

International dimension of Neutrality

A Geneva Security Debate

Geneva Centre for Security Policy

**Speech by
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Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Afternoon!

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to the Geneva Centre for Security Policy for this 35th edition of our Geneva Security Debates.

Our Geneva Security Debates are a platform for public discussions on pressing security challenges, bringing together outstanding thinkers and practitioners to offer fresh perspectives and deeper understanding of today's complex global security landscape.

Today, I am delighted to introduce this important conversation on “the international dimension of neutrality”.

In today's deeply unsettled global environment, it is more important than ever to reflect on the meaning, purpose, and practice of neutrality. Strategic rivalries and hot conflicts have returned, alliances are shifting, and the multilateral order is under strain. We find ourselves in a fragmented international system, one that is no longer unipolar or bipolar, but has turned multipolar, but is still fluid, and unpredictable.

It is within this context that the concept of neutrality is being redefined, not only by neutral states, but also by countries that are exploring alternative ways of positioning themselves in the global order.

Indeed, many states, including Switzerland, find themselves in a real and pressing dilemma to preserve their independence and flexibility while remaining engaged in international affairs.

Today's discussion invites us to think beyond the traditional, legal definition of neutrality, and to consider related approaches such as non-alignment, multi-alignment, and what some refer to as positive or active neutrality.

Non-alignment, as shaped during the Cold War, was a refusal to be drawn into great power blocs. Multi-alignment, as practiced today by emerging powers is a more flexible approach, engaging with various partners across geopolitical divides and choosing cooperation à la carte rather than formal alignment. Others pursue positive or active neutrality, remaining outside military alliances while actively contributing to diplomacy, mediation, and peacebuilding.

These variations represent different strategies for navigating a world in which the pressure to “take sides” is growing, but where many states still seek to preserve their strategic autonomy. They represent different ways for states, particularly small and medium powers, to navigate great power competition: how to remain engaged in global affairs without becoming entangled in them; how to mediate, convene, and lead without aligning militarily or ideologically.

While neutrality is under pressure in Europe, it is sparking renewed interest in other parts of the world. For many, neutrality or its other approaches is not about disengagement. It is about engaging on their own terms, refusing to be instrumentalized, while maximizing agency.

Despite pressures, neutrality is not obsolete. Rather, it is being adapted and reshaped to meet the realities of new dynamics and competitions. Neutrality is a strategic balancing act, one that must constantly be reassessed in light of new shifts, new risks, and new responsibilities.

Indeed, neutrality does not mean indifference. It definitely doesn't necessarily mean disengagement. Neutral countries are increasingly called upon to act: not to intervene militarily, but to create space for dialogue, uphold international law



and humanitarian norms, support peace processes, and ensure that their neutrality serves not only themselves, but the broader international community.

Today's discussion is therefore not just about legal status or historical traditions. It is about agency in a multipolar world. It is about how states can protect their interests, safeguard their independence, and contribute to international stability by redefining what it means to be neutral.

So perhaps the real question is not whether neutrality still has a place in 2025, but rather how we will use it going forward. What kind of neutrality, in all its forms, does the world need today? And what kinds of neutrality are possible in the current geopolitical environment?

These are some of the themes we will explore in today's discussion, and I am confident our distinguished panelists will offer invaluable insights.

Before inviting Ambassador Hajiev for his opening remarks, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our partners, the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the United Nations Office in Geneva and the Geneva Centre for Neutrality, for their invaluable support in making this event possible.

Ambassador Hajiev, the floor is yours.