

## SELF-EXCLUSION AS A SECURITY STRATEGY OF SMALL STATES

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### Abstract

This article analyzes the strategy of self-exclusion in the foreign policy of small states, considering their goals and expected results of this strategy, that is, the main conditions for its implementation, the main determinants, and also identifies and characterizes its varieties and practical manifestations. In this context, global transformations also cause changes related to the positions and roles of small states in world politics and international relations. At the same time, global transformations change the understanding of the security of small states, which in turn leads to an increase in the number of studies in this area. Together, these factors become the rationale for the relevance of studying the security problems of small states in modern conditions. In conclusion, the results of the analysis are summarized, the features of the strategy of self-exclusion, common features and differences in its varieties are shown.

**Keywords:** small state, great power, foreign policy, security, self-exclusion, neutrality, non-alignment, strategic autonomy.

### Introduction

In previous articles (Galstyan 2021, 61-70; Galstyan 2019, 8-14) the main factors underlying the foreign policy behavior and choice of strategy of small states have been examined and analyzed by us. We have also proposed an approach to classify these strategies. We have distinguished and typified two of them, strategies of compilation and opposition. Continuing the analysis, we will consider the third group of strategies - self-exclusion. Here, too, we will take as a starting point the ability of the small states to withstand threats from the external environment (and, naturally, first of all, from the great powers) and to ensure the maximum possible autonomy from the great powers in matters of foreign and domestic policy. In our opinion, the logic of self-exclusion in that regard and the difference from other groups of strategies is that *through self-exclusion, the small states seek to stay out of the competition of other states (first of all, great powers), and, which is very important, while refusing to join them in those*

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*initiatives that provide for the obligation of counteraction to a third party and the obligation of mutual assistance in the event of aggressive actions by any third state.* This definition, on the one hand, takes into consideration only the initiatives of other states, not referring to the case when the counter-action is initiated by the small state, for example, in the case of being attacked by another state (self-defense). On the other hand, this definition includes all possible countermeasures (military, economic, diplomatic, information-psychological, etc.) considering the fact that power competition in the modern world combines different spheres (for example, hybrid wars).

The primary goal of this analysis is to highlight the fundamental features of the self-exclusion policies. For this purpose, we will make an attempt 1. to specify the final result and conditions of that group of strategies, 2. from the policies attributed to small states in the literature, to separate, characterize and classify those fitting the self-exclusion.

Accordingly, we should, a) separate and define, describe the policies of small states, available in the professional literature, which correspond to the above-mentioned characteristic of self-exclusion, that is, they can be included in that group of foreign security strategies of small states. In parallel b) we have to show the characteristics, the conditions of which the policies of small states should comply in order to be considered self-exclusion and then, c) we will group, classify and typify these policies, based on their most essential commonalities and differences. Finally, c) we need to highlight the reasons that force, motivate the small states to adopt this or that policy in line with the strategy of self-exclusion.

### **Definitions and characteristics of neutrality**

As we have already mentioned (Galstyan 2021, 62-63), in the professional literature there are various sets of strategies applied by the small states towards the great powers, which mention those that fully or mostly correspond to the above-mentioned key features of self-exclusion: not to undertake counter-actions against any state and international-legal obligations providing for (mutual) support to any state and not to join actions pursuing such a goal. In other words, self-exclusion implies a refusal to undertake certain international-legal obligations and actions (steps, policies).

Neutrality (Hey 2003a, 5) is described in the professional literature as a foreign policy characterized by mentioned features of small states' policies, which, however, does not have a single definition and explanation. On the contrary, different authors, emphasizing various aspects of neutrality, give diverse definitions of it. For example, neutrality, according to Raimo Väyrynen, is a pacifist and consensual foreign policy direction, striving to play the role of a bridge between the great powers (Väyrynen 1971, 96). According to Anne-Sophie Dahl, the idea of neutrality is based on strategic independence from or strategic proportional relations with competing power centers (Dahl 1997, 185). Jean-Marc Rickli defines neutrality as a foreign policy principle which has a goal to preserve the independence and sovereignty of the small states, based on non-participation in international conflicts (Rickli 2010, 182). Graham Evans and Jeffrey Neumham consider neutral a state that does not directly or indirectly

support any of the conflicting parties by any actions or statements (Evans and Neumham 1998, 366). According to Laurent Goetschel's formulation, neutrality is a principled belief, the political core of which are the interest-based normative ideas about foreign and security policy, and the legal requirements arising from that essential are causal beliefs (Goetschel 1999, 117-118). Daniel Frei, in his turn, considers neutrality an expression of national-state sovereignty, as the right of states not to participate in hostilities (Frei 1967, 14-15).

The last idea - neutrality as the right not to participate in military operations, in our opinion, does not fully and accurately reflect the essence of neutrality. First, in the case of neutrality, not participating in hostilities (directly or indirectly-mediated) is not a right, but an obligation. Second, non-belligerence means not being a warring party, but it does not necessarily mean neutrality, not supporting (directly or indirectly) any of the warring parties. Accordingly, this support can be on one's own initiative (for example, the involvement of a third party in a "proxy war" in order to influence the result of the war) or forced (for example, under the pressure of one of the conflicting parties). Such cases are not few in history. For example, as it is known from history, the USA officially became a belligerent in the Second World War after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, and before that, without directly fighting the Axis powers, it provided technical and economic support to the Allies. In a number of local wars of the Cold War period (Korean, Vietnamese, Angolan, Afghan, etc.), the USA and the USSR and their allies did not openly fight directly against each other, but supported one of the warring parties. In the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian conflict, a number of NATO member states were not officially warring parties, but provided economic, technical and political support to Ukraine. Thus, these cases of direct non-belligerence cannot be considered neutrality, a manifestation of self-exclusion, because they do not meet the above-mentioned characteristics of self-exclusion, in particular, the condition of not joining actions aimed at countermeasures or assistance.

Neutrality should also be distinguished from demilitarization. The latter means the withdrawal or disarmament of the armed forces from any territory, and in case of retention, it is assumed that these armed forces must have exclusively limited defensive capabilities. It does not necessarily imply the provision of external guarantees of independence and territorial sovereignty to that state. And if demilitarization refers to the entire territory of a state, then it is expected that the state should thereafter conduct *a policy of neutrality or non-alignment* (Evans and Neumham 1998, 119). In other words, neutrality can be a possible or expected, but not necessary consequence of demilitarization. In this case, we should observe the concept of neutralization, which we will refer to later. But, as some authors note, "neutralized" states are rarely demilitarized (Evans and Neumham 1998, 367, Black 1968, xiv).

Summarizing the written above, we can notice that the definitions mentioned above (but also those not mentioned here) emphasize one or the other aspect of our definition of self-exclusion strategy, but not all at the same time. Therefore, it is expected that these features should also be reflected in one or another foreign security strategy, which can be considered as types and varieties of self-exclusion strategy. For this reason, it is necessary to examine such strategies mentioned in the professional literature as well.

### Forms and types of neutrality

In the professional literature, we find several external security strategies corresponding to the above-mentioned definition of self-exclusion to a greater or lesser extent. It should be noted that neutrality in general is often mentioned as an external security strategy typical of small states (Thorhallsson and Steinsson 2017, 6; Vaicekauskaitė 2017, 12-13). One can also see discussions about some types of neutrality. But we are interested in the studies in which as many types of neutrality as possible, discussed theoretically and demonstrated in practice, are presented and examined.

Thus, Lassa Oppenheim, considered the founder of the modern concept of international law, has outlined the following (*historical*) types of neutrality (Oppenheim 1912, 368-371):

- Perpetual or permanent – a state (for example, Switzerland) has been “neutralized” by a special international treaty, which defines the obligations and rights of that state in times of peace and war. Accordingly, these legal regulations imply not only the obligation not to support any of the warring parties, but also the obligation not to allow any of the warring parties to use its territory. As we will present below, focusing on the example of Finland, even permanent status does not guarantee perpetuity of neutrality.
- General and partial - in the case of partial neutrality, a part of the state’s territory is “neutralized”, and that state is obliged to be neutral in matters related to that territory. In the case of general neutrality, no part of the state is “neutralized” by an international treaty, but it conducts a neutral policy.
- Voluntary (simple, natural) and conventional - in the case of voluntary, state’s neutrality does not derive from any international-legal obligation, and at any time the state can abandon the neutral position and support any of the warring parties. An example of this is Sweden, which, as we will show below, renounced neutrality and joined NATO after a long time of neutrality. Contrary to that, conventional neutrality is an international-legal obligation. The neutrality of “neutralized” states is always conventional, while “non-neutralized” states may also be bound by an international treaty during a particular war (as the USA in the 1793 Franco-British War), and during another war the same state may be bound by an alliance treaty and, on the contrary, support any of the warring parties.
- Armed – a neutral state takes military measures to protect its neutrality, for example, when there is a threat of one of the warring parties using the neutral state’s territory or violating other rights of the neutral state. Switzerland’s neutrality is considered an example of armed neutrality.
- Benevolent – according to Oppenheim, in this outdated form of neutrality, which is no longer applicable, the state does not participate in the war, but in all other matters it had a biased attitude towards one of the warring parties. As shown by the behavior of a number of European neutral states in the context of the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian conflict, this form of neutrality is still relevant.

- Absolute (perfect) and qualified (imperfect) - a non-perfect neutral state directly or indirectly, actively or passively supported one of the warring parties, based on some agreement signed with it before the war. However, as a result of the development of international law, this version of neutrality, according to Oppenheim, is no longer applicable, in contrast to the perfect one, according to which a neutral state does not support any of the warring parties in any way.

Archie Simpson, in his turn, mentions four *modern* types of neutrality: de jure, de facto, temporary neutrality and non-alignment (Simpson 2018, 124-125). Accepting perhaps this most comprehensive typological approach reflecting the modern types of neutrality, it is necessary to examine them and also add some types or subtypes.

Thus, neutrality, as state's legal status (neutral state), can be considered the "purest" of all types. The main commonality of all its varieties and, at the same time, the difference from other types of neutrality, is the legal fixation of neutrality. Examples of this are the 1793 Proclamation of Neutrality by the USA in the Franco-British War, the recognition and guarantee of Switzerland's neutrality by the 1815 Vienna Assembly, by the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, then in 1933 by the League of Nations, the recognition of Finland's neutrality by the 1948 Soviet-Finnish Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, Austria's neutrality in 1955 by the Declaration of Independence, the declaration of Moldova's neutrality by the 1994 Constitution, the recognition of Turkmenistan's neutrality by the UN General Assembly in 1995.

Having analyzed the mentioned cases of neutrality, we can make a number of theoretical conclusions.

*First*, determining the legal status of neutrality can refer to a specific case (for example, the neutrality of the USA in the Franco-British war), be occasional, not permanent, manifest as Ad hoc "*impartial non-participation*", and be permanent, equally apply to peace and war situations (all other examples). We will look at the occasional neutrality separately a little later, and about permanent neutrality, it should be noted that Leos Müller considers it to be the birth of the concert system of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when great powers guaranteed the neutrality of a small state through an agreement. In the cases of Switzerland and Belgium, permanent neutrality was intended to reduce the tension between the great powers and the possibility of their clash in the territory of the neutralized state. In the case of Switzerland, neutralization "from above" was later transformed into a long-term policy of neutrality on the international stage, and national identity at the national level (Müller 2019, 6).

Efraim Karsh defines permanent neutrality as a consistent policy of non-alignment in peacetime aimed at forming the foundations of neutrality in wartime. In order to internationally legitimize its permanent neutrality, a neutral state seeks to institutionalize that status through national legislation or international treaties. The latter usually stipulate restrictions for a neutral state to use its armed forces exclusively for self-defense, not to sign a military alliance with other states, allowing them to use its territory for military purposes. In times of war, a permanent neutral state is obliged not to take part in the war and not to support any of its parties. The other party to the treaty (usually the great powers), in its turn, undertakes to respect the neutrality of that state, its territorial integrity and to support it in case of external attack (Karsh 2012, 27).

Second, the Finnish case shows that even permanent neutrality cannot be considered eternal. Finland's neutrality referred to Soviet-Finnish relations, and in de jure form it was maintained throughout the Cold War, and continued as de facto neutrality two decades later. However, that status was replaced by NATO membership in April 2023.

*Third*, the commonality of all presented cases is the legal fixation of neutrality, the mechanism of which is the already mentioned neutralization. The final result of the latter, as a rule, as noted by some authors (Evans and Neumham 1998, 367-368), is the international-legal status of permanent neutrality - neutrality in times of peace and war. Some authors consider neutral a state whose political independence and territorial integrity are guaranteed on a permanent basis by an agreement between the great powers, provided that the smaller state will use its military capabilities exclusively for self-defense and not against any other state, and will not undertake actions contrary to its international-legal obligations (Black 1968).

As some authors note, neutralization has been successfully tested several times in international practice, such as the independence and neutrality of Belgium in the relationship between Great Britain, France and Germany, the Suez Canal and Siam issues in the context of the Franco-British conflict, or the cases of the neutralization of Austria and Finland in the context of Soviet and Western camps confrontation during the Cold War. That idea was also discussed in the context of the relationship between Russia and the West in the cases of Ukraine and Moldova in post-Soviet space (Müller 2019, 6).

*Fourth*, two types of neutralization can be distinguished: international (fixed, recognized by international bilateral (Finland) and multilateral (Switzerland) treaties) and national (fixed in national legal norms, then recognized by other states (Austria, Moldova), and in some cases (Turkmenistan) recognized in multilateral international documents). The second type of neutralization is also called self-neutralization by some authors (Evans and Neumham 1998, 366-367). A number of authors note that the status of permanent neutrality based on self-neutralization is less clear than the version based on an international treaty (Black 1968, xiii).

*Fifth*, in some cases, as some authors note, de jure permanent neutrality may be incompatible with membership in intergovernmental organizations (Evans and Neumham 1998, 367). According to Paul Luif, the obligations of a neutral state are not limited to not joining military alliances or not allowing foreign military bases to be located on its territory. Even in peacetime, a neutral state should conduct such a foreign policy that will keep it away from the prospect of being involved in any future military conflicts, while not rejecting participation in international cooperation (Luif 2003, 98-99). Such a problem arose in the cases of both Switzerland and Austria, but received different solutions. Thus, Switzerland joined the UN only with the results of the 2002 referendum, although the result of the 1986 referendum on a similar issue was negative<sup>1</sup>. Switzerland also applied for the EU membership in 1992, but in the same

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<sup>1</sup> Cook, Don. 1986. "Swiss Reject Membership. Voter Turndown Tied to Neutrality." *The Washington Post*. 16 March. Accessed April 13, 2024. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1986/03/17/swiss-reject-membership-in-un/696489a2-d7c1-4eb9-81cf-f4f07061f3f5/>.

year, due to the refusal to join the European Economic Area in a referendum<sup>2</sup>, the Swiss government suspended and finally canceled EU membership negotiations in 2016, preferring to conclude bilateral agreements with it<sup>3</sup>. Criticism of Austria's accession to the EU was more rationalized, that is, in case of accession to the EU, the economic dependence of a neutral state on other members will be so great that this state will not be able to freeze relations or leave the EU if its other members are involved in the war.

However, as Luif notices, upon accession to the EU in 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden were not only exempted, but also committed themselves to full and active participation in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (Luif 2003, 102), while even Denmark, not being a neutral state, did not participate in defense cooperation within the Common Foreign and Security Policy until June 2022. Moreover, as a result of integration with an organization like the EU, a neutral state cannot practically maintain neutrality towards warring parties. For example, Austria, as a full member of the EU, and even Switzerland, as a state that is not a member of the EU, but is economically integrated with it, have joined the sanctions packages adopted by the EU against Russia as of 2024<sup>4</sup>. This indicates that Oppenheim hastily considered "benevolent neutrality" as an outdated, non-applicable form.

And, finally, the *sixth*, if examples of not permanent, occasional neutrality can refer to all states regardless of their position in the international hierarchy, then *all cases of permanent neutrality refer exclusively to small states*.

The next type of neutrality is state's (long-term) neutral policy (de facto neutrality), when neutrality is not based on international law, but is accepted by the international community. Müller mentions "long-term neutrality" as a long-term foreign policy strategy typical for small states with limited military capabilities. As an example, he cites the Netherlands and Denmark, to which at the end of the 18th century Sweden and the USA also joined. Müller notes the main difference between long-term neutrality and occasional neutrality: a. declaration of neutrality as a long-term foreign policy strategy, b. the desire to institutionalize neutrality as part of international law, institutions or cooperation, and c. continuous strengthening of defense capabilities to make neutrality tenable, even when these states do not participate in great power wars (Müller 2019, 5-6).

Modern examples of de facto neutrality are Ireland and the Vatican, as well as Finland and Sweden until 2023 and 2024, respectively. However, only in the case of Finland and Sweden can we see all the distinctive features mentioned by Müller, while in the case of Ireland and the Vatican the third feature - the continuous strengthening of

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<sup>2</sup> Miserez, Marc-Andre. 2012. "Switzerland poised to keep EU at arm's length." *Swissinfo.ch*, December 2, 2012. Accessed April 13, 2024. <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/swiss-politics/switzerland-poised-to-keep-eu-at-arm-s-length/34083578>.

<sup>3</sup> Goulard, Hortense. 2016. "Switzerland withdraws application to join the EU." *Politico*, June 15, 2016. Accessed April 13, 2024. <https://www.politico.eu/article/switzerland-withdraws-application-to-join-the-eu/>.

<sup>4</sup> Reuters. 2023. "Austria backs EU Russia sanctions after Ukraine removes Raiffeisen from blacklist." *Reuters*, December 17, 2023. Accessed April 13, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/austria-backs-eu-russia-sanctions-after-ukraine-removes-raiffeisen-blacklist-2023-12-16/>; The Federal Council. 2024. "Ukraine: Switzerland implements the EU's 12th package of sanctions." *Swiss government – Homepage*, January 31, 2024. Accessed April 13, 2024. <https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation/media-releases.msg-id-99902.html>.

its own defense capabilities - is missing: Ireland has limited military capabilities, and the Vatican armed forces consist of only a small number Swiss Guards.

The authors note that Sweden's neutrality policy began to take shape in 1840, not on the basis of any international agreement, as in the case of Finland, Switzerland or Austria, but on decisions of the Swedish government and parliament. Throughout the Cold War, Sweden adhered to two principles: non-alignment in times of peace and neutrality in times of war. After the Cold War, the formulation of "policy of neutrality" in official rhetoric was gradually replaced by "non-participation in military alliances", in parallel, however, Sweden actively participated in European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation on security and defense issues (Lassinantti 2001, 102, 103). Moreover, the Nordic states – Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark – actively cooperate within the framework of the Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEF) (Elínardóttir and Thorhallsson 2020, 124).

The next type of neutrality is refusal to join military-political alliances (non-alignment) and to direct or indirect support of their actions (neutralism), demonstrating equidistant behavior towards the warring parties (Evans and Neumham 1998, 365). Non-alignment, on the one hand, unlike *de jure* or *de facto* neutrality, does not imply permanent or long-term neutrality in all existing and possible future wars, but, unlike non-belligerence, it presupposes that the position and actions of the non-aligned states in (possible) wars between third states comply with one of the above-mentioned conditions of self-exclusion - non-support of any of the warring parties. Therefore, non-alignment, in contrast to the already mentioned non-participation, can be considered a variant of neutrality.

"Non-alignment" is a much younger concept than "neutrality". During the Cold War, non-alignment was institutionalized in the form of the Non-Aligned Movement. Its initial philosophy was determined by the bipolar world order of the Cold War itself - not to get involved in the struggle of groups led by the USSR and the USA. As some authors note, during the Cold War, unlike *de jure* and *de facto* neutral states, the states of the Non-Aligned Movement did not try to stay on the sidelines, "hide" from the competition of great powers, but sought to ensure their independence by conducting more autonomous diplomacy on issues of alliance competition and jointly increase their voting power in international organizations (Evans and Neumham 1998, 377). In other words, as some authors note, the states of the Non-Aligned Movement did not want to be (self)neutralized, turning into a *de jure* or *de facto* neutral state, but wanted not to be bound by any obligations specifically in the context of the conflict between the USSR and the USA (Black 1968, xiv). That is, non-alignment was a refusal to join or support competing Cold War factions that, unlike neutralization, was driven solely by internal motives rather than external coercion, and did not involve any external guarantees of security other than preserving the principles of "peaceful coexistence" adopted at the Bandung summit in 1955.

The criteria for non-aligned state were defined at the 1961 Summit of the Movement - to pursue or strive for an independent foreign policy based on the coexistence of states with different socio-political systems, to support movements for national independence, not to join multilateral military alliances formed in the context



of conflict between great powers, not to sign a bilateral alliance with a great power or to join a regional alliance that serves great power conflict (Fischer 2016, 9).

As Thomas Fischer and co-authors note, neutrality and nonalignment have a number of similarities and differences: as *de jure* and *de facto* neutral states, non-aligned countries were also obliged not to enter into military-political alliances, but, unlike neutrality, non-alignment is not legally defined and does not imply either the rights and obligations of neutrality, or duration. Fischer points out that during the Cold War in Europe, both permanently neutral and non-aligned states pursued a policy of non-alignment in relation to NATO, the Warsaw pact, the EC and the Comecon, but if the political concept of neutrality is of European origin and spread, then non-alignment is Afro-Asian-Latin American, while in Europe it was represented by Yugoslavia, Cyprus and Malta (Fischer 2016, 8, 9), and currently only by Azerbaijan and Belarus.

In his turn, Efraim Karsh, *firstly*, considers neutrality to be a legal concept arising from the concept of war, and neutralism to be a political concept not enshrined in international law and not related to the concept of war. Non-alignment, by his definition, refers to relations between states that are not in war, but in power competition in peacetime. And in the case of a war between the power centers, the non-aligned states, like the rest, will either declare neutrality or be drawn into the war. At the same time, non-alignment, in contrast to permanent neutrality, does not exclude war as an instrument of foreign policy of a non-aligned state, if this suits its interests. *Secondly*, permanent neutrality, according to Karsh, does not exclude political bias towards one of the warring parties, excluding, however, practical support for it to the detriment of the other side, and neutralism presupposes impartiality in relation to the warring parties, but not excluding, however, practical support for the side that the non-aligned state considers right (Karsh 2012, 28-29). However, as we mentioned above, some states with a status of permanent neutrality today show not only “acceptable” political bias, but even “inacceptable” practical support, applying economic sanctions to one of the warring parties.

In general, there are several caveats to note regarding non-alignment as a strategy of self-exclusion. *First*, non-alignment does not mean non-participation in all international conflicts. A party to the conflict may be the non-aligned state itself (for example, India and Pakistan, Iran and Iraq, which have declared non-aligned political status and are members of the Non-Aligned Movement).

*Second*, in certain situations, a non-aligned state may decide to support one of the competing great powers during a conflict between them (for example, Cuba's support for the USSR during the Cold War).

And *thirdly*, as world practice shows, neutralism, in contrast to *de jure* and *de facto* neutrality, may include some military and diplomatic obligations with other states. The policies of some non-aligned states call into question their declared non-aligned status. In other words, as Talukder Maniruzzaman points out, non-membership in a military alliance does not in itself guarantee the security of a given state, so non-aligned states may adopt other security strategies in specific situations (for example, the non-aligned India's pacts with Bhutan (1949), Nepal (1950), USA (1951) and USSR (1971), Egypt-USSR treaty, Yugoslavia treaties with Greece and Turkey, Malaysia and Singapore are parties to the Five Power Defense Agreement of 1971, together with Australia, New

Zealand and the United Kingdom), which may even conflict with the stated policy of non-alignment (Maniruzzaman 1982, 36). Similarly, according to the 2010 Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance and the 2021 Shushi Declaration between Non-Aligned Movement member Azerbaijan and Turkey, the parties are obliged to provide assistance to each other in case of external attack, Declaration of Allied Cooperation between Azerbaijan and Russia of 2022 also provides for mutual obligations in security issues. Although these mutual assistance commitments do not directly imply automatic mutual military assistance, they call into question the political status of Azerbaijan's non-alignment, taking into account Turkey's membership in NATO, Russia's membership in the CSTO, and the active regional policies pursued by these two countries in general. For its part, Belarus, a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, is a member of the CSTO, so Belarus has obligations for mutual assistance with other states of this alliance, and as a member of the Union State, it also has obligations for mutual assistance with Russia.

In other words, although non-alignment can be considered a variant of self-exclusion strategy, it is only in case of some countries and only in some conditions, that is, in private cases.

The last type of neutrality, the situational position of a state not to participate in any particular conflict (non-belligerence) and to exhibit equidistant behavior towards its parties, is also known as *Ad hoc*, temporary or occasional neutrality. Historical examples of such neutrality can be found in the 17th-19th centuries, during the First and Second World Wars, for example, the above-mentioned non-participation of the United States in the French-English War, the non-participation of Spain in the Second World War, the non-participation of Iran in the Gulf War in 1990-1991. Occasional neutrality, according to Karsh, implies neutrality only in a specific case, without limiting the behavior of the state either in peacetime or in another war. That is, a state may be neutral in one war, but participate in another or support one of the conflicting parties (Karsh 2012, 26-27). Moreover, as Müller rightly notes, a unilateral declaration of neutrality during a war does not mean that this state will remain neutral even throughout this war. And in general, the purpose of such behavior was, on the one hand, to limit the conflict, and on the other, to gain economic or strategic benefit from it (Müller 2019, 5). There is another important circumstance here: occasional neutrality is not limited to small states. Large and middle powers can also exercise situational neutrality in specific situations and on specific issues.

Typological approaches to neutrality are, of course, not limited to the above. There are even approaches adapted to the peculiarities of the modern technological era. For example, Hitoshi Nasu mentions four “technological” types of neutrality: *Apologetic*, *Egalitarian*, *Benevolent*, and *Deontological*. According to Nasu, *apologetic* neutrality stems from the difficulties of neutral states in defending their rights and fulfilling their obligations in the face of periodic great power wars. The main is the technological difficulty of limiting the ability of belligerent states to obtain support from neutral states and to detect the participation of neutral states in hostilities. As a result, neutrality is subject to subjective interpretation based on the political interests of states, which can significantly weaken the normative power of the neutrality law. *Egalitarian* neutrality assumes that even technologically underdeveloped states are capable of

providing a high level of technological autonomy and control over technological activities on their territory. This makes it possible to expand the balance of interests of neutral and belligerent states within the framework of the neutrality law, including non-material means of supporting military actions. In the case of *benevolent* neutrality, the neutral state, for political, economic or ideological reasons, tends to secretly support one of the warring parties. The availability of technological means to conceal the provision of support may contribute to this trend. Finally, *deontological* neutrality assumes that a neutral state has sufficient means to protect its rights and fulfill its responsibilities, while having a high level of technological autonomy and control. It also assumes that belligerents have the technological capacity to detect assistance that violates neutrality obligations (Nasu 2022a, 134-138). Using the example of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2022, Nasu shows that the modern law of neutrality can turn into benevolent neutrality when third parties do not see significant restrictions in supporting the warring parties. According to the author, this prospect is further strengthened by Russia's alienation from Western economies due to sanctions, which has reduced the importance of maintaining trade relations with Russia and therefore strict adherence to neutrality rules (Nasu 2022b).

### **Reasons and conditions of self-exclusion**

The expected end-result of all small states' security strategies, including self-exclusion, was perhaps best formulated by Allen Sens: "The political life of small power is a struggle for political, economic, and social autonomy as much as it is a struggle for national survival or territorial integrity" (Choi 1995, 27).

An analysis of publications devoted to the external security strategies of small states shows that it is important, firstly, to identify the reasons and conditions for the adoption of these strategies, and secondly, to consider them in a spatiotemporal relationship, not separately from each other and not in isolation from historical and political context. In general, followers of the school of realism look for the reasons for the foreign policy strategy of states, including the choice of self-exclusion, in external systemic-structural factors (for example, in the polar structure and order of the global and regional systems). Hans J. Morgenthau, for example, even conditioned the legal and political status of neutrality on the legal and political structure of international society at a given historical moment, arguing that any fundamental change in that structure would affect the rules of neutrality (Morris and White 2011, 105; Simpson 2018, 123-125; Simpson 2021). In their turn, followers of social constructivism prefer internal factors: identity, norms, value orientations, determining, for example, the choice of external security strategy of Switzerland and Finland discussed above (Jesse and Dreyer 2023, 25-32). But, as we have already noted (Galstyan 2019, 8-14, 15), both (realistic) external systemic-structural and (constructivist) internal factors are of significant importance in choosing a security strategy for small states. At the same time, each of these groups of factors is not enough to explain the strategic choice of small states. For example, Luif notes that changes in the international system significantly influence the foreign policy of small states, but do not always determine it. Using the example of Austria, he argues that only a joint consideration of external

systemic and internal causes can fully explain the foreign policy behavior of small states (Luif 2003, 112-113). Jeanne Hey, summarizing the results of studies of the foreign policies of various small states, also concludes in favor of this approach. In particular, she notes that leaders play a significant role in the formulation and implementation of small states' foreign policies, but their choices and opportunities are determined by external and internal factors, such as, for example, the regime's security and economic needs, culture, political ideology, geography, external pressure, changes in regional and global systems. In other words, leaders in this sense are the electors of foreign policy strategies, existing possible options that arose as a result of the above-mentioned factors (Hey 2003b, 194).

As Asle Toje rightly points out, the possibility of a small state choosing neutrality arises in a competitive system, and neutrality will be preferable to the alliance strategy, if the likelihood of punishment from one of the competing great powers for this choice is low, or small state's neutrality is preferable to competing great powers (Toje 2011, 47).

Francis Domingo notes that the basis of the strategy of neutrality is the belief that a state should rely solely on its internal capabilities, without looking for external allies. According to him, the effectiveness of this strategy, typical of European diplomacy, largely depends on the authority of the given state, and permanent neutrality will be impractical if the state has a strategically sensitive location (Domingo 2014, 49). Some authors point out that to ensure neutrality, the consent or approval of the great powers close to the small state is necessary. And once the neutrality of a small state becomes disadvantageous to the great powers, the viability of this security strategy will be called into question (Choi 1995, 22). The survival of a neutral state depends on its ability to prove its commitment to neutrality and not pose a threat to the great powers. The success of this strategy depends on whether a small state can convince a great power that it benefits from the small state's neutrality, that it can satisfy the demands of the belligerents without the use of force, or that the use of force against a small state would be too expensive compared to the expected benefits. The survival of a neutral state depends on its ability to prove its commitment to neutrality and not pose a threat to the great powers. The success of this strategy depends on whether a small state can convince a great power that it benefits from the small state's neutrality, that the latter can satisfy the demands of the belligerents without the use of force, or that the use of force against a small state would be too expensive compared to the expected benefits (Choi 1995, 22; Thorhallsson and Steinsson 2017, 6-7; Maniruzzaman 1982, 26-28).

Some authors consider neutralism - the variety of self-exclusionary - as a strategy of newly created and relatively weak states, which can expand their possibilities of achieving maximum independence, as well as foreign policy flexibility and maneuverability of (Evans and Neumham 1998, 365-366). According to Götschel, the political core of neutrality has two functions: realistic (guaranteeing state's political independence, preserving its traditional trade relations during war, maintaining internal social unity and solidarity and international equilibrium, etc.) and idealistic (the state's refusal to project its armed forces beyond own boundaries, the obligation to limit and regulate the use of force in international relations, to justify the policy of neutrality within the country and in foreign relations, etc.) (Goetschel 1999, 117-120).

It is noteworthy that, as the examination of types of self-exclusion has shown, the adoption of neutrality strategy can be either a voluntary choice or the result of external coercion. This circumstance, combined with the way neutrality as a norm is enshrined (de jure or de facto), according to Jessica L. Beyer and Stephanie C. Hofmann, significantly determines the positions of political elite and public, predicting stability and continuity of the neutrality policy (see also Table 1). The authors argue that if neutrality is imposed from the outside and is not legally enshrined, then at the first opportunity, for example, as soon as the source of external coercion is eliminated, the ruling elite will abandon the imposed neutrality. If neutrality was elite's voluntary choice and the motives for this choice have not disappeared, then it is likely that neither the elite nor society will seek to abandon this norm. And if a society views neutrality as a norm conducive to state success and national survival, it will be reluctant to give it up, regardless of whether neutrality was imposed from the outside or the result of a voluntary choice (Beyer and Hofmann 2011, 291).

**Table 1. Matrix of nature of norm embeddedness (Beyer and Hofmann 2011, 291)**

		Norm adoption	
		voluntary	coerced
Norm embeddedness	De jure	Likely that norm is constitutive to both the public and political elite	Likely that norm is regulative to both the public and elite at first, but can change over time
	De facto	Likely that norm is more constitutive for public than political elite	Likely that norm stays regulative for both public and elite

From this we can conclude that, firstly, when considering cases of self-exclusion, it is necessary to take into account the historical and geopolitical context, and, secondly, changes in these systemic and structural conditions may give rise within a given society to the question of rethinking the country's security strategy.

The above-mentioned theoretical conclusions about the reasons and conditions for adopting a self-exclusion strategy are also justified in practice. Thus, Beyer and Hoffman's approach, we believe, can help explain, in particular, the behavior of neutral European states during the Cold War, after its end, as well as in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict of 2022 and its changes over time. And in this matter, the analyzes of Fisher and Steven Murphy can be useful. In particular, Murphy sees one key commonality among the European neutrals and the non-aligned "Five" (N-5: Austria, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland and Finland) - to compensate for their relative weakness and smallness, they have traditionally strived for economic, political and social shelter. But based on the significant differences between these countries, Murphy divides them into two groups:

- The "Trio" - Ireland, Sweden and Finland, the first of which prefers to describe its policy as "military neutrality" - non-membership in military alliances, and the other two replaced permanent neutrality with "military non-alignment" after the end of Cold War in the 1990s.
- "Duo" - Austria and Switzerland, which continue to maintain their permanent neutrality even after the end of the Cold War (Murphy 2021, 153-154).

In their turn, Fischer and co-authors emphasize the differences between neutral states in terms of legal basis, historical origin, internal context and state's geostrategic position. Accordingly, the authors identify differences even within the "Trio" and "Duo". In particular, while in the case of Switzerland neutrality is a universal approach, in the case of Austria it is a direct result of superpowers conflict during the Cold War, based on Austria's geostrategic position between two conflicting systems. And although the neutrality of Sweden and Finland was a product of the Northern European context, the core of Finnish neutrality was the preservation of sovereignty and independence, and in the case of Sweden - the promotion of national interests in the context of maintaining a strategic balance in Northern Europe. Sweden and Switzerland, as the authors note, were less susceptible to Soviet pressure than Austria and Finland. What Austria, Sweden and Finland had in common during the Cold War was that their neutrality was directed outward - to the challenges of the outside world, while Switzerland's neutrality was deeply rooted in identity. After the end of the Cold War, Switzerland was the only country from the "quartet" that did not join the EU. And while Austria and Switzerland continued to support the concept of permanent neutrality in their foreign and security policies, Sweden and Finland no longer applied it in their official doctrines, while simultaneously discussing the possible prospect of NATO membership (Fischer 2016, 9-10). Moreover, in 2022, in the wake of changes in the geostrategic environment in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, as we have already mentioned, Sweden and Finland ultimately completely abandoned the policy of de facto neutrality and became NATO members.

The case of Moldova is also noteworthy: as Tom Long notes, Moldova declared de jure permanent neutrality after the war over Transnistria, so as not to be drawn into a new war with Russia's active participation. Later, Moldova received significant economic, political and security support from European structures and states. However, the retention of Russian troops and Russian support for Transnistria's de facto independence still maintain a high risk of unfreezing this conflict, so Moldova is in no hurry to revise its neutrality strategy (Long 2022, 110). Perhaps this is why, in contrast to de facto permanently neutral Finland and Sweden, in de jure permanently neutral Moldova there was no unity around the rejection of neutrality either between the elite and society, or within each of them<sup>5</sup>.

Using the above-mentioned matrix approach, we can conclude that

- The strength and continuity of Switzerland's neutrality is due to the fact that this norm was adopted voluntarily, legally enshrined and became an integral part of the security identity.
- Sweden's adoption of neutrality was also voluntary, but did not receive legal formalization, remaining a permanent de facto neutrality for a long time. As a result, even in conditions of changes in the external environment, the public was more inclined to maintain, and the elite, on the contrary, was inclined to abandon neutrality. This is evidenced by the fact that, until recently, Sweden's NATO membership was largely an elite discourse, while there was no broad

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<sup>5</sup> Al Mayadeen. 2024. "Moldova not seeking NATO membership due to low public support: PM." *Al Mayadeen English*, March 14, 2024. Accessed April 13, 2024. <https://english.almayadeen.net/news/politics/moldova-not-seeking-nato-membership-due-to-low-public-suppor>.

public consensus on that matter. Research shows that, unlike neighboring Finland, which accepted neutrality coercively, where the political discourse of NATO membership has always dominated, the Swedish ruling elite found it quite difficult to change public opinion from the permanent *de facto* neutrality in favor of an alliance strategy (Michalski, Brommesson and Ekengren 2024, 150-156).

- It is assumed that if the adoption of neutrality is the result of external coercion and is enshrined in law (Austria, Finland, Moldova), then, most likely, in the presence of appropriate new conditions in the geopolitical environment, the ruling elite and the public will be inclined to abandon neutrality. Throughout the Cold War, Austria and Finland maintained permanent *de jure* neutrality, but after the collapse of the USSR, Finland replaced it with permanent *de facto* neutrality, in 2022, shortly after the start of Russian-Ukrainian war, Finland abandoned the policy of neutrality, but Austria continues maintain *de jure* permanent neutrality. It can even be assumed that the Austrian elite and public believe that neutrality contributes to state's development and survival and has even become a component of identity, as in the case of Switzerland. Perhaps Moldova's ruling elite and public also continue to see more benefits in permanent *de jure* neutrality than in replacing it with alliance strategy. In other words, only the elite and public of Finland saw in the changes in the geopolitical environment favorable conditions for a complete abandonment of the strategy of self-exclusion. It is expected that in the case of a favorable change in the geopolitical microenvironment, Moldova will be inclined to abandon neutrality and adopt an alliance strategy.

## Conclusion and discussion

Summarizing the results of the analysis in accordance with the research problems defined in the introduction, we can make the following conclusions:

- The end-goal of self-exclusion is to ensure the strategic autonomy of the small state, the (expected) end-results are - to ensure the maximum possible independence and maneuverability in relations with the great powers.
- The reasons for adopting a self-exclusion strategy are a combination of external systemic-structural (for example, the polar structure and order of global and especially regional systems) and internal constructivist-structural (for example, identity, norms, state capabilities, beliefs of the ruling elite, its abilities and skills, public support etc.) factors, which should be considered in a spatiotemporal relationship. An example of the significance of these correlations is the relationship between the source of the norm of self-exclusion (external coercion or voluntary acceptance), the form of its fixation (*de jure* or *de facto*) and the foreign policy behavior of the state.
- Necessary conditions for the effectiveness and viability of a self-exclusion strategy are: 1. not to accept such obligations and not to join such initiatives that involve actions against any state and (mutual) assistance to another state, 2. international (primarily regional) competitive (bipolar or multipolar) system, 3.

at least the consent or approval of neighboring great powers to small state's neutral status, 4. small state's ability to prove loyalty to its neutral status in relations with the great powers, to prove the benefits of this status for the great powers and the inappropriateness and high cost of coercion compared with the expected benefits, 5. small state's ability to protect its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity with its own capabilities, without relying on external help and support.

- The following types of self-exclusion can be distinguished: permanent neutrality, in one case as state's long-term permanent legal status (neutral state), in another case as state's long-term permanent policy, occasional neutrality as state's situational, temporary position in non-participation in any particular conflict (non-belligerence) and manifestations of equidistant behavior towards the parties to the conflict (Ad hoc neutrality), as well as neutrality as a refusal to join military-political alliances and from direct or indirect support of their actions (neutrality/non-alignment).
- The above-mentioned varieties of self-exclusion can be grouped into two groups: authentic or pure and inauthentic or impure. Authentic types of self-exclusion are permanent-eternal or long-term neutrality with its variants: de jure-contractual, de facto-voluntary, general, absolute, and inauthentic types are non-alignment, neutralism and occasional neutrality.

The analysis also identified a number of issues and problems that could inform further research into self-exclusion, or at least should be taken into account in such research. These issues include:

1. Authentic forms of self-exclusion - permanent-long-term neutrality with its varieties, are more characteristic of Europe, while in other world parts the inauthentic forms of self-exclusion are more common, especially non-alignment-neutralism and occasional neutrality.
2. "Traditional" definitions of forms of self-exclusion have some internal limitations that make the applicability of these concepts controversial for the study of foreign policy of states in modern realities.
  - The first limitation is that all these definitions relate primarily to the military aspect of power competition - participation in military actions, whereas, as we said above, power competition includes and combines non-military aspects too: economic, diplomatic, information-psychological, etc.
  - The belief that after the end of the Cold War the strategy of self-exclusion has lost its relevance and states will no longer accept it is not justified. While a number of states continued to follow this strategy after the Cold War, the current confrontation between Russia and the West is reviving the political and scientific debate about self-exclusion strategy for the sake of small state survival. Moreover, some authors even put forward new concepts of self-exclusion adapted to the technological era, or even revive concepts of neutrality that were considered outdated-inapplicable (e.g., benevolent neutrality).



- Another limitation concerns the concept of non-alignment: at first glance, this concept, born during the Cold War and built on the realities of that period, is an anachronism. First of all, the object of non-alignment during the Cold War - bipolar systemic antagonism - no longer exists, therefore, there is no problem of joining the coalition of one or another pole. However, in the current confrontation between Russia and the West, global or regional changes may “revive” the applicability of this concept. Secondly, as we see, a number of states of the Non-Aligned Movement are members of military-defensive and political-economic bilateral and multilateral alliances. This circumstance forces us to rethink and reformulate the concept of non-alignment/neutralism, either by tightening its definitions, or, like neutrality, by identifying types within it.
3. There is no universal formula for the reasons for adopting a self-exclusion strategy, or at least there are more variables in this formula than it might seem at first glance. Undoubtedly, external systemic and structural factors are of significant, even paramount importance in determining a security strategy, but when choosing a specific strategy aimed at countering external challenges, internal factors, primarily the security identity and beliefs of the ruling elite, are no less significant. However, even the use of the Matrix of norm embeddedness to consider practical examples showed that in order to obtain accurate data and conclusions, a separate consideration of each case is inevitable.

### Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found at <https://doi.org/10.46991/JOPS/2024.3.7.037>

### Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and critiques.

### Conflict of interests

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

### Ethical standards

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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