

THE POLICY OF NEUTRALITY AND INVESTMENT IN THE DEFENCE SYSTEM

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At a time when traditionally neutral countries in international relations, such as Finland and Sweden, decide to abandon this concept, it is necessary to reconsider the policy of neutrality of European countries, as well as costs and investment in the defence system. Analysing the case of the neutrality of Switzerland, Austria and the Republic of Serbia, the authors start from the policy of this concept and monitor the costs and investment in their defence system. Switzerland is the first country whose permanent neutrality is internationally recognized and is considered a model of the international and legal status of neutrality. Austrian neutrality is much younger and is the result of specific international relations. Among other things, Switzerland bases its policy of neutrality on the concept of armed neutrality and great investment in materiel, and Austria follows a similar pattern in the policy of neutrality.

Although neutrality of each state is conditioned by various factors and marked by specificities, which should be taken into account when generalising, the authors believe that, despite changes in the structure of international politics and the expansion of the meaning and scope of security, great investment in the defense and security system is a guarantee of indisputability and sustainability of neutral states. Therefore, using comparative analysis of neutrality policies

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and comparing investment in defence systems, they conclude that the key to the concept of neutrality and armed deterrence is investment in materiel, which is of great importance for developing and strengthening the concept of the military neutrality of the Republic of Serbia.

Key words: policy of neutrality, Switzerland, Austria, Republic of Serbia, armed neutrality, armed deterrence, acquisition of materiel

Introduction

The paper starts from the development of neutrality policy and emphasizes the concept of armed neutrality based on investment in the defence system. In fact, the comparative analysis has shown that permanently neutral European countries invest great resources in the defence system in order to make their neutrality indisputable.

Switzerland is the first country whose permanent neutrality is internationally recognized and is considered a model of the international and legal status of neutrality. The birth of its neutrality is related to the heavy defeat in the Battle of Marignano in 1515, and it was officially mentioned for the first time in 1674. Switzerland is one of the few countries that has remained neutral for more than 200 years because it has not participated in any war since the Napoleonic Wars. It has managed to preserve its neutrality even though it was violated to a lesser extent during World War I and II. Furthermore, during the Cold War, it was exposed to a lesser extent to the conflict between East and West. Inter alia, Switzerland bases its policy of neutrality on the policy of armed neutrality and the concept of total defence. In fact, the components of its neutrality: armed deterrence, systemic concessions and the recognition of neutrality as a norm have so far ensured the survival of neutrality and represented an almost perfect model for others seeking to establish such a status. Austria became neutral much later, which was conditioned by specific international relations after World War II.

Although each neutral state is a case in itself and it is difficult to compare it with other permanently neutral states, certain lessons and experiences can be generalised and considered in other military neutral states. Nevertheless, despite changes in the structure of international politics and the expansion of the meaning and scope of security, historic lessons must not be forgotten when developing the concept of neutrality. The historic experience of neutral states has shown that the only indisputable policy of neutrality is the one supported by appropriate force, the so-called armed neutrality (Đurašinović-Radojević, 2016) and that, consequently, it has to be followed by reliable and credible instruments of deterrence (Stojanović, Šaranović, 2022: 34). In fact, military deterrence represents a traditional and, as correctly emphasized by Blagojević, "still a solid

base for comprehensive deterrence" (2021: 236-237). As a basis for the development of armed deterrence, the paper follows and analyses investment in the defense system of neutral states.

Swiss neutrality

The Swiss historic concept of neutrality has proved to be permanent, as it had its deep roots in Swiss history. The tradition of neutrality of this country and autonomous self-defence has gradually emerged throughout its history and is largely based on successful political decisions.

The beginning of Swiss neutrality is often attributed to the Congress of Vienna in 1815, but it is important to emphasize that at that time the desire of the Swiss to remain neutral was only formally recognized (Subedi, 1993: 264). According to Novaković, "the act on the recognition and guarantee of the permanent neutrality of Switzerland and the inviolability of its territory" (2016: 76-77) is today considered a document that has finally recognized (not declared, unlike some other permanently neutral states) its permanent neutrality. Thus, Switzerland has chosen its status of permanent neutrality freely and independently (Munro 2005: 47).

Although in a modern sense Switzerland cannot be considered a neutral state before the 18th century, national legends believe that the roots of its neutrality go back to the late 13th century, when three cantons of central Switzerland today signed alliance treaties that protected them from "the aggression of the wicked" (Fischer 2013b: 43). The fact is that certain elements that were later included in neutrality had already been well-known in the Swiss political tradition in earlier times (Fischer, 2013b). The Swiss managed to remain neutral during both World Wars, promoting the concept of *neutrality under arms* (Novaković, 2011: 11).

During the 19th century, preventive mobilisation and deterrence deterred great powers from invading Swiss territory in 1848, 1859 and 1870. One of the most frequently commented achievements of this period was the deft management of the situation that arose in the Franco-Prussian War, when the French Eastern Army crossed Swiss territory to avoid encirclement. The Swiss militia quickly captured and disarmed the French Armed Forces, which deterred Germans from pursuing their opponents (DeVore and Stähli, 2011: 4).

The outbreak of World War I, however, was the first major test for Swiss neutrality. Switzerland mobilised its army of almost half a million people, on all borders. It was a continuation of armed neutrality, whose purpose was to convince great powers that it was still neutral and willing to defend such neutrality with arms if necessary.

Switzerland was one of only three countries in Europe whose sovereignty was not directly violated during World War II (Dreyer and Jesse, 2014: 62). At the beginning of the War, the Federal Council (government) confirmed Swiss

neutrality, which was recognized by the warring parties. It mobilised the Armed Forces in order to protect its independence and neutrality. In fact, to make its neutrality credible, it mobilised around 450,000 people, who were on full alert by April 1945 (Dreyer and Jesse, 2014: 63). In this way, it made it quite clear that anyone who would like to enter the country by force will have to count on a conflict with its Armed Forces.

Swiss survival in World War II was, *inter alia*, based on the fact that it was heavily armed, and therefore successfully implemented the policy of armed deterrence, while at the same time it represented a kind of intermediary for informal economic exchange between the warring parties and banking services. Moreover, during the War, it served as a base for intelligence operations (Novaković, 2016: 53; Karsh, 1988: 40-41).

Nevertheless, there are opposed views on the seriousness of German threat to Swiss territorial sovereignty during the War, but explanations regarding general attitude to the Swiss Armed Forces as a deterrent to German aggression do not differ (Jesse, 2006: 16; Đurašinović–Radojević, 2016).

Today it is clear that Switzerland has made a series of concessions of its policy of neutrality to all parties in order to avoid war in its territory. Its non-involvement in World War II has unequivocally strengthened the belief in armed neutrality (Đurašinović–Radojević, 2016). The Federal Council was convinced that the only possibility to preserve independence was to meet any violation of neutrality with armed resistance. As Đurašinović–Radojević state: "the better the military preparedness, the less danger that neutrality will be violated" (2016: 65).

After World War II, the centuries-old battle between great powers in the immediate vicinity of Switzerland ended. Together with Austria, it formed a wedge of about 800 kilometres that separated the northern and southern NATO members (White Paper on Neutrality, 1993; Wyss, 2012). Swiss neutrality and security policy were generally focused on the East–West conflict (Federal Council of Switzerland, 1993: 11).

After World War II, strong defence was considered necessary in order to make the policy credible in the perception of other countries, with the objective of developing such defence. A self-sustaining (independent) policy of equipping with materiel has remained, however, a distant ideal for Switzerland. Certainly, at that time the Swiss defence industry could not equip its Air Force and Army with necessary modern aircraft and tanks (Nilsson and Wyss, 2016: 351).

Switzerland signalled its partial alignment with Western countries by participating in the Marshall Plan, in order to continue to benefit from the US-dominated economic system. In fact, it had strategic importance for the US and showed that its neutrality was "submissive" and "flexible". Therefore, in addition to its Western security "appearance", it has eventually gained access to the US weapons.

Swiss policy has influenced the perception that it is strategically important. It was clear to the Allies, especially the United States and Great Britain, that it would align itself with NATO in case it was attacked by the Soviet Union. In fact, the official defence policy pursued by the Swiss Armed Forces and the Swiss Government was one of complete independence (Rickly, 2004: 132). For example, in July 1958, the Swiss Government announced: "Our military has to be provided with the most effective weapons to preserve our independence and protect our neutrality. Nuclear weapons are among them" (Rickly, 2004: 134; Karsh, 1988: 179).

During the Cold War Swiss neutrality also relied on this concept of a state with weapons. According to an estimate, in 1987 Switzerland could mobilise 645,000 people or about 9.8 percent of its population (Karsh, 1988: 151). Its military had almost 900 tanks and 1500 armoured vehicles, and it had almost 300 fighters (Karsh, 1988: 151; Jesse, 2006: 16).

Although Switzerland wanted, due to its armed neutrality, to continue an independent policy of equipping after World War II, the lack of modern heavy military equipment and the fear of a Soviet attack influenced the decision to purchase weapons abroad. Since the end of World War II until 1958, the United Kingdom was its main supplier of aircraft and tanks. Since the early 1950s, the Swiss were not eligible to receive the US military assistance, so they bought weapons from the French defence industry. Meanwhile, the federal authorities were not only unwilling to purchase weapons from the USSR and its satellites, but rejected any possible offers from the eastern part of the Iron Curtain. It is important to emphasize that during the 1950s, Switzerland considered the option of having its arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons, thus showing its readiness to maintain its independence by improving its deterrence strategy (Rickly, 2004; Nidecker, 2014).

Regarding the issue of the neutrality policy in the post-Cold War surroundings, Swiss views have remained divided. The long-standing tradition of neutrality was put to the test when a great number of residents believed that they no longer needed the Armed Forces and favoured "unarmed neutrality" after the time of Swiss "armed neutrality" (Mannitz, 2007: 12). The results of the first referendum, held at the end of 1989, were a clear expression of dissatisfaction with the status *quo*: a total of 36 percent of citizens were in favour of abandoning military service, and in two cantons even an absolute majority voted for the abolition of the military (Mannitz, 2007: 13).

The 1999 amendments to the federal constitution (voted by citizens) did not relate to neutrality. As before, the Federal Council and the Federal Assembly remained competent to preserve neutrality (Articles 173 and 185).

Certainly, in accordance with a new view of the security environment, there was no longer a need to maintain bulky defence capacities, so the size of the Swiss Armed Forces was reduced to 400,000 in 1995. The second reform of the

Armed Forces was carried out ten years later, through the project called "Army XXI", and it entailed an additional reduction of the total size of the Armed Forces to 220,000 soldiers, including 140,000 as the active army and 80,000 serving as a reserve. The system of military service is still maintained (Novaković, 2016: 225).

Switzerland has also been adapting to the new security environment. Although new security challenges such as terrorism, organized crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, pandemics and the like cannot be adequately met by neutrality in foreign and security policy, as noted by Thomas Fischer, nine out of ten Swiss still support the policy of neutrality (Fischer, 2013: 41).

Swiss defence system is defined following the principle: "If you want peace, prepare for war". The concept of neutrality and a comprehensive system of national defence based on conscription have played a key role in security policy, while the development of militia-type armed forces is related to the development of the Swiss state.

When it comes to defence costs, some studies indicate that, although the neutrality of a country is related to a lower degree of external threat, and would thus require lower defence costs, it does not isolate the country from changes in the global security system. Therefore, Swiss defence spending was very similar to the spending trends, on average, of the United States and other NATO members. However, it should be taken into account that Switzerland largely produces its weapons and insists on military and economic independence, i.e. on as little import as possible of key defence products (including food production). In case of war, the Swiss military can have up to 800,000 soldiers, which is 14% of the population. Due to long history of neutrality, the Swiss Armed Forces do not participate in conflicts, but only in peacekeeping missions. The Swiss Armed Forces personnel has participated in some UN peacekeeping missions, although on a smaller scale compared to other European permanently neutral states (Tatalović, 1991: 107).

At the end of the 1980s, the Government tried to intensify its involvement in the UN activities, although citizens voted against membership in this organization in a referendum. The Swiss contribution to the missions was limited to unarmed personnel. The so-called "Blue Helmet Law" that would have allowed the Armed Forces personnel to use force in self-defence was rejected. It was only in 2001 that the arming of Swiss soldiers in peacekeeping missions for the purpose of self-defence was voted on in a referendum on a partial amendment to the Law on the Armed Forces. The first armed members of the Armed Forces were sent to Kosovo and Metohija in 2002. The Swiss company (SWISSCOY), engaged in 1999 in the southern Serbian province, consisted of 200 members of the Armed Forces (Swiss Armed Forces, 2022), which was the greatest engagement of Switzerland in peacekeeping missions until then.

The process of modernising the military began with plans to replace F-5 Tiger II fighters with Gripen aircraft, which were cancelled after the proposal was rejected in a national referendum in May 2014 (Schellenberg, 2017). Furthermore, in 2018, Switzerland expressed the need for the acquisition of modern multipurpose fighters and surface air defence systems for its Air Force and Air Defence. In June 2021, the Government announced the selection of the F-35A and the Patriot system for its new fighter aviation and surface air defence programmes, stating that both systems were offered at the lowest tenders.

Since the air patrol capabilities over Switzerland have been reduced, in July 2018 the Government tried again to initiate the procurement of a new fighter, to replace the F/A-18 Hornet, whose exploitation has been extended until 2030. The multi-stage selection process was completed in June 2021, and the F-35A was selected. The procurement programme was capped at 6 billion Swiss francs, in May 2019, and separated from surface air defence procurement. Previously, both programmes were linked. Other priorities include upgrading Swiss air surveillance systems and transport helicopters. Namely, the Swiss defence industry has limited development and production capabilities, with recognized capacities in the combat vehicle sector, but in cooperation with North American firms (Military Balance, 2022). Switzerland has "temporarily given up its neutrality" due to Russian attack on Ukraine and, in addition to freezing accounts and assets, has closed its sky for Russian planes. It was then announced from Bern that it remains neutral, but committed to Western values (Lakić, 2022). As Tamás Orbán mentions, this course represents a dramatic reversal, having in mind that even Nazi Germany could enjoy all benefits of neutral Switzerland, although it was a more immediate threat to the Swiss than Russia is today. Nevertheless, this move represents an unprecedented departure from Swiss long-standing neutral tradition and may therefore signal that times are changing (Orbán, 2022).

Austrian neutrality

Austrian neutrality is, in fact, imposed neutrality. After World War II, the territory of Austria was occupied by the Allied forces until 1955. With the withdrawal of Soviet forces from eastern Austria, together with the withdrawal of the US, British and French forces from other parts of the country, and in exchange for the Austrian declaration of military neutrality, the USSR got a strategic chance to drive the "neutral wedge", consisting of Switzerland and Austria, into the territorial defence of NATO. "Neutrality according to the Swiss model" became the solution for the re-establishment of the independent and democratic Austria (Fischer, 2013: 30).

Thus, in 1955, the Soviet Union demanded by the Moscow Memorandum the neutrality of Austria, following the Swiss model. Austria committed itself to

neutrality by the Austrian State Treaty of 1955 and its constitution, which prohibits accession to military alliances and establishment of foreign military bases in its territory (Legal Information System of the Republic of Austria, 1955; Pejić, 2019). In the same year, it was admitted to the United Nations, but there was no talk of its status of permanent neutrality, given specific international circumstances.

As Stojanović claims, in the case of Austria, "neutrality was not its free choice, but a consequence of specific international relations between the victorious powers after World War II" (2020: 221). Furthermore, he states that Austria is developing a concept of national security aimed at guaranteeing independence and neutrality, "consistently treating the use of military force as a last resort" (2020: 221). Along with its neutrality, Austria has become the EU member, and then, in 1995, it joined the NATO Partnership for Peace programme, making a substantial contribution within these frameworks. Influenced by changes in security threats and events in the immediate environment, such as the dissolution of the SFRY, especially the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Austria has begun to rather orient itself in the direction of NATO. One of the benefits of its membership in the Partnership for Peace was the interoperability process through which the Armed Forces were modernised. In this way, the willingness to participate in peacekeeping operations together with other Western countries has increased. Both in doctrinal documents and in practice, Austria views the participation of its troops in peacekeeping operations as an obligation, recognising the EU and NATO as its partners in this process.

The September 2019 report by the Ministry of Defence defined the conditions for reorganizing the Armed Forces and modernizing materiel by 2030. It warns that the gap between requirements and available resources is widening and will ultimately reduce the capability of the Armed Forces to carry out their missions. The report suggests that it is better to modernize the Typhoon fleet than to replace it, which was confirmed in July 2020, with the view that they should be retained. However, in January 2021, the Minister of Defence suggested that they could be sold if an opportunity arose. Austria also plans to cooperate with Italy in relation to the procurement of helicopters, and the letter of intent was signed in November 2020. It should be mentioned that the Austrian defence industry consists of about 100 companies with great "niche" capabilities and international connections in the field of arms and ammunition, communication equipment and vehicles. (Military Balance, 2021)

Serbian neutrality

The military neutrality of the Republic of Serbia involves the status according to "effective military alliances", as stated in the Resolution on the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity and constitutional order of the Republic of Serbia,

which was adopted by the National Assembly on December 26, 2007. Article 6 of the Resolution states: "Due to the overall role of NATO, from the illegal bombardment of Serbia in 1999 without a Security Council decision to Annex 11 of the rejected Ahtisaari's plan, which determines that NATO is 'ultimate supervisory authority' in an 'independent Kosovo', the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia hereby declares the neutral status of the Republic of Serbia towards effective military alliances until a referendum is called, at which the final decision on this issue will be made." (National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, [NARS], 2007).

The circumstances that influenced the declaration of military neutrality are the issue of the status of Kosovo and Metohija, opened in 2005 in the UN and the role of NATO in the illegal bombardment of the FR Yugoslavia in 1999 without a Security Council decision (Milosavljević, 2016).

Since the adoption of the Resolution of the National Assembly, which declared military neutrality, until today, this commitment has gone through various stages, but it seems that it remains the permanent foreign policy course of the Republic of Serbia. After a longer period since the Resolution, in 2019 military neutrality was more closely defined in the National Security Strategy and the Defence Strategy.

Using the position of a military neutral country, the Republic of Serbia has procured materiel from Russia, and also from the NATO and EU members, as well as Turkey, China and other countries (Forca, 2022: 174).

The comparative analysis of investment in the defence system of Switzerland, Austria and the Republic of Serbia

The policy of neutrality is based on investment in the defence system in order to make it capable of armed deterrence, because, "one of the main assumptions underlying neutrality policy of a state is the question of whether it is armed and capable of self-defence" (Mačkić, 2013: 224). In fact, as Blagojević and Radanović point out, armed or "military deterrence represents a traditional, but still a solid base for comprehensive deterrence" (2022: 30). Accordingly, defence spending and procurement of materiel from Switzerland, Austria and the Republic of Serbia have been analysed. Figure 1 shows 2019 defence spending. It can be noticed that Switzerland invests for this purpose, as well as Romania and Norway, which are the NATO members, or like Sweden, which at that time pursued a policy of neutrality. Austria has invested like Czechia, which is the NATO member, and the Republic of Serbia like Lithuania, which is also a member of this alliance.

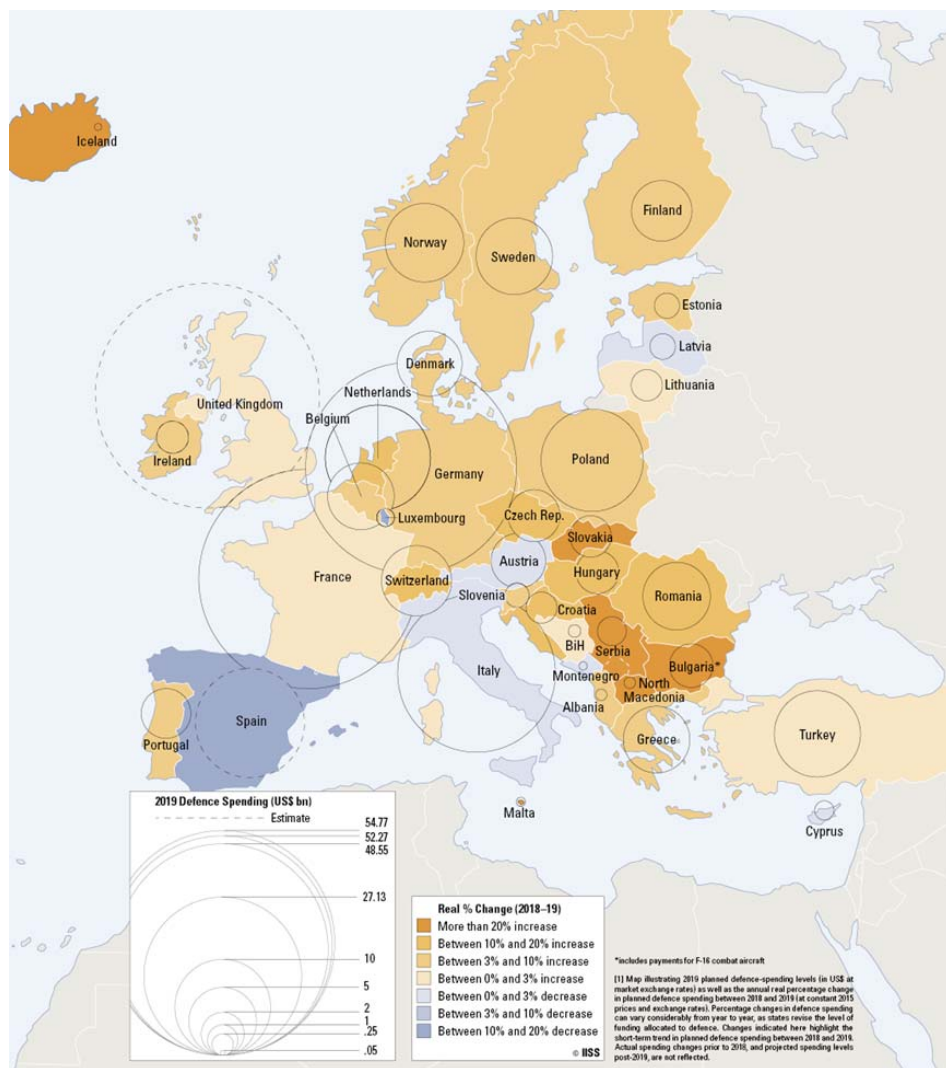
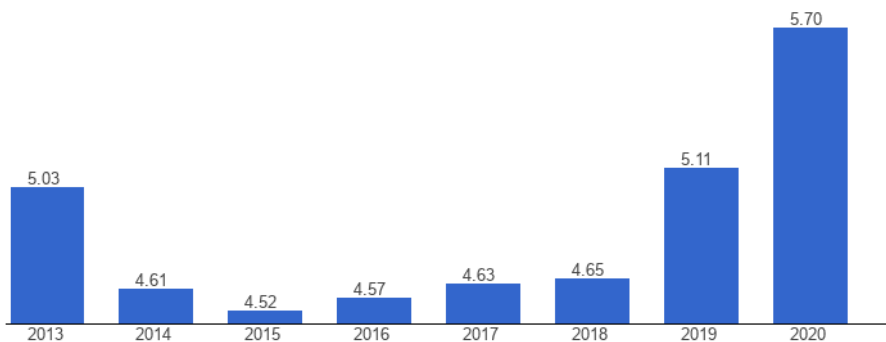


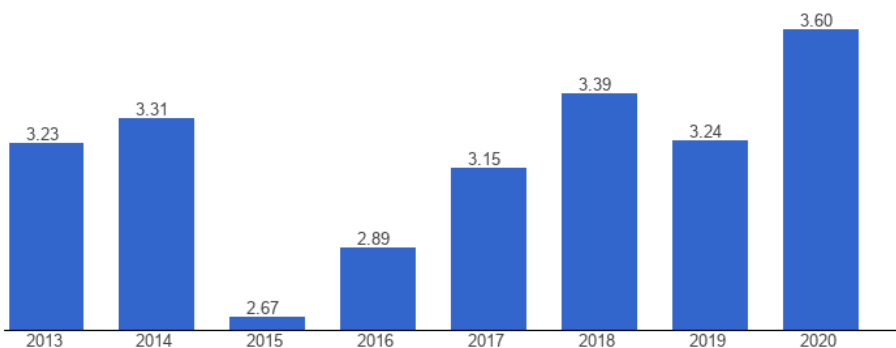
Figure 1 – 2019 Defence Spending (Military Balance, 2020)

Swiss total defence spending from 2013 to 2020 (Graph 1) increased since 2015 from US\$4.52 billion to US\$5.7 billion in 2020.



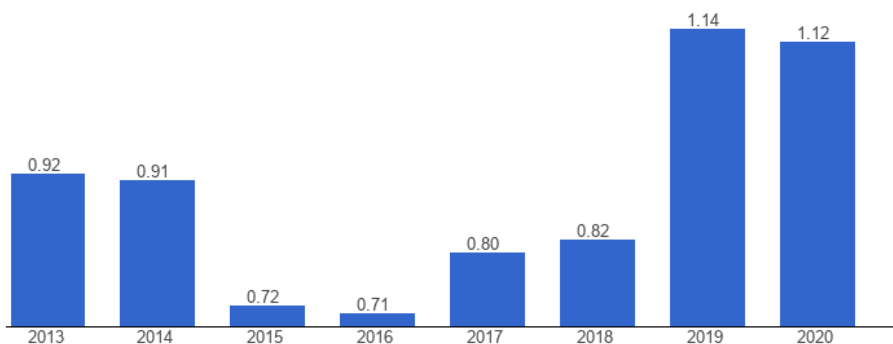
Graph 1 – Swiss defence spending from 2013 to 2020
(Source: [SIPRI], 2022)

The average value of Austrian defence spending in the period from 2013 to 2020 (Graph 2) was US\$3.19 billion, while spending in 2020 reached US\$3.6 billion.



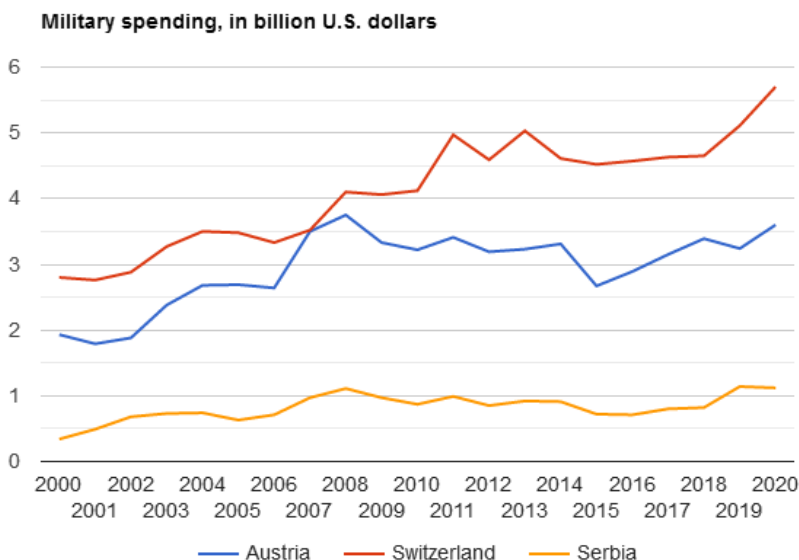
Graph 2 – Austrian defence spending from 2013 to 2020
(Source: SIPRI, 2022)

The average value of Serbian defence spending in the same period (Graph 3) was US\$ 0.89 billion with a minimum of US\$0.71 billion in 2016 and a maximum of US\$1.14 billion in 2019. Defence spending in 2020 was US\$1.12 billion.



Graph 3 – Serbian defence spending from 2013 to 2020
(Source: SIPRI, 2022)

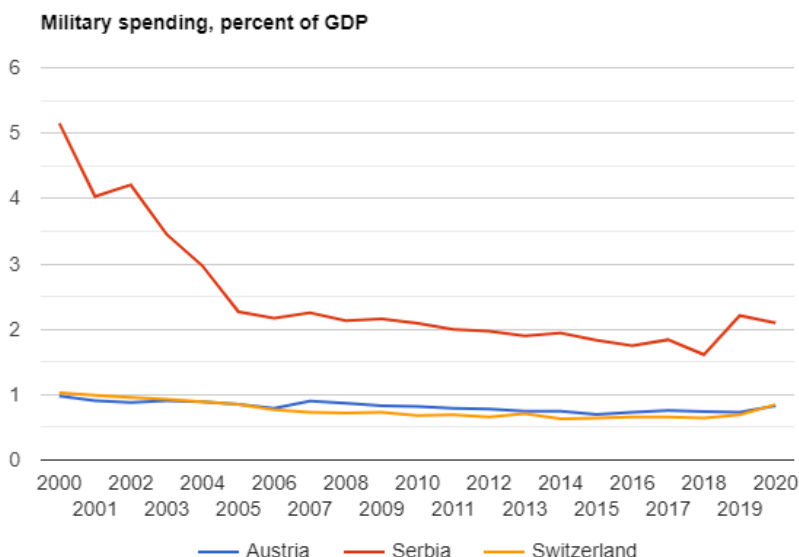
From the above-mentioned data, it can be concluded that permanently neutral countries, Switzerland and Austria, allocate great financial resources for the security and defence system, which indicates that the Republic of Serbia should follow this example. Graph 4 presents the comparative analysis of defence spending of Switzerland, Austria and Serbia in the period from 2000 to 2020.



Graph 4 – Defence spending of Austria, Switzerland and Serbia from 2000 to 2020
(Source: [SIPRI], 2022)

Analysing the graphs and diagrams for the mentioned period, an almost constant increase in defence spending can be noticed in Switzerland and Austria, while in the Republic of Serbia, a certain increase in spending has been recorded since 2018.

If spending is analysed in percent of GDP, in the case of Austria and Switzerland, permanence in spending is noticed, while in the Republic of Serbia, from 2000 to 2020, "oscillations" are noticed (Graph 5).

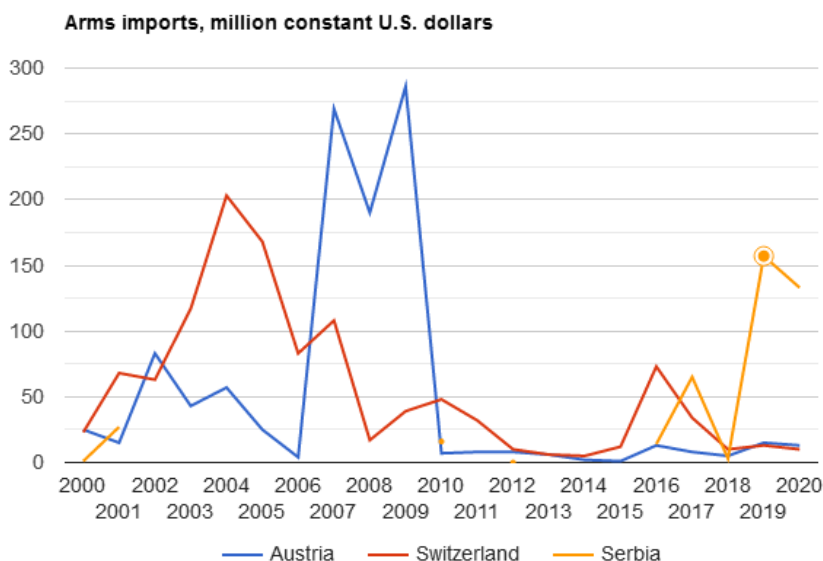


Graph 5 – Defence spending of Austria, Switzerland and Serbia in percent of GDP from 2000 to 2020
(Source: [SIPRI], 2022)

For the sake of comparison, Austrian and Swiss defence spending from GDP in 2020 were 0.8% and 0.81%, respectively, while the Republic of Serbia allocated 1.89% of GDP that year. In 2021, a slight drop to 1.79% of the share in GDP was recorded (Knežević, 2022: 105).

Therefore, the percent of financial resources allocated by the Republic of Serbia in the mentioned period has positive growth. It is very important to note that "the commitment from the Long-Term Plan for the Development of the Defence System to allocate 1.4%, i.e. 1.8% of GDP per year for the improvement of military capabilities has been met" (Knežević, Nikolić, Neševski, 2021: 112). The fact is that although Serbia allocates a higher percent of its gross national product for defence, this percent still does not allow for the orderly and stable financing of the acquisition of the most modern weapons and equipment that richer countries like Switzerland and Austria can afford.

For the procurement of materiel, Austria spent the most in 2009, US\$ 286 million, Switzerland US\$203 million in 2004, and Serbia US\$157 million in 2019 (Graph 6).



Graph 6 – Defence spending of Austria, Switzerland and Serbia for procurement of weapons from 2000 to 2020
(Source: [SIPRI], 2022)

Moreover, it is important to note that due to very high prices of modern materiel, Serbian great spending in percent of GDP does not speak in favour of accelerated arming with these weapons. Namely, this complex process is essentially conditioned by many other political, security, military and economic factors.

Conclusion

The concept of armed neutrality and self-defence, as well as the successful implementation of the policy of armed deterrence, have developed gradually and proved to be appropriate throughout history. Such an experience has unequivocally strengthened the credibility of armed neutrality, as one of the most successful manners to ensure political independence and guarantee the state security. Switzerland and Austria continue to rely on permanent and armed neutrality as a tool of foreign and security policy, precisely because a credible policy of neutrality cannot be implemented without reliance on armed neutrality. In fact, neutral states fight

against any threats by diplomatic and peaceful means, but also, if necessary, with available and powerful defence forces. Although the policy of neutrality, including its military and security aspect, must constantly be adapted to the external and security situation, the concept of armed neutrality is still relevant in international relations. Thus precisely, analysing costs of defence and procurement of weapons and military equipment of permanently neutral states, it can be concluded that the Republic of Serbia should also follow these practices in developing the concept of military neutrality.

On the other hand, we are witnessing the collapse of neutrality in Europe, and some neutral countries, such as Sweden or Finland, have decided on the course of NATO membership. The question arises how far Austria and Switzerland can maintain their neutrality in current international relations. Some theorists and researchers conclude that they can still "maintain their identity as mediators and provide services that military neutral states provide to the international community in times of crises" (Živanović, 2022). Therefore, analysing the most important factors necessary to maintain neutrality, we emphasize the need for further investment in the defence system with a particular emphasis on equipping the armed forces, which are a guarantor of the credibility of neutrality and the basis of armed (military) deterrence. Following this path, it is necessary to further study the status of neutrality in international relations. In this regard, the attention of the scientific and professional public should be drawn to the possibility that this issue will become more relevant after the end of the current conflicts in Europe despite the current downward trend.

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Summary

At a time when, in the policy and practice of international relations, traditionally neutral countries such as Finland and Sweden decide to abandon this concept, it is necessary to once again consider the policy of neutrality of European countries, as well as the costs for the defense system and investment in weapons and military equipment. Analyzing the case of the neutrality of Switzerland, Austria and the Republic of Serbia, the authors start from the politics of this concept and follow the investment in weapons and military equipment of these countries. Namely, Switzerland is the first country whose permanent neutrality is internationally recognized and is considered a model of the international and legal status of neutrality. Austrian neutrality is much younger and is the result of specific international relations. Among other things, Switzerland bases its policy of neutrality on the concept of armed neutrality and significant investment in weapons and military equipment. Austria follows a similar pattern in the policy of neutrality.

Although the neutrality of each state is conditioned by different factors and marked by the specificities of these countries, which should be taken into account when generalizing, the authors are of the opinion that despite changes in the structure of international politics and the expansion of the meaning and scope of security, historical lessons must not be forgotten when developing the concept of neutrality. Therefore, the authors, analyzing neutrality policies and comparing investment in the defense system, conclude that for the concept of neutrality and armed deterrence, investment in armament and military equipment is crucial. These lessons are of great importance in developing and strengthening the concept of military neutrality of the Republic of Serbia.

The authors therefore follow the thesis that the historical experience of neutral states has shown that the only indisputable policy of neutrality is the one supported by adequate force, the so-called armed neutrality, and that it must therefore necessarily be accompanied by reliable and credible instruments of deterrence.

Also, the authors, analyzing the most important factors necessary to maintain neutrality, indicate the need for further study of the status of neutrality in international relations and the possibility that this issue will become more relevant after the end of the current conflicts in Europe despite the current downward trend.

Key words: policy of neutrality, Switzerland, Austria, Republic of Serbia, armed neutrality, armed deterrence, acquisition of weapons and military equipment

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