conflicts and poverty in the Middle East and Africa that are framed as having direct security implications for the European continent in the form of migration, terrorism, and organized crime; the weakness of American leadership during Donald Trump's presidency and his questioning of the security guarantee among NATO allies, and the fundamental value of the alliance; environmental catastrophes and pandemics, etc. (Britz 2016). All this indicates the European neutral countries, like the others, are converging in their views on security, upgrading their security and defence policies, focusing on regional security and territorial defence (Nissen 2018). Clear evidence of this is the implementation and strengthening of security integration programmes within the EU through Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects, the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the coordinated annual review on defence (CARD), as well as suggestions to strengthen the sub-regional coordination forum Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO), etc.

According to researchers (Andisha 2015), a cursory look at successful neutral states reveals that, beyond a geostrategic location, other factors are necessary to maintain neutrality, including internal cohesion, acceptance by regional powers, and the perceived military capability of the neutral state to defend itself. Thus, for the European neutral countries, multilateral forums such as the UN, the EU, and partly NATO remain their best chance of contributing to defining and addressing threats to their own and global stability (Nissen 2018).

Thus, the European neutral states transform their neutrality policies in such a way that they can efficiently defend their national interests in the international context of the post-bipolar system. According to the status, each neutral state determines its own model of foreign policy while simultaneously retaining the international prestige associated with neutrality. Consequently, the neutrality of European states is transforming, and the strict compliance to it gives way to an active position in the international arena.

Theoretical basis of the study

The modern neutrality of European states has been transforming under the influence of constantly changing international conditions, resulting in divergences between the practical implementation and classic understanding of the concept. Changes and peculiarities of the implementation of neutrality and non-alignment concepts in the foreign policy of the states attract the attention of a great number of domestic and foreign scholars and become the subject of their researches. For example, quite comprehensive studies of the term "*neutrality*", the development of law and policy of neutrality as well as its forms, prerequisites and causes for its establishing and transformation in the foreign policy of the European states have been undertaken by many oreign scholars, for instance D.Brommesson (Brommesson

2018), C. S. Cramer and U. Franke (Cramer and Franke 2021), A. S. Dahl (Dahl 1997), C. Gebhard (Gebhard 2013), M. Gehler (Gehler 2001), L. Goetschel (Goetschel 1999), K. Morris and T. J. White (Morris and White (2011), D. Poplawski (Poplawski 2020), D. F. Vags (Vags 1998) and others. The author compares various peculiarities of the foreign policies of the neutral states in Europe regarding the establishment of neutral status and changes caused by the processes of European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation.

We assume it necessary to mention the other sources that contain relevant information and have assisted in the analysis of the problem given in the article Constitutions of the states (Sojuznaja Konstitucija Shvejcarskoj Konfederacii 2020) (in particular, Articles 173 and 185 of the *Constitution of the Swiss Confederation*; Article 9a of the *Constitution of the Austrian Republic* and its part – the *Federal Constitutional Law on the Neutrality of Austria* of 10 October 1995 (Konstitucija Avstrijskoj Respubliki 2020); Articles 28.3.1 and 29.4.9 of the *Constitution of the Republic of Ireland (*Constitution of Ireland 2018*)), foreign policy regulations, doctrines and White Papers on security and defence (Vags 1998, White Paper on Defence 2015, White Paper on Neutrality 1993), materials from websites of governments and ministries (departments) of security and defence of European neutral and non-aligned states (Annex Security and Defence Doctrine Analysis Draft Expert report 2001, Department of Defence 2019), documents and materials of international organizations that make it possible to study the spheres of participation of European neutral states in various activities, initiatives and missions (Swiss Neutrality in Practice 2000). These sources contain official argumentative positions and provide the necessary statistics for determining the main directions and priorities of the countries' international policies. They also help to clarify the nature of the chosen strategies and, to some extent, to anticipate the further orientations of the states in the international arena.

As noted, the concepts of the neutral states' foreign policy, as well as their priority directions, are changing under the influence of dynamic processes in the international environment. The speed of emergence of the new threats and ways of counteracting them determines the adoption of important state decisions that have not found their scientific reflection yet. A range of aspects, caused by the recent decisions of the states, has not been reflected in the relevant researches yet and, thus, require detailed analysis along with taking into account current events and trends in the foreign policy of the neutral and non-aligned states in Europe. It is important to understand that there is an ideological commitment to the paradigm of neutrality in the European states. It remains a powerful factor in the states' political activities. We support the opinion of researchers (Dalsjo 2017) that although policy based on expediency and realism must change as circumstances change, policy embedded in identity and ideology does not change so easily. So, today it is a common explanation of why neutral states have adopted neutrality policies, but researches which focus on why they have retained these policies in an era bereft of major security concerns are becoming increasingly important. Therefore, the *purpose* of the article is to determine the implementation peculiarities and prospects of realization of the neutral and non-aligned status in the European states in the context of a more proactive role of these countries in international cooperation and stabilisation through multilateral forums such as the UN, NATO and the EU.

This study focuses on the neutral states of Europe – Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Finland and Ireland. Switzerland and Austria are permanently neutral states bordering each other and located in Central Europe; Sweden and Finland are Nordic countries with common foreign policy priorities, which stem from their regional area and similar status,

defined more as non-alignment rather than neutrality; Ireland is the most geographically distant country from the other European neutral states and, consequently, differs in its foreign policy vectors.

Thus, all the implementation features of the concepts of neutrality and non-alignment in the foreign policy of these European states have been systemized. The use of a comparative approach should also be highlighted. This approach has been used to identify common and distinct forms of neutrality in the five states, as well as various aspects of their participation in international organizations and regional integration.

Classic and modern understanding of neutrality of European states: changing interpretations

Statuses of neutrality and non-alignment are one of the most ancient but still relevant mechanisms of a state's positioning in the international arena. These statuses transform, acquire new features, or lose the essential characteristics inherent to their traditional definition. Today, each neutral state interprets its status differently, modifying it according to the objectives of its foreign policy.

The word "*neutrality*" came into common usage from the German "*Neutralität*", which, in turn, comes from the Latin "*neuter*", translated as "neither one, nor the other" (Barash, Yizhak and Mernikov; Shevtsov 2002:7). According to the classic definition, neutrality is a special international legal state status and policy, which means the refusal to participate in a war between other countries, to provide military assistance to the parties to a military conflict, as well as to participate in any military blocs and alliances in peacetime (Rudnitskyi, Hrytsai, Holopatiuk and Horbatiuk 2013: 83).

The legal justification of neutrality as an international legal state status was formed during the 18th and 19th centuries. The law of neutrality regulates the policy and behaviour of neutral states according to the principles provided in various conventions and treaties. *The Final Act of the Congress of Vienna* of 1815 is an international legal framework for neutrality. This document established the basic principles of neutral status, in particular, the concept of guarantees to the status. The main international legal principles on neutrality, and the mechanisms for its establishment and protection were codified during the Second Hague Conference in 1907. These principles became a part of the international law of neutrality, which legally fixed the principles of the neutral status of a state (Tkachuk 2013).

International law and practice also define the duties of a state with a neutral status. The main obligation is the refusal to participate in warfare between other countries, which includes the following components: 1) not to engage in combat operations conducted by other members with its own armed forces, and not to provide the latter for these purposes; 2) not to provide territory to the belligerent states for warfare, deployment of military bases, transportation of troops and weapons; 3) not to supply weapons, equipment and military goods, as well as not to provide the belligerent states access to its own information networks (Barash, Yizhak and Mernikov; Shevtsov 2002 :10).

As it is codified in the Hague Convention of 1907, neutrality law is to be implemented solely in case of international armed conflict. It prevents a neutral state from military involvement in a conflict, and, in return, offers it a right to territorial integrity. Except during a conflict, a state can give up its neutral status by unilateral declaration (Käser 2020). Neutral states must be prepared to defend themselves in case of a violation of their territorial integrity or

sovereignty (Goetschel 1999: 115). Some researchers (Dahl 1997: 179) argue that neutrality is a "*symmetrical strategic relationship or strategic independence from both poles of power*".

The agreements concluded as a result of the Hague Conference of 1907 defined the classical notion of neutrality. The principle of neutrality establishing based on the fact of non-participation, i.e., due to the specific circumstances of certain wars, was established. Thus, the concept of "*eventual neutrality*" was codified. The legal force of obligations related to such status occurs with the outbreak of a certain war between other states, and ends when this war is over, or when a neutral state decides to join or to be involved into the war (Umerenko 2011).

Eventual neutrality, which the state adheres to for a long period of time during conflicts, is defined as traditional neutrality (neutrality by tradition). Traditionally neutral states see neutrality in case of war as desirable, but do not seek its recognition. This status is defined as a self-proclaimed neutrality. It may be terminated by a unilateral decision of a state upon entry or without entry into a war; in case of involvement in hostilities run by other states; after the end of a war, and if the state exercises its right of self-defence (Barash, Yizhak and Mernikov 2002).

The concept of "*permanent neutrality*" was developed in the 19th century. While traditional understanding of neutrality presupposes some rights and obligations of a state only during military confrontation between other countries, permanent neutrality requires the state's renunciation of war as a mechanism for resolving international disputes. This approach has a long-term perspective and requires the state to completely reject the use of military force as the means of foreign policy during war and in peacetime (Fokina 2016). Permanent neutrality is considered the highest form of neutrality and is used by the state as a complex foreign policy course.

Non-alignment is close to the concept of neutrality and is also defined as a legal status of a state. However, unlike neutrality, such status is not regulated by international law. The policy of non-alignment is interpreted by the state independently and may always be revised by it unilaterally.

The concept of non-alignment limits the country's actions only to the obligation to refuse participation in any military bloc. According to the Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms 2005), non-alignment is "*the political attitude of a state that does not associate or identify itself with the political ideology or objective espoused by other states, groups of states, or international causes, or with the foreign policies stemming therefrom. It does not preclude involvement but expresses the attitude of no precommitment to a particular state (or block) or policy before a situation arises*". Unlike in case of neutrality, there are no formal prohibitions on providing territories for the transit of military forces of other states, nor on the deployment of foreign military bases and formations for the states that have chosen non-alignment as the basis of their foreign policy (Rudnitskyi, Hrytsai, Holopatiuk and Horbatiuk 2013: 83, Stadnichenko 2014).

The neutral status of the five European states has been established at different times, for different purposes and under different circumstances. Each of these states defines neutrality in its own way, applying it to the conditions of new challenges in the international environment with the objective of ensuring their national interests and security.

Today, politicians and activists of all stripes in the European countries, armed with social networks, like to interpret the concept of neutrality in different ways, depending on their beliefs and foreign policy ideas (Bondolfi, Kamel 2021). There is no common

methodological position among researchers either. Some of them (Morris, White 2011) point out that a distaste for neutrality has existed throughout the history of the international system, especially among great powers, and this aversion has increased in recent decades due to the belief that neutrality is increasingly obsolete given the benefits that come with regional and international integration. In the post-Cold War world, the choice of states to remain neutral is deemed by some to be unnecessary and inhibiting cooperation in the international community. As authors, in this connection we have stated that the concept and meaning of neutrality has evolved from a purely legal concept to a broader political concept that allows more ambiguity regarding the relationship between neutrality and membership in an international organization like the EU (Morris, White 2011). Nowadays, some researchers claim that only Switzerland remains a truly neutral country and, thus, there are no other neutral states left (Sweden, Finland and Austria are non-aligned states, and Ireland can arguably be understood as such either) (Käser 2020). For Morris and White, Switzerland is an interesting case that is defying the expectation that neutrality will become an outdated foreign policy option (Morris, White 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the current implementation of the status in detail.

We situate the article in relation with three conceptual approaches to understanding neutrality identified by researchers (Morris and White 2011, Devine 2009, Gebhard 2013): 1. neorealistic (when neutrality is interpreted as the rational calculation of a small state's interests in the state-centered, unfriendly, self-help environment. Realists assume that neutral states rationally calculate that not engaging in wars better achieves national goals like survival than choosing to join one side or another in war); 2. neoliberal (supporters of which claim that a state would choose neutrality based on domestic factors or international normative considerations and contribute to international institutions that create collective security with or without increasing directly the neutral's own security); 3. constructivist (it is emphasized that neutrality has become institutionalized within a state due to a positive feedback mechanism from the public, and each state develops its own unique neutrality based on its own history and identity (Morris, White 2011). In this article, we will try to comprehensively analyze the current consolidation and prospects of neutral status for European countries and focus on their security and defence priorities, which are manifested in joining certain integration projects. At the same time, we tend to support the position of neoliberals, given that the central enticement that might make historic neutrals abandon neutrality is the perceived security and economic benefits that come with integration in regional organizations like the EU.

The potential of European neutral states for cooperation in security and defence

The Swiss Confederation

Switzerland's current security and defence policy is outlined in the report on Swiss Security Policy of 2011 by the Federal Council to the Federal Assembly entitled "*Security through Cooperation*". This concept was developed by the Federal Council back in 1993 and gives decisive importance to Switzerland's military cooperation with international security structures (Shvejcer 2009: 159-160, Rudnitskyi, Hrytsai, Holopatiuk and Horbatiuk 2013: 85). Since the end of the Cold War, non-aligned and passive foreign policy, which was presumed by the neutral status, has ceased to provide the state the necessary protection against new

threats. Accordingly, the activity at the national level was not sufficient, and international cooperation, along with joint actions of the countries in the European region in particular, were required. Already in 1993, in its neutrality report, the Federal Council stated that the traditional formula of "*security through neutrality and independence*" was to be amended by "*security through cooperation*", since neutrality alone could no longer protect the country against the new dangers, such as terrorism, organized crime and environmental destruction (Käser 2020). Thus, the Federal Council of Switzerland gives great importance to the participation of the Confederation in the joint activities of the international community aimed at preventing and combating modern risks and preserving peace in the world. Only 10 days before the "9/11" attacks, the partial revision of the Military Act had entered into force, regulating Swiss participation in UN and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) peace support operations and providing the basis for arming Swiss peace support forces abroad for self-protection (Käser 2020).

Today, Switzerland has formed a vision of its foreign policy until 2028 (the doctrine of Ignazio Cassis). Its characteristic feature, in particular, is the understanding of the foreign policy course as a package of measures to protect and promote national interests. In this context, the country's neutrality is seen, but to its traditional aspects was added, or rather returned, another new, but in fact very old aspect: the survival of a small state in the international arena depends on how effective the international regime is. Law is the strength of a small state and the guarantee of its security (Petrov 2019).

For a long time, the Swiss Confederation has been strictly maintaining its neutrality. On the one hand, neutrality has become a factor due to which this country could not only avoid involvement in a conflict, but also to be able to provide its 'good services' for others, i.e., mediation and arbitration. As a result, Swiss neutrality experienced its 'golden age' in the post-war period, during the Cold War (Pauchard 2015). On the other hand, Switzerland committed itself to a minimal development assistance and, despite catchwords such as 'solidarity' and 'disposability', emphasized the restraints deriving from its neutrality (Tanner 2020).

During the Cold War, the Swiss Confederation was the only non-UN member state in Europe. However, considering numerous conflicts during the collapse of the bipolar system and being aware of the possible impact of these processes, in particular on Switzerland, the government and citizens had come to the conclusion that strict adherence to neutrality no longer meets the interests of the state (Ojanen 2003: 54). In 2002, by a decision of the second referendum on this issue (the first had been held in 1986 but lacked the population's support for joining the organization), Switzerland applied for membership and later became a full member of the United Nations (Dyrda 2015: 55). Through its participation in international operations under the auspices of this organization, the Swiss Confederation has declared its willingness and ability to be active in the international arena, despite its neutral status (Erdniieva 2014: 76-77).

Lively discussions on the country's neutrality continue in the light of the fact that in 2020 Switzerland proposed its candidacy to be a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, participation in which would expand the country's range of capabilities and make it a more influential player (Bondolfi, Kamel 2021). Switzerland's candidacy was presented under the motto 'A Plus for Peace'. Switzerland believes that a non-permanent membership in the Security Council will allow the country to promote its foreign policy goals more actively, involving all its strongest diplomatic means, including Bern's contribution to peacekeeping and strengthening global security (*Swiss candidacy for UN Security*

Council moves ahead 2020). In 2018, Laurent Goetschel, director of Swisspeace Foundation (Bern), argued that Switzerland should pursue an independent policy aimed at countering the causes of military conflicts and developing the capacity for coherent peacekeeping. This also includes active crisis mediation services (Bondolfi, Kamel 2021). Pascale Baeriswyl, the head of the Swiss Mission to the United Nations in New York, believes that Bern cannot constantly avoid the acute problems of the global agenda and it should articulate its opinions more clearly. In the event of violations of international law, Switzerland ceases to be neutral (Bondolfi, Kamel 2021).

The Swiss attitude towards European integration may be defined as cautious and balanced. In 1992, the state applied to join the European Union. However, in a referendum held that same year, its citizens did not support a basic agreement between the EU and the Confederation (Barash, Yizhak and Mernikov; Shevtsov 2002: 35). The sectoral treaty packages signed in 2002 and 2004 were an alternative to Switzerland's integration into the bloc. These documents now form the basis for relations between the parties. The main interests of the Confederation in terns of cooperation with the EU are to increase the competitiveness of the state's economy, as well as to obtain free access to the European markets (Dyrda 2015: 55-56, Erdniieva 2014: 76-77). However, EU membership is not a priority for Swiss policy and is seen more as an option rather than a goal: the current state of relations between the EU and the Confederation has already provided Switzerland with necessary benefits, despite the fact it must comply with certain rules and requirements imposed by the EU. Full membership, in turn, would only oblige the state to follow more restrictions and take on more commitments. Thus, the researchers assert that the Swiss have long been cognizant of the "*smallness*" of their state, and this has meant that neutrality was an important means of self-preservation in a territory surrounded by major powers. In addition, neutrality became an important symbol of common identity for the diverse Swiss population and became the 'vital principle' which underlies Swiss foreign policy. So, Switzerland has been able to maintain a dual and apparently contradictory foreign policy of neutrality stressing independence while at the same time benefitting from economic interdependence (Morris, White 2011).

Cooperation with NATO is held in the framework of the "*Partnership for Peace*" (PfP) programme. Switzerland became a PfP member in 1996. The program's participation conditions and openness make it possible to undertake joint actions with consideration for and preservation of the neutral status of Switzerland (Ojanen 2003: 56-57, Dyrda 2015: 55-56). PfP is viewed by the Swiss government mainly as a key instrument for defence reform aimed at achieving interoperability of the military forces of the partner states (Raikhel 2019, Melnyk and Klymenko 2012: 38-44).

It is also important to add that the Swiss have taken on important functions in the field of crisis diplomacy since Russia's aggression in Ukraine. In 2015, in particular, Swiss Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the OSCE to the Minsk Process. Swiss diplomat Toni Frisch organized an exchange of prisoners between Ukraine and separatists backed by Russia. Until the end of 2017 / beginning of 2018, Swiss representatives played important roles at the operational level in the framework of the OSCE civilian mission to Ukraine (*Ukraina – dolgosrochnyj prioritet vneshnej politiki Shvejcarii* 2019).

Austria

The fundamentals of Austrian security and defence policy are set out in the Security and Defence Doctrine of 23 January 2001. Since the declaration of its neutrality in 1955, Austria has pursued a policy of "*active neutrality*" by participating in international organizations and operations, maintaining, however, the neutral status. After the end of the confrontation between the East and the West in 1989—1991, the priority of commitments to international solidarity in Austria's foreign policy has developed even further. The new doctrine was adopted by the government on 23 January 2001 and by the parliament on 12 June 2001. Under the headline "*From neutrality to solidarity*", the remaining neutrality is interpreted in a way that it suits the changed international situation (Meyer 2007).

Without rejecting the need for self-defence, Austria had identified its contribution to the EU and its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), participation in the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, as well as continuing the work in the UN and OSCE missions, as priorities. The main objectives and interests of Austrian security, apart from purely national (guarantying territorial integrity, protecting constitutional order and independence), are closely associated with the European ones: maintaining peace and security in the region and the world; strengthening the security of the European region; fostering international cooperation; developing democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights and freedoms (Annex Security and Defence Doctrine Analysis Draft Expert report 2001: 26-29, 39-40). Thus, in addition to the self-defence based on the obligation of a neutral state to be prepared to defend itself in case of violation of its territorial integrity or sovereignty, the international commitments, as well as the ability to participate in crisis management and the processes of creating collective solutions to contemporary problems, are of particular importance for Austria's current defence policy.

Unlike Switzerland, after Austria had proclaimed neutrality, it immediately intended to become an active participant in international affairs. In 1955, shortly after its declaration of neutral status, the state joined the UN (Dyrda 2015: 56). Thanks to Austrian neutrality, Vienna became the UN's third headquarters, after New York and Geneva. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) also meets in Vienna (Gruyter De 2014). From 1960 to 1991, Austria's participation in peacekeeping operations constituted the country's main contribution to the organization's activities. Only in 1991, after the Gulf War, did the government conclude that a UN member's obligations should be fulfilled despite the requirements of the law of neutrality albeit combined with adherence to the neutral status. Since the mid-1990s, Austria has also joined the coercive peacekeeping operations under UN auspices (Annex Security and Defence Doctrine Analysis Draft Expert report 2001: 30). The state is also an active OSCE member. The organization's headquarters in Vienna are a forum for cooperation between member states on equal terms, which makes the necessary contribution to the European stability and, hence, to Austria's security (Annex Security and Defence Doctrine Analysis Draft Expert report 2001: 180). Therefore, through its activities in the OSCE, Austria contributes to peacekeeping in the European region. While during the Cold War any international engagement of Austrian forces was to be limited to non-controversial types of missions, such as UN peacekeeping operations and monitoring, Austria is now more ready to deliver across the whole spectrum of Petersberg Tasks. Austrian forces have been deployed in most civilian and military missions and some NATO-led operations since Austria joined the PfP framework in 1995. These contributions seemed more restricted by material shortfalls and budgetary restraints than by political reservations (Gebhard 2013).

In 1995, also Austria became a European Union member state, adapting its legislation to the legal system of the bloc. It should be noted that the state joined on terms that did not include any reservations concerning its neutral status. By joining the EU, Austria was able to demonstrate many actions evidencing its willingness to engage in broadly understood common activities and to strengthen its crisis prevention and crisis management capabilities (Poplawski 2020). Austria, regardless of which parties constituted its government, has established itself as a proactive EU member state that consistently pushes for closer cooperation in all policy areas, including sensitive ones such as security and defence (Gebhard 2013). In 1997, the Federal Constitutional Law on Neutrality was supplemented by Article 23f, which has allowed Austria's full participation in the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and in its component – the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDF) (Annex Security and Defence Doctrine Analysis Draft Expert report 2001: 32, Melnyk and Klymenko 2012: 40). Thus, the compatibility of Austria's neutral status with its participation in the EU military cooperation has been declared at the level of national legislation. However, the solutions adopted referred only to the EU area; outside the EU, the traditional obligations resulting from neutrality would still apply. Such an approach was often reduced to the slogan: 'Solidarity with Europe, neutrality in wars outside Europe' (Poplawski 2020). As a part of its military cooperation, Austria has also become one of 23 countries to sign a joint communication on PESCO on 13 November 2017. Since 11 December 2017, Austria has been a member state of this programme and its projects (Wiegold 2017, Raikhel 2019). At the same time, Austria was eager not to contribute too much or to choose demanding projects (it has joined a cyber security programme with Greece, a disaster-response programme led by Italy, a military transport initiative, and the German-led centre for training missions) (Cramer, Franke 2021).

In 1996, Austria joined the PfP programme to develop relations with NATO (Annex Security and Defence Doctrine Analysis Draft Expert report 2001: 87). Despite the country's neutral status formally prohibiting Austria to be a member of the military alliance, the question of full membership in NATO remains open. It could only be resolved with the prior consent of the Austrian people (in a referendum) (Ojanen 2003: 12, Dyrda 2015: 56). It should be noted that the prospect of Euro-Atlantic integration is not an issue on the current agenda of the Austrian government, since the state is already surrounded by NATO member countries and thus *de facto* enjoys their protection.

The researchers claim that Austria's neutrality policy, which for decades had been the core of Austria's foreign policy, has lost much of its substance and practical relevance, and not only because global circumstances have changed since the end of the Cold War. Throughout the past two decades, Austrian leaders have taken proactive and deliberate steps at reducing the normative significance of neutrality, limiting it to its military core, i.e., the abstention from joining military alliances and from allowing foreign forces to be stationed on Austrian territory. This paradigmatic shift gradually undermined Austria's special status as an international mediator. Although Austria is still not a NATO member, it no longer stands for a 'third way' in international relations. Austrian neutrality had de facto changed in the course of EU accession, and its status is now rather "*non-aligned*" (Gebhard 2013).

Thus, Austria sees in such international activity a possibility of strengthening its role and significance within the European Union. However, researchers argue, taking into account the sentiments in Austrian society, that the predicted erosion of the importance of neutrality has not occurred (Poplawski 2020). According to several public opinion polls conducted in the past decade, Austrian citizens consider neutrality an essential part of their

national identity. Today, however, Austrian neutrality is reduced to its core meaning, i.e., no membership in any military alliance (i.e., NATO) and no stationing of foreign troops on Austrian territory. Any additional meaning and normative effect that neutrality was ascribed during the Cold War has been replaced by a policy of active but not activist engagement within the EU and NATO's PfP. Full-NATO membership has so far still not been envisaged, not least because public support for such a step is limited (Gebhard 2013).

Sweden

Researchers assert that after the end of the Cold War, Swedish foreign policy went through a rapid process of Europeanization, during which the geographical and ideological focus shifted towards Europe and a foreign policy ideology associated with European norms rather than internationalism and neutrality (Brommesson 2018). Swedish security and defence policy is based on the New Defence Act of 1999, the Government's Resolution "*Our Future Defence*" of 2004, the Swedish Security Strategy of 2006, and the Ministry of Defence's "*Functional Defence*" information materials of 2012 (Kolomiiets 2012: 87). With the end of the Cold War, the Swedish model of neutrality has become a secondary concern. The end of the global confrontation and the emergence of new threats have caused some changes in the previous concept. The authorities have realized that not even a powerful and self-sufficient national security system could protect the state in the new international system. Sweden's defence and security policy focus has shifted to international cooperation goals: "*Sweden's security policy aims at maintaining peace and independence of the country, promoting stability and security in the region, and strengthening international peace and security*" (Ojanen 2003: 42-43). When Nordic cooperation was discussed in the 2018 declaration, Nordic was placed in an EU context, on equal footing with other forms of foreign policy cooperation: Sweden's foreign and security policy builds on cohesion in the EU and on increased cooperation on a broad front: in the Nordic region and the Baltic Sea region, in the UN and the OSCE, with NATO, and through a strong transatlantic link (Swedish government 2018). So, this is expressed in Sweden's support for the United Nations, the European Union, the PfP (NATO) and regional security organizations. Sweden has gradually abandoned its policy of total defence in favour of a mobile, flexible and operational defence system capable of both protection of the country's territory and participation in the international operations (Melnyk and Klymenko 2012: 44). Therefore, the state security has ceased to be an issue of simple non-involvement in armed conflicts. Thus, the concept of Swedish neutrality, although still remaining to be pointed out in the annual foreign policy declarations of the government, has receded before the need of contribution to international peace through active participation in international organizations, their initiatives and missions.

Neutral Sweden has an active foreign policy regarding integration into international structures and their activities as well. In 1946, the country became a UN member state, and in 1975, Sweden signed the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which was renamed to the OSCE on 1 January 1995. Under their auspices, Sweden participates in peacekeeping operations that have become a traditional aspect of the state's membership, a part of its foreign policy, and a way of contributing to peace and security in the world. The UN mandate allows Sweden to participate in international cooperation on conflict resolution and prevention, despite its status of non-alignment (Ojanen 2003: 48, Kolomiiets 2012: 86).

The issue of European integration has always been controversial for both the government and the public of Sweden. For more than 30 years, the state has been refusing to join the European institutions, arguing that it must maintain its sovereignty and neutral status. Sweden applied for EU membership only in 1992 and became a full member in 1995 (Dyrda 2015: 57). Sweden did not join the EU to further its security policy interests. In addition to viewing EU membership predominantly as a rational economic risk-management strategy rather than as a foreign and security policy platform, Sweden viewed itself through the lens of decades of neutrality and non-alignment (Fägersten, Danielson, Håkansson 2018). However, the state accepted the CSDP, joined the development of the defence industry integration of the EU countries, as well as the Union's military operations. However, despite a rather wide cooperation within the framework of the EU's CSDP, the state took a separate position rejecting the idea of joint defence and transformation of the European Union into a defence structure (Ojanen 2003: 42-44, Kolomiiets 2012: 89). Some researchers assert that geopolitical turbulence in Europe and beyond has altered the Swedish strategic outlook. While a certain principled scepticism is still apparent, the long-term trend seems to suggest a "*normalization*" of Sweden's relation to the policy field of European security and defence (Fägersten, Danielson, Håkansson 2018). Other researchers claim that that Sweden is post-neutral because of its strong commitment to the CSFP (Morris, White 2011). However, Sweden has joined the expanding defence cooperation within the EU by supporting Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). By signing the agreement on 11 December 2017, the state became a participant in the programme's projects (Wiegold 2017, Raikhel 2019). In the first PESCO project round, announced in March 2018, Sweden joined the European Medical Command (EMC), Military Mobility, and the European Union Training Mission Competence Centre (EU TMCC) projects. The Foreign Minister Margot Wallström and Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist stated: "*We have two overarching goals: stronger cohesion within the EU and a strengthened common security and defence policy*". For Karin Enström, the spokesperson on foreign affairs for Sweden's largest opposition party, Moderaterna: "*The price of not joining will only rise and rise, and this is something that you must take into account. This is a way of showing, something which is also appreciated, ambition and willingness in a 'hard' policy area. This is a way of showing that we want to take part, to show that we want to be near the centre of the EU, and not at the periphery*" (Fägersten, Danielson, Håkansson 2018).

So, despite Sweden's long tradition of neutrality and an "*alliance-free*" foreign policy, Swedish leaders of almost all political stripes began to consider closer ties with NATO (Chang 2017). Neither did NATO consider Sweden's neutrality an obstacle to military cooperation but expected that Sweden would join the West in the event of a Soviet attack. Thus, there are reasons to call Sweden a "*pro-Western neutral*" or an "*extra-member*" of NATO (Vaahtoranta, Forsberg 2000).

Since 1994, Sweden has cooperated with NATO in the framework of the Partnership for Peace. Today, Swedish Armed Forces are involved in the programme's initiatives, joint activities, weapon systems reform processes aimed at ensuring the interoperability of forces, etc. (Kolomiiets 2012: 90-91). While Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström clearly stated that her government would not seek NATO membership, Sweden has moved closer to the alliance. NATO naturally welcomed the shift, given Sweden's strategic importance to NATO's defence of its Baltic member countries (Chang 2017). It signed a host-nation agreement that allows NATO forces to train in Sweden and boosted its participation in NATO military exercises, like Baltic Operations (Baltops) and Steadfast Jazz. Sweden has gone so

far as to commit a fighter squadron to fight alongside NATO's rapid-reaction force (Chang 2017). Thus, Sweden's non-alignment policy, combined with cooperation with NATO, is an active contribution to the development of international security and, in particular, the European security architecture (Ojanen 2003: 43). At the same time, according to public polls, most Swedish citizens continue to support the traditional neutral status, and, therefore, the country is in no hurry to acquire the final membership in the alliance (Dyrda 2015: 57, Kolomiiets 2012: 91). However, most Swedes now believe that Sweden needs to form stronger partnerships, though not alliances, with NATO and the United States. From their perspective, the real question is how Sweden can translate those partnerships into greater security without formal defence treaties (Chang 2017).

In addition to the above-mentioned cooperation with international organizations, Sweden is involved in regional integration activities. In April 2011, together with Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway, it adopted the Nordic Declaration of Solidarity, which is the basis for cooperation in terms of countering the security challenges of the region (Melnyk and Klymenko 2012: 42-43). In 2009, these states united into the NORDEFCO (Nordic Defence Cooperation), which provides political, military and defence cooperation. The organization's purpose is to strengthen defence capabilities of the participants and to facilitate effective joint decisions in the mentioned spheres (Nordic Defence Cooperation 2019).

To sum up, it is worth mentioning that Swedish interests, as far as they are spelled out, are often conflicting and increasingly subject to change. By contrast, the relatively few substantive interests that Sweden has in the security and defence policy area are more often formulated in the form of negations: EU security cooperation must not duplicate NATO, not lead to an EU army, and not result in any more bureaucracy. Besides Sweden and other EU member states expect assistance when needed – for instance, against hybrid threats and "*grey zone conflicts*" of the sort recently witnessed in Salisbury, UK. Thus, in parallel, Sweden has also started to readjust its former principles regarding security policy – for instance, by giving up on neutrality and pledging solidarity within a political union. The geopolitical turbulence of recent years has only made this process of adaptation more concrete (Fägersten, Danielson, Håkansson 2018).

Finland

The list of the main documents setting out Finland's security and defence policy includes the Government Report "*On security and defence policy of Finland*" of 2001, with two revisions of 2004 and 2009, and the Strategy of the Ministry of Defence 2025 "*With security to the future*" of 6 June 2006 (Kolomiiets 2012: 97, Rudnitskyi, Hrytsai, Holopatiuk and Horbatiuk 2013: 85). Finnish security and defence policy is based on two levels: pan-European security and national defence. Like the other European neutral countries, Finland stresses the importance of its participation in European structures, including the EU. It has emphasized the need for involvement in international crisis-management and peacekeeping operations. At the same time, Finland makes the most effective contribution to maintaining peace and stability in the European region by developing an independent defence system without joining any military alliance (Kuchinskaja 2012: 112-113). Unlike other neutral countries in Europe (in particular, Sweden), Finland gives priority to national defence. It is noted that Finland's contribution to international solidarity and its participation in international operations should not affect the ability of national armed forces to ensure the security and defence of

the state (Melnyk and Klymenko 2012: 43-44). Thus, the Finnish concept, emphasizing the significance of international cooperation, attaches much greater importance on the protection of the state through its own resources and means.

Finland joined the United Nations in 1955 and co-founded the OSCE in 1975. The state's contribution to both international organizations is mainly participation in peacekeeping missions and operations. State involvement in UN and OSCE peacekeeping operations is defined in Finland's foreign policy documents as a matter of the state's security and defence policy, the means of consolidating Finland's international position, and the mechanism for facilitation of the experience in conflict management, in order to develop national defence forces (Buruhina and Kovalevskaja 2016: 53).

After the denunciation of the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 and the Treaty with the USSR of 1948 by Finland following the end of the Cold War, a new interpretation of Finnish neutrality allowed the state to join the European Union. In 1995, Finland became a full member without reservation, noting, however, its desire to remain neutral. The principles of Finnish status at the time of joining the EU have been defined as "*a special contribution to peace and security in Europe*" (Ojanen 2003: 21, Dyrda 2015: 58). It should be emphasized that Finland openly acknowledged that EU membership was an element of its security policy (Fägersten, Danielson, Håkansson 2018). Researchers claim that the Finns view their neutrality from a realist perspective and rapidly abandoned neutrality after the end of the Cold War (Morris, White 2011). The new formulation of foreign policy principles has allowed Finland to participate in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (Barash, Yizhak and Mernikov; Shevtsov 2002: 46, Buruhina and Kovalevskaja 2016: 52). The state has also supported the initiative to expand military cooperation of the Union in terms of PESCO (Wiegold 2017, Raikhel 2019). Thus, Finland is considerably more positive than Sweden about deepening CSDP cooperation. This is mainly due to Finland seeing the CSDP as a possible alternative to NATO and its Article 5. Finland's strong interest in deepening defence cooperation also led it recently to join the French-led European Intervention Initiative, or E2I (Fägersten, Danielson, Håkansson 2018). Finland emphasised that it was positive to develop the EU's security and defence policy in order to improve the Union's ability to strengthen stability in Europe (Vaahtoranta, Forsberg 2000).

In general, in Finland, the question of NATO membership has usually been considered in terms of security and as well as in terms of the political influence of Finland and its identity (Siitonen 2017). However, there is an opinion that Finland's policy of neutrality was a continuous trench war against the Soviet Union that ended only when the Cold War system collapsed. For many Finns, it is, therefore, easier to give up the rhetoric of neutrality, because neutrality is seen either as a failed policy or as a means to achieve distance from Moscow (Vaahtoranta, Forsberg 2000). In 1994, Finland joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme and, respectively, its initiatives, as well as military and technical cooperation. Despite its non-aligned status and formal non-membership in NATO, Finland joins the alliance's peacekeeping operations, considering them to be an important aspect of transatlantic security and a means of development of the partners' military forces (Buruhina and Kovalevskaja 2016: 52). The idea of joining NATO has been raised throughout the country's history. In general, the position of the government remains unchanged in favour of maintaining Finland's non-aligned status (Dyrda 2017). It is important to understand that cooperation with NATO is seen as necessary in building up a more secure Europe. However, PfP cooperation is not to be regarded as a 'waiting room' for full membership in NATO but as a channel

for participating in practical cooperation and crisis management. Thus, Finland is in favour of strengthening the role of the PfP, making it a permanent and dynamic element of European cooperation structures (Vaahtoranta, Forsberg 2000). Since 2014, Helsinki has updated old defence partnerships and forged new ones. The most important frameworks for Finland are its bilateral partnerships with both Sweden and the United States, the Nordic Defence Co-operation, its close partnership with NATO, and the security and defence dimension of the EU. In addition to these frameworks, Finland has joined new European 'minilateral' defence formats: the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, the French-driven European Intervention Initiative, and the German-initiated Framework Nations Concept. Countering hybrid threats featured prominently on Finland's agenda for its presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2019. During the presidency, EU ministers and working parties conducted scenario-based policy discussions on hybrid threats (Cramer, Franke 2021).

The security cooperation of the Nordic countries is also important for Finland to the same extent as for Sweden. The main purpose of this cooperation is to preserve security and stability in the Nordic countries, as well as to develop a regional defence, economic and cultural cooperation. In 2009, Finland co-founded NORDEFCO with the other Nordic states, and, in 2011, signed the Nordic Declaration of Solidarity (Melnyk and Klymenko 2012: 43).

Analyzing the emphasis of Finnish defence and security policies with a timeline of the mid-2020s, the researchers focus on the following priorities: strengthening the EU as a security community, deepening cooperation with Sweden and other countries, deepening cooperation with the U.S., relations with Russia, other bilateral relations, developing the relationship with NATO, the future of the Arctic region, and sustainable development in foreign and security policy. Finland's position is that while Finland is non-militarily aligned, in practice it is a partnership country of NATO and the "*door is kept open*" for the possibility of applying for NATO membership (Siitonen 2017). In that case, it is also worth mentioning the data on the opinions of Finns on security and foreign policy and national security and defence. Polls indicate that about a quarter of respondents "*believe that Finland should seek NATO membership*", while 61% disagree. According to the findings, the support of Finns for military non-alignment has grown slightly but approval/disapproval of NATO membership has stayed the same (Siitonen 2017).

Ireland

The main documents of Ireland's modern security policy are the *White Paper on Defence* of 2015 and the *Regulation Strategy 2017-2020* of Irish Department of Defence. Similarly to the other European neutral states, Ireland recognizes international cooperation to be the most effective way of combating modern threats. Ireland expresses its commitment to international peace and security and underlines the importance of participation in international organizations, as well as of compliance with collective security obligations on the basis of the UN and the EU (Ojanen 2003: 30). At the same time, it is emphasized that Ireland would retain the status of "*military neutrality*", which means non-alignment to any military alliance and collective security agreement and "*enables state defence policy to adapt to the changing conditions of security environment and effectively respond to its challenges*". To this end, Ireland needs to retain its armed forces capable of providing the country's self-defence and able to meet international requirements for participation in operations aimed at maintaining international peace and security. The country's 2020 Programme for Government sets

out a policy of "*active military neutrality*" that allows for the continuation of both a flexible and participative multilateral approach (Cramer, Franke 2021).

Since 1955, Ireland has been a member of the United Nations. This membership has been treated as a basis for the international collective security system and as a guaranty of national security in the absence of international assurances of the state's neutral status. Since joining the UN, the state has indicated its willingness to provide its armed forces to participate in UN and OSCE peacekeeping operations. Such involvement in these missions is considered by Ireland as its contribution to international peace and security – the sphere, where the UN has the main role in international collective defence (Ojanen 2003: 31-32).

Ireland has been a member of the European Union since 1973. Accordingly, the state also participates in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and its missions. It is important to note that this activity is viewed by Ireland as one of the aspects of its contribution to UN peacekeeping. The CSDP is treated as a logical step towards the development of peacekeeping and crisis management (Ojanen 2003: 32). Nevertheless, the Irish government rejects the possibility of the EU's transforming into a defence organization. The state's participation in a common European defence is prohibited by Article 29.4.9 of the Constitution: "*The State shall not adopt a decision taken by the European Council to establish a common defence pursuant to Article 42 of the Treaty on European Union where that common defence would include the State*" (Department of Defence 2019). Fearing that accession to PESCO could further become a commitment to support and join the full-scale defence union of the EU, Ireland, thus, hesitated and had not immediately supported the joint notification of the member states of 13 November 2017 considering the programme. The state had informed the European Council about its intention to join the programme just before the final cooperation agreement was signed on 7 December 2017 (Wiegold 2017, Mal'chikova 2018). On PESCO, Ireland participates in the Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance project. It is an observer on nine more PESCO projects, including military deployments for disaster relief, medical training, and regarding cyber threats. However, today all Irish decision-making on the CSDP turns on a so-called 'triple lock' mechanism. In line with the Defence Acts, the Irish Defence Forces cannot be deployed to any conflict zone or CSDP mission without the approval of the UN, the government, and the Dail, the lower house of parliament (Cramer, Franke 2021).

Since 1999, Ireland has been participating in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) framework. It also joined the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in 2019. The state, however, has no separate programmes with the alliance and does not seek to become a full NATO member. This may be explained by geographical remoteness from potential sources of aggression and a land border with just a single country – the United Kingdom. The latter is one of the leading NATO members, the domination of which Ireland is wary of above all. These factors do not promote adherence to the idea of joining the alliance neither in government nor in the society (Dyrda 2015: 60).

As for the data on the opinions, they show that 4 in 10 voters in Ireland very strongly support Irish neutrality. Voters professing above-average support for neutrality regard it as having the following characteristics and foreign policy goals: peace promotion, non-aggression, the primacy of the UN and the confinement of state military activity to UN peacekeeping, not being involved in wars, impartiality and maintaining Ireland's independence, identity and independent foreign policy decision-making (especially in the context of 'big power' pressure). These characteristics reflect the concept of 'active' neutrality, also known as 'positive' or 'fundamental neutrality (Devine 2009).

To sum up, in the context of international law and interstate relations, neutrality is defined as a wartime political position involving legal duties and responsibilities (Andisha 2015). Neutrality is a historically developed concept and, like all such concepts, it denotes different things at different times. The scope and nature of neutrality have evolved over time and, thus, its meaning has also been stretched to accommodate states' interests and changes in global politics. Although traditional legal definitions focus mainly on negative rights of neutrals during war – in other words, what neutrals should not do – recent definitions allow for a more positive and constructive role of the neutral state as an honest broker capable of offering good offices and mediating between belligerents. Neutrality is thus not only a wartime legal status but also a peacetime political and diplomatic posture (Andisha 2015).

During the Cold War, these countries had chosen to stay neutral, and so they formally continue to follow this policy today. However, some may argue that their participation in NATO's PfP and active engagement in regional military activities indicate a slight shift in the policy of neutrality. European countries' policy of neutrality is manifested in active support for organizations working on peace-building and the facilitation of security. For example, Switzerland has become a hub of international organizations working on crisis management. Thus, the states' neutrality does not mean isolationism or passive participation in international affairs. The policy of neutrality serves as a platform to export values and ideas. Neutral countries have significantly contributed to the de-escalation and prevention of various conflicts; they are also able to play the role of mediators or draw attention to humanitarian crises (Vaicekauskaitė 2017).

Thus, nowadays, each of these states defines neutrality in its own way, applying it to the conditions of new challenges in the international environment with the objective of ensuring their national interests. We may point out the capacity enhancement of defence and security cooperation, with regard to the aspects of the formation and transformation of the neutral status of these countries. The data regarding the forms of neutrality in the European states is presented in table 1.

Table 1: The Forms of Neutrality of the European States

State	Year of declaring	Method of declaring	Legal embodiment	Form of neutrality	Country's actual definition of the status
Switzerland	1815	Legal international recognition of declaration	Switzerland Neutrality Recognition Act of 1815 Constitution of 1848	Permanent neutrality	Self-proclaimed, permanent, armed, active neutrality
Austria	1955	Unilateral declaration with formal international recognition	Federal Constitutional Law of 1955	Permanent neutrality	Permanent neutrality
Sweden	1834	Self-proclamation	No legal embodiment	Traditional neutrality	Non-alignment in peacetime, neutrality in case of war
Finland	1948	Neutralization	White Paper to Parliament of 1992	Non-alignment	Non-alignment
Ireland	1938	Self-proclamation	No legal embodiment	Traditional neutrality	Military neutrality

Source: Authors.

It is clear that European neutral states pay considerable attention to their security and defence strategies, the main purpose of which is to protect their territorial integrity and neutral status. All the countries are well developed economically, have military forces, and spend about 1% of GDP on the defence sector. It is obvious that government defence spending differs from state to state. This may be explained by the correspondence between expenditures and positions declared in the defence strategies of the countries under consideration. For example, the greatest emphasis on military power could be observed in the security policy of Finland, and the least in the security policy of Ireland. Accordingly, the defence sector expenditures in these states are the highest and lowest, respectively, in comparison with the spending of the other European neutral countries. The Global Peace Index 2019 identifies these neutral states as "*the most peaceful*" and places them among the top-20 states in the overall list. The latter complies with the declared neutral positions.

Thus, despite their status, neutral states actively join global and regional integration associations. They are members of the UN and the OSCE; cooperate with NATO under the PfP; four are full members of the European Union and implement its Common Security and Defence Policy. In addition, they have supported the creation of PESCO and joined its projects. Consequently, we see the neutrality of the European states to be inferior to an active position in the international arena, which ensures the contribution to solving global problems and maintaining peace and security in the world (Table 2).

Table 2: Participation of the European neutral states in international organizations (programmes of organizations) and regional collective security systems

State	International organizations and programmes				
	UN	OSCE	EU	PfP (NATO programme)	NORDEFCO
Switzerland	+ (2002)	+ (1975)	-	+ (1996)	-
Austria	+ (1955)	+ (1975)	+ (1995)	+ (1995)	-
Sweden	+ (1946)	+ (1975)	+ (1995)	+ (1994)	+ (2009)
Finland	+ (1955)	+ (1975)	+ (1995)	+ (1994)	+ (2009)
Ireland	+ (1955)	+ (1975)	+ (1973)	+ (1999)	-

Source: Authors.

Thus, there are different meanings for neutrality. Each European neutral state has a unique history and culture, and all therefore have a different conception of and meaning for this policy (Morris, White 2011). Due to evolving interpretations, states can "*customize*" the meaning of this policy for their own national purposes. We support the Goetschel (1999: 133) view that the importance of neutrality in international relations has declined since the end of the Cold War, but states that choose to retain their neutrality have the potential to play important roles within the international community. So, in that complex interdependence and the need to remain competitive in the global market, the neutrals redefine their policies in a very fluid manner; and heighten degrees of cooperation in the security architecture of the EU, including a close relationship with NATO despite repeated rejection of explicitly entering the alliance.

In the prospect of neutrality

The neutral status of the European states in its traditional sense is gradually changing. New threats and challenges in the international environment of the post-bipolar world actualize the issues of neutrality and require a transformation of the approach to national defence. Contemporary non-traditional threats, such as organized crime, religious fundamentalism and transnational terrorism, hybrid attacks, cyberwars and disinformation, do not lie within the remit of an active neutrality policy (Siitonen 2017). Potential attacks are no longer directed against states with certain international positions but against Western civilization as a whole. This includes neutral states as much as any one of the great powers with offensive foreign and security policy traditions (Gebhard 2013). Here we can add the Russian hybrid aggression against Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 that change the security climate in Europe. So neutral policy and political attitudes are still in the process of slow change; change because the surrounding world is changing, but only slowly because of the powerful pull of attitudes shaped by the past, where neutrality was seen as morally superior and a part of national identity (Dalsjo 2017).

Therefore, the question of whether neutrality can still protect the national interests of the European countries and provide necessary protection arises. We support the point of view of researchers that neutrality is not and cannot be a static phenomenon. Any political principle can and should be open to debate. Such principles should always be correlated with the reality, checking them for adequacy and analyzing the peculiarities of their evolution (Pauchard 2015). Former Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey argues that the policy of neutrality is not regulated by law; it arises from the desire of a neutral state to remain neutral in the event of interstate conflict. Therefore, the specific political content of the policy of neutrality is an open question; it must take into account the interests of foreign and security policy of the country (Bondolfi, Kamel 2021).

To ensure their national interests and security in international environment, European neutral states compromise on some of the principles of their status. As Myriam Käser asserts, a foreign policy based on neutrality admittedly is understood as active, flexible, showing solidarity, and adaptive to the circumstances (Käser 2020). Malena Britz (Britz 2016) asserts that the security and defence policy of some neutral states includes military non-alignment in combination with political solidarity, and that the politicians have stopped talking about neutrality. These countries change from a solitary actor in security and defence policy into an actor pursuing a solidarity policy and are currently embedded in a number of international security and defence co-operations (EU, bilateral, and multilateral, including getting closer to NATO). Behind the solidarity policy there is thus a need for international cooperation. According to L. Goetschel (Goetschel 1999: 129), since the end of the Cold War, neutrality has *de facto* disappeared from an official discourse on security policy, including through the expansion of NATO and the European Union. For example, Sweden, Finland and Austria have changed their foreign policies and become members of the EU. While none of these countries has joined NATO, they are reliant on their own forces and security assistance from other European powers if the need arises. Such active partnerships bring the neutral countries of Europe close to breaching their traditional neutrality and *"alliance-free"* foreign policy. Researchers say that someday states may be forced to choose one approach over the other. In the meantime, countries' leaders will continue to wrestle with what it means for them to be a partner, but not an alliance member—to be

nonaligned, but not entirely neutral either (Chang 2017). Christine Nissen (Nissen 2018) claims that modern security conditions challenge the consistency and coherence of international cooperation, but neutral states may be able to use these different relationships and memberships to their advantage. By means of joint policy-planning at the political and operational levels, they should work to formulate common interests and promote them within key multilateral forums, thus giving themselves a stronger collective voice.

On the other hand, it is believed that for some states located in close proximity to hostile countries (*not only for Finland but also for Ukraine*), neutrality may be the most conceivable option to alleviate tensions and ensure security. Since the participation of the states in power-related interactions could significantly increase their vulnerability and diminish their security, following a policy of neutrality could prevent war and preserve independence (Vaicekauskaitė 2017).

Thus, neutrality continues to be an important part of the domestic debates of neutral states. From a neorealistic point of view, by adopting neutrality as a foreign policy principle, small states such as Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland seek to compensate their relative power deficit. In such way, they protect their territorial integrity and sovereignty by political and ideological means (Gebhard 2013). Neutrality has become a policy developed in response to the power politics of Europe as an alternative means of safeguarding a state's sovereignty in the international system. In essence, neutrality is a state-centric policy born from traditional understandings of international behavior in that it assumes that the ability to initiate and sustain war is the monopoly of a state. But the conceptions of neutral states linked to their non-participation in a military conflict have lost their significance. Neutrality is increasingly seen as obsolete when non-military tools of strategic disruption are inseparable from conventional military ones (Siitonen 2017). Thus, realistic policy has changed when neutrality and non-alignment rest on a firm basis; it is defined not as a goal but as a means of providing security to the countries (Vaahtoranta, Forsberg 2000).

From a neoliberal point of view, the key tendency for all neutral states of today is the increased emphasis on bilateral and multilateral defence cooperation. The neutral states join international organizations and military cooperation programmes, take part in peacekeeping operations, and even consider joining military alliances. Neutral states bring an important perspective to international organizations. Neutral states add a sense of legitimacy to an organization, such as the EU, and can help to play the role of mediators and draw attention to humanitarian issues. Nevertheless, neutrality and non-alignment are traditionally declared in the foreign policy documents of the states, since they are effective and provide necessary protection to the states' interests and security in the international arena. At the same time, despite the allure of the integration projects, neutrality continues to play a role in preventing some states from either joining the EU or agreeing to new levels of cooperation that threaten historic policies of neutrality (Morris, White 2011).

From a constructive point of view, the neutral states' foreign policy has also been conditioned by the construction of a specific national identity, which built on the overall awareness of material and structural weakness but also emphasized the promotion of norms and values as a contribution to world order. The result was an approach that went beyond the mere issue of size and relative power gains (Gebhard 2013). A policy of neutrality has served as a platform to export values and ideas. Neutral countries have significantly contributed to the deescalation and prevention of conflicts. They can also play the role of mediators or draw attention to humanitarian crises (Vaicekauskaitė 2017). Thus, in most

states, both the government and the public support neutrality and non-alignment statuses. For example, according to the recent research data, the Swiss population supports Swiss neutrality, with the principle of neutrality enjoying almost unanimous approval (Survey: Studie Sicherheit 2018). Here another statement by constructivists will be relevant: that neutrality becomes a national symbol or emblem of identity, which connects citizens to the state itself. The national identity and neutrality that emerges from a group's history as a state can foster a strong desire to support the policy of neutrality, demonstrating the sovereignty of the state (Morris, White 2011). So, neutrality may survive as a vestige of national identity, but for all practical purposes, neutrality has significantly diminished as a substantive description of the foreign policies of post-neutral European states.

Therefore, it can be true for all European neutral states that the support of neutrality policy by the public and authorities is not undermined and, moreover, becomes possible by the strengthening of the countries' economic and political ties with other international actors. By transforming the properties and interpretations of neutral and non-aligned status, the states are reluctant to abandon the well-established mechanisms of implementing their foreign policy and continue to emphasize their priority. Both the political elites and the public of the European neutral states perceive the neutral status of their states as the key principle of their foreign policy, sufficiently effective to guarantee the security of the countries and their populations. Neutrality is one of the most important aspects of their national identity. As Martin Heinz Müller claims (Müller 2009), for example, Austrians do not necessarily see their neutral status with a rational but rather an emotional eye. Robert Dalsjo (Dalsjo 2017) asserts that ideological attachment to the old paradigm of self-sufficient neutrality remains a powerful factor in the body politic and is one of the main reasons why Sweden was deeply divided on EU membership and has not yet joined NATO. Nevertheless, the neutral status of the states is successfully combined with participation in the UN and the OSCE and, respectively, in their missions and operations, with cooperation within NATO programmes, as well as with the EU membership. Neutral states should promote multilateral and institutional responses; use their ample organizational opportunities to promote common interests in regional and international security context. In general, maintaining neutral and non-aligned status, which provides the opportunity for cooperation with other countries and enables active participation in the development of the European security system, will remain relevant in the foreign policy strategy of the European states in the short- and medium-term perspective.

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