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AUSTRIA, NEUTRALITY AND NON-ALIGNMENT

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*The Rise of Asia in Global History and Perspective:
60 years after Belgrade – what non-alignment in a multipolar world?*

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(I)
Neutrality as non-alignment

After World War II, Austria regained its sovereign status on the basis of a constitutional commitment to a non-aligned foreign policy. In the Moscow Memorandum of 15 April 1955,¹ the Austrian government solemnly pledged to work for the adoption of a law that would enshrine in the Constitution a provision of permanent neutrality according to the model of Switzerland.² In a political *quid pro quo* that resembled the one that became the basis of re-established Swiss independence after the Vienna Congress of 1815,³ the Austrian “neutrality law” was to be passed after the ratification of a “State Treaty” with the four Allied Powers on the re-establishment of an independent Austria, to be followed by the withdrawal of all Allied troops from Austrian territory.⁴ The rationale of the agreement was strikingly similar to the considerations of the Powers at the Vienna Congress, namely that permanent neutrality of a state can be in the “general interest” of the international community.⁵ It was about the idea of non-alignment as a stabilizing factor in the concert of powers, whether in the post-Napoleonic or the post-World War II era.⁶

¹ *Memorandum über die Ergebnisse der Besprechungen zwischen der Regierungsdelegation der Republik Österreich und der Regierungsdelegation der Sowjetunion* [Memorandum regarding the results of the talks between the governmental delegation of the Republic of Austria and the governmental delegation of the Soviet Union]. The document, classified as “strictly confidential,” was signed on the day after the conclusion of talks in Moscow that lasted from 12 to 14 April 1955. – All German titles and quotes in this paper are translated by the author.

² Article I (1) of the Memorandum.

³ After the Napoleonic wars in 1815, the victorious Powers of the Vienna Congress had determined “that the general interest demands that the Helvetic States should enjoy the benefit of a perpetual neutrality.” The powers also committed themselves to enable Switzerland “to secure its independence and maintain its neutrality.” (“XI: Déclaration des puissances sur les affaires de la Confédération Helvétique, du 20 Mars 1815,” in: *Actes du Congrès de Vienne*. Brussels: Weissenbruch, 1819, p. 274. (Translated from French.) On 27th May 1815, the Helvetic Diet expressed the “eternal gratitude of the Swiss nation” to the “High Powers [Contracting Powers of the Vienna Congress], who (...) promise solemnly to acknowledge and guarantee the perpetual neutrality of the Helvetic Body, as being necessary to the general interest of Europe.” (“XI: Acte d’accession [*en date de Zurich le 27 Mai 1815*] de la Confédération Suisse à la Déclaration des Puissances réunies au Congrès de Vienne, *en date du 20 Mars 1815*,” *op. cit.*, pp. 285f.) (Translated from French.)

⁴ As early as 1947, Austrian President Karl Renner – who served as first post-war Chancellor (Prime Minister) of Austria in 1945 – referred to the “ewige Neutralität” [perpetual neutrality] of Switzerland as basis of the country’s recognition as a sovereign state after the Napoleonic wars. (Karl Renner, “Die ideologische Ausrichtung der Politik Österreichs” [The Ideological Direction of Austrian Policy], in: *Wiener Zeitung*, 240th Year, No. 16, 19 January 1947, p. 1.)

⁵ *Actes du Congrès de Vienne*, p. 274, p. 286. See quotes in fn. 3 above.

⁶ The difference between the arrangements of 1815 and 1955 was in the sequence of the steps. While in the former case, the neutral status was initially brought up by the guaranteeing Powers, and acceded to by the concerned state (Switzerland), in the latter case, the neutral status was “offered” by the concerned state (Austria) so as to induce the Allied Powers (the Soviet Union, in particular) to agree to a “State Treaty” on the restoration of Austrian sovereignty.

One of the founders of the Non-aligned Movement, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, played a crucial role in Austria's efforts. On 20 June 1953, he met with Austrian Foreign Minister Karl Gruber on the Bürgenstock Mountain above Lake Lucerne, Switzerland.⁷ The latter asked for the Prime Minister's good offices vis-à-vis the Soviet government in the matter of the deadlocked negotiations on the State Treaty⁸ between Austria and the four Allied Powers.⁹ Conclusion of the treaty was Austria's top priority on the road to recognition of its sovereign status.¹⁰ Gruber told the Prime Minister – in the presence of India's Ambassador to Moscow, K. P. S. Menon¹¹ – that his government was considering to offer “guarantees against Austrian participation in military alliances,” i.e. a constitutionally enshrined policy of permanent neutrality.¹² He asked Nehru to convey this position to the Soviet authorities.¹³ According to British historian Sir John Wheeler-Bennett,

“Nehru was intrigued with the idea. He accepted the office of mediator¹⁴ and shortly thereafter [K. P. S.] Menon, in conversation with Molotov in Moscow, advanced the proposal – as coming from himself and without committing the Austrian Government – that an undertaking by Austria not to allow foreign military bases upon her territory or to

⁷ “Auf dem Bürgenstock am Vierwaldstättersee: Außenminister Dr. Gruber besucht Pandit Nehru“ [On the Bürgenstock Mountain at Lake Lucerne: Foreign Minister Dr. Gruber visits Pandit Nehru], in: *Neues Österreich*, 9th Year (No. 140), No. 2478, Vienna, 20 June 1953, p. 1. – “Gruber besucht Nehru auf dem Bürgenstock,” in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Zurich, 19 June 1953, p. 38.

⁸ On the difficulties of the negotiations that repeatedly stalled due to mutual mistrust among the Allied Powers see Karl Gruber's detailed record: *Zwischen Befreiung und Freiheit: Der Sonderfall Österreich* [Between Liberation and Freedom: Special Case Austria]. Vienna: Ullstein, 2nd ed. 1953, pp. 309ff. – Cf. also, Gerald Stourzh and Wolfgang Mueller, *Der Kampf um den Staatsvertrag 1945-1955: Ost-West-Besetzung, Staatsvertrag und Neutralität Österreichs* [The Struggle for the State Treaty 1945-1955: East-West-Occupation, State Treaty, and the Neutrality of Austria]. Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2020.

⁹ For details see, *inter alia*, Michael Gehler, “Grubers Treffen mit Nehru am 20. Juni 1953: Allianzfreiheit als Maximum des Möglichen und die Bürgenstock-Initiative” [Gruber's Meeting with Nehru on June 20th, 1953: Non-alignment as Maximum of what is Possible, and the Bürgenstock Initiative], in: *Modellfall für Deutschland? Die Österreichlösung mit Staatsvertrag und Neutralität 1945-1955* [Model for Germany? The Austrian Solution: State Treaty and Neutrality 1945-1955]. Innsbruck/Vienna/Bozen: StudienVerlag, 2015, pp. 279ff. – Margit Franz, “Höhepunkte der österreichisch-indischen Beziehungen,” in: Gabriela Krist and Tatjana Bayerová (eds.), *Heritage Conservation and Research in India: 60 Years of Indo-Austrian Collaboration*. Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2010, p. 18.

¹⁰ For an overview, cf. Gerald Stourzh, “Österreichs Weg zum Staatsvertrag und zur Neutralität,” in: Forum Politische Bildung (ed.), *Frei – Souverän – Neutral – Europäisch. 1945 – 1955 – 1995 – 2005*. Innsbruck/Vienna: Studien Verlag 2004, pp. 7-20; p. 17.

¹¹ Former Foreign Secretary (1948-1952) and Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union (1952-1961), not to be confused with Krishna Menon, Indian Ambassador to the United Nations (1952-1962). The confusion frequently occurs in literature about Indian mediation in the matter of the Austrian State Treaty.

¹² Karl Gruber, *Ein politisches Leben: Österreichs Weg zwischen den Diktaturen* [A Political Life: Austria's Journey between Dictatorships]. Vienna/Munich/Zurich: Molden, [1976], p. 122.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 151.

¹⁴ See also a commentary in the Austrian media, “Indien bereit, Österreich ‘gute Dienste’ zu leihen“ [India ready to lend her ‘good offices’ to Austria], in: *Neues Österreich*, 9th Year (No. 141), No. 2479, 21 June 1953, pp. 1-2.

adhere to any military alliance of alignment with a foreign Power might form the basis for the conclusion of a *Staatsvertrag* [State Treaty].”¹⁵

In Sir Wheeler-Bennett’s assessment, Nehru’s role as “diplomatic mediator” introduced “an entirely new factor into the Austrian treaty discussions.”¹⁶ Similarly, in a secret diplomatic cable to the Department of State, the Acting United States High Commissioner for Austria, Walter C. Dowling, reported that Gruber had told Nehru that Austria would consider “some carefully-worded declaration against military alliances by Parliament,” but only in case that this was “essential for Soviet consent to treaty [*sic*].”¹⁷ The cable referred to a conversation between Gruber and the U.S. High Commissioner three days after the Bürgenstock meeting. The secret message further stated that Nehru was “agreeing entirely with Austrian views re neutrality.”¹⁸

Obviously, this was a constellation where the ideas of “neutrality,” proposed by Austria, and “non-alignment,” actively pursued by India, coincided. For Austria, however, it was a delicate balancing act between the conflicting geopolitical interests of the Allied occupying powers.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, in the wake of the meeting, a controversy erupted on how to qualify India’s intervention. After reports in the international media,²⁰ stating that Austria “had not been successful in convincing the Indian Prime Minister to intervene in the Austrian case” (Reuters)²¹ or that Nehru had denied that Austria had requested the Prime Minister’s official intervention (AFP),²² a debate ensued on terminology. Already on 23 June 1953, Austria’s Council of Ministers officially had officially declared the denials as “baseless.”²³

¹⁵ Sir John Wheeler-Bennett and Anthony Nicholls, *The Semblance of Peace: The Political Settlement after the Second World War*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1972, p. 478.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ “Austria: Interest of the United States in the reestablishment of an independent and democratic Austria,” 871/SECRET/3497, dated 25 June 1953, in: *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954*. Vol. VII: *Germany and Austria*, Part 2. William Z. Slany, Editor in Chief. (Department of State Publication 9470 – Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs.) Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1986, p. 1868.

¹⁸ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁹ The Western powers, in particular the United Kingdom, were highly skeptical of Austria’s “neutrality offer” and Nehru’s involvement. Cf. the above-quoted cable of the Acting U.S. High Commissioner, dated 25 June 1953, p. 1868. According to Gruber, for the Western powers, Nehru’s initiative came totally unexpected (*Ein politisches Leben*, p. 122). Concerning the United Kingdom, see also Gruber, *op. cit.*, p. 123. Furthermore, according to Gruber, the British complained that Nehru had met with the Austrian Foreign Minister without consulting them, which they considered particularly embarrassing in view of India’s Commonwealth membership (pp. 147f).

²⁰ According to the Austrian daily “*Neues Österreich*,” Nehru offered Austria India’s “good services” (*Neues Österreich*, “Die guten Dienste,” No. 2482, 25 June 1953, pp. 1-2) while AFP and Reuters reported exactly the opposite. (Cf., *inter alia*, *Der Spiegel*, “Cäsar mit Knöpfelschuhen” [Caesar with button shoes], No. 36/1953, 1 September 1953, pp. 1-19.)

²¹ Quoted according to *Neues Österreich*, Vienna, 25 June 1993, p. 1.

²² According to a report of the Cairo correspondent of AFP, quoted in *Der Spiegel*, *loc. cit.*

²³ *Neues Österreich*, *loc. cit.*

In an op-ed article on 25 June 1953, the well-informed newspaper *Neues Österreich* (The New Austria) spoke of Nehru as the “most eminent” representative of the powers that are committed to East-West understanding, and whose “willingness to act as advocate of our neglected rights (...) constitutes a fact of global political importance.”²⁴ Thus, Nehru acted as mediator in the true sense of the word, as has eventually also been confirmed by Gruber in his 1976 memoirs.²⁵

Although, in the Moscow meeting with the Indian Ambassador, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov reportedly said that Austria’s offer to commit herself to a neutral status was “useful,” but not “sufficient,”²⁶ the pledge by Austria was eventually drafted into the above-mentioned Moscow Memorandum of 1955, which finally paved the way for the State Treaty.²⁷

Thus, what was to be known as the “Bürgenstock Initiative” has become the foundation for the successful conclusion of the treaty in May 1955. Bruno Kreisky – at the time Minister of State in the Prime Minister’s Office, and later to become Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of Austria – summed it up in solemn style: “So ist der Name Nehru für immer mit der Geschichte unserer Neutralität verbunden.” [Thus, the name of Nehru will forever be connected with the history of our neutrality.]²⁸

The Bürgenstock meeting was the result of intensive and sustained diplomatic efforts vis-à-vis like-minded countries since 1952, when Austria rallied support for an “appeal” to the United Nations General Assembly concerning the country’s international status. The initiative, sponsored by Brazil and other states, including Mexico, the Netherlands and Lebanon, was also endorsed by India.²⁹ The matter was referred to the General Assembly’s Special Political

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

²⁵ *Ein politisches Leben*, pp. 124, 151, and *passim*.

²⁶ Heinrich Siegler (ed.), *Österreichs Weg zur Souveränität, Neutralität, Prosperität 1945-1959* [Austria’s Journey to Sovereignty, Neutrality, Prosperity 1945-1959]. Bonn/Vienna/Zurich: Verlag für Zeitarchive, 1959, Par. 55, p. 33. Cf. also, Thomas Fischer, “Mount Nehru: Friedensgipfel Bürgenstock” [Mount Nehru: Peace Summit Bürgenstock], in: *Transhelvetica*, #8/2012, January-February, p. 45. – Memo by Austrian Ambassador Enderl in the Austrian State Archive: *Amtsvermerk / Gespräch mit Botschafter K.P.S. Menon, Staatsvertragsfrage, 14. September 1953*. AdR BKA-AA II-Pol StV 1 316.065-Pol/53 323.914-Pol/53.

²⁷ It is an interesting coincidence that the Moscow Memorandum in which Austria committed itself to a status of permanent neutrality was signed a few days before the Asian-African Conference, convened at the initiative of Indonesia in Bandung (18-24 April 1955), and which became the decisive event for the creation of the Non-aligned Movement.

²⁸ Bruno Kreisky, *Reden*. Vol. 1. Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Staatsdruckerei, 1981, p. 597. – In his memoirs, Foreign Minister Karl Gruber – who was Nehru’s interlocutor in the delicate phase preceding the conclusion of the State Treaty – enthusiastically speaks about his “encounter with the Indian Prime Minister Pandit Nehru who, suddenly and unexpectedly, took such an active role in support of Austria” [“meine Begegnung mit dem plötzlich und unerwartet für Österreich so aktiv gewordenen indischen Ministerpräsidenten Pandit Nehru”] (*Ein politisches Leben*, p. 147).

²⁹ The Austrian Foreign Minister’s evaluation of Indian support is indicative of the two countries’ close diplomatic cooperation at the time, rooted in their mutual commitment to neutrality: “Die Zustimmung eines so bedeutenden Landes, dessen Neutralität im Ost-West-Konflikt über jedem Zweifel stand, mußte

Committee.³⁰ In the 1952 session of the Assembly, India's UN delegate, Ambassador Krishna Menon, addressed the Committee, expressing his country's support for the restoration of Austrian sovereignty. Foreign Minister Gruber expressed Austria's special appreciation: "Das Wort Indiens war für uns von großer Bedeutung" [The word of India was of major importance to us].³¹ Eventually, on 20 December 1952, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously addressed an "earnest appeal" to the four Allied Powers "to make a renewed and urgent effort on the terms of an Austrian treaty with a view to an early termination of the occupation of Austria and the full exercise by Austria of the powers inherent in its sovereignty."³² Also, in August 1952, the Political Director of the Foreign Ministry was sent to New Delhi where he met with the Prime Minister. Nehru assured him of India's readiness, at an opportune moment, to sound out the Soviet position concerning Austria's aspirations for the conclusion of a "State Treaty."³³ In view of obtaining accurate information on the intentions of the Soviet Union, deputies in the Austrian Parliament, in the course of 1953, further discussed the "engagement of a neutral power" such as India.³⁴ Eventually, in the morning of 3 June 1953, Prime Minister Nehru met with Foreign Minister Gruber in London. Both had attended the coronation of Elizabeth II on the preceding day. Nehru invited Gruber to visit him at the Bürgenstock resort in Switzerland where, after his London visit, the Prime Minister was meeting Indian diplomatic representatives.³⁵

Following the eventual signing of the State Treaty on 15 May 1955 in Vienna³⁶ and the completion of the ratification process on 27 July of the same year, the Austrian Parliament, on 26 October 1955, decided that Austria will permanently refrain from joining military alliances and will not allow any foreign military basis on its soil.³⁷ This happened exactly on the day after the last foreign soldier had left Austria under the provisions of the State Treaty.³⁸

der Sache Österreichs ganz besonderen Nutzen bringen." [The consent of such an important country – whose neutrality in the East-West Conflict is beyond any doubt – was destined to be especially beneficial to Austria's cause.] (Gruber, *Zwischen Befreiung und Freiheit*, p. 281.)

³⁰ For details see Gruber, *op. cit.*, chapter XXII: *Appell an die Vereinten Nationen*, pp. 290ff.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 293.

³² United Nations, General Assembly, 7th session, resolution 613 (VII), adopted at the 409th plenary meeting, 20 December 1952: *Question of an appeal to the Powers signatories to the Moscow Declaration of 1 November 1943 for the early fulfillment of their pledges towards Austria*.

³³ Gruber, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

³⁴ Gruber, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

³⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954*. Vol. VII: *Germany and Austria*, Part 2, p. 1967, fn. 2. India's Ambassador to Austria was also present at the meeting.

³⁶ *Staatsvertrag, betreffend die Wiederherstellung eines unabhängigen und demokratischen Österreich* [State Treaty concerning the reconstitution of an independent and democratic Austria]. Republik Österreich, *Bundesgesetzblatt*, Year 1955, Issue 39, No. 152, published on 30 July 1955.

³⁷ *Bundesverfassungsgesetz vom 26. Oktober 1955 über die Neutralität Österreichs* [Federal Constitutional Law of 20 October 1955 on the Neutrality of Austria]. Bgbl. No. 211/1955.

³⁸ Article 20(3).

As Austria's leaders made clear at the time, the country's concept of neutrality was not to be understood as equidistance vis-à-vis ideological blocs,³⁹ a position some polemically described as "neutralism" (and which commentators later attributed to the Non-aligned Movement [NAM]).⁴⁰ After World War II, Austria always saw itself as part of the Western world. "Military," not ideological, neutrality, tied to a commitment to "comprehensive national defense" (enshrined in Article 9a of the Federal Constitutional Law), has become a defining element of Austrian state identity ever since the post-World War II period.

It is worthy of note that Austria's Foreign Minister in the period of the State Treaty (1953-1959), Leopold Figl,⁴¹ adhered to a policy that committed the country to a strict interpretation and practice of neutrality. In an official instruction to the Austrian delegation to the XIIth Session (1957-1958) of the United Nations General Assembly, he laid down that, "in general, (...) all resolutions that are in conformity with the Principles of the UN Charter should be supported," but with the proviso that, "because of Austria's neutrality, the Delegation is obliged to abstain in all General Assembly votes that may imply the adoption of specific measures [*Maßnahmen*]."⁴² In the same instruction, the Foreign Minister also committed the delegation "to support, in all cases of de-colonization [original: *Antikolonialismus*], the general principle of self-determination of peoples" and "to adopt a positive, if necessary active, attitude in all humanitarian cases where a possibility of mediation might exist, also in cases which do not directly concern Austria's interests."⁴³ Issued in the early period of the country's independence, immediately following the conclusion of the State Treaty, these guidelines are evidence of Austria's genuine commitment to neutrality, in connection with some of the basic causes and principles of the Bandung Conference and the later Non-aligned Movement. The commitment included, in particular, support for peaceful co-existence on the basis of non-interference into the internal affairs of states.

³⁹ On the development of the concept in Austria's foreign policy during the Cold War era cf. also Karl Zemanek, "Austria's Policy of Neutrality: Constants and Variables," in: Hanspeter Neuhold and Hans Thalberg (eds.), *The European Neutrals in International Affairs*. Vienna: Braumüller / Boulder, Co.: Westview, 1984, pp. 17-24.

⁴⁰ Cf. the characterization of the Yugoslav position by Austrian National Radio as a "concept of neutralism" in the sense of "a loose form of cooperation among non-aligned countries" ["Konzept des Neutralismus" als "lose Aktionsgemeinschaft blockfreier Länder"]: Hellmuth Bock, "Wir blenden auf, wir blenden ein – Besuch von Marschall Tito in Wien," ORF (Austrian State Radio), 31 January 1967, audio recording, Österreichische Mediathek, orf-06418_K02.

⁴¹ Leopold Figl succeeded Karl Gruber who had served as Foreign Minister since 1945. Figl is considered as one of the founding fathers of the "Austrian second Republic," the new democratic state rebuilt after the defeat of the Nazi empire in 1945. He served as Federal Chancellor (Prime Minister) from December 1945 to April 1953.

⁴² According to *Österreichisches Staatsarchiv* (Austrian State Archive), AdR, BMfAA, II-Pol. ZI.223.864-POL/57. (Translated from German.)

⁴³ *Loc. cit.* (Translated from German.)

It was certainly no coincidence that Prime Minister Nehru – who played such a vital role in support of the negotiations of 1953 – paid a state visit to Austria in June 1955, roughly one month after Austria had gained full independence through the conclusion of the State Treaty.⁴⁴ It was also two months after the affirmation of the Bandung Principles. Nehru's was the first state visit of a foreign leader in newly independent Austria. Subsequently, in September 1956, another of the founding fathers of the Non-aligned Movement, and host of the Bandung Conference, President Sukarno of Indonesia, came to Vienna on a state visit.

In the following years, Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky aimed at widening the scope of Austria's international relations on the basis of neutrality and non-alignment. He established cooperation with an increasing number of countries in the non-Western world. The impromptu visit of President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, also one of the initial leaders of the Non-aligned Movement, on 8 August 1961 (three weeks before the founding summit of the Movement in Belgrade), is evidence of this as is the second state visit of President Sukarno in June 1963.⁴⁵ In the midst of Cold War tensions, the five-day state visit of President Tito of Yugoslavia in February 1967 further highlighted the position of Austria as a permanently neutral state. In spite of historical differences, the two countries were able to engage in constructive cooperation, not the least because of common appreciation of a non-aligned foreign policy. In the face of East-West rivalry, Austria and Yugoslavia agreed on the importance of a "European solution," independent from the era's two superpowers.⁴⁶ It was in this context that the Austrian Parliament endorsed Yugoslavia's initiative for an assembly of European parliaments.⁴⁷

As neutral country in the center of Europe, Austria was eager to position itself as international meeting place and facilitator of dialogue. This was evident in two of the major superpower summits of the Cold War period that were hosted in the Austrian capital, namely the meetings between President John F. Kennedy of the United States and Premier Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union in June 1961, and between President Carter and Soviet leader

⁴⁴ After visiting Moscow, Nehru arrived in Vienna on 26 June 1955 for a two-day state visit in the course of which he also met with Indian diplomatic representatives from all over Europe; cf. "Nehru in Vienna Today," in: *The New York Times*, 26 June 1955, p. 4.

⁴⁵ The state visit was scheduled for a period of one week (2-9 June) and included comprehensive information and cooperation meetings. On the global political dimension of Sukarno's relationship with Austria cf. the assessment of Chancellor Bruno Kreisky's Deputy Chief of Staff (1977-1983), Wolfgang Petritsch: "Von den Führern des neuen Asiens war es vor allem der indonesische Präsident, der die Beziehungen zu Wien schätzte." [Among the leaders of the new Asia, it was first and foremost the Indonesian President who appreciated relations with Vienna {i.e. Austria}.] Wolfgang Petritsch, *Bruno Kreisky: Die Biografie*. Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 2011, p. 126.

⁴⁶ In the above-quoted commentary (fn. 40), Austrian State Radio positively noted that Yugoslavia had left the "Eastern Bloc" as early as 1948 and had proved "capable of navigating between the blocs." (Translated from German.)

⁴⁷ Austrian State Radio, *loc. cit.*

Leonid Brezhnev in June 1979. The latter meeting concluded with the signing of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II).

Also, since the late 1950s, Austria has become host country for an increasing number of intergovernmental organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (1957), the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (1965), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (1995), and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (Preparatory Commission) (1996). In 1980, the United Nations established its third headquarters (after New York and Geneva) in Vienna. Furthermore, since 1960, Austria has provided non-combatant troops for United Nations peacekeeping and observer missions, e.g. in Syria, Lebanon, and Cyprus.

In July 1962, in his capacity as Foreign Minister, Kreisky convened an international “Conference on Economic Co-operation and Partnership,” which was consecutively held in Salzburg and Vienna. Representatives from 36 industrialized and developing countries, among them Prime Minister Nehru of India, adopted the “Vienna Declaration” that called for a “Marshall Plan for the Third World.”⁴⁸ Kreisky aimed to position Austria among the countries that supported a just and more equitable international economic system, and as a mediator in international conflicts. Informed by the bipartisan approach of Austria's "grand coalition" between the (conservative) People's Party and the Socialist Party, this was a continuation of the foreign policy pursued by his conservative predecessors in the years preceding and following the conclusion of the State Treaty.

Bruno Kreisky continued and widened the policy in the 1970s and early 1980s, when – in his capacity of Federal Chancellor (Prime Minister) – he reached the peak of his influence in Austrian politics. He introduced a policy of “active neutrality,” which meant, *inter alia*, support to causes of the then-Third World, in particular the establishment of a New International Economic Order, the struggle against *apartheid*, and the aspirations of the Palestine Liberation Organization for the establishment of an independent state. This was indeed the time of Austria's constructive engagement with the Non-aligned Movement.

For Kreisky, “active neutrality” signified, above all, a role for Austria as mediator in international politics. In the Government Policy Statement delivered at the Austrian Parliament, on 19 June 1979, he commented in detail on what neutrality means for Austria:

⁴⁸ “Die zweite Wiener Deklaration vom 7. Juli 1962 über die Zusammenarbeit und Förderung der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung“ [Second Vienna Declaration of 7 July 1962 on Co-operation and Promotion of Economic Development], according to: *Österreichisches Jahrbuch 1962*. Vienna: Österreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1963. – See also, Wolfgang Petritsch, “Dialog mit dem Süden,” in: *Bruno Kreisky – Gegen die Zeit*. Heidelberg: Edition Braus, 1995, p. 111.

“As permanently neutral state, Austria cannot be content with the role of mere observer of international developments. Within the framework of an active foreign policy, we shall (...) rather take part in the solution of international problems and, hence, contribute to the consolidation of general peace.”⁴⁹ Already on the basis of this understanding, the Chancellor had hosted, on 1 and 2 June 1975, a Middle East summit in Salzburg between President Gerald Ford of the United States and President Anwar Sadat of Egypt. On 7 July 1979, he convened a meeting in Vienna with the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat. Eventually, Kreisky’s initiative led to the recognition of the PLO in the Western world.

On the basis of the foundations laid by Figl and Kreisky in their time as Foreign Ministers, Austria continued to play an active role in the debates on development policies and North-South dialogue.⁵⁰ Chancellor Kreisky, a founding member of the North-South Commission (“Brandt Commission”), entertained close relations with non-aligned leaders such as Indira Gandhi, Tito or Yasser Arafat. Together with President José López Portillo of Mexico, he convened, in October 1981, the North-South Summit in Cancún (“International Meeting on Cooperation and Development”).⁵¹ At this meeting, the Prime Minister of China suggested the establishment of a “New International Economic Order.” At the European level, within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), Austria further coordinated its foreign policy with Yugoslavia, in an effort aimed at the implementation of the Helsinki Accords of 1975.

The Austrian Chancellor also took an active interest in, and was supportive of, conferences convened by the International Progress Organization on the New International Economic Order (held in Vienna in April 1979, and attended by Austria’s Minister of Finance), the Question of Palestine (held in Vienna in November 1980, and inaugurated by Austria’s Foreign Minister), and the Principles of Non-alignment (held in Baghdad in May 1982, with Leo Mates, Chief of Staff to President Yosip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia when NAM was founded in 1961, as General Rapporteur of the Conference). Furthermore, at the initiative of Chancellor

⁴⁹ “Als immerwährend neutraler Staat kann sich Österreich nicht mit der Rolle eines bloßen Beobachters der außenpolitischen Entwicklung begnügen. Wir werden vielmehr im Rahmen einer aktiven Außenpolitik (...) uns bei der Lösung internationaler Probleme beteiligen und damit einen Beitrag zur Festigung des allgemeinen Friedens leisten.“ (*Außenpolitischer Bericht 1979: Bericht des Bundesministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten* [Foreign Policy Report 1979: Report of the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs]. III-43 der Beilagen XV – Bericht – 02 Hauptdokument. Vienna: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1979, p. 204.)

⁵⁰ For details, cf. the report of Kreisky’s former Deputy Chief of Staff, Wolfgang Petritsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 110ff.

⁵¹ Because of his health condition, Kreisky was represented at the summit by Austria’s Foreign Minister Willibald Pahr. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau of Canada took his place as Co-chair of the Summit. For details of Kreisky’s involvement see B. Vivekanandan, “Bruno Kreisky / Cancun Summit,” in: *Global Visions of Olof Palme, Bruno Kreisky and Willy Brandt: International Peace and Security, Co-operation and Development*. [No place]: Palgrave Macmillan / Springer Nature, 2016, pp. 145ff.

Kreisky, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi attended an International Dialogue Conference at the Austrian mountain village of Alpbach in the summer of 1983.

(II)

Redefining neutrality

Since the beginning in the 1950s, the interpretation and practice of neutrality by Austria has been substantially determined by changes in the global balance of power. At an international conference which the author convened in June 1973 on the topic, "Austria and the European Economic Community," there was consensus among all attending that full membership of Austria in the then EEC (which, unlike today's EU, was not yet a structure with supranational elements) would be out of question, simply because of Austria's constitutional status as a permanently neutral country. The conference was held under the joint auspices of Chancellor Bruno Kreisky and the President of the Commission of the European Economic Community, Sicco L. Mansholt. Austrian delegates included the Minister of Foreign Affairs, parliamentary deputies from all parties, and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and the Trade Union.⁵²

A major policy shift occurred in the period after the end of the Cold War. A decade earlier already, an increasing number of decision-makers thought, "development of a closer relationship between the European neutral states and the non-aligned movement would very likely decrease the credibility of their policies in the Western eyes."⁵³ In view of gradually intensifying cooperation in the framework of the EEC, this concern ultimately got the upper hand. The geopolitical reorientation and redefinition of Austria's role was substantive. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar order at the beginning of the 1990s, the self-evaluation of Austria's position in Europe changed, and the definition of "neutrality" was adapted to the changes in terms of realpolitik (as perceived by the Austrian political establishment).⁵⁴

⁵² International Conference, "Österreich und die EWG" [Austria and the EEC], organized by Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Wissenschaft und Politik [Working Group for Science and Politics], Innsbruck, 2-3 June 1973. Cf. the commentary, "Österreich und die Zehnergemeinschaft: Die Europafunktion Tirols – 'Neutralitätsbonus' für das Land an der blauen Donau" [Austria and the Community of Ten {EEC}: The European Role of Tyrol – 'Neutrality Bonus' for the Country on the Blue Danube], in: *Dolomiten*, Bozen, South Tyrol, No. 125, 6 June 1972, p. 10.

⁵³ Harto Hakovirta, "Effects of Non-Alignment on Neutrality in Europe: An Analysis and Appraisal," in: *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1983), pp. 57-75; p. 57.

⁵⁴ Cf., *inter alia*, Karin Liebhart, "Austrian Neutrality: Historical Development and Semantic Change," in: András Kovak and Ruth Wodak (eds.), *NATO, Neutrality and National Identity: The Case of Austria and Hungary*. Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2003, pp. 23-49. On the ambiguities in the debate cf. also Michal Kořan,

The country's focus shifted to *full integration* with the European Community (later, European Union). Following a general referendum on 12 June 1994, Austria joined the European Community (EC) as full member on 1 January 1995. The Foreign Ministry was accordingly reframed as "Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs." All concerns about neutrality were forgotten. After the referendum, former Austrian Foreign Minister Lujó Tončić-Sorinj said, "for Austria, permanent neutrality is merely a transitory status."⁵⁵ (In terms of semantics, the Minister seems to have been unaware of the logical contradiction between "permanent" and "transitory.") Later, some commentators even declared Austria as a "post-neutral" state.⁵⁶ It goes without saying that the full membership of Austria has made an independent foreign policy virtually impossible. (It also limited the scope of democratic decision-making at the national level.⁵⁷) As a member state, Austria has unavoidably become party to the geopolitical disputes the European Union is involved in, including in Afghanistan, Chad and Mali.

Immediately after the accession to the European Union, Austria joined NATO's "Partnership for Peace" (10 February 1995). In the same year, the country also obtained observer status with the Western European Union (WEU). In 1998, the Austrian Parliament ratified the Agreement among NATO and partner states on the status of their forces.⁵⁸ Article I of the Agreement obliges Austria to apply the provisions of the 1951 status of forces agreement of NATO. Furthermore, as member of the European Union, Austria also takes part in "EU Battlegroups" within the Union's Common Security and Defense Policy.

The participation in NATO activities and the integration into the intergovernmental structures of the EU have been perceived by many as incompatible with Austria's status of permanent neutrality and, thus, in violation of its Constitution. Accordingly, in 2010, the Parliament amended the neutrality law of 1955, inserting an article into the Constitution that

"Austrian Neutrality: Burden of History in the Making or Moral Good Rediscovered?" in: *Perspectives*, No. 26 (Summer 2006), pp. 23-45.

⁵⁵ "Die immerwährende Neutralität sei für Österreich nur ein vorübergehender Status." Quoted according to Christian Jenny, *Konsensformel oder Vorbild? Die Entstehung der österreichischen Neutralität und ihr Schweizer Muster*. (Schriftenreihe der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Außenpolitik, No. 12.) Bern/Stuttgart/Vienna: Paul Haupt, 1995, p. 7. (Translated from German.)

⁵⁶ Heinz Gaertner and Otmar Hoell, position paper on "Austria" in a documentation published by the Austrian Ministry of Defense, http://bundesheer.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/05_small_states_14.pdf, p. 1 (retrieved 25 May 2021).

⁵⁷ Cf. Köchler, "The European Constitution and the Imperatives of Transnational Democracy," in: *Singapore Yearbook of International Law*, Vol. IX (2005), pp. 87-101.

⁵⁸ *Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich*, Jahrgang 1998, Teil III, 2 September 1998, No. 136: "Übereinkommen zwischen den Vertragsstaaten des Nordatlantikvertrages und den anderen an der Partnerschaft für den Frieden teilnehmenden Staaten über die Rechtsstellung ihrer Truppen samt Erklärung Österreichs" [Agreement between the State Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty and other States, participating in Partnership for Peace, on the legal status of forces, including the Declaration of Austria].

allows for the active participation in military operations within the framework of Austria's EU membership.⁵⁹ Already in 2001, the Parliament adopted a law that authorizes the Minister of Defense to allow the transit and temporary presence of foreign land, sea and air force units through or on Austrian territory.⁶⁰ The provisions of the law have been made use of extensively, and frequently, by NATO forces.

Thus, at present, Austria's foreign and defense policy is essentially oriented towards the European Union and, to a considerable extent, the United States and NATO. This is also reflected in the country's active participation in NATO's "Partnership for Peace." Under the heading of "Partnership," the Alliance's Strategic Concept of 24 April 1999 describes as a fundamental security task of NATO the efforts "to promote wide-ranging partnership, cooperation, and dialogue with other countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, within the aim of increasing transparency, mutual confidence and the capacity for joint action with the Alliance."⁶¹ It goes without saying that this is hardly compatible with a foreign policy of "permanent neutrality" [*immerwährende Neutralität*] in the sense of Austria's Neutrality Law of 1955.

Quite obviously, influential sectors of Austrian civil society were not at ease with a foreign policy that empties the meaning of neutrality in favor of partisan engagement in international disputes. A case in point was the insistence by influential sectors of civil society on a neutral position of Austria in the NATO war over Kosovo in 1999. A so-called "Equidistance Initiative" (*Initiative Äquidistanz*), launched by a wide spectrum of academics and artists, warned of the dangerous consequences for peace and stability in Europe.⁶²

The erosion of Austria's policy of neutrality became particularly obvious in a recent symbolic gesture of both, the country's Federal Chancellor and Foreign Minister. At the height of the armed confrontation between Israel and Palestine, on 14 May 2021, the flag of Israel was hoisted in Vienna on the rooftop of the Federal Chancellery and the Foreign Ministry. The action of the government, initiated by the Chancellor, was widely condemned by the Austrian

⁵⁹ Article 23j(3) of the Federal Constitutional Law, in reference to Article 43(1) of the Treaty on European Union that provides, *inter alia*, for the deployment of "combat forces in crisis management."

⁶⁰ *Bundesgesetz über den Aufenthalt ausländischer Truppen auf österreichischem Hoheitsgebiet* ("Truppenaufenthaltsgesetz") [Federal Law on the stay of foreign troops on the sovereign territory of Austria], Bgbl. I No. 57/2001.

⁶¹ *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*, Par. 10, Partnership. – On the evolution of the concept of "Partnership for Peace" cf. John Borawski, "Partnership for Peace 'Plus': Joint Responsibility for Euro-Atlantic Security," in: *Defense Analysis*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1999), pp. 323-332.

⁶² "Der Krieg für Kosovo ist nicht zu rechtfertigen" [The war for Kosovo cannot be justified]. *Initiative Äquidistanz*, Vienna, News Release, OTS0207, 29 April 1999.

public and media, including the country's former President, Heinz Fischer.⁶³ A commentator bluntly stated that such a step will not only undermine Austria's "integrity as a neutral state," but also diminish the country's international reputation as "neutral meeting place in situations of international conflict."⁶⁴ The action also cast a shadow on Austria's role as host of the resumed Iran nuclear talks in Vienna,⁶⁵ as became evident when Iran's Foreign Minister cancelled an official visit to Vienna, right on the day of the flag hoisting.

These and other steps described above have meant a constant erosion of the country's neutrality in favor of Western-centered realpolitik. Thus, it is not surprising that Austrian officialdom since the end of the Kreisky era has been almost completely silent about Prime Minister Nehruh's historical role as facilitator, and mediator, in the negotiations with the Soviet Union on the conclusion of the State Treaty. (As explained above, the commitment to a neutral status, laid out in the Moscow Memorandum of 1955, was essential for the successful conclusion of the State Treaty and, thus, the full restoration of Austrian sovereignty.) However, unlike the governing elite, a majority of Austrians still adhere to a stricter, more traditional understanding of neutrality in the sense of non-alignment. They consider a non-aligned foreign policy as indispensable for safeguarding the country's independence, and they have not forgotten that it was Austria's pledge to adopt a status of permanent neutrality that brought it the freedom as a full member of the international community after World War II.

Thus, at the present stage, Austria's relationship with the Non-aligned Movement lacks the substance of the early years. It has become rather formal, or merely ceremonial. Together with other neutral European countries and some NATO members, such as the United States or the United Kingdom, Austria is listed, by NAM, as "Guest Country" (not, "Observer Country"). In this capacity, it is invited – on an ad hoc basis – to the opening and closing ceremonies of Non-aligned Summits and Ministerial Conferences.⁶⁶

However, in spite of the obvious change of priorities of Austria's foreign policy since the Cold War era, with ever more close integration into the Western security system, the country's continued commitment, in principle, to multilateralism and its active participation in the movement against nuclear arms could still be a basis for constructive cooperation, albeit

⁶³ Heinz Fischer, "Einseitigkeit auf dem Dach des Kanzleramts?" [One-sidedness on the roof of the Chancellery?], in: *Wiener Zeitung*, 17 May 2021.

⁶⁴ Rubina Möhring, "Ein langer schwarzer Freitag: Ein Bundeskanzler verirrt sich in der Weltpolitik" [A long Black Friday: A Prime Minister gets lost in world politics], in: *Der Standard*, Vienna, 16 May 2021. (Quote translated from German.)

⁶⁵ Vienna was the venue of the final round of the nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany) that were successfully concluded on 14 July 2015 with the agreement on a "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" (JCPOA).

⁶⁶ Austria has attended as observer since 1970, the year Bruno Kreisky assumed the office of Prime Minister.

limited in scope, with countries of the Non-aligned Movement. It should be noted that it was at the initiative of Austria, with some other states, that the General Assembly of the United Nations decided to convene a conference on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.⁶⁷ The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was eventually adopted on 7 July 2020. The UN has now announced that the first meeting of State Parties of the Treaty will take place in Austria in January 2022.

In conclusion: As a small state in the center of Europe, Austria could, in principle, continue to build on its legacy of honest broker and facilitator – if it returns to the traditional virtues of non-alignment and defines neutrality in the sense conceived of by the founding fathers of the second Republic. Under the conditions of an ever more chaotic globalization, overshadowed by the threat of a new cold war, “active” neutrality could mean, for Austria, renewed engagement for the causes of a *multilateral* world, which include self-determination, respect of equality among all states, nuclear disarmament, and an unequivocal commitment to peaceful co-existence. These are also the principles expounded by the Non-aligned Movement, some of whose founders supported or encouraged Austria on its way to gaining full independence after World War II.

There is one big stumbling block to such noble ambitions – that are shared by a majority of the Austrian electorate nonetheless. Membership with the European Union sets clear limits to any redefinition of the country’s international status. Unlike in the post-war era, when Austria was still weak and dependent on foreign goodwill, but fiercely independent-minded, *now* – as member of a powerful regional bloc – the country has less space to navigate in global affairs. After half a century, the non-aligned ideals of Austria’s founders – that enabled them to reposition the country on the world map – no longer seem to conform to Austrian *realpolitik*.

⁶⁷ In a speech at the UN General Assembly on 21 September 2016, Austrian Foreign Minister (now, Chancellor [Prime Minister]) Sebastian Kurz described nuclear disarmament as “the number one unfinished business” and, according to a UN news release, announced that, “[t]ogether with other Member States, Austria would table a draft resolution to convene negotiations on a legally binding comprehensive instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons ...” (General Assembly of the United Nations / General Debate / Austria, 21 September 2016 [71st Session], <https://gadebate.un.org/en/71/austria>.)