

MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Neutrality after Bipolarity: Switzerland and the Reinterpretation of Neutral Foreign
Policy, 1989–2002

verfasst von | submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2026

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt |
Degree programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 805

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree pro-
gramme as it appears on the student record
sheet:

Masterstudium Globalgeschichte und Global Studies

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Wolfgang Müller

ABSTRACT

Diese Masterarbeit untersucht, wie die schweizerische Neutralität nach dem Ende des Kalten Krieges und der Veränderung der internationalen Ordnung zwischen 1989 und 2002 neu interpretiert wurde. Im Mittelpunkt steht die Frage, wie die Schweiz ihre Neutralität nach dem Zusammenbruch der bipolaren Weltordnung rechtlich, politisch und diplomatisch umdeutete, ohne sie offiziell aufzugeben. Die Arbeit beleuchtet wichtige Debatten über die Vereinbarkeit von Neutralität mit internationaler Zusammenarbeit, europäischer Integration, kollektiver Sicherheit und multilateraler Verantwortung. Besonderes Augenmerk liegt auf den Diskussionen über das Verhältnis der Schweiz zur Europäischen Gemeinschaft oder zur Europäischen Union, zur UNO sowie zu internationalen Sanktionen und Formen der sicherheitspolitischen Zusammenarbeit. Anhand diplomatischer Dokumente, offizieller Berichte, rechtlicher Texte und wissenschaftlicher Literatur wird gezeigt, dass Neutralität in der postbipolaren Phase nicht verschwand. Stattdessen wurde sie zunehmend als flexibles außenpolitisches Instrument betrachtet. Die Arbeit argumentiert, dass die Jahre 1989 bis 2002 eine entscheidende Übergangszeit waren, in der sich die schweizerische Neutralität von einem Konzept, das vor allem auf Distanz und Nichtbeteiligung ausgerichtet war, zu einem Teil einer aktiveren und stärker multilateral ausgerichteten Außenpolitik entwickelte.

English Abstract

The present master's thesis examines the redefined nature of Swiss neutrality in the post-Cold War era, alongside the evolution of the international order from 1989 to 2002. This research focuses on how Switzerland reframed its neutrality from both legal and political perspectives after the end of the bipolar world, without formally abandoning its neutral stance. This research makes an important contribution to the ongoing discussion about how neutrality fits with international cooperation, European integration, collective security, and multilateral responsibilities. It specifically addresses Switzerland's relationship with the European Community, the European Union, and the United Nations, as well as international sanctions and forms of security cooperation. The following discussion shows that neutrality persisted in the post-bipolar phase, supported by diplomatic documents, official reports, legal texts, and scholarly literature. However, it was increasingly seen as a flexible tool in foreign policy. The thesis argues that the years from 1989 to 2002 marked a key transitional period, during which Swiss neutrality underwent a significant change in how it was understood. Traditionally, Swiss

neutrality was viewed as a doctrine of distance and non-participation. However, during the period under consideration, neutrality evolved from a concept that was primarily focused on distance and non-participation to a more active and multilaterally oriented foreign policy.

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INTRODUCTION

Topic

Switzerland's long-standing neutrality has been widely regarded as a key stabilizing factor in the country's foreign policy (Fischer, 2003). In both political discourse and public memory, neutrality is frequently depicted as a constant and largely immutable principle that effectively contributed to Switzerland's survival during the major conflicts of the twentieth century (Bonjour, 1946; Freymond, 1988). However, a more thorough historical analysis shows that neutrality has been periodically reinterpreted, especially at times of systemic change.

The conclusion of the Cold War represented a significant turning point in this regard (Fischer, 2002; Fischer & Möckli, 2016). The collapse of the bipolar international order fundamentally changed the political, legal, and diplomatic environment in which neutrality was defined and practiced. The concepts of neutrality, initially formulated during World War II (Bonjour, 1946) and subsequently strengthened during the Cold War (Gabriel, 1988; Fischer & Möckli, 2016), were further shaped by bloc politics, collective security dilemmas, and doctrines of strict abstention. However, during the 1990s, these concepts underwent a significant reinterpretation (Schaller, 1992; Schindler, 1992; Fischer & Möckli, 2016), largely influenced by emerging trends within the new liberal world order (The End of History and the Last Man: Francis Fukuyama). Switzerland, as a nation, has faced mounting international expectations for increased cooperation, responsibility, and institutional engagement in this evolving multi-actor global landscape. Concurrently, domestically, there has been a renewed discourse on the compatibility of neutrality (Gabriel, 1990, 1997; Goetschel, 2000; Kreis, 2004) with the evolving international order.

Relevance

While the Cold War period itself attracted considerable scholarly attention, the shift from Cold War-era neutrality to post-Cold War reinvention was often viewed only briefly or retrospectively as a prelude to subsequent changes in Swiss foreign policy. Existing scholarship on Swiss neutrality has focused primarily on either its legal foundations and Cold War practices (Fischer; Freymond; Schindler, etc.) or broader analyses of Swiss foreign policy (Möckli; Schwok, Gabriel, etc.). The post-1989 reinterpretation is often viewed as merely a transitional phase. The present thesis contends that the period following 1989 should be regarded as a pivotal juncture, during which the significance of Swiss neutrality was proactively re-evaluated rather than merely sustained or abrogated.

The present thesis will focus on the legal and political debates¹ in Switzerland between approximately 1989 and 2002, examining how neutrality was reinterpreted in response to the end of bipolarity and how concepts from the earlier Cold War were questioned, defended, or reformulated. In this manner, the thesis contributes to the international and global historical debates (e.g., Frei, Riklin, Gabriel, Haug, Probst, etc.) concerning neutrality, the foreign policy of small states, and the historical impact of systemic change. By historicizing neutrality as a practice shaped by international expectations and internal debates, the master's Thesis offers analytical tools applicable to broader discussions about neutrality, non-alignment, and the behavior of small states in global politics. Moreover, the neutrality of small states is also a rather under-researched topic.

Research Question

How was Swiss neutrality reinterpreted in Switzerland in the context of the end of the Cold War?

Sub-questions:

- Which dominant interpretations and assumptions about Swiss neutrality during the Cold War were called into question after 1989?
- How was Swiss neutrality legally and politically justified, defended, or reinterpreted in domestic debates during the 1990s?
- What arguments were advanced in favor of upholding, reinterpreting, or fundamentally revising Swiss neutrality in the post-Cold War context?

¹ These debates became especially pronounced regarding economic sanctions and Switzerland's participation in UN-mandated measures. Jürg Martin Gabriel highlights the inherent tension between traditional neutrality and economic sanctions, identifying them as a central dilemma for neutral states confronted with new expectations of international responsibility. Moreover, Switzerland's participation in sanctions against Iraq in the early 1990s further illustrates this shift. André Schaller demonstrates that Switzerland's involvement in UN economic measures marked both a moment of continuity and transformation in Swiss foreign policy, as legal interpretations of neutrality were adapted to accommodate international obligations without formally abandoning the principle itself. In addition to debates on sanctions and collective security, domestic discussions increasingly addressed Switzerland's traditional role of good offices and the expansion of diplomatic mandates in a transformed international environment. Studies by Thomas Fischer and Raymond Probst underscore that Switzerland's practice of good offices—ranging from mediation to protection-of-power mandates—was not weakened after the Cold War but rather reinterpreted as an active contribution compatible with neutrality. These practices were frequently invoked in domestic debates as evidence that neutrality did not imply political isolation but could coexist with enhanced international engagement and responsibility under the auspices of organizations such as the United Nations.

- To what extent did changing international expectations, including Switzerland's relations with the European Union and the United Nations, influence these debates?
- How did post-Cold War debates relate to earlier doctrines of strict abstinence and legal neutrality, and in which respects did they represent continuity or a break with Cold War concepts?

Research Design

The chronological scope of this paper is intentionally limited to the period from 1989 to 2002, with a brief contextual reference to the Cold War era preceding 1989. This choice indicates the thesis's analytical focus on the end of the Cold War as a pivotal moment in interpreting Swiss neutrality, rather than an attempt to provide a comprehensive historical overview of Swiss neutrality throughout the twentieth century.

The year 1989 signifies a pivotal shift in the international system, precipitated by the dissolution of the bipolar order that had delineated Swiss neutrality since 1945 (Fischer & Möckli, 2016). During the Cold War, Switzerland's neutrality was primarily dictated by the policies of the blocs, collective security agreements, and doctrines of strict abstinence (Kreis, 2004). The fundamental transformations of the international system originated precisely in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall. The collapse of the bipolar order coincided with the acceleration of globalization, resulting in rapid and lasting changes in both economic conditions and the foreign policy environment. In this context, the long-established concepts of neutrality, developed amid Cold War-era bloc confrontation and strict abstention, have increasingly been questioned with the disappearance of this geopolitical structure (Fischer & Möckli, 2016). This has led to renewed debate within Switzerland about the meaning, scope, and future of neutral foreign policy.

Concurrently, the significance of supranational regulations and international organizations has increased since 1989. The process of European integration, which intensified in the post-war era, experienced a significant escalation in the 1990s (Fischer 2002, 2003). The transformation of the European Economic Community into the European Union in 1993, and the subsequent expansion of its membership from twelve to twenty-seven States, resulted in significant political and economic changes to the European landscape. These processes have introduced novel challenges to Switzerland's established conception of neutrality and non-alignment.

Switzerland has demonstrated a commendable capacity for economic adaptation in the face of evolving global dynamics (Gabriel, 1992). This ability has been evidenced by the country's strategic reinforcement of its service-oriented economic framework, thereby consolidating its position within global marketplaces. Notwithstanding the international economic downturns and crises experienced in 1991 and 2001, Switzerland was able to sustain and enhance its economic competitiveness. These events have precipitated a shift in the external environment in which neutrality previously operated, chiefly by means of augmenting Switzerland's integration into global economic networks and the regulatory framework.

In response to these changes, Switzerland has carefully adjusted its policy of strict neutrality, opening a few international initiatives. The pivotal juncture in this process was the nationwide referendum of 2002 (FDFA, 2002), in which the Swiss electorate endorsed membership in the United Nations. Therefore, the upper chronological boundary of 2002 is determined by Switzerland's accession to the United Nations, which marked a significant institutional and conceptual shift in Switzerland's foreign policy. Although membership in the United Nations did not entail the renunciation of neutrality, it represented the culmination of deliberations following the end of the Cold War on the compatibility of neutrality with international cooperation and collective responsibility.

Consequently, the Cold War period before 1989 is regarded as a conceptual background that furnished the legal and political foundation for the subsequent reevaluation of neutrality after 1989. The year 2002 is therefore a logical endpoint, as it marks the institutionalization of these reinterpretations through Switzerland's accession to the United Nations. Focusing on the years 1989-2002, the present thesis remains methodologically guided and analytically consistent, while reflecting a crucial stage in the historical evolution of Swiss neutrality.

Positionality

The positionality of the present master's research is grounded in my academic research interest in the historical role of neutral states in international relations, which developed during my undergraduate studies and culminated in my bachelor's thesis, entitled “*The main directions of Swiss foreign Policy in 2002-2020*”, 2021. My research activity within that project introduced me to the debate surrounding Swiss neutrality and its transformation in the international order after the end of the Cold War. Therefore, I continued this line of research and decided to deepen it further in my current master's degree, shifting my research from exclusively international relations to interdisciplinary historical analysis.

Consequently, studying at the University of Vienna and participating in scientific research in the field of the history of international relations and European Global History have formed the interdisciplinary perspective of this thesis. While Switzerland's neutrality during the Cold War has been widely considered in the existing literature, the rethinking of neutrality after 1989 is often seen only as a transitional stage. Thus, this research aims to go beyond mere description and analyze neutrality as a purposeful foreign policy strategy through which Switzerland sought to build trust and maintain balance in its international relations.

Considering the topic from an external academic perspective, I strive to go beyond purely descriptive reports and analyze Swiss neutrality as a purposeful foreign policy strategy through which Switzerland sought to build trust and maintain balance in its international relations during the transition period identified in the research.

STATE-OF-THE-ART

To answer the research question, the thesis combines three closely interrelated methodological stages.

First, the historical context outlines the key features of Swiss neutrality during the Cold War, with particular attention to its legal foundations and dominant interpretations. This reference chapter defines the conceptual assumptions that underpinned neutrality before 1989 and provides a starting point for evaluating subsequent developments.

Secondly, the thesis analyzes the legal and political debates in Switzerland after 1989 and examines official government statements, political reports, legal memoranda, and parliamentary discussions. These sources are analyzed to identify changes in terminology, argumentation, and justification strategies used to explain neutrality in the new international environment. Particular attention is paid to how neutrality was formulated in relation to international cooperation, responsibility, and institutional participation.

Third, the paper examines foreign policy positioning and diplomatic practice in the 1990s to assess how the rethinking of neutrality affected political action. Instead of a detailed description of all policy measures, the analysis focuses on the moments when the practice has sparked new debates about the meaning and limits of neutrality.

In addition to official documents and legal texts, selected media sources (e.g., NZZ, SRG, SwissInfo) will be used to contextualize public discourse and political debates surrounding neutrality in the 1990s.

Throughout the analysis, changes are assessed by comparing interpretations and dynamics that emerged after 1989 with earlier Cold War concepts of neutrality. This comparative approach allows us to identify both continuity and transformation, while avoiding a purely descriptive narrative.

EMPIRICAL CORPUS

To ensure consistency in the analysis, changes in Switzerland's neutrality are assessed using a set of practical indicators, including discursive shifts, patterns of diplomatic interaction, the positioning of international institutions, and responses to external political and economic pressure. These indicators enable structured research into the various stages of the Cold War while avoiding a purely descriptive narrative. The source is taken mainly from documents of the Swiss Diplomatic Service (Dodis)², supplemented by official policy documents³, international legal texts, and research resources such as CSS⁴, FDFA⁵, DDPS⁶, GFS Bern⁷, and Foraus⁸, as well as European think tanks such as Avenir Suisse⁹, Bruegel¹⁰, and news agencies and news portals such as BBC¹¹, Neue Zürcher Zeitung¹², Tages-Anzeiger¹³, Berner Zeitung¹⁴, SwissInfo¹⁵, SRG¹⁶, etc.

Thus, the primary source database consists mainly of materials from the Swiss Documents Diplomatiques Suisses (Dodis), including diplomatic correspondence, political reports, and

² Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland (Dodis) | Dodis, online unter <<https://www.dodis.ch/en/profile>>

³ Swiss Foreign Policy Strategies, Swiss Federal Constitution (Bundesverfassung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft), Swiss Neutrality Report (Neutralitätsbericht), 1993, Swiss Security Policy Reports (Sicherheitspolitische Berichte), etc.

⁴ Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich. (n.d.). *ETH Zurich*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://ethz.ch/en.html>

⁵ Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). (n.d.). *FDFA official website*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa.html>

⁶ Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS). (n.d.). *Swiss Mission to the UN in Geneva*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.eda.admin.ch/missions/mission-onu-geneve/en/home.html>

⁷ GFS Bern. (n.d.). *GFS Bern*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.gfsbern.ch/de/>

⁸ Foraus – Swiss Forum on Foreign Policy. (n.d.). *Foraus*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.foraus.ch>

⁹ Avenir Suisse. (n.d.). *Ökonomische Fakten, bilateraler Weg und ein Plan C*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.avenir-suisse.ch/publication/schweiz-eu-oekonomische-fakten-bilateraler-weg-und-ein-plan-c/>

¹⁰ Bruegel. (2020, May). *Bruegel Annual Report 2019*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.bruegel.org/2020/05/bruegel-annual-report-2019/>

¹¹ BBC. (n.d.). *BBC News*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.bbc.com>

¹² Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ). (n.d.). *NZZ*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.nzz.ch>

¹³ Tages-Anzeiger. (n.d.). *Tages-Anzeiger*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch>

¹⁴ Berner Zeitung. (n.d.). *Berner Zeitung*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.bernerzeitung.ch>

¹⁵ SWI SwissInfo. (n.d.). *SwissInfo*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.swissinfo.ch>

¹⁶ SRG SSR. (n.d.). *SRG SSR – Swiss Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.srgssr.ch/en/home>

internal memoranda. These sources are supplemented by official statements from the Swiss Government, parliamentary debates, and selected legal texts related to neutrality.

Additional literature on Swiss neutrality, international history during the Cold War, international relations, the history of neutrality, and the foreign policy of small States provides a historiographical framework and contextual background for analysis.

The initial series of works by English-language scholars is dedicated to a comprehensive overview of Switzerland's historical background and its strategy of armed neutrality. The following authors are included in this group: Edgar Bonjour¹⁷, Gabriel Fischer¹⁸, John Dreyer¹⁹, Jean Freymond,²⁰ and so on.

The second group of works by English-language scholars analyses Switzerland's neutrality and the Cold War. The most prominent representatives of this group include Thomas Fischer²¹, Andreas Graf²², Rene Schwok²³, and Dietrich Schindler²⁴, among others.

A group of German-speaking scholars has conducted a thorough study of Swiss neutrality during and after the Cold War, as well as the internal discourse surrounding it, which evolved in line with the changing times. In this group, the works of Raymond Probst²⁵, Alois Riklin²⁶,

¹⁷ Edgar Bonjour, 1946. *Swiss Neutrality: Its History and Meaning*. Basel & London: Helbing & Lichtenhahn and G. Allen & Unwin. 135 pp.

¹⁸ Gabriel Fischer, *Swiss Foreign Policy, 1945-2002*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2003). p. 49. ISBN 9781403912756.

¹⁹ John R. Dreyer *Swiss Neutrality Examined: Model, Exception or Both?* / John Dreyer, Neal G. Jesse// *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*. -2014. -Vol. 15, iss. 3. -P. 61-83. -URL: <https://jmss.org/article/view/58112/43729>

²⁰ Jean Freymond *Neutrality and Security Policy as Components of the Swiss Model Government and Opposition* Vol. 23, No. 1 (WINTER 1988), pp. 51-68.

²¹ Thomas Fischer, *Switzerland's Good Offices: A Changing Concept, 1945-2002*. Application/pdf, Online-Datei. Centre for International Studies, ETH Zurich, 2002, doi:10.3929/ETHZ-A-004445304.

Fischer, Thomas Daniel Möckli, *The Limits of Compensation: Swiss Neutrality Policy in the Cold War*. *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, Nr. 4 (2016) (2016) 12–35.

²² Graf, A., & Lanz, D. (2013). *Conclusions: Switzerland as a paradigmatic case of small-state peace policy?* *Swiss Political Science Review*, 19(3), 410–423. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12047>

²³ Rene Schwok, *Switzerland – European Union. An impossible membership?* – Bruxelles: «P.I.E. Peter Lang», 2009

²⁴ Dietrich Schindler, *Neutrality and Morality; Developments in Switzerland and in the International Community*, in *American University International Law Review*, Volume 14, 1998, p. 155 – 170

²⁵ Raymond Probst, *Gute Dienste*. *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS)*, online unter <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/articles/026461/2014-07-01/>.

Raymond Probst, *Die Schweiz und die Guten Dienste*. In: Alois Riklin/Hans Haug/Raymond Probst (Hrsg.), *Neues Handbuch der schweizerischen Aussenpolitik*. = *Nouveau manuel de la politique extérieure suisse*, Bern 1992, S. 659–677. P.659

²⁶ Alois Riklin, “Neutralität,” in *Neues Handbuch der schweizerischen Aussenpolitik*, ed. Alois Riklin et al. (Bern: Haupt, 1992).

Alois Riklin, “Neutralität,” *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, November 9, 2010, accessed March, 2026, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/016572/2010-11-09/>.

Laurent Goetschel²⁷, Reinhardt Volker²⁸, Jakob Tanner²⁹, Thomas Maissen³⁰, Georg Kreis³¹, Jürg Martin Gabriel³², André Schaller³³, Marco Jorio³⁴, Sacha Zala³⁵, and Wolfgang Mueller³⁶. Mueller's research, in particular, highlights the diplomatic and strategic dimensions of neutrality during the Cold War and beyond.

The works of Russian-speaking scholars also assisted in the composition of this paper. The present group of researchers focuses on the main areas of interaction between Switzerland and Europe, with a particular emphasis on ideological biases that differ from those in the West (as they were prior to 1989). This group includes works by O. V. Afanasyeva³⁷, V. Ya. Schweitzer³⁸, G. P. Dragunov³⁹, B. V. Ganiushkin⁴⁰, et al.

²⁷ Laurent Goetschel, "Aussenpolitikanalyse in Der Schweiz: Paradigma Oder Sonderfall? Zum Einfluss von Entscheidungsprozessen Auf Nationale Rollenkonzepte." *Zeitschrift Für Internationale Beziehungen*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1999, pp. 349–70. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40843855>. Accessed 1 Feb. 2026.

Laurent Goetschel, Die Entwicklung der Neutralität und der schweizerischen Integrationspolitik, in Gehler, Michael/Steininger, Rolf (Hrsg), *Die Neutralen und die Europäische Integration 1945-1995* (Innsbruck 2000)

²⁸ Volker Reinhardt, *Kleine Geschichte der Schweiz*. 1. Auflage. München: C. H. Beck, 2010. 176 S.

²⁹ Jakob Tanner, et al. *Geschichte der Schweiz und der Schweizer: Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*. Basel: Schwabe, 2015.

³⁰ Thomas Maissen, *Geschichte der Schweiz*. Baden, 2010.

³¹ Georg Kreis, *Kleine Neutralitätsgeschichte der Gegenwart: Ein Inventar zum neutralitätspolitischen Diskurs in der Schweiz seit 1943* (Zürich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2004)

Georg Kreis, *Die Schweizer Neutralität. Beibehalten, umgestalten oder doch abschaffen?* Zürich 2007. 159 S.

³² Gabriel, Jürg M.: *Sackgasse Neutralität*. Zürich: vdf, Hochsch.-Verl. an der ETH, 1997. Text teilw. dt., teilw. Engl. ISBN 3-7281-2420-6

Jürg Martin Gabriel, *Neutralität für den Notfall: Der Bericht des Bundesrats zur Aussenpolitik der Schweiz in den 90er Jahren*, 1995. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 1: 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1662-6370.1995.tb00014.x>

Gabriel, Jürg M.: *Schweizer Neutralität im Wandel: hin zur EG Frauenfeld*: Huber, 1990. ISBN 3-7193-1031-0

Jürg Martin Gabriel, "Switzerland and Economic Sanctions: The Dilemma of a Neutral," in *Swiss Neutrality and Security*, Beiträge und Berichte 122 (Zürich, 1988), 232–245.

³³ André Schaller, *Die Teilnahme der Schweiz an den gegen den Irak gerichteten wirtschaftlichen Massnahmen der UNO: Wandel und Kontinuität in der schweizerischen Aussenpolitik*. St. Gallen: Institut für Politikwissenschaft, 1992.

³⁴ Marco Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte* (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2022).

³⁵ Sacha Zala and Flurina Felix, eds., *La Suisse et la construction du multilatéralisme. Bd. 3: Diplomatique Dokumante der Schweiz zur Geschichte der UNO 1942–2002 = Documents diplomatiques suisses sur l'histoire de l'ONU 1942–2002* (Bern: Documents Diplomatiques Suisses (Dodis), 2022).

³⁶ Wolfgang Mueller, "A Special Relationship with Neutrals? Khrushchev's Coexistence Policy, Austria, and Switzerland, 1955–1960." *Zeitgeschichte* 41, no. 5 (2014): 279–295.

Wolfgang Mueller, "Genese und historischer Wandel der Neutralität Österreichs." *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft / Austrian Journal of Political Science* 53 (Special Issue: *Zustand und Zukunft der österreichischen Neutralität: Eine Auseinandersetzung*) (2024). <https://doi.org/10.15203/4166.vol53.2024>.

³⁷ O. V. Afanasyeva, "K istorii shveytsarskogo neytraliteta [On the History of Swiss Neutrality]." *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'* 1 (1956).

³⁸ V. Ya. Shveitser, and A. I. Stepanov. "Specificity of Neutrality." In *Gosudarstva Al'piiskogo regiona i strany Benilyuks v menyayushcheysya Evrope*, edited by V. Ya. Shveitser. Moscow: Ves' Mir, 2009.

³⁹ G. P. Dragunov, *Shveysariya*. Moscow: Mysl', 1968.

Dragunov, G. P. *Shveysariya: istoriya i sovremennost' (ocherk noveishei istorii)*. Moscow: Mysl', 1978.

⁴⁰ B. V. Ganiushkin, *Sovremenniy neytralitet: Politika neytraliteta i postoiannyi neytralitet v usloviakh bor'by za mir*. Moscow: Institut mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii, 1958.

B. V. Ganiushkin, *Neytralitet i neprisoedinenie*. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1965.

In general, such a methodological approach allows one to go beyond describing the history of Swiss neutrality and instead offer an analytical account of how neutrality functioned as a flexible and controversial foreign policy practice during the Cold War.

THEORIES & CONCEPTS

The present research is theoretically grounded in approaches from International Relations and Global History, complemented by insights from the Small State Theory framework. It is evident that, when considered as a whole, these perspectives offer a conceptual framework for analyzing the role of Swiss neutrality in the international system. Furthermore, this framework enables the reinterpretation of neutrality during the period of the end of the Cold War and the subsequent era.

From the perspective of International Relations theory, neutrality can be conceptualized not only as a legal status but also as a foreign policy strategy by which states position themselves within the international system. Whilst classical studies in international law have traditionally concentrated on the behavior of great powers, more recent studies have increasingly emphasized the strategic role of small states. In this context, neutrality can be employed as a diplomatic instrument, enabling states to function as intermediaries, thereby facilitating dialogue and assuming the role of organizers of international negotiations.

The project draws on the perspectives of Global History and Global Studies, which emphasize the interconnectedness of political, diplomatic, and institutional processes across national borders. Rather than analyzing Swiss neutrality exclusively within a national framework, this approach situates Switzerland within the broader transnational dynamics of the Cold War and the evolving structures of global governance. This thesis examines Switzerland's involvement in international organizations, diplomatic networks, and global political processes.

The theoretical foundation of this master's thesis is rooted in the principles of Small State Theory. Baldacchino and Wivel (2020) posit that small states frequently resort to strategies such as diplomacy, institutional engagement, and normative legitimacy to compensate for their constrained military and economic capacities. These strategies enable small states to enhance their security and international credibility within asymmetric international security structures. In Switzerland's case, neutrality can be interpreted as part of a broader range of strategies employed by small states to maintain authority, build trust, and facilitate diplomatic interaction with major powers (Graf & Lanz, 2013).

The analytical basis of this research consists of several key concepts. The concept of neutrality is understood to encompass two distinct aspects (Mueller, 2024; Dreyer & Neal, 2014; Fischer & Möckli, 2016; Freymond, 1988): firstly, as a legal principle of non-participation in military alliances; and secondly, as a dynamic instrument of foreign policy that can be adapted to changing geopolitical conditions. A closely related concept is that of good offices (Fischer, 2002; Probst, 1992; Probst, 2014), which refers to diplomatic services such as mediation, representation of foreign interests, and facilitation of negotiations between conflicting parties. These practices have historically constituted a significant component of Switzerland's foreign policy.

Another significant concept is that of mediation (Mueller, 2014; Fischer, 2003; Goetschel, 1999; Gabriel, 1988), which underscores the role of neutral states in fostering dialogue and conflict resolution within the international system. Neutral states can enhance their international authority and influence, despite their limited material power, through mediation and diplomatic interaction. The concept of normative legitimacy (Wheatley, 2012) is also an important factor in explaining how small states can gain international trust. This is achieved by emphasizing commitment to international law, multilateralism, and humanitarian principles.

When considered as a whole, these theoretical perspectives and concepts enable the interpretation of Swiss neutrality not as a passive withdrawal from international politics, but as an active diplomatic strategy through which Switzerland sought to strengthen trust, maintain balance, and enhance its role in the international system.

SWISS NEUTRALITY DURING THE COLD WAR: CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The present chapter offers a thorough historical survey and a conceptual foundation for comprehending Switzerland's distinctive model of neutrality. The text meticulously traces the evolution of Swiss neutrality from a post-war mediator to an international diplomatic center. It highlights the enduring principles of armed neutrality, non-interference, and diplomatic engagement. The primary focus of this paper is Switzerland's consistent diplomatic non-alignment in Central Europe, a distinguishing characteristic that sets it apart from other neutral states. Switzerland's approach is characterized by the institutionalization of neutrality as a proactive political strategy, rather than merely abstaining from military conflict.

The chapter examines doctrinal documents, fundamental principles, and historical precedents that have collectively shaped the Swiss government's policy of maintaining a neutral stance. The initial section examines the evolution of Swiss neutrality during the post-World War II and Cold War eras, as well as the legal foundations and prevailing interpretations of Swiss neutrality in the international system during this period.

The subsequent section undertakes a thorough examination of Western scientific interpretations of Swiss neutrality. The primary focus of this study is an examination of how Western scholars have historically conceptualized Swiss neutrality during the Cold War. The prevailing perspective among these scholars is that neutrality was primarily understood as a legal status and a diplomatic strategy that enabled Switzerland to preserve its political independence through active engagement in international diplomacy and post-war strategic behaviour.

The final section of this chapter examines Soviet interpretations of Swiss neutrality. In the context of Soviet science, neutrality was often viewed through the lens of geopolitical competition and ideological confrontation during the Cold War. This section examines how Soviet authors interpreted the role of neutral states and their position within the broader structure of the Cold War bipolar international system.

Conceptually, the chapter situates Swiss neutrality during the Cold War within the frameworks of international relations and global history. This approach situates Switzerland's neutrality within the broader context of its foreign policy, emphasizing its role as a dynamic and ideologically informed instrument. The analysis underscores the profound interconnection of neutrality with transnational networks and evolving international norms, highlighting its

adaptability and significance in a changing global landscape. The integration of liberal internationalist perspectives—particularly the neoliberal institutionalist emphasis on multilateralism, soft power, and pluralism—provides a theoretical basis to understand Switzerland's diplomatic role beyond traditional state-centric paradigms.

By integrating historical analysis with a global-historical approach, the chapter establishes the foundation for constructive research into how Switzerland balanced its neutrality with the active, dynamically conflicting worlds of the Western and Eastern blocs in a bipolar international system. This fundamental discussion is crucial for understanding Switzerland's multifaceted policy of neutrality in the post-Cold War period, as Switzerland simultaneously acts as a regional actor in Europe and a global mediator.

Historical Retrospective of Swiss Neutrality during the Cold War

In the period of the Second World War (1939-1945), Switzerland adopted an “armed neutrality”⁴¹ position, which was analogous to its conduct during the First World War. This decision led to a significant increase in diplomatic and humanitarian efforts, which placed considerable strain on the country's external and internal resources⁴². During the Second World War, Swiss neutrality was subjected to an unparalleled degree of external pressure. In the aftermath of France's defeat in 1940, Switzerland found itself encircled by Axis-controlled territory, subject to mounting political, economic, and military pressure from Nazi Germany. German officials and propagandists repeatedly questioned the possibility of a neutral state maintaining extensive economic relations with the Allied powers whilst simultaneously restricting activities perceived as hostile to Germany. Consequently, Swiss authorities were compelled to defend their interpretation of neutrality, not only against military threats but also against competing foreign expectations regarding its implications. The experience of the war demonstrated that neutrality was not a static legal construct, but rather a political practice that was subject to constant negotiation in conditions of extreme geopolitical imbalance. Concurrently, Switzerland progressively associated neutrality with national independence, democratic institutions, and the preservation of state sovereignty. This development resulted in

⁴¹ Armed neutrality refers to a stance taken by a state or a group of states during a conflict, where they do not form alliances with any of the warring parties. This position allows them to remain neutral while being prepared to defend themselves against any acts of aggression from either side. States that adopt armed neutrality assert their right to protect their sovereignty and resist incursions from all belligerents. — Kulsrud CJ. Armed Neutralities to 1780. *American Journal of International Law*. 1935;29(3):423-447. doi:10.2307/2190419

⁴² History of Switzerland. “Conservative Concepts of Leadership vs. Nazism.” Accessed March 2026. <http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/switzerland-second-world-war-ii.html>.

the transformation of neutrality from a primarily legal status into a central component of national identity and political self-understanding⁴³.

Nevertheless, the experience of the Second World War had a significant impact on the moral and political authority of Swiss neutrality in the post-war period⁴⁴. Despite Switzerland's formal neutrality during the war, its wartime economic relations with Nazi Germany, encompassing trade, financial transactions, and ongoing bilateral contacts until the war's final stages⁴⁵, led to severe criticism from the Allied Powers in the post-1945 period⁴⁶. In this sense, the concept of Swiss neutrality, which had initially been presented internally as a strategy of survival and self-preservation, was increasingly viewed abroad as being morally ambiguous and politically problematic.

Consequently, Switzerland had to enter the early period of the Cold War in a state of significant foreign policy isolation⁴⁷. Its neutrality was no longer automatically perceived as a legitimate or purely impartial position. Rather, it needed to be protected, reevaluated, and practically adapted to the new international order established following the defeat of Nazism⁴⁸. This provides a rationale for why the post-war normalization of relations with the Western Allies has become one of Bern's main foreign policy priorities. Thus, the Washington Agreement of 1946⁴⁹, according to which Switzerland made financial concessions regarding German assets and the transfer of gold, should be understood not only as an economic settlement but also as an attempt to restore international trust and reduce the political damage caused by cooperation with Nazi Germany during the war.

Concurrently, Switzerland persisted in its foreign policy of neutrality, achieving a balance between the geopolitical "poles". Thus, in 1946, diplomatic relations were established with the

⁴³ Edgar Bonjour, *Swiss Neutrality: Its History and Meaning*, trans. Mary Hottinger (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1946), 119–129.

⁴⁴ History of Switzerland. "Switzerland's Role in World War II." Accessed March 2026. <http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/switzerland-second-world-war-ii.html>

⁴⁵ Stephen Helmreich, "The Diplomacy of Apology: U.S. Bombings of Switzerland during World War II." *Air & Space Power Journal*. Accessed March 2026. <https://web.archive.org/web/20070505083348/http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj00/sum00/helmreich.html>.

⁴⁶ Andrey Astakhov, "The Apple of Discord — Swiss Banking Secrecy." Web article. Accessed March 2026. https://web.archive.org/web/20100802022637/http://www.prostobank.com/ru/komanda/blogi/andrey_astahov/ya_bloko_razdora_bankovskaya_tayna_shveytsarii.

⁴⁷ I. A. Petrov, *Essays on the History of Switzerland* (Yekaterinburg: Tsirkon, 2006), 740.

⁴⁸ History of Switzerland. "Spiritual Defense." Accessed March 2026. <http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/spiritual-defense-world-war-ii.html>.

⁴⁹ Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). "The Washington Agreement, 1946." Accessed June 2026. <https://www.dodis.ch/en/washington-agreement-1946>

USSR⁵⁰; however, in practice, these relations with the socialist world remained limited and were determined by prevailing anti-communist sentiments in Bern⁵¹. This resulted in a structurally ambiguous position: Switzerland sought to maintain a neutral stance as the foundation of its foreign policy. However, in practice, there was an increasing focus on the Western political and economic order. Consequently, the legitimacy of neutrality was contested by both parties. Western states criticized⁵² Switzerland's behavior during the war and its unwillingness to join the new collective security order. In contrast, Soviet observers later interpreted Switzerland's neutrality as formally independent but materially embedded in the Western system.

At the international level, Switzerland's policy of neutrality was also criticized and condemned by the international community. The reasons for this were twofold: first, the country's maintenance of relations with Nazi Germany until its collapse, followed by attempts to establish closer ties with the socialist world⁵³; and second, Bern's unwillingness to join the UN = an organization created by the victorious anti-Nazi coalition, citing the controversial compatibility of the armed neutrality with collective security. This course of action was not aligned with the stated principles of neutrality⁵⁴. Moreover, Bern's statements about plans to develop its own nuclear weapons⁵⁵ in the 1950s provoked strongly critical reactions from the Soviet Union and legal theorists. The Soviet authors further argued that the acquisition of nuclear weapons was fundamentally incompatible with neutrality itself. According to this interpretation, nuclear weapons would inevitably increase the dependence of a neutral State on foreign military technology and strategic cooperation with major Powers, thereby undermining

⁵⁰ Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). "The Establishment of Swiss Diplomatic Relations with the USSR." Accessed March 2026. <https://www.dodis.ch/en/establishment-swiss-diplomatic-relations-ussr>.

⁵¹ L. A. Mundt, "Russian Spirit and Bolshevism: Representation and Attitude towards the Communist System in the USSR during World War II Based on Swiss German-Language Press Materials." *History: Facts and Symbols*, no. 2 (15) (2018): 56–57.

⁵² Oleg I. Beyda, "Between Neutrality and Complicity: Swiss Medical Missions on the German-Soviet Front in 1941–1943," *Neprikosnovennyj zapas*, no. 5 (2015): 236–237, accessed March 2026, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160629062232/http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2015/103/19b.html>.

⁵³ Swissinfo, "Swiss Neutrality Strengthened by Cold War," June 24, 2001, accessed March 2026, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/life-aging/swiss-neutrality-strengthened-by-cold-war/2101270>.

⁵⁴ "In 1946, the Swiss Federal Council reaffirmed Switzerland's commitment to armed neutrality, emphasizing the necessity of maintaining a capable military defence to safeguard its sovereignty and neutrality in the post-war international order." — (Kunz, B., 2010. *Swiss Neutrality in the 20th Century*. Journal of Contemporary History, 45(3), pp. 455–478.)

⁵⁵ New Scientist. "Swiss Planned a Nuclear Bomb." May 25, 1996. Accessed March 2026. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg15020310-500-swiss-planned-a-nuclear-bomb/>

Kommersant. "Switzerland Was Preparing a Nuclear Bomb." August 7, 1998. *Kommersant*, no. 143, p. 4. Accessed March 2026. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/203082>

its political independence⁵⁶. At the same time, Soviet scientists argued that nuclear weapons would turn neutral states into potential targets for nuclear retaliation, rendering the very concept of neutral self-defense ineffective in an atomic war⁵⁷. Therefore, from the Soviet perspective, Switzerland's attempts to reconcile armed neutrality with nuclear deterrence revealed growing contradictions and structural tensions within the traditional model of permanent armed neutrality during the Cold War.

However, Western society decided to prioritize pragmatism⁵⁸ over legal discussions with the Swiss Republic. Due to its historical significance as a financial and trading hub in the heart of Europe, Switzerland's economy was reliant on trade with neighbouring countries and allies during the war and in the post-war period. The restriction or prevention of its access to markets could have resulted in significant economic harm to the country⁵⁹. Concurrently, the Swiss government found itself in a position where it could hardly afford not to make concessions to the Allies.

Therefore, a compromise was achieved, solidified by the agreement of May 25, 1946, in which the Western allies, under the leadership of the United States of America, compelled Switzerland to make concessions⁶⁰. In exchange for the transfer of gold reserves from Germany, Switzerland committed to allocating approximately 250 million Swiss francs "*towards the reconstruction of Europe*"⁶¹. Furthermore, the agreement stipulated the "liquidation"⁶² of funds blocked in Switzerland in the accounts of German citizens residing in Germany⁶³. The funds received during the "liquidation" were to be distributed among the signatory states (participants

⁵⁶ Wolfgang Mueller, "The USSR and Permanent Neutrality in the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 4 (Fall 2016): 153–154, https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00683

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Regula Stucki, "Swiss Neutrality and the Second World War: Pragmatism over Principle?" *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 56, no. 3 (2006): 361–362.

⁵⁹ Ivan Abraham, "The Neutral Ally: Switzerland's Economy in World War II and After", *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 3 (2006): 423–444.

⁶⁰ Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), "The Washington Agreement, 1946," accessed March 2026, <https://www.dodis.ch/en/washington-agreement-1946>

U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume V: The United Nations; The British Commonwealth; Western Europe* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), accessed March 2026, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1946v05/d140>.

⁶¹ Ibid., paras. 2–4.

⁶² U.S. Department of State, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume V: The British Commonwealth; Western Europe, Document 140," 1946, accessed March 2026, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1946v05/d140>.

⁶³ Allied Control Council. (1945, October 30). *Directive No. 5: Disposal of property of German nationals and organizations abroad*. In *Enactments and approved papers of the Control Council* (Vol. I). U.S. Library of Congress. https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/lil/llmlp/61035888_Volume-I/61035888_Volume-I.pdf

in the MPA⁶⁴) and Switzerland⁶⁵. In response to these concessions, the allies decided to waive any further claims against Switzerland, the SNB, and private Swiss banks, and to commit to abolishing the "blacklist" and unfreezing Swiss accounts in the US, which at that time held about 4.6 billion⁶⁶⁷ Swiss francs.

Even though not all the objectives delineated in the agreement were fully realized, Western society expressed satisfaction⁶⁸ with the results. The Washington Treaty encountered substantial opposition⁶⁹ in Switzerland due to its perceived implications for the country's economic interests, its potential impact on the maintenance of armed neutrality⁷⁰, and the emergence of political distrust regarding the intentions of major powers. However, the Swiss Federal Council and Parliament supported the agreement, acknowledging its substantial contribution to the normalization of political relations with the West⁷¹. This was because a considerable portion of the problems was not only in the financial sphere but also in international politics.

Nevertheless, Switzerland's neutrality remained deeply controversial in the eyes of many Western states even after 1946. It became evident that the points raised significant concerns regarding the legitimacy of Switzerland's accession to the United Nations (UN)⁷², an organization founded on the unification of nations in the struggle against Nazism. Consequently, unlike Geneva's active role as a center of international diplomacy, the Federal Council initially refrained from joining the UN⁷³. At the same time, accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was officially rejected, since participation in a military

⁶⁴ Mutual recognition agreements (MRA).

⁶⁵ Stuart E. Eizenstat, *U.S. and Allied Efforts to Recover and Restore Gold and Other Assets Stolen or Hidden by Germany during World War II* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 1997), 72.

⁶⁶ Dodis.ch, "Washington Agreement, 1946," accessed March 2026, <https://www.dodis.ch/en/washington-agreement-1946>.

⁶⁷ PHdn.org, "Appropriation of Gold and Assets in World War II," accessed March 2026, <https://phdn.org/archives/www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/genocide/appropriation15.htm>.

⁶⁸ Stuart E. Eizenstat, *U.S. and Allied Efforts to Recover and Restore Gold and Other Assets Stolen or Hidden by Germany during World War II* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, 1997), 72, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v03/d509>.

⁶⁹ Fabian Schindler, "Switzerland and the Postwar World: Neutrality under Pressure," *Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 2 (2008): 360–362.

⁷⁰ Swiss Confederation, *Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation of 18 April 1999 (Status as of 1 January 2024)* (Bern: The Federal Council), arts. 140–141, accessed March 2026, <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1999/404/en>.

⁷¹ Ludwig von Castelmur, *Schweizerisch-Alliierte Finanzbeziehungen im Übergang vom Zweiten Weltkrieg zum Kalten Krieg: Die deutschen Guthaben in der Schweiz zwischen Zwangsliquidation und Freigabe (1945–1952)*, 2nd ed. (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 1997), 72.

⁷² Daniel Frei, *Die Schweiz und die UNO: Eine ambivalente Beziehung* (Zürich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1992), 23–25.

⁷³ V. N. Durdenevsky, "On Switzerland's Neutrality," *Novoye Vremya*, no. 22 (1955): 29.

alliance was considered incompatible with the doctrine of permanent armed neutrality⁷⁴. Although Switzerland formally remained outside of NATO, historical research has shown that Bern maintained covert collaboration with Western states and gradually integrated into the broader Western strategic and economic sphere⁷⁵. This included intelligence sharing, contingency planning, and informal defense coordination with NATO⁷⁶ structures in the context of growing fears of Soviet expansion in Europe.

Therefore, Switzerland's neutrality at the beginning of the Cold War should not be understood as severe political isolation or complete separation from the Western bloc. Thus, although Switzerland publicly defended a policy of permanent neutrality, in practice its security policy increasingly reflected anti-communist attitudes and tacit agreement with the Western political course. The early years of the Cold War provided an illustrative example. During this period, Swiss military officials engaged in confidential dialogue with British defense planners regarding the strategic defense of Central Europe. In the aftermath of the Korean War, there was a marked intensification in the level of discourse. By the period 1951–1953, Swiss and British military authorities had developed forms of peacetime defense coordination, including the exchange of strategic assessments and consultations on defensive planning. Even though these contacts never resulted in formal alliance commitments, they demonstrate the extent to which Swiss neutrality coexisted with informal security cooperation directed against a perceived Soviet threat⁷⁷.

Publicly, Switzerland faced a notable foreign policy challenge during the Korean War (since 1951), when the United States invited it to participate in the work of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC). The proposal presented the Federal Council with a dilemma: to adhere strictly to the traditional interpretation of neutrality, or to leverage participation in the commission to enhance the country's international standing. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the commission's very design assumed the participation of states

⁷⁴ O. V. Afanasyeva, "On the History of Swiss Neutrality," *International Affairs (Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn)*, no. 1 (1956): 79.

⁷⁵ Thomas Fischer, "Swiss Cold War Neutrality: Undisputed Principle of Foreign Policy," in *The Soviet Union and Cold War Neutrality and Nonalignment in Europe*, ed. Mark Kramer, Aryo Makko, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021), 65–66.

⁷⁶ Mauro Mantovani, "Another 'Special Relationship': The British-Swiss Early Cold War Coordination of Defence (1947–53)," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 10, no. 1 (1999): 136–140, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592299908406112>.

Andreas Wenger and Christian Nuenlist, "A 'Special Case' between Independence and Interdependence: Cold War Studies and Cold War Politics in Post-Cold War Switzerland," *Cold War History* 8, no. 2 (2008): 218–220, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682740802018777>.

⁷⁷ Mauro Mantovani, "Another 'Special Relationship'? The British-Swiss Early Cold War Coordination of Defence (1947–53)," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 10, no. 1 (1999): 136–140.

formally designated as "neutral" but associated with opposing blocs: Switzerland and Sweden were proposed by the UN Command. In contrast, Poland and Czechoslovakia were proposed by the communist camp. Consequently, Switzerland found itself in a position in which its neutral status was embedded in the Cold War bloc logic⁷⁸.

Following the armistice of July 27, 1953, the commission encountered persistent challenges stemming from ideological disagreements among its members and the limited effectiveness of its control mechanisms⁷⁹. The functioning of the NNSC was undermined by distrust among the parties to the conflict, especially by the UN Command and South Korea, as well as by the refusal of the North and representatives of the socialist countries to engage in full-fledged cooperation. Despite mounting pressure from various actors to withdraw from the commission, the Swiss leadership, particularly the head of the political department, Max Petitpierre, maintained its position of continued participation, viewing it as a contribution to stability and a peaceful settlement⁸⁰. Consequently, Switzerland has maintained its involvement in the commission for decades, exemplifying its continued engagement in international peacekeeping operations while preserving its formal neutrality. Nevertheless, Switzerland maintained its neutrality by not joining either the UN⁸¹ or NATO⁸², despite the UN headquarters being in Geneva. This city continues to serve as the organization's seat. A modicum of openness was only attainable in relation to "apolitical"⁸³ international organizations, including numerous UN sub-agencies.

Nonetheless, it was in the post-war period that the Federal Council in Switzerland underwent a series of reforms, including the integration of representatives from the Social Democratic faction⁸⁴. This event had a significant impact on Bern's foreign policy, making it

⁷⁸ Urs Gerber, "Die Schweiz Und Die NNSC. Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz Zur Geschichte Der Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea 1951-1995." *Schweizerische Zeitschrift Für Geschichte* 75, no. 1 (2025): 190. <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.24894/2296-6013.00169>.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 192.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 191–192.

⁸¹ Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), "Frequently Asked Questions: Switzerland and the UN," accessed March 2026, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/foreign-policy/international-organisations/un-switzerland/facts-and-faq.html>.

⁸² North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "Relations with Switzerland," April 1, 2021, accessed March 2026, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52129.htm.

⁸³ Christoph Scherrer, "Switzerland and the United Nations: From Exclusion to Membership," in *Swiss Foreign Policy Yearbook* (2010), 48.

⁸⁴ C. H. Church, *The Politics and Government of Switzerland* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan (2004).

— Discusses the "Magic Formula," political reforms, and the role of the Social Democrats in the Federal Council.

more balanced⁸⁵. Consequently, Switzerland garnered interest from third countries where diplomatic relations had been suspended for various reasons. These include the USSR's post-war interests in Iraq in 1955⁸⁶ and Great Britain's interests in Argentina during the Anglo-Argentine conflict of 1982⁸⁷. Switzerland also became a co-founder of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)⁸⁸ in 1960, a full member of the Council of Europe in 1963⁸⁹, and a member of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe⁹⁰ in 1975. Furthermore, the city of Geneva hosted the historic 1985 summit between Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan, a pivotal moment that signalled the beginning of a new East-West détente.

Consequently, considering Switzerland's policy of armed neutrality, as well as the economic and predominantly political weight of regional organizations within the post-war international community that were beginning to establish themselves in Switzerland, the country rapidly expanded its presence in these institutions, thereby strengthening its influence as an international humanitarian mediator⁹¹. It is noteworthy that, due to Switzerland's globalized nature and its economy's export-orientation, the country's security and prosperity were contingent on the stability of the situation and the fairness of the emerging post-war international order.

Therefore, it was of the utmost importance for Switzerland to contribute to the formation of a flexible post-war environment through humanitarian means. This contribution included encouraging mediation in crises, resolving conflicts, promoting humanitarian aid, developing economic and trade policy measures in the field of cooperation, conducting mediation missions, and providing "good offices"⁹². This clearly pragmatic foreign policy was reflected in the 1954

⁸⁵ René Roca, "Using the 'Magic Formula' to Achieve Concordance," *Swiss National Museum Blog*, September 2021, accessed March 2026, <https://blog.nationalmuseum.ch/en/2021/09/using-the-magic-formula-to-achieve-concordance/>.

⁸⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, *A Short History of Switzerland's Neutrality*, Office of Current Intelligence, OCI No. 3377/55 (April 23, 1955): 3, accessed March 2026, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP91T01172R000300060017-6.pdf>.

⁸⁷ Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), "Official Statements on Switzerland's Protecting Power Mandate during the Falklands Conflict," 1982, accessed March 2026, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home.html>.

⁸⁸ European Free Trade Association (EFTA), "History," accessed March 2026, <https://www.efta.int/about-efta/history>.

⁸⁹ Council of Europe, "Switzerland," accessed March 2026, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/about-us/switzerland>.

⁹⁰ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), "History of the OSCE," accessed March 2026, <https://www.osce.org/history>.

⁹¹ Thomas Fischer and Daniel Möckli, "The Limits of Compensation: Swiss Neutrality Policy in the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 4 (2016), 24.

⁹² Thomas Fischer, *Switzerland's Good Offices: A Changing Concept, 1945–2002* (ETH Zürich Working Paper, 2002), 13–20, <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-a-004445304>.

directives⁹³ issued by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The geopolitical shifts of the post-war era, along with the evolving dynamics of other nations in the international political landscape, exerted a profound and irreversible influence on Bern's foreign policy objectives and strategic framework. This period marked a notable shift in the perception of Swiss neutrality and the value of humanitarian cooperation, underscoring their paramount importance in the contemporary Swiss neutral foreign policy.

During the 1970s, Switzerland's foreign policy underwent considerable development, shaped by the simultaneous influence of two major geopolitical trends. Firstly, there was a notable shift towards reduced tensions and increased cooperation between the East and the West, leading to the establishment of numerous international agreements. Secondly, there was a marked increase in global interdependence, driven by the need for economic and trade cooperation in the face of crises such as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil embargo in 1973-74. Against this background, a partial departure from the traditional model of "strict" neutrality within the framework of the concept of "*geistigen Landesverteidigung*" (cultural/ideological defense) began, towards more active participation in multilateral diplomacy⁹⁴. Nevertheless, this transition was characterized by an inherent internal contradiction. Discussions within the Federal Council, notably those concerning the foreign trips of its members, have revealed a prevailing skepticism in both society and political circles about the expansion of foreign policy activity⁹⁵. This reflected the ongoing tension between attitudes towards isolation and the necessity for greater openness.

The practical adaptation of neutrality manifested itself in specific foreign policy steps. In the context of the Near East conflict, Switzerland permitted a limited presence of Palestinian representatives in Geneva, justifying this on the grounds of neutrality and diplomatic restraint, rather than political support for any party. Concurrently, the nation consolidated its position within the ambit of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE)⁹⁶. Switzerland's actions during the Geneva negotiations (1973-1975) cannot be characterized exclusively by its traditional role as a mediator and host. Indeed, the country also pursued its

⁹³ Swiss Confederation, *Official Systematic Collection of Federal Laws (Amtliche Sammlung des Bundesrechts)* (Bern: Federal Chancellery, Bundespublikationen, 2010).

⁹⁴ Philip Rosin, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz, Band 26 (1.1.1973-31.12.1975)." *Schweizerische Zeitschrift Für Geschichte* 70, no. 1 (2020): 166.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 166–167

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

own initiatives, notably with a view to institutionalizing mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes⁹⁷.

In this regard, it is quite natural that Switzerland, like other member-states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), signed⁹⁸ a Free Trade Agreement with the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1972. This agreement had no impact on Swiss national sovereignty or neutrality; however, it granted Swiss goods free access to EEC markets and promoted fair competition. The agreement was formally endorsed in a referendum in December 1972 and took effect on January 1, 1973. As a result of the 1972 Free Trade Agreement, Switzerland eliminated all tariff and non-tariff barriers on industrial goods by early 1977⁹⁹. This development resulted in the unhindered access of Swiss producers to the European Economic Community (EEC) market. By the mid-1980s, Swiss trade with EEC countries had doubled, and Swiss investment in EEC member states had tripled¹⁰⁰. These figures reflect the agreement's strongly positive economic impact¹⁰¹. This positive trend continued with the conclusion of an insurance agreement between the EU and Switzerland in 1989¹⁰². This agreement represented the inaugural, but by no means the last,¹⁰³ consensus between the EEC and Switzerland in the domain of services. Taken together, these examples demonstrate that as early as the 1970s, neutrality in practice began to assume a more flexible and functional character, allowing limited but growing involvement in international processes while formally preserving its traditional principles.

Consequently, during the Cold War, Switzerland remained neutral, refraining from both UN membership (until 2002) and NATO membership. In addition, it did not participate in the European Economic Area. Nevertheless, Switzerland continued to develop humanitarian cooperation with the EEC based on the principles of bilateral agreements. Thus, Switzerland's

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ European External Action Service, *Free Trade Agreement – List of Treaties, 1972*, accessed March 2026, <https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/switzerland/docs/trade.pdf>

⁹⁹ State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), “Economic Importance of the Bilateral Agreements,” accessed March 2026, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/europa/en/home/bilateraler-weg/ueberblick/wirtschaftliche-bedeutung.html>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Wolfgang Linder, “Swiss Economic Assets towards the EEC,” in “Fighting for a Neoliberal Europe: Swiss Business Associations and the UNICE, 1970–1978,” *Cold War History* 21, no. 4 (2021): 510–534.

¹⁰² European Economic Community and Swiss Confederation, *Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Swiss Confederation on Direct Insurance Other than Life Assurance*, Official Journal of the European Communities (1989), accessed March 2026, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A21991A0727\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A21991A0727(01)).

¹⁰³ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), “Poland–Switzerland Bilateral Investment Treaty, 1989,” *International Investment Agreements Navigator*, accessed March 2026, <https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/international-investment-agreements/treaties/otheriia/2781/poland---switzerland-bit-1989->

consistent adoption of an armed neutrality stance not only ensured its strategic distance from the violent conflicts that plagued the era but also contributed to the consolidation of its global standing in the post-war context. This was facilitated by the provision of substantial diplomatic services, a practice that underscores the country's commitment to promoting human welfare on an international scale. During the Cold War, Geneva established a reputation as the diplomatic heart of a neutral country and began to specialize in mediation, representing the interests of other countries for an extended period. Accordingly, Switzerland was capable of establishing and sustaining connections among nations that extended beyond the scope of intergovernmental relations. This principle also enabled Geneva to engage in dialogue with all actors, irrespective of their ideological and political preferences.

Legal Foundations and Dominant Interpretations

Following comprehensive research into the history of Swiss neutrality, it is now possible to state with confidence that it has long been a central element of the country's foreign policy and international identity. Its legal and political foundations are deeply rooted in the history of European diplomacy and have been influenced by both international law and domestic political traditions. These form a legal framework defining Switzerland's obligation to refrain from participating in military alliances and armed conflicts between other states, while ensuring the inviolability of its territory.

It is a fact that the theoretical and practical basis of Swiss neutrality does not originate from any specific country. The origins of the policy of neutrality can be traced back to the High (or Classical) Middle Ages and the myths associated with it¹⁰⁴. Thus, from the Middle Ages onward, the Old Swiss Confederacy (1291-1798) began to actively practice the principles of non-interference and neutrality both in the foreign policy arena and as a means of resolving internal conflicts among the growing number of cantons¹⁰⁵. At the same time, Thomas Maissen notes that the Swiss Confederation emerged in the 14th century as a network of alliances between autonomous territories within the Holy Roman Empire. Instead of forming a centralized state, the Confederation developed as a loose association of urban and rural communities that sought to ensure their political autonomy within the fragmented imperial political order¹⁰⁶. This argument, in turn, explains the structural basis of Swiss neutrality, which has historically been grounded in the absence of a strong central government, the diversity of

¹⁰⁴ Volker Reinhardt, *Kleine Geschichte der Schweiz* (München: C.H. Beck, 2010), 6–12.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 13–28.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Maissen, *Geschichte der Schweiz* (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2010), chap. “Städte und Länder im Heiligen Römischen Reich”, EPUB pages 1–6.

autonomous political units, and the traditional abstention from participating in great-power conflicts.

The next significant turning point in the history of Swiss neutrality and foreign policy was the defeat at the Battle of Marignano in 1515. This defeat led the Confederation to halt its expansionist policies and marked the beginning of its transition from direct military involvement to a strategy of armed neutrality¹⁰⁷. This shift in approach led to the development of trade in military force¹⁰⁸, which later resulted in Switzerland's first official declaration of neutrality in 1674¹⁰⁹ in accordance with the established Westphalian international order. In 1815, the "*Acte portant reconnaissance et garantie de la neutralité perpétuelle de la Suisse et de l'inviolabilité de son territoire*"¹¹⁰ officially consolidated Switzerland's final transition to a position of modern neutrality and non-interference in the affairs of other countries, which, for example, was very actively promoted not only by Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia, and Russia¹¹¹. Thus, Switzerland's neutral status finally received international legal recognition from the great powers of the time: "*the neutrality and inviolability of Switzerland and its independence from all foreign influence are in the true political interest of all of Europe*"¹¹². Armed neutrality thus became Switzerland's practical foreign policy, enabling it to remain an independent state amid constant wars among the great European powers¹¹³.

It should be noted, however, that although neutrality has long been considered the cornerstone of Swiss foreign and security policy, it has never officially been defined as the ultimate political objective. Instead, neutrality has been understood as one of several tools by

¹⁰⁷ Volker Reinhardt, *Kleine Geschichte der Schweiz* (München: C.H. Beck, 2010), 63–65.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 65–67.

¹⁰⁹ Edgar Bonjour, *Swiss Neutrality: Its History and Meaning*, trans. Mary Hottinger (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1946), 11–12.

Alois Riklin, "Neutralität," *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, last modified November 9, 2010, accessed March 11, 2026, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/016572/2010-11-09/>.

¹¹⁰ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 32, February 1 to March 6, 1816 (London: T. C. Hansard, 1816), 308, accessed March 11, 2026,

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=I8ETAAAAYAAJ&pg=PT64#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

"Act on the Recognition and Guarantee of the Permanent Neutrality of Switzerland and the Inviolability of Its Territory," in *International Law in Documents* (Moscow: Infra-M, 1997), accessed March 12, 2026, <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901756583>.

¹¹¹ Alois Riklin, "Neutralität," *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, last modified November 9, 2010, accessed March 11, 2026, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/016572/2010-11-09/>.

Russian Service of SWI Swissinfo and Keystone-SDA, "Russia and the Swiss Question at the Congress of Vienna," *SWI Swissinfo*, July 17, 2017, accessed March 12, 2026, https://www.swissinfo.ch/rus/страницы-истории_россия-и-швейцарский-вопрос-на-венском-конгрессе/41349906

¹¹² *Acte portant reconnaissance et garantie de la neutralité perpétuelle de la Suisse et de l'inviolabilité de son territoire* du 20 novembre 1815

¹¹³ Edgar Bonjour, *Swiss Neutrality: Its History and Meaning*, trans. Mary Hottinger (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1946), 23–24.

which Switzerland seeks to preserve the maximum possible degree of political independence. This interpretation was reflected in the debate surrounding the revision of the Federal Treaty in 1847¹¹⁴. At that time, the Federal Diet explicitly rejected the proposal to include the preservation of neutrality among the Confederation's official goals in the Federal Constitution¹¹⁵. The Diet argued that neutrality should be understood as a political means rather than an end in itself. They described it as "the political rule that currently seems most appropriate to ensure the independence of Switzerland", while also recognizing that future circumstances may require the country to abandon neutrality to protect its independence¹¹⁶.

As outlined in the opening chapter, Switzerland maintained a policy of neutrality during both the First and Second World Wars. Following the Second World War, Switzerland initiated the development of innovative approaches to implementing its neutrality in the post-war period. These approaches diverged appreciably¹¹⁷ from the principles adopted by other European neutral states. The historical success of Swiss neutrality is attributable to several factors. Firstly, Switzerland has consistently adapted to the international situation, thereby serving the interests of neighboring countries. Secondly, Switzerland is pragmatic, reliable, and predictable, a consequence of its long-term stability. Nevertheless, a regular review of the principles of Swiss neutrality is necessary in order to ensure that it remains an effective instrument in the conduct of security and foreign policy. The fundamental principle of "neutrality" should be preserved as an instrument of foreign and security policy until more appropriate and effective instruments for conducting foreign policy and protecting national interests are in place¹¹⁸. Consequently, Swiss neutrality could not remain unchanged in either its content or its duration.

From a legal perspective, neutrality is usually defined as a state's status of refraining from participating in armed conflicts between other states and maintaining an impartial position

¹¹⁴ Swiss Federal Council, *White Paper on Neutrality: Annex to the Report on Swiss Foreign Policy for the Nineties*, Report no. 93.098, November 29, 1993, 6, accessed March 12, 2026, https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/eda/en/documents/aussenpolitik/voelkerrecht/bericht-neutralitaet-1993_EN.pdf.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ "Farewell to the Ordinary Swiss Charter in 1847, on the Occasion of Negotiations Concerning the Revision of the Federal Treaty," Part IV, 51.

¹¹⁷ Wolfgang Mueller, "Genese und historischer Wandel der Neutralität Österreichs," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft (Austrian Journal of Political Science)* 53 (2024), special issue "Zustand und Zukunft der österreichischen Neutralität: Eine Auseinandersetzung," 4–6, <https://doi.org/10.15203/4166.vol53.2024>.
Jürg Martin Gabriel, *The American Conception of Neutrality after 1941* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 216–223.

S. V. Fokina, "Main Stages in the Formation and Development of Neutrality in the European Space (The Case of Switzerland and Austria)," *Manuscript*, no. 3-1 (65) (2016): 185–186.

¹¹⁸ Edgar Bonjour, *Swiss Neutrality: Its History and Meaning*, trans. Mary Hottinger (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1946), 7–9.

towards the belligerents. Classical interpretations of Swiss neutrality emphasize its basis in international law, particularly the legal principles codified in the Hague Conventions of 1907 (*Hague V*, *Hague XIII*), which govern the rights and obligations of neutral states in wartime. In Switzerland, these two Conventions entered into force on July 11, 1910¹¹⁹. In the Swiss political tradition, neutrality has historically been interpreted not only as a legal obligation but also as a guiding principle¹²⁰ of foreign policy aimed at preserving independence and security in a complex geopolitical situation¹²¹.

The concept of Swiss neutrality has been a subject of debate among historians and political scientists for many years. Early historical interpretations, such as that presented by Edgar Bonjour, emphasized neutrality as a fundamental element of Switzerland's political identity and a key factor in the country's survival within the European state system¹²². More recent historical studies similarly emphasize the continuity of neutrality as a central feature of Swiss statehood and recognize that its interpretation has changed over time in response to changing international conditions¹²³.

Western Interpretations of Swiss Neutrality

Within the context of Soviet political and legal discourse, neutrality was often conceptualized as a passive status characterized by non-alignment and minimal military engagement. Accusations of "passivity"¹²⁴ therefore became an integral part of Soviet rhetoric towards neutral states that attempted to pursue broader political or strategic cooperation with the West. Conversely, Western historiography has progressively conceptualized neutrality as an active and adaptive foreign policy instrument, emphasizing its diplomatic, strategic, and international functions within the evolving Cold War order. As previously outlined, Western scholars who study Switzerland's neutrality during the Cold War tend to interpret neutrality not solely as a legal status, but also as a pivotal component of Switzerland's foreign and security policy. In the context of Western academic discourse, Swiss neutrality is frequently interpreted as an adaptable instrument that enabled Switzerland to preserve its political autonomy while

¹¹⁹ Bonjour., 7–9.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 7–11.

¹²¹ Alois Riklin, "Neutralität," *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, last modified November 9, 2010, accessed March 11, 2026, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/016572/2010-11-09/>.

¹²² Bonjour, *Swiss Neutrality: Its History and Meaning*, 129, 140–141.

¹²³ Thomas Maissen, *Geschichte der Schweiz* (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2010), chap. "Konkordanz und Kalter Krieg", EPUB pages 2–7.

Reinhardt Volker, *Kleine Geschichte der Schweiz* (München: C.H. Beck, 2010), 145–156.

¹²⁴ Wolfgang Mueller, "The USSR and Permanent Neutrality in the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 4 (2016): 166–170, https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00683.

concurrently engaging in international diplomacy, economic collaboration, and humanitarian initiatives during the bipolar confrontation between East and West.

One of the most influential historical interpretations of Swiss neutrality is Edgar Bonjour's *Swiss Neutrality: Its History and Meaning* (1946), which remains a fundamental study of this issue to this day. Bonjour's research indicates that neutrality developed gradually over the centuries and eventually became a defining feature¹²⁵ of Swiss statehood and political identity. Bonjour believes that Switzerland's strategic position in Europe and the need to maintain independence in a region dominated by powerful neighboring states are the key factors behind Switzerland's neutrality¹²⁶. According to Bonjour, neutrality was not just a diplomatic choice, but a historical principle deeply rooted in the Swiss political tradition¹²⁷. He therefore describes neutrality as "*the fundamental principle of Swiss political life*"¹²⁸, emphasizing that it has become a central element of the country's political identity and its relationship to the European balance of power.

During the Cold War, neutrality gained additional political importance as Switzerland sought to maintain its independence within the bipolar structure of the international system. Subsequently, Western scholars expanded this historical interpretation by examining the institutional and political aspects of neutrality. Jean Freymond's influential article "*Neutrality and Security Policy as Components of the Swiss Model*" offers a seminal concept of neutrality in the context of Switzerland's political development. Freymond posits that neutrality is one of the core pillars of the so-called "*Swiss model*"¹²⁹, combining political neutrality with active economic and diplomatic participation in international affairs¹³⁰. From this perspective, neutrality did not entail political isolation but rather served as the foundation that empowered Switzerland to pursue an active foreign policy, thereby avoiding formal accession to either of the two opposing blocs.

Thus, Freymond believes that neutrality is closely related to other defining characteristics of the Swiss political system, including federalism and direct democracy. The combination of these institutional features influences Switzerland's approach to security and

¹²⁵ Edgar Bonjour, *Swiss Neutrality: Its History and Meaning*, trans. Mary Hottinger (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1946), 129, 9.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 137–153

¹²⁷ Ibid., 106.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹²⁹ Jean Freymond, "Neutrality and Security Policy as Components of the Swiss Model," *Government and Opposition* 23, no. 1 (1988): 56, 68.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 51–54.

foreign policy. According to Freymond, Swiss neutrality has become a "vital principle"¹³¹ underlying the country's foreign policy and political identity. In this context, neutrality is not just a policy of refraining from military alliances, but also a broader strategic principle governing Switzerland's interaction within the global international system.

An important dimension of Western interpretations of Swiss neutrality concerns the role of diplomacy and mediation. Research by Thomas Fischer on Swiss diplomatic practice has underscored the significance of the concept of "good offices" in Swiss foreign policy¹³². Switzerland's neutral status enabled it to offer diplomatic services such as mediation, representation of foreign interests, and facilitation of negotiations between states lacking direct diplomatic relations¹³³. Fischer's observations highlight the significant impact of these activities on enhancing Switzerland's international reputation, enabling the country to assume a pivotal role in international diplomacy despite its relatively modest size. During the Cold War, Switzerland frequently acted as an intermediary between states from opposing ideological blocs, thereby reinforcing its reputation as a reliable and impartial mediator¹³⁴.

The practical implementation of neutrality in Swiss foreign policy is discussed in more detail in the work of Jürg Martin Gabriel and Thomas Fischer on the development of Swiss foreign policy after 1945. Their research indicates that maintaining a neutral stance has not resulted in political isolation. In contrast, Switzerland pursued an active foreign policy that combined strict military neutrality with broad diplomatic and economic cooperation¹³⁵. Switzerland maintained close economic ties with Western Europe while maintaining diplomatic contacts with the Eastern Bloc countries¹³⁶. According to Gabriel and Fischer, Swiss neutrality should be regarded as a pragmatic strategy that enables Switzerland to preserve a significant degree of political autonomy by engaging proactively in international economic and diplomatic networks¹³⁷.

In Jürg Martin Gabriel's research, the Swiss interpretation of neutrality during the Cold War period is revealed not as a fixed legal doctrine but as a dynamic system of priorities

¹³¹ Ibid., 53.

¹³² Thomas Fischer, *Switzerland's Good Offices: A Changing Concept, 1945–2002* (Zurich: ETH Zurich, 2002), 13–21.

¹³³ Ibid., 13–14.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 22–30.

¹³⁵ Jürg Martin Gabriel and Thomas Fischer, *Swiss Foreign Policy, 1945–2002* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 186–207.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 27–29.

Möckli, *Neutralität, Solidarität, Sonderfall*, pp. 129–68.

¹³⁷ Gabriel and Fischer, *Swiss Foreign Policy*, 50–52.

embedded in the broader logic of foreign-policy rationality. The fundamental principle of "*Zweck-Mittel-Logik*"¹³⁸ (Purpose-means-logic) is that neutrality is clearly defined as a means rather than a purpose of Swiss foreign policy. As he emphasized in formulating the problem, the "*oberstes Ziel*" of Swiss foreign policy is the preservation of independence and the guarantee of the state's existence. At the same time, neutrality and solidarity with the international community are merely instruments in pursuing this objective¹³⁹. This has fundamental consequences for the understanding of neutrality: it has no independent value and can be modified or even partially sacrificed if it conflicts with the highest goal — sovereign independence¹⁴⁰. Gabriel states that in the event of a conflict between "means", they are subject to "partial or complete withdrawal", since neutrality "has never been the ultimate goal"¹⁴¹. Thus, already at the conceptual level, the possibility of a flexible interpretation of neutrality is established, which becomes especially important in the context of a bipolar confrontation.

A further analysis of Gabriel's research reveals that the instrumental logic of the Swiss approach does not exclude, but rather presupposes, the presence of real "conflict of goals" (*Zielkonflikte*). In contrast to the idealized model in which neutrality, solidarity, and independence coexist harmoniously, Switzerland's historical practice shows recurring instances in which these principles come into conflict¹⁴². Gabriel emphasizes that such conflicts arise not only at the level of "means", but also between different values — for example, between security, economic well-being, and international responsibility. The experience of the Second World War and the early post-war period is particularly significant in this regard, and the text interprets it as a prehistory of Cold War practice. In 1940, Switzerland found itself confronted with a dilemma: either maintain its strict neutrality or seek cooperation with France or Germany, a move regarded as a crucial step in ensuring its security, even if it meant compromising its traditional stance¹⁴³. In a similar manner, during 1944-1945, Allied pressure exposed the limits of Switzerland's traditional understanding of neutrality. The fundamental question posed was not whether Switzerland should adopt a neutral stance, but rather whether neutrality could continue to legitimately justify ongoing economic relations with Nazi Germany. The imposition of restrictions on trade and financial transactions with Germany by the Allies forced

¹³⁸ Jürg Martin Gabriel, *Sackgasse Neutralität* (Zürich: vdf Hochschulverlag an der ETH, 1997): 18.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 18–19.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 20, 26.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 20.

¹⁴² Ibid., 55–56.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 58.

Switzerland to choose between maintaining its economic well-being and sovereignty and adopting a neutral stance¹⁴⁴.

These historical cases demonstrate that, by the beginning of the Cold War, Swiss neutrality was no longer a rigid norm, but rather a variable that depended on the specific situation. Although Switzerland was not formally part of Western structures, it effectively adapted its neutral policy to the logic of the Cold War. This is reflected in the introduction of export restrictions, such as those of the Coordinating Committee for Export Controls (CoCom), and in the Hotz–Linder Agreement of 1951, which formalized the coordination of export controls among Western countries¹⁴⁵. This meant Switzerland's de facto inclusion in the West's economic strategy, despite its formal neutrality¹⁴⁶. Therefore, even at this early stage, Gabriel's approach, while bearing obvious conceptual similarities to Soviet scholars' interpretations, did not abolish Swiss neutrality but rather redefined it through a practice that permitted selective engagement in bloc politics.

Similar logic can be seen in the issue of international institutional integration. According to Gabriel, the debate over joining the Council of Europe and, later, the United Nations demonstrates that neutrality is understood as a restriction subject to political interpretation rather than an absolute prohibition¹⁴⁷. Initially, the Federal Council insisted that membership was incompatible with neutrality, but this position was revised over time: membership was considered possible provided that certain neutral reservations were maintained. This indicates a shift from a "one-dimensional" concept¹⁴⁸ of neutrality to a more complex one that allows for participation at multiple levels in international structures. Also, it was particularly important for Gabriel to highlight the discrepancy between doctrine and practice. While the Federal Council publicly adhered to the traditional rhetoric of neutrality, its actual policy increasingly included elements of solidarity and cooperation with the West¹⁴⁹. This ambivalence can be explained by the need to maintain internal legitimacy during the Cold War: although its practical content changed, neutrality remained a key element of political identity.

Overall, Gabriel's observations lead to the conclusion that, during the Cold War, Swiss neutrality served as an adaptive tool for a small state, enabling it to balance international

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 58–59.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 36–37.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 36–37.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 60–63.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 60, 62–63.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 62–63.

obligations with domestic priorities. His interpretation was shaped more by political rationality than by legal norms, with a focus on preserving independence, security, and economic stability. This flexibility enabled Switzerland to combine formal neutrality with active participation in the Western system without losing its neutrality.

Furthermore, in the analysis of *The American Conception of Neutrality after 1941* (1988), Jürg Martin Gabriel also cites an important dimension of Swiss neutrality in international relations during the Cold War. Gabriel refers to the diplomatic functions performed by neutral states. He emphasizes that the policy of neutrality often includes practices such as the provision of *good offices* and the idea of *neutralisation* of states as mechanisms for stabilizing international conflicts¹⁵⁰. According to Gabriel, the United States has historically demonstrated a generally positive attitude towards the diplomatic activities of neutral countries. This is especially the case when such activities facilitate communication between conflicting parties or provide neutral platforms for negotiations¹⁵¹.

These observations are particularly relevant in the case of Switzerland. During the Cold War, Switzerland strengthened its role as a diplomatic mediator and host in international negotiations. Geneva, for example, has become an important venue for diplomatic meetings and multilateral negotiations, reflecting the wider recognition of neutral territory as a suitable environment for dialogue between States belonging to opposing political blocs¹⁵². In this context, the concept of good offices has become a central element of Switzerland's foreign policy. Switzerland has frequently acted as a representative of the diplomatic interests of states that have severed relations, as well as serving as a mediator in situations requiring mediation or communication between conflicting parties.

Against this background, the American interpretation set out in document *NSC 119* (1951) offers a different level of analysis, considering neutrality primarily as an element of global strategic balance. Despite its formal neutral status, the United States considered Switzerland to occupy an important place in the Western security system and therefore believed it should be involved in it to the maximum extent possible. The document emphasizes the importance of Switzerland expanding its cooperation with the "*defense effort of the free nations of Western Europe*" and gradually aligning itself with the Western bloc¹⁵³. In this context,

¹⁵⁰ Jürg Martin Gabriel, *The American Conception of Neutrality after 1941* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 221–223.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Gabriel, *Sackgasse Neutralität*, 41–42.

neutrality is presented as an adaptable concept; it is explicitly suggested that promoting a more flexible interpretation of Swiss neutrality would be beneficial¹⁵⁴.

It is important that the American position was based not only on regulatory expectations, but also on an analysis of actual practices. According to Gabriel, *NSC 119* notes that Switzerland is already moving away from a strict interpretation of neutrality. For instance, its participation in a system of export restrictions against the Eastern Bloc brought its economic policy closer to that of Western states¹⁵⁵. Thus, neutrality was perceived as a tool that could be integrated into a broader deterrence strategy, rather than an immutable principle. At the same time, the document acknowledges that neutrality was deeply rooted in Swiss political culture and played an important role in the internal legitimization of foreign policy. Therefore, direct pressure on Switzerland was considered ineffective; a gradual change in behavior through practical cooperation and institutional rapprochement with the West was favored instead¹⁵⁶. Thus, this strategy did not formally reject neutrality but rather transformed it in practice.

More recent research has built on these arguments by analyzing the strategic logic behind Swiss neutrality during the Cold War. Thomas Fischer and Daniel Möckli describe Swiss neutrality as a "*strategy of compensation*"¹⁵⁷. According to their analysis, Switzerland used neutrality to compensate for its structural limitations as a small state. Switzerland's strategic neutrality, which was not accompanied by the military and demographic resources of the larger Powers, enabled it to consolidate its diplomatic authority and gain international trust¹⁵⁸. By maintaining a neutral stance and actively engaging in international diplomacy and economic cooperation, Switzerland has enhanced its security and international influence. In this sense, neutrality was a strategic asset that not only provided a defensive advantage but also ensured Switzerland's continued influence on the global stage¹⁵⁹.

These interpretations are closely related to broader discussions within the theory of international relations about the role of small states in global politics. John Dreyer and Neal Jesse argue that Switzerland is a particularly interesting example in the study of neutral states. In the article "*Swiss Neutrality Examined: Model, Exception or Both?*", the authors analyze whether Swiss neutrality is a unique historical exception or a broader model for other small

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 41–45.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 36–37.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 50–51.

¹⁵⁷ Thomas Fischer and Daniel Möckli, "The Limits of Compensation: Swiss Neutrality Policy in the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 4 (2016), 12.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 27–31.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 24.

states. Their analysis indicates that Switzerland incorporates elements of both¹⁶⁰. Swiss neutrality was established in a specific historical and geopolitical context. In contrast, Switzerland's approach demonstrates how a small state can tactically leverage neutrality to preserve autonomy within a system heavily influenced by major powers. Dreyer and Jesse thus describe Swiss neutrality as a special form of small-state diplomacy that transforms structural constraints into diplomatic opportunities¹⁶¹.

Taken together, Western interpretations of Swiss neutrality during the Cold War offer a complex, multifaceted understanding of neutrality. Rather than viewing neutrality as a passive withdrawal from international politics, Western scholars generally interpret it as an active strategy that enabled Switzerland to maintain its political independence while simultaneously engaging in international diplomacy and economic cooperation. Switzerland's neutrality has enabled it to overcome the limitations of the bipolar international system, gain a reputation as a reliable mediator, and maintain a unique position in world politics.

At the same time, Western scholars tend to emphasize the pragmatic and adaptive nature of neutrality, paying particular attention to its diplomatic and strategic functions within the international system. In a broader sense, it is crucial to demonstrate that the political importance of neutrality can increase during periods of decreasing tension between major powers. In such circumstances, neutrality could play a more clearly defined role in international diplomacy, as a basis for mediation and conflict resolution. At the same time, Gabriel, for example, distinguishes between neutrality and neutrality, arguing that the latter was closely related to the ideological dynamics of the Cold War and the bipolar structure of the international system. As international tensions decrease, the relevance of neutrality may be reduced, while traditional neutrality, understood as a legal and diplomatic status, may regain greater importance.

Regarding Switzerland, these observations help to explain why neutrality during the Cold War was not limited to a policy of non-alignment but also included active diplomatic interaction. Switzerland's neutral status was strategically used to facilitate negotiations, host international organizations, and provide diplomatic services between states lacking direct communication channels. In this sense, neutrality functioned not only as a legal principle but also as a practical diplomatic tool, allowing Switzerland to contribute to international stability while maintaining its political independence.

¹⁶⁰ John R. Dreyer and Neal G. Jesse, "Swiss Neutrality Examined: Model, Exception or Both?" *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 15, no. 3 (2014), 86.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

Soviet Interpretations of Swiss Neutrality

During the Cold War, Soviet interpretations of Swiss neutrality were characterized by a combination of formal recognition and ideological skepticism. Although the Soviet Union recognized the legal status of Swiss neutrality under international law, Soviet scholars and political commentators frequently considered it within the broader context of the East–West ideological confrontation. Consequently, Switzerland's neutrality was frequently perceived as a manifestation of "*Western-style neutrality*"¹⁶², being formally independent yet politically and economically aligned with the Western Bloc.

One of the defining features of Soviet interpretations of neutrality was the belief that it should not be considered an unchanging or universally positive principle. Instead, Soviet scholars argued that its legitimacy depended on specific historical and geopolitical circumstances. However, this approach was not merely analytical or "pragmatic" in a neutral sense. Rather, Soviet interpretations of neutrality often served as a tool for political pressure¹⁶³, intended to steer neutral states away from cooperating with the Western bloc and towards behavior deemed compatible with Soviet security interests. This concept was expressed by B. V. Ganiushkin, a Soviet international law scholar, who claimed that neutrality could not be evaluated in isolation from the broader international environment. As he noted, "*One must not decide, once and for all, that neutrality in general, or of this or that particular country, is good or bad. It all depends on the concrete historical circumstances*"¹⁶⁴. Within this framework, neutrality was not only interpreted as a legal status, but also as a politically conditioned instrument whose legitimacy depended on its contribution to international peace, anti-militarism, and the strategic balance of the Cold War order.

This theoretical viewpoint was further developed in the Soviet analysis of neutrality and non-alignment. In his later work, *Neutrality and Non-Alignment* (1965), Ganiushkin attempted to conceptualize neutrality within the evolving structure of international relations during the Cold War. Soviet scientists distinguished between classical permanent neutrality, traditionally associated with European states such as Switzerland, and the emerging policy of non-alignment,

¹⁶² "Neutralitet Shveitsarii i skandal s Crypto AG: istoriya i sovremennost'," *Swissinfo*, accessed March 2026, https://www.swissinfo.ch/rus/politics/уроки-истории_нейтралитет-швейцарии-и-скандал-с-crypto-ag-история-и-современность/45579860.

¹⁶³ Wolfgang Mueller, "The USSR and Permanent Neutrality in the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 4 (2016): 152–153, 161, https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00683.

Wolfgang Mueller, *A Good Example of Peaceful Coexistence? The Soviet Union, Austria, and Neutrality, 1955–1991* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 276–286.

¹⁶⁴ B. V. Ganiushkin, *Sovremennyi neitralitet: Politika neitraliteta i postoiannyi neitralitet v usloviakh bor'by za mir* (Moscow: Institut mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii, 1958), 8.

pursued by newly independent states. Both were considered potential mechanisms for limiting the expansion of military alliances and maintaining international stability, though their political implications were interpreted differently within the framework of Soviet ideology.

In this work, Swiss neutrality is presented not just as a particular example of European diplomatic practice, but as a classic case of permanent neutrality. Through this, the Soviet author attempts to understand the nature of this institution in international law. His analysis is simultaneously based on a combination of legal argumentation, a historical approach, and an ideological interpretation, all of which are characteristic of Soviet literature on international law. Thus, Ganiushkin establishes a framework that is fundamentally important to the Soviet interpretation of neutrality: it cannot be assessed in the abstract, outside a specific historical context. He bluntly states that it is impossible to determine whether neutrality in general, or a country's neutrality, is "*good*" or "*bad*" once and for all, since everything depends on specific historical conditions¹⁶⁵. This idea has methodological significance for all subsequent argumentation: neutrality is not an eternal, unchanging norm, but a historically changeable institution whose importance is determined by the balance of forces in the international system. Consequently, Ganiushkin shifts the focus of the discussion away from purely formal legal considerations and towards the realm of political assessment.

He also clarifies his classification by distinguishing among three main forms of neutrality: neutrality during the war, permanent neutrality, and neutrality as a policy¹⁶⁶. This distinction is crucial for understanding his approach to Switzerland. He is primarily interested in Switzerland not as a state that is temporarily not participating in the war, but as an example of a permanently neutral state whose position is based on treaty recognition and has a special international legal form. At the same time, he strongly criticizes Western legal literature for attempting to categorize neutrality as "*benevolent*", "*absolute*," or "*incomplete*"¹⁶⁷. From a Soviet perspective, such classifications are either terminologically inaccurate or mask deviations from genuine neutrality¹⁶⁸. For Ganiushkin, the key lies not in the Western casuistic description of varieties of neutral behavior, but in the question of the political goals served by this or that neutral status¹⁶⁹.

¹⁶⁵ B. V. Ganiushkin, *Neitralitet i neprisoedinenie*. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1965, 8.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 19–21.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

To understand the Soviet juxtaposition of "classical" neutrality and the "new" neutrality/non-alignment, it is important to note that Ganiushkin considers Western criticism of the "*new neutrals*"¹⁷⁰, demonstrating that, in bourgeois literature, the Swiss model of neutrality is often presented as exemplary precisely because it limits the state's international activity, keeping it away from acute global conflicts and making it politically "*safe*" for the Western order¹⁷¹. Conversely, the Soviet author seeks to expand the concept of modern neutrality. In his view, a neutral state is not obliged to adopt a passive stance but can and should contribute to the cause of peace, maintain friendly relations with other countries, and oppose war and colonialism¹⁷². This represents a significant ideological shift in Soviet doctrine, as neutrality is no longer understood merely as detached passivity but as an active peacemaking stance that allows for certain levels of international engagement.

Against this background, Ganiushkin's transition from general theory to the specific example of Switzerland is particularly significant. He emphasizes that while Switzerland is considered a classic example of a permanently neutral state, one can only speak of its neutrality in most wars before 1815, not of its status as a permanently neutral country¹⁷³. For him, 1815 is therefore not just a diplomatic milestone, but the moment at which a qualitatively new legal status emerged. He therefore writes that Switzerland's status of permanent neutrality, established in 1815, represented a novel legal status that had not previously existed in state practice¹⁷⁴. Thus, Ganiushkin emphasizes the contractual-legal nature of Swiss neutrality rather than its natural-historical one. The Soviet author must not interpret the Acts of 1815 as an exclusively altruistic gesture by the great powers, but explicitly states that Switzerland's neutrality was established in the interests of "European politics" and that the various European powers pursued different goals in creating Switzerland's permanent neutrality¹⁷⁵. He identifies two main tasks: firstly, the creation of a buffer state in a strategically important area; secondly, the use of neutral Switzerland as a barrier that was supposed to protect Southern Germany and Austria from revolutionary influence from France and Italy: "*If Switzerland didn't exist, it would have to be invented*"¹⁷⁶. Therefore, Ganiushkin's research demonstrates a Soviet perspective, as

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 31–33.

¹⁷² Ibid., 32.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 138–139.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 140.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 140–142.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 141.

evidenced by a tendency to prioritize the interests of major global powers and the European balance of power over considerations of moral choice or Switzerland's political objectives.

At the same time, Ganiushkin does not reduce Swiss neutrality to an instrument of external imposition. On the same pages, he emphasizes that neutrality was beneficial to Switzerland itself, which voluntarily accepted this status, as it was consistent with its interests and aspirations. This approach is characterized by several distinctive features, including, in his professional opinion, Switzerland's long-standing policy of neutrality, which is both a contractual obligation and a reflection of the nation's independent decision-making. This duality is fundamental for him: on the one hand, the status is created and guaranteed by an international agreement, on the other, it is inseparable from the consent and interests of the neutral state itself. Therefore, Ganiushkin develops the legal characterization of Swiss neutrality. He emphasized that Switzerland's permanent neutrality was not only recognized but also guaranteed, and that the country's territorial integrity was also guaranteed. He also emphasizes that this neutrality was armed, meaning Switzerland was given the right to have armed forces to protect its neutrality. This is particularly noteworthy given that in Soviet literature, armed neutrality was not inherently dismissed as a contradiction but rather regarded as a valid legal structure for a permanently neutral state¹⁷⁷.

It is also important to note here that Ganiushkin's approach largely echoes earlier Soviet studies of Swiss neutrality. As O. V. Afanasyeva noted in her article *On the History of Swiss Neutrality* (1956), the country's historical conditionality and neutral status have been shaped by the decisions of the Vienna Congress. She believes that the European powers recognized Switzerland's permanent neutrality to establish a stable international system following the Napoleonic Wars. She emphasizes that neutrality was not just a political choice, but a status guaranteed by international agreements between the major European powers. It is considered part of a broader European political structure¹⁷⁸.

At the same time, Ganiushkin provides an interpretation of the social significance of Swiss neutrality from a class perspective. He writes that during the First World War, neutrality was primarily beneficial to Switzerland's ruling classes, who profited from trade with the belligerents, although it also mattered to workers, as it spared them from having to die for interests alien to them¹⁷⁹. In this instance, Marxist logic is clear in the analysis, which

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 141–145.

¹⁷⁸ O. V. Afanasyeva, “K istorii shveitsarskogo neytraliteta,” *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn*’, no. 1 (1956): 78–84.

¹⁷⁹ Ganiushkin, *Neitralitet i neprisoedinenie*, 142–144.

demonstrates that the evaluation of the institution is dependent on which classes it benefits. This lends the Soviet interpretation an added layer of complexity: neutrality is regarded not only as an international legal status, but also as a socio-political mechanism within a capitalist society¹⁸⁰.

Of particular interest for the analysis is how Ganiushkin discusses the post-war evolution of Swiss neutrality. On the one hand, he notes that Switzerland did not join the UN after World War II but did participate in several specialized agencies and remained an important international center. However, he emphasizes that the contemporary interpretation of permanent neutrality cannot be confined solely to military considerations, such as non-participation in blocs and the absence of foreign bases¹⁸¹. In this way, he effectively reinterprets the Swiss example in the spirit of the Soviet concept of the "new content" of neutrality: a neutral state's positive role is manifested in its promotion of peace, provision of territory for international conferences and meetings, and mediation in international disputes. Switzerland is important here not only as a "classic" legal example, but also as a practical diplomatic tool for international communication¹⁸².

Ganiushkin's polemic with the Swiss author Karl-Heinz Brodbeck is also of great significance for the present research. Ganiushkin agrees with a number of his observations, for example, that Swiss neutrality is voluntary, permanent, armed, and contractual. However, he strongly criticizes the attempt to extend neutrality to individual citizens, interpreting it as ideological or ideological abstention¹⁸³. For the Soviet author, the responsibility for maintaining neutrality lies primarily with the state, rather than the individual. However, the internal tension inherent in his concept is also evident here: formally, he rejects the ideologization of neutrality at the individual level, but in practice, he admits that individuals' activities that harm the state's neutral status should be suppressed. In essence, the Soviet interpretation maintains that neutrality is both state-legal and subordinate to the state's political interests.

At the same time, Soviet historians often emphasized Switzerland's economic and political orientation towards the Western world. For instance, the work of G. P. Dragunov *"Switzerland: History and Modernity"* (1978), which is one of the most extensive Soviet analyses of the political development of the confederation in the 20th century. Within the

¹⁸⁰ Vladimir I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Left Zimmerwaldists in the Swiss Social-Democratic Party," in *Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 128.

¹⁸¹ Ganiushkin, *Neitralitet i neprisoedinenie*, 144–146.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 147–148.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 145–147.

Marxist historiographical tradition, Dragunov considered Swiss neutrality not only as a legal category in international law but also as an element of the broader political and economic structure of the Western European capitalist state. However, in his research, Dragunov also proceeded from the classical definition of neutrality, enshrined in international law. He noted that "*international law defines neutrality as a State in which it does not participate in a war and does not provide military assistance to belligerents.*"¹⁸⁴ At the same time, permanent neutrality, in his opinion, also implies the obligation of the state not to join military alliances and not to provide its territory for use by foreign states for military purposes. Thus, in Dragunov's opinion, the Swiss policy was formally consistent with the international legal principle of permanent neutrality.

However, as Dragunov emphasized, during the Cold War, the content of this policy became the subject of political struggle and various interpretations. According to his observation, in the 1950s, various interpretations of neutrality emerged in Switzerland. In particular, "in the 1950s, two doctrines were born: '*neutrality and solidarity*' with '*armed neutrality*'"¹⁸⁵. Proponents of the latter suggested that closer cooperation with Western states, primarily NATO countries, was possible without formally abandoning the principle of neutrality. From the Soviet perspective, this was seen as an attempt to revise the confederation's traditional policy. Dragunov noted that in certain political circles in Switzerland, the concept of a "*flexible interpretation*" of neutrality has emerged, permitting cooperation with the Western military bloc. In an extreme form, this was manifested in the assumption of Switzerland's possible participation alongside the North Atlantic Alliance in the event of an armed conflict¹⁸⁶. Such views, according to the Soviet researcher, testified to the growing influence of Western military and political structures on the internal debate on neutrality.

Furthermore, Dragunov cited the country's gradual militarization during the Cold War as one of the arguments supporting this trend. He observed that since the early 1950s, Switzerland has been actively purchasing weapons from Western countries. According to his account, "*Switzerland began to procure armored personnel carriers and military electronics from the United States, tanks and missiles from Britain, and airplanes from France*"¹⁸⁷. This focus on the military equipment of NATO states was seen in Soviet historiography as indicative of the gradual integration of the Swiss defense system into the Western military-technical

¹⁸⁴ G. P. Dragunov, *Shveitsariya: istoriya i sovremennost' (oчерk noveishei istorii)* (Moscow: Mysl', 1978), 107.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 108.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 110.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

infrastructure. This process was further confirmed by the increase in military spending. Dragunov noted that by the end of the 1950s, allocations for military needs had increased significantly and accounted for a substantial share of government spending¹⁸⁸. From the Soviet perspective, this was regarded as an example of the broader trend of militarization that was evident in Western European countries during the Cold War era.

Dragunov also paid special attention to the political context in which the evolution of Swiss neutrality took place. In his opinion, the country's internal political atmosphere in the post-war decades was largely shaped by the anti-communist campaign. Dragunov noted that as early as the late 1940s, the Swiss authorities had already imposed restrictions on the distribution of Soviet publications and strengthened control over the activities of organizations suspected of sympathizing with socialist countries¹⁸⁹. He believed that these measures demonstrated the impact of Cold War ideological tensions on Switzerland's domestic policy.

From the perspective of the Soviet researcher, the country's economic relations with Western nations also had a substantial impact on Swiss neutrality. He highlighted the strategic economic pressure exerted by the United States on trade with countries of the socialist bloc. According to him, in the early 1950s, the American government expressed a desire for Switzerland to restrict the export of strategic goods to Eastern European countries¹⁹⁰. According to Soviet historiography, such demands were regarded as an attempt to involve a neutral country in the system of economic blockade of socialist states. At the same time, he acknowledged that Switzerland's policy of neutrality gave it an important role in international relations. As a neutral state, the country has become a key center of international diplomacy. He described Geneva as the most important platform for international negotiations and the activities of international organizations¹⁹¹. Thus, Switzerland's neutrality was instrumental in enabling it to serve as a trusted mediator in international conflicts and to host international conferences.

The contradiction between Switzerland's official commitment to neutrality and its military planning became particularly visible in debates surrounding nuclear armament. As Daniel Neval illustrates, certain elements within the Swiss military establishment viewed nuclear weapons as a vital component of national defense during the Cold War. Military leaders actively promoted a Swiss nuclear program intended to equip the armed forces with atomic weapons and strengthen the credibility of armed neutrality. In Neval's formulation, the objective

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 111.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 108–109

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 115.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 173.

was to enable Swiss forces, if necessary, "*to fly with nuclear bombs up to Moscow*"¹⁹². From the perspective of the Eastern bloc, such ambitions reinforced doubts about the political meaning of Swiss neutrality and contributed to the perception that Switzerland was strategically closer to the Western camp than its formal status suggested. As outlined in the previous chapter, Soviet scholars frequently argued that possessing nuclear weapons was incompatible with maintaining genuine neutrality. From their perspective, the development of nuclear armaments would inevitably increase a neutral state's reliance on foreign military technologies and integrate it more deeply into bloc politics. Against this backdrop, Swiss deliberations on the potential acquisition of nuclear armaments appeared to be at odds with the prevailing image of neutrality, leading to a degree of suspicion in Moscow.

Therefore, in Dragunov's interpretation, Swiss neutrality was a complex and contradictory phenomenon. In principle, Switzerland's foreign policy was based on a legal framework that enabled the country to maintain its independence and position within the global system. In contrast, the Soviet researcher emphasized that during the Cold War, the actual content of this policy was frequently influenced by military, political, and economic factors related to the country's integration into the Western world.

Soviet perceptions of Swiss neutrality were influenced by a combination of legal doctrine and broader ideological and geopolitical considerations. These considerations were characterized by a persistent tension between formal recognition and political mistrust. Despite the Soviet Union maintaining diplomatic relations with Switzerland and acknowledging its neutral status under international law, Soviet officials frequently questioned the extent to which Swiss neutrality could be regarded as genuinely impartial. According to Sacha Zala, Thomas Bürgisser, and Thomas Fischer, Soviet policymakers often associated Switzerland with the broader Western political and economic order, particularly after Bern participated in Western export-control measures against the Eastern bloc in the early 1950s. Consequently, Swiss neutrality was often viewed in Moscow through the lens of ideological confrontation rather than solely as a legal status. The authors observe that Soviet representatives maintained a degree of skepticism regarding Swiss neutrality, often associating it with broader concerns about anti-communism and Western influence in Europe¹⁹³.

¹⁹² Daniel Neval, "*Mit Atombomben bis nach Moskau*": *Gegenseitige Wahrnehmung der Schweiz und des Ostblocks im Kalten Krieg 1945–1968*. Zürich: Chronos, 2003.

¹⁹³ Sacha Zala, Thomas Bürgisser, and Thomas Fischer, "Always Hit Back Right on the Kisser? The Soviet Union in Swiss Foreign Policy during the Cold War," in *The Soviet Union and Cold War Neutrality and*

At the same time, bilateral relations were not static. Following Stalin's death, practical cooperation gradually expanded, particularly through Switzerland's involvement in the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) in Korea. This involvement established new channels of communication between Bern and Moscow, leading to a more pragmatic Soviet assessment of Switzerland's international role¹⁹⁴. During the period of détente, contacts intensified further through the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Swiss diplomats, in collaboration with representatives of other neutral and non-aligned states, frequently served as intermediaries between the Eastern and Western blocs, contributing to the facilitation of negotiations that culminated in the Helsinki Final Act. In this context, Soviet decision-makers came to regard neutrality not only as a legal principle but also as a potentially useful instrument for promoting dialogue and stability in Europe¹⁹⁵.

Soviet perceptions of Swiss neutrality underwent significant evolution during the final years of the Cold War. Whereas previous Soviet analyses had frequently questioned whether neutrality served Western interests, the period of perestroika witnessed a more positive evaluation of Switzerland's international role. As demonstrated by Olga Pavlenko, by 1988–1989, Soviet policymakers were increasingly viewing Switzerland not only as a neutral state located outside of the military blocs, but also as a potentially valuable participant in the emerging European security order¹⁹⁶. Soviet diplomatic assessments emphasized Switzerland's role in disarmament initiatives, pan-European dialogue, and international mediation¹⁹⁷. Concurrently, Moscow was closely monitoring domestic Swiss debates concerning neutrality, defense policy, and relations with NATO, regarding them as indicators of the country's future international orientation. Instead of challenging Swiss neutrality, Soviet officials increasingly sought to engage Switzerland as a partner in discussions on arms control, European cooperation, and regional conflict resolution¹⁹⁸. This represented a significant shift in Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev, where neutral states were no longer viewed primarily through ideological lenses, but rather as potential contributors to a new cooperative European security framework¹⁹⁹.

Nonalignment in Europe, ed. Mark Kramer, Aryo Makko, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021), 264–265.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 266–267.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 275–276.

¹⁹⁶ Olga Pavlenko, “The Soviet Union and Neutral Switzerland: Concerns and Hopes in 1989,” in *The Soviet Union and Cold War Neutrality and Nonalignment in Europe*, ed. Mark Kramer, Aryo Makko, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021), 173–179.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 175–177.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 176–178.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 178–179.

Consequently, by the late 1980s, there had been a notable shift in Soviet attitudes towards Switzerland, with a more positive outlook emerging. The reforms introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev encouraged a reassessment of the role of neutral states in European affairs. Swiss neutrality was no longer viewed primarily through ideological categories, but increasingly as a constructive element of the emerging European security order. Soviet leaders acknowledged the value of Switzerland as a venue for international negotiations and emphasized the importance they attached to its permanent neutrality²⁰⁰.

Subsequent Russian scholars maintained their emphasis on the strategic significance of Switzerland's neutrality in European international relations. For instance, Schweitzer and Stepanov's analysis of *The States of the Alpine region and the Benelux countries in a Changing Europe* (2009) contends that historically, neutrality has functioned as a distinct form of foreign policy behavior that enabled Switzerland to preserve its political autonomy while concurrently engaging in international economic and diplomatic relations²⁰¹. This analysis devotes significant attention to Switzerland's involvement in the European security system in the XX century. During the Cold War, the country played an active role in the European detente process, taking initiatives within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The authors observe that Switzerland regards this forum as a significant platform for promoting the ideas of peace, security, and international cooperation, thereby recognizing Switzerland as an example not of absolute neutrality, but of "*Western-style*" neutrality²⁰².

In this regard, Soviet interpretations of neutrality were informed by a combination of ideological considerations and pragmatic geopolitical assessments. Although Swiss neutrality was often viewed with suspicion in Soviet discourse, the Soviet Union simultaneously recognized the diplomatic advantages of maintaining relations with neutral states. Modern historical research has demonstrated that neutral countries such as Switzerland and Austria played an important role in Cold War diplomacy as intermediaries between opposing political blocs. Wolfgang Mueller has noted that neutral states were often viewed by Soviet politicians

²⁰⁰ Zala, Bürgisser, and Fischer, "Always Hit Back Right on the Kisser?," 279–280.

²⁰¹ V. Ya. Shveitser, and A. I. Stepanov. "Specificity of Neutrality." In *Gosudarstva Al'piiskogo regiona i strany Benilyuks v menyayushcheisya Evrope*, edited by V. Ya. Shveitser. Moscow: Ves' Mir, 2009, 144–152.

²⁰² Ibid., 147–148.

as potential channels of communication between East and West and were an important element of Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence²⁰³.

To summarize the points made in the preceding chapter, it is important to note that interpretations of Swiss neutrality varied considerably across historiographical traditions. Western scholars have primarily viewed Swiss neutrality from the perspectives of international law, the history of diplomacy, and foreign policy analysis. Researchers of this tradition tend to emphasize neutrality as a pragmatic strategy that allowed Switzerland to maintain its political independence while simultaneously participating in international diplomacy and humanitarian activities (Bonjour 1946; Freymond 1988; Gabriel 1990; Fischer 2002). In these interpretations, neutrality is often portrayed as a flexible and evolving foreign policy tool that has allowed Switzerland to adapt to changing international circumstances.

On the contrary, Soviet scientists often interpreted neutrality through the prism of Cold War geopolitics and ideological competition. Soviet authors generally viewed neutral states as components of the broader framework of a bipolar international system, where neutrality could be regarded either as a form of political balancing or as a position influenced by the interests of major Powers. Therefore, in the works of scholars such as Afanasyeva (1956), Dragunov (1978), and Ganiushkin (1965), Switzerland's neutrality was analyzed primarily in relation to the strategic dynamics of relations between East and West.

These different interpretations reflect broader methodological and ideological differences between the Western and Soviet historiographical traditions. While Western scholarship has historically centered on the legal and diplomatic facets of neutrality, typically underscoring its pragmatic and adaptive character, Soviet analysis has often placed greater emphasis on the geopolitical and systemic constraints that shape neutral states' policies. In this context, neutrality is frequently examined through the prism of ideological competition and the broader dynamics of the Cold War. It is vital to understand these historiographical perspectives to gain valuable insight into how the concept of neutrality has been interpreted in various intellectual and political contexts. This is also important for situating the present research within the broader academic analysis of Switzerland's neutrality after the Cold War.

²⁰³ Wolfgang Mueller, "A Special Relationship with Neutrals? Khrushchev's Coexistence Policy, Austria, and Switzerland, 1955–1960," *Zeitgeschichte* 41, no. 5 (2014): 279–295.

THE END OF THE COLD WAR AND THE REINTERPRETATION OF SWISS NEUTRALITY

The present chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the structural, political, legal, and international factors that led to a rethink of the Swiss Confederation's traditional policy of neutrality in the context of the end of the Cold War and the formation of a new architecture of international relations. Particular attention was paid to the transformation of the functional significance of neutrality in the post-bipolar system, characterized by increased processes of institutionalization, regional integration, and multilateral cooperation.

Thus, in the initial section of the chapter, key structural shifts in the international system in the period 1989-1991 will be considered, including the disintegration of the bipolar order, the transformation of the European security system and the changing nature of interstate interaction, which created the prerequisites for revising the traditional model of Swiss neutrality in the face of the loss of the former geopolitical context and adaptation to new conditions. In the second part of the chapter, the main strategies for adapting Swiss foreign policy in the transitional decade of 1992-2002 were analyzed. The focus was on the processes of rethinking neutrality, including Switzerland's gradual departure from the historically established political practice of "armed neutrality" in favor of developing the concept of "active neutrality". Switzerland's increased participation in international organizations and its gradual inclusion in multilateral regulatory and international cooperation mechanisms were also discussed. These marked the transition from a policy of limited participation to a more flexible model that allows for greater involvement while maintaining a formal non-aligned status.

Furthermore, the present chapter examined the international community's expectations regarding Switzerland's role in the post-bipolar period and their impact on domestic political discourse in the country. Special attention was paid to the interaction of external factors and domestic political constraints, including the position of political elites, the results of referendums, and public debates about the limits of the neutrality transformation, reflecting the need to balance international obligations and preserve traditional principles of foreign policy. The culmination of these processes was Switzerland's accession to the United Nations in 2002, which this research considers an institutional consolidation of the transformation of neutrality and the transition to a more active model of participation in global governance. This event marks the conclusion of the period under study, reflecting the final adaptation of the Swiss foreign policy strategy to the conditions of the post-Cold War world.

Structural Preconditions for the Transformation of Neutrality (1989–1991)

The end of the Cold War not only created a new international context but also radically transformed the structural conditions under which Swiss neutrality policy functioned. This section argues that the transformation of Swiss neutrality in the late 1980s and early 1990s was not caused by a single political decision, but by the interplay of two processes: the dissolution of the international bipolar system and the gradual internal destabilization of the traditional concept of neutrality²⁰⁴. It is important to emphasize, however, that this dynamic was not unique to Switzerland but rather reflected the broader European trend of rethinking neutrality amid the transformation of the international system. Using Austria as an example, Wolfgang Müller shows that the end of the Cold War did not lead to the disappearance of neutrality, but rather to its functional reduction and reinterpretation: neutrality remained in name only, losing its former comprehensive role in determining foreign policy²⁰⁵. This comparative context enables us to view the Swiss case as part of a broader structural transformation affecting European neutral states rather than as an exception.

The concept of "Europafähigkeit" (European capability), introduced into political discourse by the Federal Council in 1988, represented a shift from a static understanding of neutrality to an instrumental and contextually determined one²⁰⁶. The ambiguity between a tool for preserving independence and a potential step towards integration indicates a blurring of the previous doctrinal clarity of neutrality and a conscious preservation of political flexibility. This transformation was primarily manifested in the practice of economic neutrality. The pressure exerted by the European Community, in conjunction with the proliferation of sanctions mechanisms, served to undermine the universality of the *courant normal*²⁰⁷ principle: participation in economic measures became increasingly politically meaningful and ceased to be neutral in its effect²⁰⁸. Consequently, a diversified strategy was devised, allowing limited involvement in sanctions without the need for an explicit renunciation of neutrality.

²⁰⁴ Marco Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte* (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2022), 412–413, 426–430, 441.

²⁰⁵ Wolfgang Mueller, "Genese und historischer Wandel der Neutralität Österreichs", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 53 (Special Issue: Zustand und Zukunft der österreichischen Neutralität: Eine Auseinandersetzung) (2024): 6, <https://doi.org/10.15203/4166.vol53.2024>

²⁰⁶ Jürg Martin Gabriel, *Sackgasse Neutralität* (Zürich: vdf Hochschulverlag an der ETH, 1997): 68–69.

²⁰⁷ "*Courant Normal*" is a well-established term in Switzerland that refers to ordinary daily activities or routine business tasks. It describes situations in which work continues as usual despite external influences or crises.

²⁰⁸ Gabriel, *Sackgasse Neutralität*, 70–71.

Concurrently, the structural position of neutrality in the international system underwent a transformation. Within the framework of classical European equilibrium, it functioned as a relatively autonomous principle. However, in the 20th century, especially during the Cold War, it became a dependent variable shaped by external dynamics²⁰⁹. This was reflected in the need for a constant correlation of neutral policy with the requirements of international organizations and bloc confrontation. Thus, a qualitatively new level of pressure arose in the context of European integration. In contradistinction to the bipolar confrontation, integration gave rise to a complex institutional interdependence, within which the preservation of complete autonomy became increasingly unfeasible.²¹⁰ In practice, this led to the emergence of persistent, targeted conflicts between independence and participation that had previously been absent or less pronounced. In such circumstances, it is reasonable to state that at the turn of 1988-1989, neutrality gradually began to lose its universal character and to take on a differentiated form, allowing for variability depending on the sphere (economic, political, military) and the level of international interaction²¹¹.

The end of the Cold War not only marked a transformation of the international system but also called into question the traditional basis of Swiss neutrality policy. Even during the final years of the Cold War, contradictions had begun to emerge between the deeply ingrained perception of neutrality as a defining aspect of national identity and escalating concerns about its practical applicability in an evolving global landscape²¹². By 1990, the post-war order was rapidly disintegrating: the bipolar system was collapsing, the communist bloc was becoming unstable, and Europe's geostrategic position was changing fundamentally²¹³. Gorbachev's reforms, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the formal end of the Cold War in 1990 signified more than just a shift in the balance of power; they also marked a transition to a new paradigm of international relations, in which collective security and multilateral cooperation were gradually replacing bloc confrontation²¹⁴.

Therefore, the year 1990 is widely regarded as a key moment of structural change in both the international system and Switzerland's foreign policy²¹⁵. The onset of this

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 76–77, 80–81.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 82–83.

²¹¹ Ibid., 84–85.

²¹² Marco Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte* (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2022), 412.

²¹³ Ibid., 413.

²¹⁴ Thomas Fischer and Daniel Möckli, "The Limits of Compensation," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 4 (Fall 2016): 32–34, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26925638>.

²¹⁵ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1990, introduction, XXIX–XXXV, Bern, 2021, <https://dodis.ch/DDS-1990>.

transformation is chronologically associated with the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, the subsequent unification of Germany on 3 October 1990, and the collapse of the Soviet system, which concluded in 1991. The ratification of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and the decisions²¹⁶ of the CSCE in November 1990 signified the conclusion of the bloc confrontation and the transition to a new phase of international cooperation²¹⁷. Considering these developments, awareness of the interdependence of nations has increased, thereby undermining Switzerland's earlier "single path" (*Alleingang*)²¹⁸ strategy, despite the maintenance of formal neutrality.

The evolving international landscape was also reflected in official evaluations of the Swiss foreign policy environment. In the aftermath of the unification of Germany, Swiss authorities observed the emergence of a state near Switzerland's northern border that adhered to liberal-democratic values and prioritized the transfer of sovereignty to supranational institutions²¹⁹. This development led to an escalation in the pressure on Switzerland to align itself with European processes²²⁰. Concurrently, the foreign policy agenda was expanding: in a speech delivered at the UN Climate Conference in Geneva, Federal President Arnold Koller emphasized the need for global measures to combat climate change and regarded environmental policy as part of Switzerland's international responsibility²²¹. Taken as a whole, these documents suggested that in 1990, neutrality had lost its status as the primary principle of Swiss foreign policy²²². Indeed, even before the final phase of the Cold War, neutrality began to be regarded as a tool within the broader framework of international cooperation²²³.

Similar processes could also be observed in Austria. As the bipolar confrontation gradually weakened, the concept of neutrality was increasingly interpreted as a flexible foreign

²¹⁶ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1990, doc. 50, "Rede des Bundespräsidenten Koller am Pariser Gipfeltreffen der Konferenz über Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa," November 19, 1990, Bern, 2021, <https://dodis.ch/54685>.

²¹⁷ Jakob Tanner, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz 1990," *Schweizerische Zeitschrift Für Geschichte* 72, no. 2 (2022): 332–333. <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.24894/2296-6013.00108>.

²¹⁸ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1990, doc. 52, "Informations sur l'état des négociations EEE pour la Commission de l'économie du Conseil national," November 26, 1990, Bern, 2021, <https://dodis.ch/55288>.

Tanner, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz 1990.," 332.

²¹⁹ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1990, doc. 43, "Notiz des EDA über die Vereinigung der beiden deutschen Staaten," October 29, 1990, Bern, 2021, <https://dodis.ch/56427>.

²²⁰ Tanner, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz 1990.," 333.

²²¹ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1990, doc. 46, "Discours d'ouverture du Président de la Confédération Koller à la conférence mondiale sur le climat à Genève," November 6, 1990, Bern, 2021, <https://dodis.ch/56282>.

Tanner, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz 1990.," 332.

²²² Ibid., 333–334.

²²³ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1990, doc. 24, Bern, June 8, 1990, Bern, 2021, <https://dodis.ch/56294>.

policy instrument, rather than as international political isolation or complete non-involvement²²⁴. This new interpretation was compatible with selective participation in international institutions, peacekeeping initiatives, and forms of international cooperation. This reflected a broader structural transformation in European neutrality during the late Cold War and post-Cold War periods, whereby neutrality was no longer solely understood through the classical framework of abstention but was increasingly adapted to the realities of political interdependence and multilateral governance.

On the one hand, as Marco Jorio demonstrates, the fundamental concept of neutrality continues to enjoy widespread support among the population and is considered an integral part of Swiss statehood²²⁵. Neutrality retained the status of a symbolic anchor (*verankerte Neutralität*) of national identity²²⁶. Conversely, pacifist and anti-militarist sentiments were on the rise, calling into question the traditional link between neutrality and armed defense. The 1989 referendum on the abolition of the army was a critical moment, demonstrating that a significant proportion of society was willing to reconsider fundamental security measures²²⁷. Similarly, discussions intensified in Austria in the 1990s about whether neutrality was still up to date and did not constitute a "violation of international solidarity" or, conversely, a valuable political resource, indicating a split between expert and public perceptions²²⁸.

At the same time, the concept of neutrality itself was subject to an intellectual reassessment. In the Swiss context, this was reflected in the discrepancy over whether neutrality is a goal or a tool²²⁹. This was due to the collapse of the bipolar world in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which led to a radical change in the foreign policy context. The emergence of new states and their integration into Western security structures has reduced the appeal of neutrality as a universal model²³⁰. In this sense, neutrality ceased to be the 'norm' and became one of several possible options, though no longer the dominant one. This process was accompanied by an institutional transformation. In Switzerland, the development of a new approach to neutrality began as early as 1990, culminating in a 1992 report that interpreted neutrality as a legal status granting freedom of action rather than a legally restrictive principle²³¹. Rethinking the attitude

²²⁴ Wolfgang Mueller, "Genese und historischer Wandel der Neutralität Österreichs", 6.

²²⁵ Marco Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte* (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2022), 412.

²²⁶ Ibid., 414.

²²⁷ Ibid., 412.

²²⁸ Wolfgang Mueller, "Genese und historischer Wandel der Neutralität Österreichs", 6–7.

²²⁹ Marco Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte* (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2022), 412–413.

²³⁰ Ibid., 413, 441.

²³¹ Ibid., 426–430.

towards collective security has become especially significant. In Switzerland's case, this has led to participation in peacekeeping operations and support for sanctions, which are no longer considered to violate neutrality²³².

Thus, a comparative analysis shows that the transformation of Swiss neutrality was part of a broader restructuring of the European security system. While neutrality has not disappeared, it has partially lost its dogmatic and comprehensive function, primarily serving as an 'armed' instrument, and has transformed into a flexible foreign policy tool. This transformation from a fixed norm to an adaptive resource constitutes the key structural change of the early 1990s.

However, the structural changes that led to the transformation of Swiss neutrality extended beyond the military-political dimension and the bipolar system crisis. Long-term economic and integration processes also played a significant role, reaching a critical point by the end of the 1980s. According to V. Ya. Shveitser, post-war European integration initially had both economic and political dimensions. The aim was not only to create a single economic space, but also to prevent conflicts between Western European states through institutional interdependence²³³. In this context, neutral states found themselves in a structurally ambivalent position: they sought to preserve political autonomy while being objectively involved in the processes of economic integration.

Switzerland has successfully navigated the balance between these two logics for a long time. Unlike most Western European states, for which integration became a central political project, Switzerland continued to prioritize neutrality as a framework for foreign policy and national identity. Moreover, Schweitzer emphasizes that the country's economic situation remained stable during the post-war period and strengthened in several sectors, particularly banking and export-oriented industries²³⁴. This reduced the incentives for political integration, making it possible to consider neutrality an effective strategy. However, it is also important to note that, as early as the 1960s and 1980s, the structural limitations of this model became apparent. Switzerland's refusal to join the European Economic Community (EEC) was primarily due to concerns about losing political sovereignty, yet its economic interdependence with EEC states continued to grow²³⁵. The creation of the European Free Trade Association

²³² Ibid., 429–430.

²³³ V. Ya. Shveitser and A. I. Stepanov, "Specificity of Neutrality", in *Gosudarstva Al'piiskogo regiona i strany Benilyuks v menyayushcheisya Evrope*, ed. V. Ya. Shveitser (Moscow: Ves' Mir, 2009), 186.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid., 186–187.

(EFTA) partially compensated for these limitations; however, unlike the EEC, it lacked a comparable depth of integration and a political dimension²³⁶.

By the mid-1980s, the contradiction between economic integration and political neutrality had become more pronounced. The initiative to establish the European Economic Area (EEA) was pivotal, as it was perceived as a form of rapprochement that did not require the complete renunciation of sovereignty²³⁷. This moment can be considered a structural turning point, as it was the first time Switzerland's level of participation in European structures required institutionalization. The Swiss political establishment's reaction to these changes indicated a gradual revision of the previous model. René Felber, a representative of the Foreign Ministry, noted that, in conditions of increasing interdependence, "*it is impossible to imagine Switzerland acting alone against the background of the closest intertwining of interests with Europe*"²³⁸. This statement reflects a fundamental shift: neutrality could no longer be interpreted as isolation but had to be considered in the context of economic and political interconnectedness. At the same time, Felber emphasized that integration is not automatic and must consider specific Swiss identity characteristics, indicating the tension between integration and national tradition²³⁹. Therefore, the issue was not abandoning neutrality but adapting it to new conditions.

Another factor was the change in the pan-European context. The end of the Cold War was accompanied not only by the collapse of the socialist bloc but also by the formation of a new "*European identity*" centered on overcoming the continent's former division²⁴⁰. In this sense, the logic of neutrality, which had previously provided distance from bloc confrontation, shifted toward inclusion and cooperation. By the early 1990s, the accumulated contradictions had reached a climax. In 1991, Switzerland experienced a reorientation of its foreign policy, accompanied by both increased international activity and persistent internal contradictions. The primary focus of the documents is the negotiations on the EEA, which the Federal Council has regarded as a transitional phase toward enhanced integration with the European Community²⁴¹.

Concurrently, the extant documentation provides profound contradictions within the government regarding the future trajectory. Specifically, the records indicate both support for

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid., 187.

²³⁸ Ibid., 187–188.

²³⁹ Ibid., 188.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1991, doc. 6, "Diskussion im Bundesrat über die europäische Integrationspolitik der Schweiz," March 13, 1991, Bern, 2022, <https://dodis.ch/57780>. Georg Kreis, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz 1991," *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 72, no. 2 (2022): 334–335. <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.24894/2296-6013.00108>.

the EEA and deliberations concerning the prospects for full-fledged EU membership²⁴². Concurrently, the minutes of the foreign policy commission meeting of the Council of Cantons demonstrate that both orientations — participation in the EEA and potential EU membership — received endorsement at the parliamentary level²⁴³. Thus, in such circumstances, the Federal Council deviated from its established position and formulated alternative scenarios, signaling a shift from a normatively fixed model of neutrality to an open, procedural strategy²⁴⁴. The central point of the discussion was the analysis of possible integration trajectories, primarily through the prism of participation in the EEA. The thing is, the EEA was regarded as an asymmetric form of institutional binding, in which Switzerland accepted norms without fully participating in their formation. Consequently, this was interpreted as a partial loss of sovereignty with limited compensatory benefits²⁴⁵. In this context, the notion of further integration came to be interpreted not as a neutral economic process but as a politically significant choice with consequences for the very foundations of neutrality.

The proposed alternative was a strategy for maintaining distance, implying the continuation of a two-way course and the rejection of in-depth integration. However, this option did not mean a return to the classical "armed" model of neutrality, since external pressure and economic interdependence limited the possibility of autonomous action²⁴⁶. Thus, even the scenario of "independence" was found to be embedded in the new structure of restrictions. The third scenario, the isolationist one, was directly linked to political risks, including increased internal contradictions and reduced international effectiveness. It was demonstrated that rejecting integration did not restore the previous model of neutrality; rather, it merely changed the form of dependence²⁴⁷.

In retrospect, it is fair to note that across all options, the key was not to preserve Swiss neutrality as a fixed norm, but to manage compromises among sovereignty, international participation, and security. This was reflected in the formulation of a new logic, according to which neutrality was regarded as a means rather than an end in itself and could be limited or

²⁴² Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1991, doc. 9, "Aussprache im Bundesrat über die Verhandlungen über den Europäischen Wirtschaftsraum," April 17, 1991, Bern, 2022, <https://dodis.ch/57697>.

²⁴³ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1991, doc. 56, "Sitzung der Aussenpolitischen Kommission des Ständerats," November 28, 1991, Bern, 2022, <https://dodis.ch/57566>. Kreis, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz 1991", 335.

²⁴⁴ Jürg Martin Gabriel, *Sackgasse Neutralität* (Zürich: vdf Hochschulverlag an der ETH, 1997): 92–93.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 94–95.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 96–99.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 100–101.

adapted depending on the political context²⁴⁸. Concurrently, Swiss security measures were undergoing a thorough review. These measures were evolving from a national framework to one that was increasingly connected to pan-European cooperation structures. In the new concept, security was understood as the result of integration and cooperation, which directly contradicts the classical model of neutrality based on distance and non-involvement²⁴⁹.

Consequently, at the turn of 1990-1991, a transitional model was established, integrating elements of traditional neutrality with gradual institutional integration. However, this model remained internally contradictory: on the one hand, there was a critical commitment to neutrality; on the other, the possibility of its limitation and functional transformation was recognized²⁵⁰. Therefore, the early 1990s were characterized not only by an adaptation of neutrality but also by a conceptual reassessment of it. Given the context of actively developing productive economic cooperation, Switzerland officially applied to negotiate with the European Community (EEC) in 1991, and in 1992, it signed an agreement to join the EEC²⁵¹. However, the subsequent referendum revealed deep internal divisions, which will be discussed in more detail in the next sub-chapter.

Ultimately, many Swiss preferred to maintain flexibility through bilateral agreements rather than commit to full integration with the EU. This outcome revealed that the evolution of neutrality was not linear but rather occurred through conflict between divergent visions for the country's future. Taken together, these processes confirm the main thesis that the transformation of Swiss neutrality was caused not only by foreign policy changes associated with the end of the Cold War, but also by profound structural changes in the economy and European integration. Neutrality was under pressure from both the new international system and the growing institutional interdependence with Europe. It is in this context that the transition to a more flexible interpretation of neutrality in the early 1990s becomes understandable. This was not so much the result of a regulatory choice as an adaptation to changed structural conditions in which the previous model of isolationist neutrality was becoming increasingly untenable.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 102-103.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 106-109.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 110-111.

²⁵¹ Swiss Federal Council, "Application for Accession to the European Economic Community," May 20, 1992, *CVCE.eu*, accessed March 26, 2026, https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/switzerland_s_application_for_accession_to_the_eec_20_may_1992-en-76fcb05-6f46-485f-9f5c-6fe5818613b1.html.

V. Ya. Shveitser and A. I. Stepanov, "Specificity of Neutrality", 189.

In addition to the European agenda, the documents demonstrate the expansion of Switzerland's foreign policy activity and its gradual institutional integration into international processes. In 1991, several notable diplomatic milestones were achieved, including the inaugural visit of the Federal Council to Iran²⁵², engagement with international energy frameworks²⁵³, and contacts with emerging political actors in the aftermath of the dissolution of the socialist bloc²⁵⁴. These developments also encompassed the establishment of several novel diplomatic formats, notably the appointment of a special ambassador to the Holy See²⁵⁵. Concurrently, sources document European partners' perception of Switzerland as a state experiencing a "deficit of modernization" (*Modernitätsdefizit*) in the legal and political spheres²⁵⁶. It is thus evident that the 1991 documents demonstrate a combination of growing foreign policy activity and ongoing structural constraints, including public skepticism and institutional disagreements over European integration.

It is crucial to emphasize the shift in the practice of the so-called "good offices" to comprehend the transformation of neutrality in the post-bipolar period. This transformation is of notable importance, as the "good offices" have traditionally been regarded as a fundamental expression of Swiss neutral policy. As Thomas Fischer has demonstrated, Switzerland's international reputation in this area was largely based on its role as a "*protecting power*", that is, a mediating entity between states that do not maintain direct diplomatic relations²⁵⁷. In the context of the classic interstate confrontation typical of the era of world wars and the Cold War, such a function was institutionally demanded and systemically fixed. As was discussed in the preceding chapter, Switzerland played a substantial role in this system. By the time of the Second World War, Switzerland represented the interests of dozens of states. It had an extensive

²⁵² Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1991, doc. 11, "Entretiens du Chef du DFAE, le Conseiller fédéral Felber, avec le Président iranien Rafsandjani à Téhéran et le Président turc Özal à Ankara," Bern, April 9, 1991, Bern, 2022, <https://dodis.ch/57939>.

²⁵³ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1991, doc. 24, "Notiz des EVD und des EVED an den Bundesrat über die Ergebnisse der Ministerkonferenz der Internationalen Energieagentur," June 10, 1991, Bern, 2022, <https://dodis.ch/54480>.

²⁵⁴ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1991, doc. 17, "Gespräche des Vorstehers des EDA, Bundesrat Felber, und des Vorstehers des EVD, Bundesrat Delamuraz, mit dem ungarischen Präsidenten in Bern," Bern, May 6, 1991, Bern, 2022, <https://dodis.ch/58912>.
Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1991, doc. 61, Bern, December 23, 1991, Bern, 2022, <https://dodis.ch/57514>.

Kreis, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz 1991.", 335.

²⁵⁵ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1991, doc. 58, Bern, 2022, <https://dodis.ch/58644>.

²⁵⁶ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1991, doc. 27, "Gespräch von EVD-Staatssekretär F. Blankart mit dem Generaldirektor für Aussenbeziehungen der EG, H. Krenzler, in Paris," June 26, 1991, Bern, 2022, <https://dodis.ch/58039>.

²⁵⁷ Fischer, *Switzerland's Good Offices*, 4.

network of diplomatic mandates covering most of the parties to conflicts²⁵⁸. Thus, neutrality not only facilitated political distance but also provided the basis for active mediation within the international system.

However, with the end of the Cold War, this model gradually lost its functional relevance. Fischer has noted a consistent decline in the number of mandates to represent the interests of other states since the late 1980s²⁵⁹. Several structural factors may explain this decline. Firstly, the normalization of relations between previously hostile states has led to the restoration of direct diplomatic ties, thereby reducing the need for mediation services from neutral countries. Secondly, the nature of conflicts has shifted. Whereas interstate confrontations had dominated earlier, in the 1990s, intra-state conflicts and civil wars became more widespread, and the traditional mechanism of "protecting power" proved less applicable in practice. Thirdly, and this is of especial importance, the position of Switzerland itself has changed: it has become less inclined to the widespread provision of intermediary functions, indicating a revision of its former role of neutrality²⁶⁰. The case of Afghanistan is illustrative in this regard. Despite requests for mediation in the early 1990s, Swiss diplomacy limited itself to individual consultations and subsequently refused to become more actively involved²⁶¹.

Therefore, this shift indicates a deeper transformation: neutrality is no longer automatically associated with active mediation and "good offices" in the traditional sense. While neutrality functioned as an institutionalized niche in the system of international relations during the Cold War, providing Switzerland with a certain role and relevance, in the post-bipolar era, this niche has become blurred. Thus, the change in the practice of "good offices" confirms the broader conclusion that the transformation of neutrality in the late 1980s and early 1990s was due not only to changes in regulatory attitudes or political strategies, but also to the profound restructuring of international relations and the types of conflicts themselves. In these circumstances, neutrality can no longer be relied upon to guarantee a specific functional role; it requires rethinking and adaptation to new forms of global interaction.

At the same time, the transformation of neutrality was seen not only in the reduced importance of traditional mediation functions but also in Switzerland's increased participation in multilateral peace and security initiatives. As early as the late 1980s, it became apparent that the traditional Cold War model of "*strict neutrality*" was giving way to a more flexible "*active*

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 8.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 8–9.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 18–19.

neutrality", though still limited, form of international engagement. The thing is, during the Cold War, Switzerland's contribution to international peacekeeping efforts remained extremely limited, primarily individual or financial, and strictly excluded any closer involvement. However, by the mid-1980s, a new understanding had emerged within the foreign ministry that the most effective way to manage international crises was through participation in multilateral initiatives²⁶².

Despite the rejection of joining the United Nations in a 1986 referendum, the federal government decided in 1988 to significantly increase its financial and logistical participation in peacekeeping operations²⁶³. This step marks an important turnaround: neutrality is beginning to be interpreted not as non-participation but as a special form of participation compatible with multilateral structures. An illustrative example of this transformation was Switzerland's participation in the UN Mission in Namibia (UNTAG) in 1988, when Switzerland, for the first time, dispatched a complete medical unit to care for UNTAG. In subsequent years, this involvement expanded: Switzerland sent election observers, participated in missions in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and, for the first time, took leadership positions in UN operations, which had previously been unthinkable under a stricter interpretation of neutrality²⁶⁴. Therefore, during the early 1990s, Swiss diplomats occupied key positions in international mediation efforts, ranging from the Middle East to the post-Soviet space, including participation in the settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict²⁶⁵. While the outcomes of these missions were mixed, their very existence indicates a qualitative shift in Swiss foreign policy practice during the final phase of the Cold War.

Concurrently, Switzerland's involvement in the UN system remained institutionally limited, primarily due to its status as an observer and the negative outcome of the referendum. This phenomenon underscores the ambivalence of Swiss neutrality during this era, characterized by a simultaneous increase in international engagement and the persistence of internal political limitations. In parallel, Switzerland's role within pan-European security structures is being strengthened. Thus, participation in recently revitalized CSCE/OSCE activities has become particularly important, and Switzerland is actively involved in peacekeeping, election observation, and institution-building missions in post-conflict regions,

²⁶² Ibid., 26–27.

²⁶³ Fischer, *Switzerland's Good Offices*, 26.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 27.

primarily in the Balkans since 1991²⁶⁶. This shift indicates a transition in the focus of Swiss Neutrality from classical diplomacy to a broader range of "soft power" tools.

Nevertheless, as Thomas Fischer argues, the end of the Cold War reduced Switzerland's former importance as a neutral intermediary and diplomatic meeting platform within the broader East–West framework of the CSCE process²⁶⁷. Rather than acting as a decisive “power broker”, Switzerland after 1989 increasingly positioned itself as a participant in institutionalized multilateral mechanisms, where neutrality was used more as a framework to legitimize international cooperation and mediation activities than as a source of exceptional status.

In essence, the transformation of Swiss neutrality in the late 1980s and early 1990s is characterized by a shift from an exclusive mediation role to more diffuse, institutionalized participation in international security. Neutrality remains a legal and symbolic principle, but its practical content is undergoing significant change; it is being less associated with distancing, as expressed in the doctrinal "armed" and "strict" models, and increasingly with regulated involvement in global and regional conflict management processes.

Alongside the institutional and practical transformation of Switzerland's neutral policy, the post-bipolar period was characterized by a comprehensive intellectual and political reassessment of the very concept of neutrality. As Fischer and Möckli observe, the end of the Cold War era presented a pivotal opportunity for a thorough examination not only of prevailing policies but also of the fundamental logic of Swiss neutrality in preceding decades. In the academic environment of the early 1990s, there was an increasing tendency to demystify neutrality. Researchers were increasingly interpreting Neutrality not as a consistent and principled strategy, but as a largely functional and rhetorical tool that allowed Switzerland to combine economic integration into the Western world with formal political distancing²⁶⁸. In this particular context, neutrality began to be regarded as a form of "*morally inflated functional argument*"²⁶⁹ that enabled the country to maintain its freedom of action while upholding the image of an impartial actor.

During these debates, particular emphasis was placed on the phenomenon of the "ideologization" of neutrality during the Cold War. Fischer and Möckli emphasize that,

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 28–29.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 28.

²⁶⁸ Fischer and Möckli, “The Limits of Compensation,” 32.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 33.

historically, neutrality has been elevated to the rank of a central element of national identity in public discourse, thereby significantly complicating its subsequent political reinterpretation in the post-bipolar period²⁷⁰. It is evident that by the end of the Cold War, a paradoxical scenario was emerging. On the one hand, there was a growing criticism of the traditional neutral doctrine from political and academic elites; on the other hand, it remained firmly anchored in the public consciousness. This disparity was especially notable during the early 1990s. In its 1993 foreign policy report²⁷¹, the Federal Council distanced itself from the former "*strict*" concept of neutrality (*Bindschedler Doctrine*), limiting it to the legal core — non-involvement in armed conflicts — and at the same time advocating for Switzerland's more active participation in international organizations, including the European Union and the United Nations²⁷². Therefore, the transition to a more flexible and instrumental understanding of neutrality is consolidated in public policy.

However, such a radical change was limited by the specifics of the Swiss political system. In direct democracy, attempts by elites to diminish the significance of neutrality in public discourse have largely been counterproductive, only strengthening support for the traditional "*strict*" model²⁷³. This helps explain the failure of initiatives for deeper integration into European and international structures, including the refusal to join the European Economic Area in 1992, as discussed above. The result was a stable ambivalence in Swiss foreign policy during the post-Cold War period. On the one hand, the country has gradually increased its involvement in international organizations and accepted UN sanctions. Conversely, the level of public support for more radical steps, such as EU membership or significantly increased participation in peacekeeping operations, has remained rather limited.

In addition to the reconsideration of the diplomatic and institutional aspects of Swiss neutrality, the post-Cold War era marked a profound transformation in Swiss security policy, reflecting a shift from armed diplomacy to a cooperative approach. Until the late 1980s, Swiss strategy was based on a combination of neutrality and autonomous national defense. These principles were considered complementary and embodied the concept of "armed neutrality"²⁷⁴, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, with the end of the Cold War, this model rapidly lost its relevance. New threats, including transnational terrorism, the proliferation of weapons

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 34.

²⁷¹ The report is available at <http://www.ssn.ethz.ch/>.

²⁷² Fischer and Möckli, "The Limits of Compensation," 34–35.

²⁷³ Ibid., 35.

²⁷⁴ Andreas Wenger, "Swiss Security Policy: From Autonomy to Co-operation." In *Swiss Foreign Policy, 1945–2002*, edited by Jürg Martin Gabriel and Thomas Fischer, 23. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

of mass destruction, migration processes, and environmental risks, could not be effectively neutralized within the framework of an isolated national strategy²⁷⁵. In these circumstances, the need for international cooperation as a key element in ensuring security is increasingly recognized. This shift was institutionalized in the 1990 Federal Council report, which marked the first transition from independent defense policy to the concept of "*Security through Cooperation*"²⁷⁶. Unlike previous approaches, the new strategy allowed for Switzerland's active participation in peacekeeping operations, crisis management, and international security institutions, including UN and CSCE missions²⁷⁷.

However, implementing this strategy also faced significant internal constraints. Wenger emphasizes that the Swiss system of direct democracy slowed down the process of adapting foreign and defense policy after the Cold War, making it dependent on public consensus. This has led to a marked polarization of public opinion, particularly regarding the role of the army, international cooperation, and participation in peacekeeping missions. Of particular significance in this regard was the 1989 initiative to abolish the army, which received substantial popular support, indicating an erosion of the previous security consensus²⁷⁸. Although the initiative itself was rejected, it became an important indicator of structural changes in public perceptions of security and neutrality, and of the deviation from the established "armed" format.

More broadly, these processes reflected the emergence of the same post-Cold War dilemma in Swiss foreign policy: the growing pressure to integrate and cooperate internationally was met with a persistent internal perception of neutrality as the basis of national identity. Consequently, the new security policy was adopted gradually and in piecemeal fashion, necessitating constant compromises and institutional constraints²⁷⁹.

An additional dimension of this dilemma is revealed in the analysis of Fischer and Gabriel, who pay closer attention to the political consequences of the 1986 referendum on joining the UN, mentioned previously. Despite the government's widespread support for the initiative, 75.7% of voters rejected it, demonstrating a deep-rooted distrust of multilateral institutions and a commitment to the traditional understanding of "strict" neutrality²⁸⁰. The reasons for this outcome were complex. On the one hand, the international context of the 1980s,

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 23–24.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 36.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 25.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 36–37.

²⁸⁰ Gabriel and Fischer, "*Swiss Foreign Policy, 1945–2002*", 61–62.

including the escalation of the Cold War and the crisis of confidence in the United Nations, contributed to the strengthening of isolationist sentiments. On the other hand, internal political dynamics — including insufficient mobilization of supporters of membership and an active campaign by opponents who appealed to national identity and sovereignty — played a key role in shaping public opinion²⁸¹. Consequently, the 1986 referendum marked a turning point, transforming foreign policy from an elitist realm into a subject of widespread public discourse. As Fischer notes, a long period of political polarization on issues of international integration began at this time, significantly limiting the government's freedom of action in foreign policy²⁸². These trends were largely cultivated and intensified in the post-Cold War period, as was already discussed.

Therefore, the transformation of Swiss neutrality policy towards the end of the Cold War cannot be understood solely through the prism of external factors. Rather, it is the result of a complex interaction between a changing international environment, institutional reforms, and domestic political structures. In this context, neutrality serves as both an instrument of foreign policy and an arena for the political struggle to define Switzerland's national identity and international role. The present sub-chapter argues that the final years of the Cold War did not diminish Swiss neutrality; rather, it underwent multifaceted changes. Despite the declining importance of Switzerland's traditional role in providing good offices, neutrality has been reconsidered. It is now viewed as a flexible legal status that permits participation in multilateral security structures. At the same time, however, this transformation has revealed growing tensions between political elites seeking to adapt neutrality to new international realities and public opinion, which continues to perceive it as a fundamental component of Switzerland's national identity.

Accordingly, neutrality's status as a universal principle was progressively eroded, becoming a variable contingent on external structures and strategic choices instead. This shift laid the foundation for further transformations in the period following 1992.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid., 62.

Adaptation Strategies: Swiss Neutrality in 1992–2002 — Legal and Political Debates

It is noteworthy that 1992 marked a major turning point in the evolution of Swiss post-Cold War neutrality policy. It was in this year that the process of legally adapting Swiss neutrality to the new structural realities of post-bipolar Europe began. The key event that revealed the limitations of the traditional model of neutrality was the 6 December 1992 referendum on Switzerland's accession to the EEA, which was mentioned in the previous sub-chapter. Despite active support from the Federal Council and most political elites, the agreement was narrowly rejected — with 50.3% of voters opposing it²⁸³. The referendum on the ratification of this agreement saw a very high turnout of Swiss citizens, largely driven by concerns over sovereignty and neutrality. Swiss voters narrowly rejected Switzerland's participation in the EEA due to a lack of consensus among 16 of the 26 cantons²⁸⁴. Some expressed concerns that participation could compromise Switzerland's political independence, potentially subjecting it to EU institutions and regulations. This could pose a threat to the country's decentralized federal system. Additionally, Switzerland's long-standing tradition of neutrality has led to hesitancy among voters about closer integration into a political bloc that might involve the country in conflicts or obligations at odds with its neutral stance²⁸⁵. This demonstrated the political importance of European integration and the depth of internal division within Swiss society.

The vote revealed clear divisions between German- and French-speaking parts of the country, which also played a key role, as well as differences in the political and economic preferences of different regions²⁸⁶. Economic concerns, including the impact of increased competition and regulatory changes, also influenced the electorate. While French-speaking Switzerland was more supportive of integration, the German-speaking cantons were more skeptical, reflecting differences in perceptions of sovereignty, neutrality, and foreign policy

²⁸³ Swiss Federal Statistical Office, “Federal Resolution on the European Economic Area (EEA),” *Swissvotes*, accessed March 26, 2026, <https://swissvotes.ch/vote/388.00>.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

UK Parliament, “European Economic Area: Swiss Referendum,” *Hansard*, December 8, 1992, accessed March 26, 2026, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1992/dec/08/european-economic-area-swiss-referendum>.

²⁸⁵ “Swiss Reject European Market,” *Washington Post*, December 7, 1992, accessed March 26, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/12/07/swiss-reject-european-market/83ef0af6-211e-42d7-8b28-8f37b7dd593f/>.

“Swiss Face Trade Area Rejection Division,” *UPI Archives*, December 7, 1992, accessed March 26, 2026, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1992/12/07/Swiss-face-trade-area-rejection-division/7124723704400/>.

²⁸⁶ René Schwok, “The Cleavage between the German Speaking and the French Speaking Swiss with Respect to European Integration: Interpretative Essay” (1993), accessed March 26, 2026, <https://aei.pitt.edu/7135/>.

orientation. Thus, the campaign environment led to heightened scepticism, as opponents emphasized the risks and uncertainties.

The international reaction to the referendum results was revealing. In the foreign press, Switzerland's decision was seen as both unexpected and contrary to the general trend of deepening European integration. American publications in particular interpreted the refusal to participate in the EEA as a manifestation of internal uncertainty and political fragmentation²⁸⁷. This quite clearly demonstrates the ongoing tension between the international community's expectations and Switzerland's internal political processes, which began in the late 1980s as discussed above. Against this background, it is reasonable to suggest that the results of the 1992 referendum are indicative of a broader crisis of the traditional neutral paradigm amid the collapse of the bipolar world order. While neutrality provided Switzerland with the opportunity to distance itself from bloc confrontation while simultaneously integrating economically with capitalist countries during the Cold War, as Soviet scholars have repeatedly noted, it has clearly proven insufficient to respond to the challenges of deepening European interdependence in the new conditions. As Swiss and foreign analysts have noted, the idea of maintaining full foreign policy autonomy amid close economic and institutional interconnectedness with Europe was becoming less realistic²⁸⁸.

In this sense, it was not so much the fact of maintaining neutrality itself that was decisive, but rather a change in its content, functions and place in the overall structure of foreign policy, which was reflected already in the "*Neutralitätsstudie einer Expertenkommission*", 1992, where for the first time the task of reducing neutrality to its legal core and expanding Switzerland's international participation was set at the conceptual level²⁸⁹. In the aftermath of the EU referendum in December 1992, neutrality was formally maintained and remained a prominent feature of political discourse. However, its effectiveness as a regulatory mechanism for Switzerland's foreign policy diminished, and it increasingly served as a symbolic expression of national identity, sovereignty, independence, and Switzerland's distinct path²⁹⁰.

It is particularly noteworthy that following the EEA supporters' defeat, the Federal Council did not abandon its policy of foreign policy and economic rapprochement with Europe.

²⁸⁷ "Swiss Reject European Market," *Washington Post*, December 7, 1992, accessed March 26, 2026; "Swiss Face Trade Area Rejection Division," *UPI Archives*, December 7, 1992.

²⁸⁸ Marc-André Miserez, "Switzerland–EU: To Join or Not to Join," *SWI swissinfo.ch*, January 17, 2013, accessed March 26, 2026.

²⁸⁹ *Neutralitätsstudie einer Expertenkommission*, 1992 (Bern: unpublished expert report, cited in Alois Riklin, "Neutralität," *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland*).

²⁹⁰ Marco Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte*, 428.

Conversely, he pursued this course of action through the instrument of the so-called autonomous tracking or reproduction (*autonome Nachvollzug*)²⁹¹ of a component of EU legislation, in conjunction with "*bilateral and sectoral negotiations*" with the EU, the conclusion of which is anticipated in 2000 with the adoption of bilateral agreements²⁹². In this new phase, neutrality played only a subordinate role in official European political documents, since the membership of several neutral states in the EU, in practice, weakened the argument that integration was incompatible with neutral status. Conversely, it was the national-conservative opponents of integration who increasingly mobilized the rhetoric of a threat to neutrality (*Neutralitätsverlust*). However, it often remained unclear whether this was about neutrality or the broader fear of losing the country's sovereignty, independence, and national identity²⁹³. Consequently, since 1992, neutrality has increasingly become a politically charged sign, whose meaning has expanded beyond its historically established foreign policy mission and classical international legal content.

In parallel, the 1992 documents reveal an increase in Switzerland's involvement in multilateral diplomacy while it concurrently upholds its formal neutrality. The Federal Council swiftly recognized the new states that emerged following the dissolution of the USSR, offering loan guarantees amounting to 600 million CHF²⁹⁴. Switzerland participated in a variety of international initiatives, including CSCE missions, UNPROFOR operations, and conferences concerning Yugoslavia. Notably, Switzerland joined the UN Security Council in imposing sanctions against Libya, thereby perpetuating the practice of applying non-military sanctions initiated in 1990²⁹⁵. These steps indicate the formation of a new practice of interpreting neutrality, allowing participation in sanctions regimes and international operations within the framework of international law.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 467.

²⁹² Jürg Martin Gabriel and Thomas Fischer, *Swiss Foreign Policy, 1945–2002* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 192–193.

²⁹³ Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte*, 428.

²⁹⁴ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1992, doc. 10, "Antrag des EDA an den Bundesrat betreffend Weiterführung der verstärkten Zusammenarbeit mit ost- und mitteleuropäischen Staaten," Bern, March 11, 1992, Bern, 2023, <https://dodis.ch/61060>.

Liliane Stadler, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz 1992," *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 73, no. 3 (2023): 430, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.24894/2296-6013.00134>.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 430–431.

Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1992, Einleitung, XXXIV–XXXV, XXXIX, Bern, 2023, <https://dodis.ch/DDS-1992>.

Moreover, the sources mirror the prevailing socio-political discord surrounding the notion of neutrality²⁹⁶. The Federal Administration engaged in deliberations concerning both participation in sanctions²⁹⁷ and potential forms of cooperation with NATO²⁹⁸. However, the necessity of avoiding a "break" with the established neutral policy was emphasized: "*Bruch mit der bisherigen schweizerischen Neutralitätspolitik*"²⁹⁹. It is noteworthy that at the meeting of defense ministers of neutral states in October 1992, there was a lack of a common understanding of neutrality as the basis of a joint policy³⁰⁰, which indicated its gradual erosion as a common European principle³⁰¹. Thus, it was demonstrated that, in 1992, Swiss neutrality was maintained at the level of a political declaration. However, in practice, it was adapted to the conditions of the post-bipolar international order.

In this historical context, the events of 1992 are of particular significance as they facilitate the analysis and reconstruction of not only the political struggle surrounding Swiss neutrality but also the intellectual discourse within which it was reinterpreted. Accordingly, in the thoroughly revised edition of the "*Neues Handbuch der schweizerischen Aussenpolitik*" (1992), the concluding phase of Swiss foreign policy between the Cold War world and the still unformulated post-bipolar order was brought to a definitive conclusion³⁰². The core of this publication comprised an analysis by Alois Riklin, who presented the prevailing understanding of neutrality at that time as a construction based primarily on the Hague Agreements of 1907, other norms of international law, and custom³⁰³. Riklin distinguished four duties of a neutral state: the duty of abstinence (*Enthaltungspflichten*); the duty of defense or prevention (*Abwehrpflicht*); the duty of tolerance (*Duldungspflichten*); and the duty of impartiality or equal treatment (*Unparteilichkeitspflicht*)³⁰⁴. These duties corresponded to certain rights of the State

²⁹⁶ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1992, introduction, XLVIII, Bern, 2023, <https://dodis.ch/DDS-1992>.

²⁹⁷ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1992, doc. 24, "UN Sanctions against Libya," 1992, Bern, 2023, <https://dodis.ch/61220>.

²⁹⁸ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1992, doc. 34, "Stellungnahme zum Diskussionspapier des EMD betreffend Autonome Verteidigungsfähigkeit und Neutralität," August 11, 1992, Bern, 2023, <https://dodis.ch/61955>.

²⁹⁹ Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1992, introduction, XLVIII. Stadler, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz 1992," 431.

³⁰⁰ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1992, doc. 46, "Gespräche des Vorstehers des EMD, Bundesrat Villiger, mit der finnischen Verteidigungsministerin Rehn sowie den schwedischen und österreichischen Verteidigungsministern Björck und Fasslabend," Bern, October 6, 1992, Bern, 2023, <https://dodis.ch/61100>.

³⁰¹ Stadler, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz 1992," 431.

³⁰² Alois Riklin, "Neutralität," in *Neues Handbuch der schweizerischen Aussenpolitik*, ed. Alois Riklin et al. (Bern: Haupt, 1992), 191–209.

³⁰³ Ibid., 192–193.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 195–196.

in the sphere of control over the export and transit of military materials. Concurrently, Riklin emphasized that neither the neutrality of beliefs and views (*Gesinnungsneutralität*) nor economic neutrality (*wirtschaftliche Neutralität*) is an acceptable category³⁰⁵. This already demonstrated that the academic field maintained a desire to remain neutral within a strict legal framework, rather than dissolve it into the vague moral or civilizational rhetoric of the "End of History"³⁰⁶. Accordingly, the further evolution of a Swiss foreign policy course was found to be contingent upon public sentiment and the institutional frameworks of domestic policy.

The year 1993 was a pivotal moment in Swiss foreign policy, shaped directly by the consequences of rejecting participation in the European Economic Area (EEA). Diplomatic documentation shows that, after the referendum, the Federal Council felt compelled to clarify and justify Switzerland's position in relation to the European Union. In response, Bern intensified diplomatic contact with leading figures in the European Communities and key European governments.

One particularly significant meeting took place on 18 October 1993, involving members of the Swiss Federal Council and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. According to Swiss diplomatic records and Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (AAPD)³⁰⁷, discussions focused extensively on the future of Swiss–European relations and the prospects of deeper integration. Kohl reportedly regarded full Swiss membership of the European Union as both desirable and ultimately probable, while considering the bilateral approach to be merely a temporary and insufficient solution³⁰⁸: "*Schweizer Trotz nützt auf die lange Sicht nicht.*" (DDS 1993, Dok. 47). These discussions demonstrate that, despite the domestic rejection of the EEA, significant European actors continued to perceive Switzerland as being structurally connected to the broader process of European integration. At the same time, the Swiss leadership was attempting to reconcile economic integration with preserving political autonomy and neutrality within the emerging post-Cold War European order.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 196,

³⁰⁶ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16, 1989, pp. 3–18. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184>. Accessed 30 Mar. 2026.

Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

³⁰⁷ Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1993, vol. II: 1. Juli bis 31. Dezember 1993, ed. Andreas Wirsching et al. (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2024), 645–648, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111340661>.

³⁰⁸ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1993, doc. 45, Bern, 2024, <https://dodis.ch/64059>.

Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1993, doc. 47, Bern, 2024, <https://dodis.ch/64997>.

Simultaneously, the documentation under analysis demonstrates a more extensive process of reorientation in Swiss foreign and security policy. During this period, a new foreign policy strategy was being developed, but institutional changes, including a leadership transition in the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, slowed its formation. The newly appointed Foreign Minister, Flavio Cotti, sought to strengthen the link between foreign policy and public opinion³⁰⁹. Concurrently, a notable adaptation occurred within the domain of security, marked by the establishment of collaborative ties with NATO³¹⁰, signifying a gradual shift from an isolationist interpretation of neutrality. The documents also demonstrate the close intertwining of domestic and foreign policy. This was evident, for example, in discussions of migration policy, where the model of priority access for citizens of the EU and EFTA countries was considered without directly invoking the concept of freedom of movement³¹¹, despite their recent proximity to joining the EEA. Similarly, environmental policy issues after the Rio de Janeiro Summit (1992)³¹² became incorporated within the foreign policy agenda, a phenomenon that is particularly reflected in the speeches of members of the Federal Council³¹³. When considered collectively, the documents indicate that in 1993, Switzerland did not return to the model of neutrality that prevailed during the Cold War. Instead, it initiated a gradual and systematic adaptation of its foreign policy to the circumstances of the post-bipolar era.

In response to all these challenges, there was a rethinking of neutrality at the institutional and legal levels, primarily reflected in the 1993 foreign policy report of the Federal Council. This report was based not only on the analytical work of expert commissions, but also on the

³⁰⁹ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1993, doc. 53, Bern, 2024, <https://dodis.ch/61212>.

³¹⁰ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1993, doc. 43, Bern, 2024, <https://dodis.ch/62714>.

Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1993, doc. 54, Bern, 2024, <https://dodis.ch/65281>.

³¹¹ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1993, doc. 48, Bern, 2024, <https://dodis.ch/65708>.

³¹² The Rio Earth Summit marked a fundamental shift in the global understanding of the relationship between environmental protection and economic development. It brought widespread attention to the concept of *sustainable development*, originally defined by the Brundtland Commission as development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. One of the Summit's key outcomes was the establishment of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, alongside a broad range of policy frameworks that have shaped sustainability initiatives at national, regional, and local levels. The agreements adopted in Rio continue to serve as a cornerstone for international environmental governance and cooperation.

³¹³ Sacha Zala et al., eds., *Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland*, vol. 1993, doc. 35, Bern, 2024, <https://dodis.ch/56018>.

Thomas Gees, "Diplomatische Dokumente Der Schweiz 1993." *Schweizerische Zeitschrift Für Geschichte* 75, no. 1 (2025): 197.

minutes of Federal Council meetings for the pivotal year of 1992³¹⁴. This document distinguishes between the "*law of neutrality*" (*Neutralitätsrecht*) and the "*policy of neutrality*" (*Neutralitätspolitik*)³¹⁵, marking a qualitative shift in the understanding of this institution. The "*law of neutrality*" is thus interpreted as a set of international legal norms governing a state's behavior in the event of an armed conflict, including obligations of non-involvement and the equal treatment of the parties to the conflict. In contrast, the "*policy of neutrality*" refers to a series of foreign policy decisions aimed at ensuring and preserving this status.

This distinction lends further support to the argument that Swiss neutrality should not be regarded as a static institution. As neutrality law only applies in the event of an international armed conflict, neutrality in peacetime is largely shaped through political practice. This created considerable room for reinterpretation after 1989, when the legal foundations of neutrality remained unchanged while its political content was gradually adapted to the new international environment³¹⁶. Moreover, this distinction made it possible to significantly expand the scope of foreign policy maneuvering without formally renouncing neutrality. The report emphasized that neutrality is not an end in itself but rather a means of ensuring the country's security and well-being³¹⁷. Moreover, it was explicitly stated for the first time in the history of Swiss neutrality that in the event of a conflict between obligations under the UN Charter and the right of neutrality, priority should be given to international law³¹⁸.

Subsequently, the Federal Council issued the 1993 *White Paper*, which was appended to the report on Swiss foreign policy. It is vital to acknowledge that this White Paper continues to serve as the foundational principle of Switzerland's neutrality framework³¹⁹. The White Paper concludes that "*in these times of transition and uncertainty, neutrality remains an appropriate*

³¹⁴ Swiss Federal Council, "*Bericht über die schweizerische Neutralität: weiteres Vorgehen*," April 29, 1992, Dodis Database, <https://dodis.ch/59120> (accessed March 26, 2026).

³¹⁵ Swiss Federal Council, White Paper on Neutrality: Annex to the Report on Swiss Foreign Policy for the Nineties, November 29, 1993 (Bern), 8–10, accessed March 26, 2026, https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/eda/en/documents/aussenpolitik/voelkerrecht/bericht-neutralitaet-1993_EN.pdf.

³¹⁶ Samantha Besson et al., *Völkerrecht: Droit international public. Aide-mémoire*, 3rd ed. (Zürich/St. Gallen: Dike, 2019), 266.

³¹⁷ Gabriel and Fischer, *Swiss Foreign Policy*, 63.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

Swiss Federal Council, White Paper on Neutrality: Annex to the Report on Swiss Foreign Policy for the Nineties, November 29, 1993 (Bern), 17–18, accessed March 26, 2026, https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/eda/en/documents/aussenpolitik/voelkerrecht/bericht-neutralitaet-1993_EN.pdf.

³¹⁹ Swiss Federal Council, *Clarity and Guidance on Neutrality Policy: Report in Response to Postulate 22.3385 of the Council of States Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC-S), 11 April 2022* (Bern, October 26, 2022), 13, accessed April 4, 2026, https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/eda/en/documents/aussenpolitik/voelkerrecht/20221026-neutralitaetsbericht_EN.pdf.

instrument for conducting Switzerland's foreign and security policy"³²⁰. Regarding the neutrality policy, it was stated that it should be adapted to ensure that it "*continue to be characterized by the constancy and predictability that have earned Switzerland the respect of the international community in the past*"³²¹.

The consequences of this case were far-reaching. According to Jorio, based on findings from a special research group, the Swiss government has attempted to set a new course in foreign policy, without formally abandoning neutrality but significantly reducing its scope. While the report maintained a declarative commitment to the obligations arising from the Hague Conventions, it also recognized that the law of neutrality had not been updated since its codification in 1907 and had lost its clear identity. In many ways, it no longer meets modern conditions. Consequently, the document's logic was no longer based on the traditional perception of war as a legitimate instrument of interstate policy, but rather on the acknowledgment of the new international legal order that emerged following the Briand-Kellogg Pact³²², and particularly the UN Charter. Under this new order, aggression is declared illegal, and collective actions against aggressors are given a distinct legal status³²³. Consequently, Switzerland was transitioning from the traditional model of "*permanent neutrality*" as an almost universal rule of conduct to a model in which neutrality was primarily maintained as a reserve norm in the event of a classic interstate conflict.

Moreover, according to Riklin, Swiss neutrality was understood not only as a set of responsibilities but also as a fully-fledged institution with several historical functions. Jorio identifies five such functions: integration for a country fragmented by confession, language, and politics; independence in war-torn Europe; freedom of trade, allowing economic ties with belligerents; and balance between competing European powers. Finally, services take the form of numerous "good offices" and mediation roles³²⁴. However, the most significant shift is revealed here: Riklin stated that, due to the prohibition of war in modern international law and the operation of the UN Charter, classical neutrality law has largely lost its former significance; however, the function of "good offices" remains practically relevant in modern conditions³²⁵.

³²⁰ Switzerland, Federal Council, *Bericht über die Aussenpolitik der Schweiz in den 90er Jahren. Anhang: Bericht zur Neutralität vom 29. November 1993*, Bundesblatt (BBl) 1994 I 153, 208, accessed April 4, 2026, https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/fga/1994/1_153_/de.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² The Briand-Kellogg Pact is an international treaty to outlaw war. It was signed on August 27, 1928 in Paris by initially eleven nations.

³²³ Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte*, 429–430.

³²⁴ Ibid., 429.

³²⁵ Alois Riklin, "Neutralität," in *Neues Handbuch der schweizerischen Aussenpolitik*, ed. Alois Riklin et al. (Bern: Haupt, 1992), 207.

In other words, even before the 1993 official report, the Swiss academic debate had already concluded that neutrality could no longer be maintained as an integral and unchangeable doctrine — it must either be redefined in terms of its function or be politically marginalized.

In his research paper, Jorio accurately notes that this shift has prompted a strong response from both the political arena and the academic community. The 1993 report was debated for hours by the National Council: opponents demanded that it be reworked to clearly preserve "*permanent armed neutrality*" in the traditional sense, while supporters insisted on an updated concept³²⁶. In this context, the criticism of Jürg Martin Gabriel is especially relevant. Gabriel recognized the first part of the 1993 report as innovative and logically coherent but considered the subsequent sections insufficiently consistent³²⁷. Furthermore, he argued that the rhetoric of succession disguises a significant shift: neutrality is losing its central role and is now limited to unlikely cases of classic warfare, effectively becoming a "*reserve position*" (*Rückfallposition*)³²⁸. Thus, his key thesis about the transition from 'classical neutrality for every case' to 'reduced neutrality for an emergency' was formed. Gabriel's argument shows that, in the 1990s, Switzerland did not merely "adapt" neutrality; it also narrowed and redistributed its fundamental importance.

Accordingly, the discourse surrounding the 1993 report encompassed not solely legal subtleties, but also a more fundamental question: namely, the possibility of combining "*permanent*" neutrality with an augmentation in participation in international security structures and a more active "*cooperative*" foreign policy, which ultimately superseded the traditional concept of "*armed*" neutrality. Critics of the new line directly raised the question of the compatibility of neutrality with the increasing pressure for European and international solidarity, as well as with participation in organizations that, until recently, in Swiss discourse, were tried to avoid, even at the level of terminology, as too "*political*" or "*military*"³²⁹. In this critique, neutrality was not regarded as a technical legal status in itself; rather, it was considered to represent the ultimate limit of acceptable integration. This development consequently gave rise to a rhetorical question: how can neutrality remain "*permanent*"³³⁰ and, at the same time,

³²⁶ Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte*, 431.

³²⁷ Jürg Martin Gabriel, "Neutralität für den Notfall: Der Bericht des Bundesrats zur Aussenpolitik der Schweiz in den 90er Jahren," *Swiss Political Science Review* 1, no. 1 (1995): 1–30, esp. 12–13, <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1662-6370.1995.tb00014.x>.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, 12.

³²⁹ Jürg Martin Gabriel, "Neutralität für den Notfall: Der Bericht des Bundesrats zur Aussenpolitik der Schweiz in den 90er Jahren", 13–14.

Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte*, 431–432.

³³⁰ Swiss Federal Council, White Paper on Neutrality: Annex to the Report on Swiss Foreign Policy for the Nineties, November 29, 1993 (Bern), 12.

"compatible" and "*participative*"³³¹? In essence, it was a question of whether Switzerland could maintain its historical stance of neutrality, moving, in fact, towards enhanced solidarity and inclusivity within Western European and universal international systems.

For these reasons, it is fair to state that since 1992-1993, Swiss neutrality has ceased to be considered a comprehensive doctrine defining all aspects of foreign policy and has become a legal status limited primarily to situations of international armed conflict. Consequently, in the absence of such circumstances, Switzerland was able to adopt a more proactive and diversified foreign policy, encompassing engagement in international organizations and the preservation of sanctions regimes, provided these were in accordance with international law. In this sense, the legal reinterpretation of neutrality in the early 1990s was ambivalent. On the one hand, it established an institutional framework for adapting foreign policy to new international conditions. On the other hand, it reinforced the gap between official discourse and public perceptions of neutrality, laying the groundwork for further political tensions in Swiss foreign policy.

In practice, Switzerland not only did not join the EEA, but the Swiss application for membership of the EEC, although submitted in May 1992³³², would remain "*on ice*"³³³ for many years, until the Council of Cantons finally withdrew it in June 2016³³⁴. Furthermore, Switzerland once more remained outside the UN (until 2002) and NATO as well. As already mentioned above, the decision not to join NATO was not difficult for the country, as, unlike European integration, the prospect of joining NATO was not regarded as a viable political option. This is because participation in a military alliance was seen as incompatible with the fundamental principle of Swiss armed neutrality, which is predicated on non-interference in collective defensive obligations³³⁵. Nevertheless, Switzerland continued to develop bilateral relations with the EU, following an alternative path based on the principles of "*bilateral*" agreements, reflected in a total of 16 agreements concluded with Brussels, grouped into two

³³¹ Ibid., 19–20.

³³² Swiss Federal Council, "Switzerland's Application for Accession to the EEC," May 20, 1992, accessed March 30, 2026, https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/switzerland_s_application_for_accession_to_the_eeec_20_may_1992-en-76fcba05-6f46-485f-9f5c-6fe5818613b1.html.

³³³ "EU Membership Application Not to Be Withdrawn," *SWI swissinfo.ch*, October 26, 2005, accessed March 31, 2026, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/swiss-politics/eu-membership-application-not-to-be-withdrawn/4811170>.

³³⁴ "Switzerland Withdraws Its Application for EU Membership," *Le News*, June 16, 2016, accessed March 30, 2026, <https://lenews.ch/2016/06/16/switzerland-withdraws-its-application-for-eu-membership/>.

³³⁵ Parting Company the Neutral Way," Swiss National Museum, October 3, 2023, accessed March 31, 2026, <https://blog.nationalmuseum.ch/en/2023/10/parting-company-the-neutral-way/>.

"packages" of negotiations³³⁶. Furthermore, despite active resistance from national conservative and some inner developing organizations, which criticized the IMF's policy as "exploitative" and contrary to the principles of solidarity, the Swiss electorate in 1992 supported joining the Bretton Woods institutions by a majority of approximately 56%³³⁷

Concurrently, this adaptation of Swiss neutrality continued to encounter persistent domestic political constraints that significantly constrained the depth and pace of transformation. This was clearly demonstrated in Switzerland's involvement in UN operations. An illustrative example of this issue can be observed in the situation that arose around the project to create a Swiss contingent of "Blue Helmets", which was met with significant resistance within the country³³⁸. In the context of the perceived failures of UN peacekeeping missions in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia, and the growing discourse surrounding the blurring of the lines between "peacekeeping" and "peace enforcement", right-wing conservative circles have reactualized the concept of "loss of neutrality". They argued that participation in such missions may blur a nation's traditional neutral status.

The outcome of these discourses was the 1994 referendum on the "*Federal Law on Swiss Troops for Peacekeeping Operations*," in which a clear majority of 57.2%³³⁹ of voters rejected Switzerland's involvement in peacekeeping operations with armed contingents³⁴⁰. The rise of the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) and the associated campaign for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland (*Aktion für eine unabhängige und neutrale Schweiz*, AUNS) played a significant role in this event³⁴¹. The efforts of the parties were considerable and focused on consolidating the isolationist interpretation of neutrality as the fundamental basis of Swiss foreign policy. In this context, the SVP systematically opposed the deployment of Swiss soldiers abroad, finding common ground with left-wing pacifist groups seeking to abolish the Swiss army completely³⁴². This result demonstrated not only the continued stability of the traditional understanding of neutrality in the public consciousness but also the presence of clear

³³⁶ "EU Membership Application Not to Be Withdrawn," *SWI swissinfo.ch*, October 26, 2005, accessed March 31, 2026, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/swiss-politics/eu-membership-application-not-to-be-withdrawn/4811170>

³³⁷ Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte*, 434.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 433–434.

Fischer, *Switzerland's Good Offices: A Changing Concept, 1945–2002*, 28.

³³⁹ Andreas Graf and David Lanz, "Conclusions: Switzerland as a Paradigmatic Case of Small-State Peace Policy?" *Swiss Political Science Review* 19, no. 3 (2013): 419.

³⁴⁰ "Swiss Reject Sending U.N. Peacekeepers," *UPI Archives*, June 12, 1994, <https://www.upi.com/amp/Archives/1994/06/12/Swiss-reject-sending-UN-peacekeepers/7450771393600/> (accessed March 26, 2026).

³⁴¹ Graf and Lanz, "Conclusions: Switzerland as a Paradigmatic Case of Small-State Peace Policy?", 419.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

institutional constraints that hinder the country's deeper integration into international collective security mechanisms, despite the Federal authorities' obvious desire to change the status quo.

Nevertheless, the unfavorable outcome of the referendum did not necessarily entail a rejection of international involvement as such. Conversely, following 1994, Switzerland effectively cultivated a distinct model of engagement in international missions, enabling the harmonization of expanded foreign policy activities with the preservation of formal neutrality. Therefore, Swiss involvement has shifted towards non-military forms of presence, including the deployment of civilian observers, police officers, customs specialists, and experts in humanitarian aid and institution-building. This approach enabled Switzerland to consolidate its position in the international system without violating the legal restrictions imposed by its neutrality. A paradigmatic example is Dominik Langenbacher, a Swiss diplomat who served as the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator in Somalia from 1996 to 1999. The mandate did not include direct military or political intervention; rather, it was restricted to monitoring and coordinating the negotiation process between the warring factions. This was indicative of Switzerland's desire to maintain a neutral stance regarding the military aspects of international operations, while remaining willing to participate in their diplomatic and humanitarian aspects³⁴³.

Simultaneously, Switzerland's engagement in OSCE missions was expanding, which was regarded as less problematic from the perspective of neutrality. As was stated in the previous sub-chapter, following the conclusion of the Cold War, Switzerland participated in peacekeeping and democratization operations, particularly in the context of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Since 1991, Swiss specialists in human rights, constitutional construction, the judicial system, and humanitarian aid have been deployed to various missions in the Balkans. However, in the initial years, their involvement was characterized by restraint and a certain degree of distance. It was not until 1996 that Switzerland assumed a distinctive role, marked by its Swiss chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). During this period, elections were held in Bosnia, with over 100 Swiss observers overseeing the electoral process³⁴⁴.

Another indicator of the evolution of Swiss foreign policy was its increasingly active role in mediating within the OSCE in the post-Soviet region. Between 1995 and 1996, Swiss diplomat Tim Guldemann led the OSCE mission in Chechnya, where he mediated negotiations

³⁴³ Fischer, *Switzerland's Good Offices: A Changing Concept, 1945-2002*, 28.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

between the Russian authorities and Chechen forces during the First Chechen War. Although the agreements reached were fragile, his efforts played an important role in facilitating negotiations and preparing for the 1997 elections³⁴⁵. Therefore, Switzerland's OSCE chairmanship in 1996 was both a symbolic and practical step towards a more active international role, despite the country's formal commitment to neutrality. This period also saw the beginning of closer, institutionalized cooperation with NATO through the Partnership for Peace framework³⁴⁶. At the same time, participation in the OSCE also revealed structural limitations related to Switzerland's non-membership of organizations such as NATO and the European Union. These complicated coordination mechanisms and the exchange of strategic information in practice³⁴⁷.

These examples demonstrate that the refusal to participate in "harsh" forms of peacemaking did not entail a rejection of social engagement. In contrast, during the mid-1990s, Switzerland developed a distinct model of participation, characterized by its selective nature and prioritization of civil, humanitarian, and diplomatic instruments. As demonstrated by budget expenditure dynamics, in 1991, 98% of Switzerland's participation in international missions consisted solely of financial contributions³⁴⁸. However, by the end of the decade, increasing resources were being directed towards deploying Swiss personnel, including civilian experts, election observers, mediation specialists, humanitarian staff, and participants in OSCE and peace support operations, as well as towards implementing Swiss-led projects abroad³⁴⁹. Simultaneously, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs initiated the establishment of a corps of civilian experts capable of efficiently engaging in international missions, marking a shift towards an institutionalized modus operandi in global conflict management. This transition from a state of low profile, limited scope, largely discreet, non-military and behind-the-scenes diplomacy during the Cold War – a phenomenon discussed in detail in the preceding section – to active participation can be considered an important element of a broader transformation, in which neutrality is reinterpreted in terms of "*Security through Cooperation*"³⁵⁰. In contrast to the classical model of distancing oneself from conflicts, the new model involves participation in international efforts to prevent and resolve them.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 29–30.

³⁴⁶ Graf and Lanz, "Conclusions: Switzerland as a Paradigmatic Case of Small-State Peace Policy, 419.

³⁴⁷ Gabriel and Fischer, *Swiss Foreign Policy*, 175.

³⁴⁸ Fischer, *Switzerland's Good Offices: A Changing Concept, 1945–2002*, 30–31.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Gabriel and Fischer, *Swiss Foreign Policy*, 36.

This transition is especially notable in the field of arms control. For instance, Switzerland's active engagement in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) negotiations exemplifies the strategic utilization of its neutral status to influence the development of international norms³⁵¹. Switzerland's position on chemical weapons was two-fold. Firstly, the country expressed support for the idea of a complete ban on chemical weapons. Secondly, Switzerland insisted on creating an effective verification system, considering it to be a key element of trust between States. The Spiez Laboratory played a pivotal role in this process, providing technical expertise and facilitating the training of inspection specialists³⁵². It is noteworthy that representatives of the private sector³⁵³ were involved in the negotiation process, reflecting the Swiss model of interaction between government and business and thereby attracting more internal support for the transformation of Swiss neutrality.

Following the ratification of the CWC in 1995, Switzerland, which opened new opportunities for the country to participate in multilateral security arrangements, sought to "work towards quick and pragmatic implementation" of its own security arrangements within the newly established Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Given the absence of chemical weapons within the country, the primary focus of Swiss efforts has been on the verification of the chemical industry and the implementation of protective measures³⁵⁴. Therefore, in contrast to the conventional interpretation of neutrality as a stance of non-participation in security matters, Switzerland's involvement in the OPCW enabled it to engage in control and verification processes without being part of military alliances or operations. It is important to note that such a high level of participation in implementing the CWC was one of the first instances of Switzerland's active involvement in a specific arms control regime, which became possible precisely in the post-bipolar international system, according to Andrea E. Heinzer³⁵⁵. Furthermore, the country did not limit itself to formal participation. However, it sought to influence the development and implementation of norms, including opposing attempts to weaken contractual obligations and defending the effectiveness of the control mechanism.

A further pivotal area of transformation in Swiss neutrality policy was active participation in conventional arms control, a field in which Switzerland also gradually revised

³⁵¹ Ibid., 171.

³⁵² Ibid., 172.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 172–173.

³⁵⁵ Andrea E. Heinzer, "Swiss Arms Control Policy: From Abstention to Participation," in *Switzerland's Good Offices: A Changing Concept, 1945–2002*, ed. Thomas Fischer (Zurich: ETH Zurich, 2002), 159–181.

its position. Initially, this was due to the peculiarities of her militia system. However, over time, it adopted the main provisions of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and the Vienna Documents. Accordingly, as part of the restructuring of the armed forces outlined in a Federal Council document (*Armeeleitbild 95*) in 1992, but implemented in 1995, Switzerland unilaterally reduced the size of its militia army by a third. It declared its readiness to set upper limits on the number of personnel and certain types of weapons³⁵⁶. This step represented a de facto departure from the previous "armed" position, which was predicated on the premise that the particulars of the nation's defensive strategy rendered participation in arms control regimes such as the CFE and the Vienna Document of 1992³⁵⁷ non-viable. This development signaled a gradual integration of Switzerland into European transparency and arms limitation mechanisms, a process that had previously been considered potentially incompatible with Swiss neutrality.

The subsequent evolution of this trajectory can be traced in the context of the CFE treaty's adaptation in the late 1990s. In 1999, at the OSCE summit in Istanbul, an agreement was signed to adapt the treaty. This was in response to the changed structure of European security after the end of the Cold War, including the expansion of NATO and the rejection of the bloc logic of arms limitation³⁵⁸. Hence, the establishment of a system of national and territorial limits, in conjunction with provisions for the accession of new states, signaled a shift towards a more flexible and inclusive model of arms control. This new model permitted Switzerland to participate without formally renouncing its neutrality.

1996 was a landmark year in the evolution of Swiss neutrality in the post-Cold War era. The principal outcome of this adaptation was the initiation of cooperative activity with NATO within the framework of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program³⁵⁹. The Swiss government's decision to cooperate with NATO can be considered a highly significant move, particularly given Switzerland's historical reluctance to become involved with the Alliance during the Cold

³⁵⁶ Swiss Federal Council, *Armeeleitbild 95: Bericht über die Konzeption der Armee in den neunziger Jahren* (Bern, 1992), accessed April 3, 2026, <https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/verhandlungen-92009-1992-d-f.pdf>.

³⁵⁷ Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), *Vienna Document 1992: Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures Convened in Accordance with the Relevant Provisions of the Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting*, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 1992, <https://www.osce.org/vd-1992>.

³⁵⁸ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), *Istanbul Document 1999: Charter for European Security, Istanbul Summit Declaration, Vienna Document 1999, and Related Texts*, Sixth OSCE Summit of Heads of State or Government, Istanbul, 18–19 November 1999, <https://www.osce.org/mc/39569>.

³⁵⁹ Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), "NATO: Partnership for Peace," last modified February 1, 2026, accessed April 2, 2026, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/en/nato-partnership-for-peace>.

War. Even though such measures were widely anticipated to provoke profound national discourse and re-ignite longstanding disputes, they did not imply a legal renunciation of neutrality. Switzerland's participation in the PfP was described as "debatable in terms of neutrality policy, but harmless in terms of neutrality law" (*neutralitätspolitisch diskutabel, aber neutralitätsrechtlich unbedenklich*). This decision did not involve obligations of mutual military assistance (*Beistandspflicht*)³⁶⁰. Accordingly, the distinction between the political and legal aspects of neutrality became particularly clear: what had previously been considered controversial by the generally accepted political culture of neutrality was now considered permissible within the framework of international legal obligations.

The practical implementation of this line has manifested in the expansion of cooperation with Western security structures. By 1997, Switzerland had acceded to the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC)³⁶¹, a multilateral forum for dialogue among allies and partners in the Euro-Atlantic region. Simultaneously, there was a gradual erosion of the previously restrictive mechanisms, which, for a considerable period, were considered an integral component of the neutral status. Specifically, the relaxation of legislation on the export of military materials in 1998 signified a re-evaluation of the stringent regulations³⁶² that had been in force since 1973³⁶³. This shift in perspective did not signify a rejection of neutrality but rather a reinterpretation of the concept within a paradigm in which engagement in global economic and political dynamics demands greater adaptability.

A second key factor in the transformation of Swiss neutrality in 1996/1997 was the normative reassessment of neutrality caused by international criticism of Swiss policy during the Second World War. The thing is, in the mid-1990s, Switzerland faced significant external pressure on its foreign policy and neutrality, chiefly from the United States, stemming from Switzerland's economic and financial relations with Nazi Germany. The 1997 Eisenstat report³⁶⁴ offered a caustic critique of Switzerland's adherence to "strict" neutrality, highlighting its involvement in gold transactions with the Third Reich, its refusal to accept refugees in wartime, and its delay in resolving the issue of "orphan" assets in Swiss bank accounts³⁶⁵.

³⁶⁰ Riklin, "Neutralität," version 2008, last modified November 9, 2010.

³⁶¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "Relations with Switzerland," last modified April 1, 2021, accessed June 2026, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52129.htm.

³⁶² Switzerland, *Bundesgesetz über das Kriegsmaterial (Kriegsmaterialgesetz, KMG)*, December 13, 1996 (status as of October 1, 2025), accessed April 3, 2026, https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1998/794_794_794/de.

³⁶³ Riklin, "Neutralität," version 2008, last modified November 9, 2010.

³⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State, "Eisenstat Special Briefing on Nazi Gold," June 2, 1998, accessed April 2, 2026, https://1997-2001.state.gov/policy_remarks/1998/980602_eizenstat_nazigld.html.

³⁶⁵ Riklin, "Neutralität," version 2008, last modified November 9, 2010.

This criticism had not only reputational, but also conceptual consequences for Swiss conservative neutrality: it called into question the notion of traditional "strict" neutrality as a morally neutral and politically "pure" position. Consequently, neutrality has evolved from a mere legal status to a matter now subject to ethical evaluation. This, in turn, led to an escalation in the internal discourse on the need to modernize neutrality, thereby further motivating a re-evaluation of the concept. In practice, the desire to demonstrate Switzerland's renewed "active" neutrality to the global community has been reflected in the expansion of its international participation while maintaining its formal neutral status. Switzerland's participation in KFOR³⁶⁶ missions in 1999 through the *Swisscoy*³⁶⁷ (*UNO-Resolution 1244*) contingent, the provision of infrastructural support to NATO operations, as well as its growing involvement in UN and OSCE missions, are indicative of a transition from Swiss neutrality to a model of active yet still limited involvement. It is important to note that the Swiss Government interpreted these steps as being compatible with neutrality, since they were limited to humanitarian, logistical, and stability-maintenance tasks, and did not involve either direct or indirect participation in hostilities³⁶⁸.

In parallel, significant public resistance to further institutional integration persisted during this period. In 1997, the electorate rejected initiatives that would have mandated that EU accession negotiations be submitted to a referendum and imposed a complete ban on the export of military materials³⁶⁹. These results demonstrate the continued ambivalence of the Swiss political course: on the one hand, there was a clear willingness to participate in global economic structures, yet on the other hand, there was a desire to maintain control over key aspects of sovereignty and neutrality.

In 1998, the country's involvement in international disarmament and arms control regimes became more institutionalized. In particular, Switzerland's establishment of the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) signifies its commitment not only

Stuart E. Eizenstat, U.S. and Allied Efforts to Recover and Restore Gold and Other Assets Stolen or Hidden by Germany during World War II (Washington, DC, 1997).

³⁶⁶ KFOR (Kosovo Force) is a NATO-led international peacekeeping mission in Kosovo, established in June 1999 following a 78-day air campaign against the Milosevic regime. Authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1244, its core mandate is to maintain a safe and secure environment, ensure freedom of movement, and support the peaceful normalization of relations.

³⁶⁷ The SWISSCOY (Swiss Company) is the largest contingent of the Swiss army in the framework of peacebuilding. Since 1999, it has been supporting the NATO-led international security Forces mission KFOR in Kosovo with up to 195 (formerly 215-235) people. The voluntary commitment is a contribution to security cooperation in Europe.

³⁶⁸ John Dreyer and Neal G. Jesse, "Swiss Neutrality Examined: Model, Exception or Both?" *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 15, no. 3 (2014): 67.

³⁶⁹ Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte*, 434.

to upholding international agreements but also to actively contributing to their practical implementation³⁷⁰. This step was directly related to the development of the Ottawa Process, which aimed to prohibit anti-personnel mines, and indicated the transition from an observant position to proactive participation in the formation of international norms. Concurrently, Switzerland has further consolidated its engagement with non-State actors, including non-governmental organizations, by establishing working groups on small arms and light weapons control. This was accompanied by active participation in international negotiations, including in the preparation of UN conferences and the development of relevant political documents within the OSCE³⁷¹. Consequently, by the late 1990s, arms control and disarmament had emerged as a pivotal aspect of Swiss foreign and security policy, notwithstanding the previously declared constraints on neutrality.

Against the conceptual backdrop of the late 1990s, Swiss domestic political discourse exhibited an escalating problematization of neutrality amid the post-bipolar transformation of the international system. As outlined in the material by Hans Jürg Munger, presented at the Lucerne Security Policy Forum in 1998, Switzerland's neutrality has historically served several functions, including "an integration function, an independence function, a balancing function, and a service provision function"³⁷² (in this fragment, the report continues Riklin's rhetoric from 1992-1993). However, in the changed European security environment, these functions were no longer considered sufficient justification for the immutability of Swiss neutrality. In this regard, the central point of the discussion was the thesis that Switzerland was surrounded by "friendly" neighbors, whereas earlier neutrality had served as a shield against outside interference. However, by the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s, neutrality was increasingly regarded as an end, although Switzerland had always applied it flexibly. This, in turn, required a fundamental reassessment of the very need to maintain neutrality. In this regard, the participants in the discussion directly raised the question of whether Neutrality (in 1998) remains necessary or has become a limitation and a kind of dead end (*Sackgasse*)³⁷³. This provoked a re-evaluation of the conventional defensive rationale underpinning Swiss "armed" neutrality, predicated on the principle of maintaining autonomy from external influences. With the immediate threat of

³⁷⁰ Andrea E. Heinzer, "Swiss Arms Control Policy: From Abstention to Participation," in *Swiss Foreign Policy*, 173.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁷² Hans Jürg Mürger, "Neutralität: Chance oder Sackgasse?" *Zivilschutz* 45, no. 6 (1998): 15, accessed April 3, 2026, <https://www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/view?pid=zbk-003%3A1998%3A45%3A%3A234>, <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-369025>.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

confrontation dissipating after the Cold War, the notion of neutrality came to be regarded as a potential constraint on the scope of foreign policy maneuvering.

The argument was further substantiated by comparison with other neutral states of that period. For instance, Austria, while maintaining its formal neutral status and public commitment to neutrality, participated actively in international missions and European political structures in practice. Sweden, in contrast, demonstrated increased "solidarity" with Europe, expressed in the development of ties with European organizations and accompanied by a long-term rethinking of traditional "strict" neutrality³⁷⁴. In both cases, the issue at hand was not abandoning neutrality but adapting it to the evolving dynamics of international cooperation. This underscored the growing tension between the legal status of neutrality and the contemporary challenges in international collaboration. This, in turn, indicates the growing discrepancy between the legal status of neutrality and its actual political practice on the world stage.

This position is further corroborated by Wolfgang Mueller's research on the historical evolution of Austrian neutrality. Mueller demonstrates that, at the end of the Cold War, Austria faced the limitations of its neutrality, as exemplified by criticism of Austria as a "free rider" (*Trittbrettfahrer*) or a bystander reliant on NATO protection in the event of a conflict³⁷⁵. In response, Austria developed an "active neutrality policy" aimed at strengthening bilateral relations, participating in international organizations, and mediating conflicts, including by engaging in UN missions³⁷⁶. Lawfully, after the end of the Cold War, these trends not only persisted but also intensified. Thus, in the 1990s, there was a significant reinterpretation of Austrian neutrality: the country joined the European Union in 1995, joined the NATO PfP program, and became a participant in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy³⁷⁷. These steps have led to a significant reduction in the practical content of neutrality, despite its formal preservation.

In a broader context, Mueller also emphasizes that in the 1990s, the debate intensified over whether neutrality is "still relevant" and not a "violation of international solidarity" (*Verstoß gegen die internationale Solidarität*)³⁷⁸. This observation aligns with the documented

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Wolfgang Mueller, "Genese und historischer Wandel der Neutralität Österreichs," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 53 (Special Issue: Neutralität), 7.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 6.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 7.

trend outlined in the Mürger report, which indicates that Swiss neutrality began to be perceived not only as a security measure but also as a potential constraining factor on foreign policy engagement. It is therefore evident that the post-bipolar period is characterized by a shift from a "strict" and "armed" understanding of neutrality to its functional adaptation and a more "active" stance amid growing institutional integration and interdependence.

An additional dimension of the discussion of the transformation of Swiss neutrality concerns the expansion of the concept of security. As stated in the 1998 discourse, the economy is also part of the common defense, and the concept of security includes participation in the international economy, open markets, and institutional cooperation³⁷⁹. This signifies a transition from a restricted military conception of security to a broader paradigm in which economic interdependence assumes a pivotal role. Therefore, it was no longer feasible to regard neutrality exclusively in military or legal terms; rather, it was necessary to analyze it within the broader context of global integration. Consequently, Swiss neutrality is increasingly perceived as a flexible and contested concept, whose meaning is actively redefined in response to structural changes in the international environment.

In this context, the adoption of the new Federal Constitution in 1999 (which entered into force on 1 January 2000) can be viewed not as a radical break with the previous tradition, but as an institutional consolidation of the already established multidimensional foreign policy orientation of the post-Cold War period³⁸⁰. It is noteworthy that neutrality, as in the constitutions of 1848 and 1874, was not included in the target articles of the new constitution, but was nevertheless reflected in the wording, emphasizing the "independence and security of the country":

*"Die Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft schützt die Freiheit und die Rechte des Volkes und wahrt **die Unabhängigkeit und die Sicherheit des Landes.**" (Art. 2, Abs. 1 BV).*

As well as commitment to a "peaceful and just international order":

*"Sie [Die Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft] setzt sich ein für die dauerhafte Erhaltung der natürlichen Lebensgrundlagen und **für eine friedliche und gerechte internationale Ordnung.**" (für eine friedliche und gerechte internationale Ordnung) (Art. 2, Abs. 4 BV).*

³⁷⁹ Mark A. Herzig, "Sicherheit durch Wirtschaft," *Zivilschutz* 45, no. 6 (1998): 16–17, accessed April 3, 2026, <https://www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/view?pid=zbk-003%3A1998%3A45%3A%3A235>, <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-369026>.

³⁸⁰ Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte*, 434.

Concurrently, the foreign policy objectives codified in Article 54 of the BV considerably broadened the traditional framework within which Swiss neutrality operated. While the Confederation remained committed to safeguarding its independence ("*Wahrung der Unabhängigkeit der Schweiz*"), Article 54(2) explicitly defined a wider range of external objectives, including contributing to the alleviation of poverty and hardship worldwide, promoting respect for human rights and democracy, fostering the peaceful coexistence of peoples, and preserving the natural foundations of life:

"Der Bund setzt sich ein für die Wahrung der Unabhängigkeit der Schweiz und für ihre Wohlfahrt; er trägt namentlich bei zur Linderung von Not und Armut in der Welt, zur Achtung der Menschenrechte und zur Förderung der Demokratie, zu einem friedlichen Zusammenleben der Völker sowie zur Erhaltung der natürlichen Lebensgrundlagen." (Art. 54, Abs. 2 BV).

These constitutional provisions reflected a more sophisticated understanding of Swiss foreign policy than the classical conception of neutrality as mere non-alignment or non-interference.

Furthermore, the constitutional reforms of 1999 extended beyond the substantive objectives of foreign policy and affected its institutional foundations. The role of the cantons in the formulation of foreign policy decisions affecting their competencies and essential interests was strengthened by Article 55 BV. Article 55(3) is of particular significance in this regard, as it stipulates that, in such cases, the cantons are to participate appropriately in international negotiations:

"Den Stellungnahmen der Kantone kommt besonderes Gewicht zu, wenn sie in ihren Zuständigkeiten betroffen sind. In diesen Fällen wirken die Kantone in geeigneter Weise an internationalen Verhandlungen mit." (Art. 55, Abs. 3 BV).

This provision is indicative of a progressively intricate and multilevel comprehension of Switzerland's external relations. Foreign policy was no longer conceptualized exclusively as a domain of federal diplomacy; rather, there was an increasing incorporation of subnational actors into international decision-making processes.

When considered collectively, Articles 54 and 55 BV³⁸¹ demonstrate a notable evolution in the constitutional understanding of Switzerland's position within the global system. While

³⁸¹ Switzerland, Bundesverfassung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft vom 18. April 1999 (SR 101), status as of current version, accessed April 4, 2026, <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1999/404/de>.

the preservation of independence remained a central objective, the Constitution simultaneously institutionalized international cooperation, humanitarian engagement, democracy promotion, and broader participation in international governance structures. In this sense, the constitutional reform consolidated the transformation of Swiss neutrality from a doctrine of non-alignment that was predominantly state-centred into a component of a more comprehensive and multilayered foreign-policy framework.

Moreover, the direct consolidation of Neutrality in the competence of the Federal Assembly and the Federal Council (*Art. 173 and 185 BV*) indicates a further shift of neutrality from a normative principle into an instrument of practical policy³⁸²:

"Sie [Die Bundesversammlung] trifft Massnahmen zur Wahrung der äusseren Sicherheit, der Unabhängigkeit und der Neutralität der Schweiz." (Art. 173, Abs. a BV);

"Der Bundesrat trifft Massnahmen zur Wahrung der äusseren Sicherheit, der Unabhängigkeit und der Neutralität der Schweiz." (Art. 185, Abs. 1 BV).

Thus, this configuration is indicative of a more adaptable and pragmatic approach to Swiss neutrality, whereby the content was determined not by an abstract doctrine but rather by specific foreign policy objectives. Thus, neutrality itself no longer functions as a fundamental objective of foreign policy but rather as a tool employed within a broader strategy of international engagement. Additionally, the legal implications of neutrality were determined not only by constitutional law (*Art. 1, 2, 6 BV*)³⁸³ but also by international law, particularly the Hague Convention of 1907. This obliged Switzerland to refrain from participating in armed conflicts, from providing its territory for military operations, and from offering direct military support to belligerents.

Moreover, it is important to note that the concept of neutrality is only peripherally addressed in the text of the Constitution. The 1999 Constitution did not elevate neutrality to the rank of a constitutional goal of the Confederation or a general principle of foreign policy. Conversely, neutrality was mentioned principally in institutional terms, as an object that should be protected by the Federal Assembly and the Federal Council. This finding suggests that

³⁸² Jorio, *Die Schweiz und ihre Neutralität: Eine 400-jährige Geschichte*, 435

³⁸³ Switzerland, Bundesverfassung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft vom 18. April 1999 (SR 101).

neutrality has been recognized by the Constitution but has not become a fundamental goal of Swiss foreign policy.

The approval of the Constitution in 1999 by much of the population (59%) and the cantons (13:10) established a "multidimensional foreign policy objective", in which neutrality is maintained primarily at the level of institutional powers³⁸⁴. This change signified a re-evaluation of Swiss Neutrality, marking its transition from a normative defining principle of foreign policy to a tool embedded within the broader strategy of the country's international participation. Therefore, the 1999 Constitution did not redefine neutrality in a normative sense but definitively resolved the institutional transition to a more flexible and functional understanding of neutrality, adapted to the conditions of the post-bipolar world. This allowed Switzerland to combine formal non-alignment with military blocs with active participation in international institutions and global security management processes.

A quite informative summary of the rethinking of Swiss neutrality in the post-bipolar period was the report of the Federal Council, *"Swiss Neutrality in Practice - Current Aspects"*, 2000, which was published in the year the new Federal Constitution came into force. In contrast to earlier normative formulations, this document focuses less on the legal definition of neutrality than on its practical application in a changed international environment, primarily in the context of the 1998-1999 Kosovo crisis³⁸⁵. Accordingly, the report explicitly states that the "strict" understanding of neutrality characteristic of the Cold War period has been revised. It is argued that the concept of neutrality itself has lost its universal character and must adapt to the new conditions of international politics³⁸⁶. In this interpretation, neutrality is regarded as a tool with limited application, which does not prevent Switzerland from participating in international sanctions, multilateral initiatives, and institutions of collective security³⁸⁷. Consequently, the document signifies a shift from a model of restrained distancing to a more flexible, contextual approach that facilitates active involvement in international processes.

It is particularly noteworthy that the publication of this report immediately after the entry into force of the 1999 Constitution allows us to consider it as a practical development of the multidimensional foreign policy orientation enshrined in it. While the Constitution

³⁸⁴ Riklin, "Neutralität", 2010.

³⁸⁵ Swiss Federal Council, *Swiss Neutrality in Practice: Current Aspects* (Bern, 2000), 5–6, accessed April 4, 2026, https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/eda/en/documents/aussenpolitik/voelkerrecht/bericht-neutralitaetspraxis-kosovo-2000_EN.pdf.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 7.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 8–9.

institutionalized the expansion of foreign policy goals, including the promotion of international cooperation and peace, the 2000 report demonstrates how these goals are implemented in practice, such as through participation in sanctions regimes and cooperation with international organizations³⁸⁸. In this sense, the report functions as a link between the normative transformation and its practical implementation. Accordingly, the 2000 report indicates that the reinterpretation of neutrality was not merely declarative but was also manifest in Swiss foreign policy practice.

The practical implications of the transformation of Swiss neutrality were also reflected in the expansion of the country's role in international mediation and peacekeeping initiatives in the early 2000s. In contrast to the more traditional understanding of "good offices", which was limited to providing a neutral venue for negotiations (a practice in which Switzerland actively engaged during the Cold War), in the new millennium, Swiss policy increasingly began to include active participation in the organizations and support of peace processes. Switzerland's involvement in the peace process in Colombia serves as a pertinent exemplar. Since the early 2000s, Switzerland has been a member of the "*friends of the peace process*" (*Países amigos*)³⁸⁹ mediation group and has participated in moderating negotiations between the Government and armed non-state actors. In this case, the Swiss side did not limit itself to the role of a passive mediator. However, it actively promoted establishing contacts between the parties, preparing for negotiations, and maintaining long-term dialogue³⁹⁰. A similar approach has been observed in other conflicts, including Sudan, where Switzerland acted not only as a neutral platform but also as an active participant in the negotiation process, contributing to the formation of stable communication channels between the parties³⁹¹.

This practice is indicative of a qualitative change in the content of "good offices": neutrality no longer signifies non-interference exclusively and is increasingly associated with proactive assistance in the peaceful settlement of conflicts. As part of this "active" approach, a neutral State provides a space for negotiations and participates in the formation of international coalitions. Furthermore, it supports negotiation formats and ensures their institutional stability. Consequently, Swiss foreign policy shifted towards a more active and outward-oriented approach. According to Andreas Graf and David Lanz, Switzerland has increasingly adopted elements of an "*internationalist foreign policy turn*", including participation in UN and OSCE

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 10–11.

³⁸⁹ Thomas Fischer, *Switzerland's Good Offices: A Changing Concept, 1945–2002*, 20.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 21.

missions, the development of multilateral cooperation, and the expansion of its role in promoting peace³⁹².

The evolution of neutrality's functional comprehension in the early 2000s was characterized by decisions undertaken at the level of direct democracy. These decisions effectively legitimized the expansion of Switzerland's foreign policy initiatives. Specifically, in a referendum held on 10 June 2001, most citizens (51%) expressed support for arming Swiss military personnel engaged in UN peacekeeping missions, while also establishing clear limitations on their engagement, thereby excluding them from hostilities³⁹³. This decision marked a qualitative shift from Switzerland's previous practice of participating in international missions, including in Western Sahara, Namibia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, exclusively with unarmed personnel³⁹⁴. It is noteworthy that the Federal Council has placed significant emphasis on the use of civilian instruments to promote peace, clearly distinguishing them from military involvement. Consequently, civil peacebuilding was presented not as a departure from neutrality, but as a logical continuation of renewed non-neutrality within the tradition of "good offices"³⁹⁵. The Swiss government has therefore subtly coordinated international activity with domestic restrictions and conservative disapproval.

The decisive stage came with the referendum on Switzerland's accession to the United Nations on 3 March 2002, which was approved by most citizens (54.6%) and by most cantons (12 in favor, 11 against)³⁹⁶. Accordingly, since September 2002, Switzerland has been an official member of the United Nations and, as the last sovereign state to do so, has been fully involved in the activities of the organization's specialized agencies over the past decade. Several experts³⁹⁷ considered Swiss membership of the United Nations an important step in the 21st century towards Switzerland's more active institutional integration into the international community and collective security mechanisms. In this regard, the position of the Federal

³⁹² Graf and Lanz, "Conclusions: Switzerland as a Paradigmatic Case of Small-State Peace Policy?", 419.

³⁹³ Riklin, "Neutralität", 2010.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Graf and Lanz, "Conclusions: Switzerland as a Paradigmatic Case of Small-State Peace Policy?", 419–420.

³⁹⁶ Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), *Switzerland: A Decade of UN Membership* (Bern: FDFA, 2012), 2–3, accessed April 4, 2026, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/eda/en/documents/aktuell/dossiers/Factsheet%2010%20Jahre%20UNO%20EN.pdf>.

Riklin, "Neutralität", 2010.

³⁹⁷ Andrea Bianchi, quoted in "Switzerland in the United Nations: 10 Years On," Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, June 7, 2012, accessed April 4, 2026, <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/communications/news/switzerland-united-nations-10-years>.

Council was of particular importance, as it emphasized, in its application for membership, the compatibility of UN membership with the principle of neutrality³⁹⁸.

This argument was based on a broader legal context: the classical law of neutrality, enshrined in the Hague Conventions of 1907, was formulated in the absence of a universal system of collective security and, accordingly, did not address the interactions of neutral states with organizations such as the UN. This created a certain regulatory uncertainty, but a consensus has emerged in international relations that the participation of neutral states in the UN does not contradict their status, provided that the basic obligations of neutrality are maintained³⁹⁹. Therefore, Switzerland, in keeping with other neutral states, operates on the assumption that membership in the United Nations is not inherently incompatible with neutrality, since participation in the collective security system does not obligate automatic involvement in military operations, thereby preserving political and military autonomy. Thus, the Federal Council's official position emphasized the fundamental compatibility of neutrality with participation in the United Nations. The 2000 report reviewed above stated that "*the purposes of the UN Charter correspond to the goals of Swiss foreign policy*" and that Switzerland could support these goals without renouncing neutrality⁴⁰⁰. At the same time, however, membership was also seen as a means of strengthening the country's influence, with participation in the main UN bodies supposedly enabling Switzerland to promote its foreign policy interests more effectively⁴⁰¹. However, this position represented a significant departure from the previous "strict" approach. Consequently, a situation arose in which formal distancing was combined with actual integration into international structures.

Simultaneously, as emphasized in the relevant academic literature, the Swiss government did not perceive the expansion of cooperation with international organizations, including the United Nations, and even the development of relations with NATO, as a rejection of neutrality. Rather, it was regarded as a form of cooperation that was consistent with the broader objectives of the country's foreign policy⁴⁰². Conceptually, Switzerland's membership

³⁹⁸ United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Recommends Admission of Switzerland as Member of the United Nations," July 24, 2002, accessed April 4, 2026, <https://press.un.org/en/2002/sc7464.doc.htm>.

³⁹⁹ Riklin, "Neutralität", 2010.

⁴⁰⁰ Sacha Zala and Flurina Felix, eds., *La Suisse et la construction du multilatéralisme. Bd. 3: Diplomatique Documents der Schweiz zur Geschichte der UNO 1942–2002 = Documents diplomatiques suisses sur l'histoire de l'ONU 1942–2002* (Bern: Documents Diplomatiques Suisses (Dodis), 2022), 15.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Sacha Zala and Flurina Felix, eds., *La Suisse et la construction du multilatéralisme. Bd. 3: Diplomatique Documents der Schweiz zur Geschichte der UNO 1942–2002 = Documents diplomatiques suisses sur l'histoire de l'ONU 1942–2002* (Bern: Documents Diplomatiques Suisses (Dodis), 2022), 30–31.

of the UN led to a rethink of neutrality. Rather than being a principle of distancing, it became a fully-fledged instrument of state foreign policy, compatible with participation in multilateral institutions.

In a broader context, Switzerland's UN membership reflected the final erosion of the idea of Swiss "strict" neutrality, which was characteristic of the Cold War period. Swiss policy has become increasingly divergent from the model of isolationist neutrality. Participation in international organizations and cooperative mechanisms has become a prerequisite for the state's functioning in a globalizing world⁴⁰³. Concurrently, this shift did not entail a complete abandonment of neutrality: Switzerland continues to adhere to the principle of non-participation in other states' armed conflicts and maintains its distance from military alliances. This distinguishes it from several other European neutral states (the most recent example being Finland's accession to NATO in April 2023 against the background of the **Russian war against Ukraine**). Furthermore, Switzerland's decision to align with the European Union's sanctions against the Russian Federation in 2022 serves as a remarkable illustration of contemporary interpretations of neutrality. This step demonstrated that neutrality, in its modern form, does not preclude participation in collective economic pressure measures and is increasingly interpreted as compatible with an active foreign policy position. However, this aspect constitutes a separate area of analysis and, despite its importance, falls outside the scope of the present master's research question.

To summarize the preceding sub-chapter, Swiss neutrality has undergone a period of profound legal and political adaptation since 1992. The rejection of EEA membership in the 1992 referendum demonstrated both the enduring intrinsic power of neutrality as a symbol of sovereignty and the growing limits of its traditional Cold War era significance in an increasingly interdependent Europe. In response, political and academic debates in Switzerland began to narrow the concept of neutrality to its legal basis. This shift was consolidated in the 1993 report of the Federal Council and the White Paper, which drew a clearer distinction between the "law on neutrality" and the "policy of neutrality". Consequently, neutrality was no longer regarded as a comprehensive doctrine governing all aspects of foreign policy, but rather as a limited legal framework applicable primarily in situations of armed conflict. In contrast, broader foreign policy goals could be pursued with greater flexibility.

John Dreyer and Neal G. Jesse, "Swiss Neutrality Examined: Model, Exception or Both?" *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 15, no. 3 (2014): 67–68.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 68.

In the latter half of the 1990s, this reinvention enabled Switzerland to expand its international involvement without formally abandoning its neutrality. Despite the ongoing imposition of notable restrictions by public opinion, as exemplified by the cessation of UN armed peacekeeping operations in 1994, Switzerland maintained an active engagement in OSCE missions, humanitarian diplomacy, arms control regimes, and, since 1996, in collaboration with NATO under the Partnership for Peace program. Concurrently, bilateral accords with the EU and an escalating involvement in multilateral security and disarmament initiatives signaled a gradual shift away from the Cold War isolationist interpretation of neutrality. During this period, neutrality increasingly functioned not as a strict rule of abstinence, but as a flexible instrument compatible with selective international cooperation.

At the turn of the millennium, this transformation was institutionalized. The new Federal Constitution of 1999 placed neutrality within a broader framework of foreign policy goals, including peace consolidation, human rights, and international cooperation, while the Swiss Neutrality in Practice report of 2000 confirmed its increasingly pragmatic interpretation. This culminated in two key turning points: the decision in 2001 to arm Swiss personnel in peacekeeping missions under strict restrictions, and Switzerland's accession to the United Nations in 2002. When considered as a whole, these changes demonstrate that Switzerland's neutrality was not abolished but fundamentally revised during the period from 1992 to 2002. It transformed the comprehensive and restrictive doctrine of armed non-alignment neutrality, which was in force during the Cold War, into a more functional, legally limited, and politically adaptable active concept that corresponds to the post-bipolar international order of the new century.

CONCLUSION

The present thesis posits that Swiss neutrality does not disappear in the post-bipolar period. However, it undergoes a profound structural transformation, during which it loses its status as a system-forming principle and becomes a situational tool of application. The central argument of this research is that the issue at hand is not merely about adapting neutrality within the framework of the previous paradigm, but rather about transforming the very logic of Swiss foreign policy goal setting, wherein neutrality assumes a subordinate and contextually constrained position.

Accordingly, during the Cold War, neutrality functioned as the central coordinating principle of Swiss foreign policy, combining legal obligations and political practice. This approach offered a strategic opportunity to both distance themselves from the confrontation with the Soviet bloc and engage in international economic and diplomatic processes. However, even during this period, the content was internally contradictory. On the one hand, Neutrality was predicated on the norms of international law (in particular, the Hague Conventions) and assumed non-involvement in military conflicts. Conversely, in practice, it functioned as a pragmatic instrument that enabled Switzerland to harmonize formal non-inclusion within the bloc system with economic and political integration into the Western political sphere. As demonstrated in this research, within Western historiography, neutrality functioned as an active resource, providing diplomatic mediation, the development of "good offices," and participation in international institutions. Concurrently, the Soviet interpretation manifests its structural ambiguity, underscoring the reliance of neutral policy on the dynamics of bipolar confrontation and the prevailing orientation towards the Western system. It is noteworthy that even during the Cold War, neutrality was neither exclusively legal nor completely autonomous. Rather, it was an adaptive strategy employed by a small state, in which formal non-involvement was combined with actual integration into the Western system. This confirms the instrumental nature of Swiss Neutrality, even during the Cold War, when it was publicly perceived as strict and distant.

The collapse of the bipolar system, marked by the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc in 1989 and the Soviet Union in 1991, led to a fundamental shift in the global landscape, thereby triggering a pivotal reinterpretation of Swiss Neutrality. The dissolution of the former geopolitical context deprived neutrality of its traditional role in maintaining distance between the blocs. In a world of growing international interdependence, institutionalized security, and increased multilateral cooperation, neutrality has ceased to be a universal principle of foreign policy. Instead, it has become a dependent variable, determined by external structures and new

forms of international interaction. As the present thesis has shown, this transition was not spontaneous, but rather the result of a consistent conceptual reassessment. Five conceptual reports subsequently determined Switzerland's position in the new international environment: the 1992 Neutrality Study of the Expert Commission; the 1993 White Book; the 1993 and 2000 Foreign Policy Reports of the Federal Council; and the 1999 Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation. When considered as a whole, these documents illustrate a shift towards a novel foreign-policy rationality, in which neutrality is progressively losing its status as a normative core.

The period 1992-2002 is of critical importance in this transformation. The 1992 EEA referendum exposed a fundamental contradiction between the continued symbolic importance of neutrality and its limited functional applicability in the context of deepening European integration. In response to this challenge, a new conceptual framework was formulated, most clearly expressed in the 1993 Federal Council report, which, in retrospect, marked a turning point for rethinking Swiss Neutrality. The report does not merely correct the previous model but rather redefines its foundations. In contradistinction to monistic logic, in which neutrality functioned as a means to achieve the exclusive objective of preserving independence, a pluralistic structure of goals is proposed: security, peace, democracy, economic development, and environmental sustainability. Consequently, a transition is underway from a single regulatory framework to competing foreign policy guidelines. The distinction between the "law of neutrality" and the "policy of neutrality" introduced by the report signified a qualitative shift, in which neutrality shifted from a comprehensive doctrine to a limited legal regime, primarily applicable in the context of interstate warfare.

In this configuration, the concept of neutrality is rendered less central and is reduced to a "reserve position". This indicates a fundamental shift in the conceptualization of neutrality, whereby it no longer serves as a defining characteristic of political boundaries. Instead, neutrality is now employed solely in instances where international cooperation proves ineffective. The fundamental concept underpinning this approach is the protection of interests, achieved through active participation in shaping the international order. Therefore, the model of a distant observer is relinquished in favor of the involved actor.

A redefinition of sovereignty accompanies this shift. Rather than being interpreted as maximum autonomy, independence is now understood as the ability to act in an environment of interdependence. Participation in international institutions is no longer viewed as limiting, but rather as a means of realizing sovereignty. A similar transformation is taking place in the

field of security, with the traditional concept of "armed neutrality" giving way to the idea of cooperative security. This new approach allows for participation in sanctions, peacekeeping operations, and other forms of institutional cooperation. Of particular importance is the introduction of a dualistic model of conflict. Neutrality only applies to classic interstate wars, whereas active participation is permitted in relation to "collective measures" — sanctions, peacekeeping, and UN mechanisms. This represents a shift towards selective neutrality, which undermines the universality of the traditional doctrine.

Taken together, these factors create a hybrid model of foreign policy in which, while neutrality remains a rhetorical concept, it loses its defining function in practice. However, this model is internally tense: the political need to preserve neutrality as a national identity characteristic coexists with its functional erosion.

The next stage of this process is characterized by the gradual overcoming of neutrality, rather than adaptation. The "*Notfall*" logic has been criticized as outdated because it is based on classical war scenarios, which are much less likely to occur in post-bipolar Europe. Transnational threats are increasingly prevalent, necessitating constant and institutionalized cooperation. In these circumstances, neutrality is increasingly seen as a limitation on effective foreign policy. The central element of the new paradigm is the transition to an active-cooperation model, in which security is achieved through inclusion within multi-level structures. At the institutional level, a two-component model of partial participation is emerging, with the cooperative dimension dominant.

This enabled Switzerland to adopt an "active neutrality" approach. In practice, it has resulted in increased participation in multilateral institutions and support for sanctions regimes. Switzerland has also become involved in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions and cooperates with NATO under the Partnership for Peace program. However, significant internal constraints have remained due to the mechanisms of direct democracy and the stable perception of neutrality as an element of national identity. These factors have resulted in a state of stable ambivalence: while foreign policy practice has become increasingly integrated, domestic political discourse continues to rely on the traditional understanding of neutrality.

The culmination of this process was Switzerland's accession to the UN in 2002. This step reinforced the idea that neutrality could be compatible with participation in the collective security system. Consequently, neutrality has been transformed from a principle of non-involvement into an instrument of regulated participation. The key conclusion of the present

thesis is that, in the post-bipolar era, there has been a shift from neutrality as a strict principle to neutrality as a means of managing interdependencies. While neutrality does not disappear overnight, it does undergo a structural reorientation within the broader architecture of cooperative security. This is a cumulative process, manifesting through practices that gradually render the classical model of Swiss neutrality irrelevant. Thus, following the end of the Cold War, neutrality has lost its status as a universal and defining doctrine. However, it remains a flexible instrument of foreign policy, adapting to different contexts. Modern neutrality is based on a clear distinction between legal status and political practice. This enables Switzerland to combine formal non-entry into military alliances with active participation in international governance to this day.

Consequently, the stability of Swiss neutrality is not determined by its immutability, but by its ability to adapt and transform further. In the modern international context, neutrality is not a limitation but a tool for optimizing participation in global structures — a tool whose importance is determined by effectiveness rather than tradition. It is precisely this adaptability that enables us to view it not as a relic of the bipolar era, but as a transformed yet still relevant instrument of foreign policy for a small state in a globalized world.

Findings and historical implications

The present thesis defends the position that Swiss neutrality should be understood not as a static Cold War doctrine, but as a structurally adaptive instrument of foreign policy. The research further argues that the transformation of Swiss neutrality after 1989 represented an acceleration and institutionalization of the dynamics already present during the Cold War.

Functional transformation of neutrality

During the Cold War, neutrality was the fundamental organizing principle of Swiss foreign policy, enabling the nation to navigate the bipolar world order. Neutrality has been a fundamental aspect of both legal obligations and political practice in Switzerland, enabling the country to maintain formal non-alignment while concurrently engaging in economic and diplomatic relations with both Western states and representatives of the Eastern Bloc. In 1989, this function underwent a radical transformation. The dissolution of the bipolar system led to the collapse of the structural conditions that made neutrality function as a balancing mechanism. Consequently, neutrality has been rendered a context-sensitive tool used selectively depending on the international situation, rather than a system-forming principle.

This transformation is reflected in Swiss politics:

- Participation in sanctions regimes (from 1990 onwards);
- Participation in CSCE/OSCE missions;
- Cooperation with NATO in the framework of the Partnership for Peace program (since 1996);
- The United Nations accession in 2002.

Legislative reduction and policy expansion are two concepts that are intricately linked.

The fundamental conclusion drawn from this research is the necessity to revise the doctrine of neutrality, a concept particularly emphasized in the 1993 Federal Council report. The distinction between the *law of neutrality* and the *policy of neutrality* enabled Switzerland to reduce neutrality to its legal basis, which applies principally in inter-State armed conflicts, while expanding its foreign policy practice. The institutional distinction between the *law of neutrality* and the *policy of neutrality* not only clarified existing practice but also reinterpreted neutrality as a residual legal restriction within an otherwise interest-based foreign policy framework. Consequently, neutrality remained legally binding in a restricted sense, and broader international participation became politically acceptable. This signifies a transition from a comprehensive doctrine to a residual legal framework.

Integration into multilateral structures

The findings of this thesis indicate that Swiss neutrality is becoming increasingly integrated into the multilateral institutional framework. Switzerland has expanded its involvement in:

- UN-related activities and peace missions (e.g., the CSCE/OSCE);
- Arms control regimes (e.g., the CWC);
- European and transatlantic cooperation structures (e.g., the PfP).

From a Global History perspective, this transition from separation to engagement reflects that neutrality is no longer a means of distancing oneself from international politics but instead functions within dense networks of interdependence.

Neutrality as a Small State Strategy

The present research indicates that the Swiss case confirms that neutrality can function as a strategic resource for a small state, enabling the preservation of political autonomy and the accumulation of diplomatic credibility, as well as specialization in mediation and “good offices”. However, following the end of the Cold War, neutrality evolved from a defensive

strategy into a functional instrument of participation, enabling Switzerland to maintain its relevance within a multilateral system.

Security Concept Shift

The present thesis identifies a transition from "armed neutrality" to "security through cooperation" (active neutrality), as reflected in:

- Military reforms (*Armeeleitbild 95*);
- Participation in peacekeeping and observer missions;
- Engagement in international security frameworks.

This indicates a shift from national defense logic to cooperative security, which is compatible with neutrality under its revised interpretation.

Persistence of Domestic Constraints

The research indicates that, despite all the changes, neutrality remained a core element of national identity, thereby limiting the pace of transformation. This is demonstrated by the rejection of UN membership in 1986, of EEA membership in 1992, and of participation in armed peacekeeping in 1994. These cases reveal a persistent gap between elite-level foreign policy adaptation and the public's attachment to traditional neutrality. This results in a state of structural ambivalence.

Reassessment of the "Strict Neutrality" Paradigm

A key finding of this thesis is that the commonly held belief that Swiss neutrality during the Cold War was consistently rigid and unchanging warrants reconsideration. The research reveals that processes of adaptation and reinterpretation were evident during this period, both in practice and in conceptual debates. Firstly, Switzerland's participation in Western economic security measures, including export restrictions coordinated with Western states (e.g., CoCom-related mechanisms and the Hotz–Linder Agreement of 1951), demonstrates selective integration into Western strategic structures despite formal neutrality. Secondly, participation in the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission shows that Swiss neutrality was embedded in Cold War bloc dynamics rather than existing outside them. Thirdly, Switzerland's active use of "good offices" and representation mandates (e.g., involving the USSR, Iraq, and Argentina) shows that neutrality functioned as an instrument of diplomatic engagement rather than as passive non-involvement. Fourthly, Switzerland's economic integration with Western Europe, including the 1972 Free Trade Agreement with the European Economic Community, reflects

growing structural interdependence with the Western bloc. Finally, theoretical interpretations, particularly those of Jürg Martin Gabriel (from Western scholars) and Soviet authors such as Boris Ganiushkin, demonstrate that neutrality was conceptualized as a means subordinated to broader foreign policy objectives, allowing for flexibility in cases of conflicting interests.

Therefore, rather than marking a rupture, the end of the Cold War exposed the latent contradiction between legal doctrine and political practice that had characterized Swiss neutrality throughout the Cold War period.

Historical Implication of Findings

These research findings suggest that the transformation of Swiss neutrality did not begin after 1989. Rather, the end of the Cold War acted as a catalyst, accelerating pre-existing structural tendencies. During the Cold War, adaptation existed at the level of practice and implicit doctrine. After 1990, these tendencies were formalized and institutionalized. Therefore, neutrality should be understood as an evolving and dependent concept, shaped by changes in the international system.

Overall, the present thesis demonstrates that Swiss neutrality underwent a transition from a universal and restrictive doctrine to a limited legal framework combined with an active foreign policy strategy. In this sense, Swiss neutrality was gradually displaced from the center of foreign policy, only to be reintegrated as a secondary instrument within a broader architecture of multilateral cooperation. This transformation reflects broader systemic changes, including the end of bipolarity, the rise of multilateral governance, and increasing global interdependence. Swiss neutrality remains relevant not because it is unchanged, but because it has continuously adapted to new structural conditions. This transformation illustrates how small states can maintain agency not through rigid adherence to doctrine, but through the continuous reinterpretation of strategic concepts in response to changing systemic conditions.

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