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Published twice a year by the  
Groupe de liaison des professeurs d'histoire  
contemporaine auprès de la Commission européenne  
in cooperation with the  
Jean Monnet Chairs in History of European Integration  
with the support of the  
European Commission, DG X University Information

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**Notices – Informations – Mitteilungen**
**Neutral States in Europe and European Integration 1945–1994**  
**(Die europäischen Neutralen und die Integration 1945–1994)**

International Symposium of the Working Group for European Integration at the  
Institute of Contemporary History at the University of Innsbruck (Austria)  
held April, 6th to 9th, 1995

Can neutrality of European states like Ireland, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland or Austria be defined as a problem of security policy, or is neutrality a problem of national identity and sovereignty which must be regarded in the context of European integration? This question dominated the symposium, organized at the instigation of Michael Gehler and Rolf Steininger of the Institute of Contemporary History at Innsbruck. Since the recent accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden to the European Union, the questions of their future position within the European framework, of the neutrality of Ireland and of the future attitude of Switzerland have once again been put on the European agenda. Furthermore, each of the five neutral countries of Europe contributes its own historical and conceptual perspective to the discussion about how to continue the process of European integration.

The great powers – the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain – each had an idea of their own about how the neutrality of the five countries would affect their security interests. As long as the problem of Germany remained unresolved, that is until 1955, the United States regarded neutralism, in Dulles' words, as "immoral". Neutrality could be tolerated only where a strong anti-communist bias and economic and ideological cooperation with the Western world existed (Michael Ruddy, St Louis). To close the security gap, however, President Eisenhower as early as 1953 pleaded for Austrian neutrality to follow the Swiss example. Dulles gave this policy his reluctant support, but there was no room for neutral countries in George Ball's view of European integration policy in the early sixties (Oliver Rathkolb, Vienna).

After the crisis involving the attitude of the neutral countries towards the EEC and their failure to establish a wider EFTA at the beginning of the sixties, the neutral states only rediscovered a constructive role in world politics in the seventies, with the beginning of detente and disarmament talks, and more especially in the context of the CSCE. Their exact position in European-American relations, however, remained to be defined (Oliver Rathkolb, Vienna). From the early sixties onwards, the British sought a pragmatic role for the neutral states within the framework of their European policy (Wolfram Kaiser, Essen/Vienna). Marshall Plan Aid and the division of Germany led the Soviets to abandon their concept of a belt of neutral states from Norway and Denmark through Germany and Austria to Italy. Accordingly, the Stalin offer of March 10 of 1952 must be viewed in terms of propaganda (Vladislav Zubok, Moscow/Washington). After the phase of "peaceful coexistence", inaugurated in 1955 by Khrushchev, who showed great personal confidence in Austrian politicians like Raab, the colours of neutrality reappeared with Gorbachev's formula of a common "European home".

Ireland's interest in neutrality was almost exclusively determined by the problem of defining its political independence from Britain and by the question of the Ulster provinces (Brian Girvin, Cork). At the same time, the economic dependence of Ireland on Great Britain was continuously increasing. In 1947, after violent internal debates, the positive British attitude enabled Ireland to accept Marshall Aid (Ulfert Zöllner, Hamburg). By 1961, it was obvious that European integration had become a critical economic consideration for Ireland

JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN  
INTEGRATION HISTORY

REVUE D'HISTOIRE DE  
L'INTÉGRATION EUROPÉENNE

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and that the political significance of neutrality had diminished in the process. This was reflected in the referendum result of 1972 which saw eighty-three per cent of the Irish electorate voting in favour of EEC membership (Maurice FitzGerald, Florence). Irish interest in European integration up till now has been focused on economic as opposed to political or social considerations (Rona Fitzgerald, Dublin). The Irish interpretation of neutrality as “non-alliance” and “non-participation in international military organisation” is a special case of how national sovereignty and identity are defined (Jürgen Elvert, Kiel). A change of position could occur once the question of the Ulster provinces is resolved.

Among the states whose neutrality is “self-imposed”, Switzerland possesses a particularly clear and orthodox definition. Neutrality, as a political symbol, has for nearly hundred and fifty years been closely related to national identity and sovereignty. As the Federal Council depends on a referendum for approval of any major decisions on foreign policies, and as its actions are by necessity based on a high degree of consensus on internal affairs, a number of restrictive elements are bound to appear in the integration discourse (Laurent Goetschel, Chavannes près Renens). The very fact that Switzerland is characterized by a high degree of economic interdependence with the international community creates a prejudice against any kind of interference with the rules and customs of the national economy. Thus, the inability of the EFTA to survive had very serious consequences for Switzerland. Negotiations for association with the EEC at the beginning of the sixties were hesitantly conducted (Martin Zbinden, Chavannes près Renens). The first report on integration by the Swiss federal council in 1988 deeply affected the traditional self-perception of the Swiss (Peter Moser, Zurich). It meant a change of direction which, however, did not translate automatically into the courage necessary for a discussion of foreign policy problems in front of a national audience. The report led to a deeper feeling of disorientation and of fears about the preservation of national sovereignty, especially as far as monetary and agricultural matters were concerned.

Swedish neutrality features a model welfare-state apparently bridging the gap between the two superpower-systems, but linked to NATO by a “secret partnership”. Sweden’s democratic stability became a myth legitimizing the country’s demand for leadership among the Nordic countries. At the same time, economic dependence on the West and on military cooperation with the USA was growing fast (Karl Molin, Stockholm; Charles Silva, Stockholm; Mikael af Malmberg, Lund). Full membership of the EEC was demanded by the Conservatives all through the sixties, while the Socialist Party did not redefine its aims until 1967 when Labour members began to participate in governments in EEC states. During the eighties, an intellectual reorientation took place, mainly within the Socialist Party, which used Delors’ masterplan for a common European policy on social affairs as one of its points of departure. At the same time, economic decline put a severe strain on the socialist welfare system, which was meant to provide a “people’s home” and closely related, as a factor of identity, to the concept of neutrality. Public opinion was divided over this static idea of the state and a “fuzzy concept” of neutrality which was used as a vehicle for new political ideas. This division occurred within the ranks of the Socialist Party as well and was reflected in the discussion about the referendum of 1994 (Bo Strath, Gothenburg).

Finnish neutrality was determined by the geopolitical and military condition of the country which made a policy of appeasement towards the Soviet Union inevitable. Exclusion from the Marshall aid program later led to considerable economic difficulties (Tapani Paavonen, Turku). When Sweden became an EFTA member, there remained no alternative for Finland but to become associated as well, in 1960, and to conclude corresponding trade agreements with the Eastern European countries. EFTA was regarded as the forecourt of the EEC, Sweden being the decisive factor (Pekka Visuri, Helsinki). President Kekkonen’s good relations with De Gaulle were of paramount importance for giving a European orientation to political ideas in Finland (Matti Häikiö, Helsinki).

Austria’s approach to neutrality was as flexible as the Swedish. In 1955, when Soviet pressure forced Austria to become a neutral and a sovereign state at the same time, an ambiguous comparison was drawn with the Swiss example; in fact, neutrality was in the first place used as a means to distance Austria from both West and East Germany and to enable it to conduct an active foreign policy through international institutions, especially during the era of Chancellor Kreisky (Heinrich Schneider, Vienna). For Austria as for others, the Marshall Aid Program was of vital importance. Since the fifties, Austria’s close economic cooperation with West Germany has made Bonn – but also Rome – the champion of its interests within the EEC. In 1956, Austria became a member of the Council of Europe. Political leaders of both the Socialist and People’s parties declared themselves in favour of adherence to the European Coal and Steel Community. After an interruption caused by severe Russian pressure following the rebellion in Hungary, a possible Austrian membership of the EEC was discussed controversially in 1959/60 (Michael Gehler, Innsbruck). In terms of international law (Maximilian Oswald, Graz) and historiography (Thomas Angerer, Vienna), the evaluation of neutrality underwent a change from 1955 to 1995 as Austria developed closer links with the European and the world economy. Interpretations of neutrality range from the view that it is a permanent protection for Austrian independence, a discussion of problems implied by membership in international institutions to the concept of “secret alliance” with the West (Paul Luif, Laxenburg).

Although the end of the cold war has obliterated the security argument in favour of neutrality, it is still important for the establishment of a national identity and the protection of smaller states during the process of European integration. A collective security structure must be created in Europe to which the formerly neutral states are able and prepared to adhere. The fear of losing national identity and sovereignty, however, remains and will only be overcome if an attractive alternative is shown. This presents a double challenge to the European Union and the five countries under discussion at Innsbruck.

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