

International Perspectives on Neutrality*

Cheng-Feng Shih, Ph.D. in Political Science

**Professor, Department of Indigenous Affairs and Development, National
Dong Hwa University, Shoufeng, Hualien, TAIWAN; President, Taiwan
International Studies Association, Taipei, TAIWAN**

Introduction

Neutrality, meaning non-interference in other states' wars or international conflict, is a state's status under international law. These states are considered neutral as they claim to stay neutral if conflict. Neutrality policy is an option for foreign, strategic, or even national security other than alliance, military one in particular (Zecha, 2011). Neutralization is a process of becoming a neutral state. However, it is sometimes loaded with pejorative connotations of concessions under coercion or being neutralized as client states of the powers as Finland was, from whence the term "Finlandization." (Jesse, 2006: 24)

Neutrality did not become an authentic policy option until the rise of the modern nation-state as an actor to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity when wars broke out. There is a rich literature on neutrality in the field of International Law, with a special focus on these neutral states' rights and obligations in wars. In the area of International Relations, the interests have been in how small or weak states located in sensitive geopolitics have made all efforts for their survival. Since by definition they lack effective military strength for deterring neighboring powers, neutrality is a rational choice for their leaders (Aguis & Devine, 2011: 271-73).

During the two World Wars, roughly ten states declared neutrality. Among them, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Belgium were eventually invaded by Nazi Germany in 1940. Only Switzerland, Ireland, Spain, and Portugal successfully maintained their neutrality. After the War, the United Nations was established under the norm of collective security. Nonetheless, Finland, Austria, and Sweden had chosen to stay away from the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union and thus uphold neutrality. With the end of the Cold War, traditional neutral states began to consider the meaning and necessity of neutrality in the face of increasing regional integration and global economic interdependence.

Taiwan was incorporated into the unclear umbrella of the United States when the Korean War broke out in 1950. As a "Free China" against the "Communist China,"

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this island was engulfed in the struggle between the Nationalist Chinese and the Communist Chinese. Even though the United States entered into formal relation with the People's Republic of China in 1979, this Communist China has so far refused to give up its coveted dream over Taiwan's sovereignty. As a result, the security of Taiwan has been largely under the sanctuary of the *Taiwan Relations Act* passed by the United States Congress in 1979, which makes Taiwan a quasi-ally, if not client state, of the United States.

The Taiwanese have yearned for obtaining the international status of neutrality as the Swiss have enjoyed for hundreds of years. However, no political leader has ever seriously promoted it as a realistic cause. Nor do we witness any efforts at comprehensive academic understandings of its desirability and feasibility. We shall start with the concept of neutrality followed by its purposes, and ways of pursuit.

The Concept of Neutrality

There are two types of neutrality: neutrality in war, and permanent/perpetual neutrality. Traditionally, neutrality stands for the unwillingness of a state to be involved in military conflicts, from whence the idea of military neutrality. On the other hand, permanent neutrality signifies the determination to stay neutral even in peacetime (Havel, 2000: 167; Aguis & Devine, 2011: 267-68). More concretely, neutrality in war is a temporary position in contingencies while permanent neutrality is one that states take in peacetime so that they would not be forced to take side in the event of war (Subedi, 1993: 241).

In a word, neutrality in International Law is a norm requiring neutral states not to participate in any wars right now and to remain impartial in case of war in the future (Andr n, 1991: 69; Aguis & Devine, 2011: 268). In other words, what international law jurists are concerned with is the abiding of neutrality standards when wars break out. On the other hand, students of International Relations affirm states' neutrality in peacetime so that they won't be drawn into disputes and wars. By renouncing military alliance, neutral states envisage neutrality both in war and in peace (Jesse, 2006: 15; Aguis & Devine, 2011: 267).

In a strict *de jure* sense, whether a state is neutral or not is straightforward: it is either neutral or partial; and there is no gray area. In other words, it pledges not forge military alliance with other states in peacetime so that it won't be dragged into war. However, in terms of *de facto* international politics, neutrality is a holistic concept. On the deepening side, it not only requires non-alliance and non-involvement but also demands sufficient military preparedness for defending territorial integrity and national sovereignty. And on the widening side, neutrality is

further to be measured by its economic integration (Beyer & Hofmann, 2011: 292). Comparatively, a neutral state by the former definition may thus strike a course with a larger freedom without being accused of deviating from the spirit of neutrality by participating in regional integration, collective security, or humanitarian assistance (Beyer & Hofmann, 2011: 293).

Take five successful neutral states in Europe for example. Saving Switzerland, Ireland, Austria, Finland, and Sweden have joined the European Union since the 1970's. Even Switzerland ultimately took up the membership of the United Nations in 2002. In other word, neutrality is by no means self-isolation. In terms of the course of foreign policy, while Switzerland has largely steered an impartial one and Ireland has taken a noticeably pro-Anglo-American stance, the other three would implicitly ally themselves with the Western Camp (Jesse, 2006: 18-19). Of course, all of them have thus far kept their distance from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Purposes of Neutrality

If we contemplate neutrality as strategic demand of small states, how to we explain it as a favorable policy option? In terms of the three dominant approaches in the International Relations literature, neutrality can be adopted to fulfill three policy goals: security, interest, an identity. For the proponents of Realism, since small states are vulnerable to external pressures without bargaining power buttressed by solid national defense, neutrality appears to be their only choice availability (Beyer & Hofmann, 2011: 287). In the eyes of the Realists, neutrality is thus not only a pragmatic course of action but also a strategic necessity for defending national sovereignty. Neutrality is intrinsically an armed one (Jesse, 2006: 8, 14-15, 23).

Alternatively, the believers of Liberalism, in addition to resorting to collective security for guaranteeing national security, neutrality as international norm can be applied to overcome military disadvantages. By taking an equal-distance stand, the resources saved may be reserved for other purposes. As a result, neutrality is essentially unarmed (Jesse, 2006: 8, 14-15). The Constructivists would go further to insist that neutrality is a way for national actualization. Based on the idea of national self-determination, neutrality is the national choice to preserve its unique culture. What is pursued here is hence security identity (Jesse, 2006: 13, 24).

By synthesizing the three approaches from political, economic, and cultural dimensions, we may understand neutrality as a means in the quest of state-making, state-building, and nation-building (Scheck, 2012: 21, 27).

Implementing Neutrality

Regarding the way to embark on neutrality, the first consideration is whether to achieve it by unilateral declaration, legislation, constitution, or treaty. In other words, whether it is institutionalized *de facto* or *de jure* (Fig. 1). Further, the state needs to decide whether it would be armed or unarmed neutrality. Finally, the most controversial issue would be if it is chosen or imposed. For instance, Finland signed the *Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance* with the Soviet Union in 1948 in order to avoid the latter's occupation. Similarly, Austria's neutrality, ostensibly voluntary, was coerced by the Soviet Union in exchange for the latter's withdrawal of the Red Army.



Fig. 1: Modes of Implementing Neutrality

It is frequently assumed that neutrality is assured only when the powers give their consent, especially those potential adversaries. However, this speculation has not been supported by empirical evidences. In practice, when facing neutrality, both allies and enemies may have some options between favorable support and outright resistance. For instance, they may express some reservations, tacit agreement, or acceptance (Fig. 2). In general, while not completely trusting the words of the small state, strong states may want to watch its deeds. If they judged that it is neutral indeed, consent would be offered pragmatically; if, on the other hand, the weak insists on remaining neutral, there is no need to dismiss it sweepingly as there may be some conditions agreed upon for mutual gains (Harkovirta, 1983: 582).

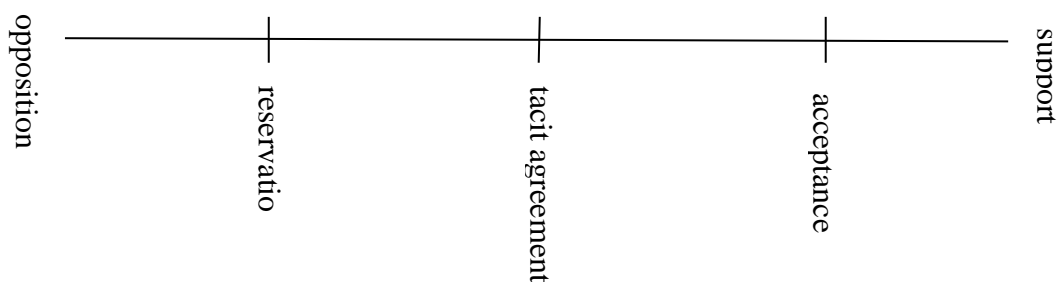


Fig. 2: Attitudes toward Neutrality

During the Cold War era, the Soviet Union practiced neutrality for the sake of enhancing its own relative power. To a less degree, it was calculated to weaken its opponents. In other words, when evaluating whether or not to confer neutrality to the weak, the best upshot is to draw them to its side; if this is not achievable, efforts are made to avoid their exit from its own orbit (Harkovirta, 1983: 584).

Therefore, neutrality is not a zero-sum game. Between absolute alliance and absolute neutrality, there may be some forms of neutral alliance, that is, partial neutrality and limited alliance. It is never a rigid either-or interpretation.

Imagining Neutrality

Back to the scene of the Straits of Taiwan, this island state may have three types of neutrality: pro-United States, pro-China, and symmetric (truly independent) one. What would the United States and China imagine Taiwan's neutrality beyond the current strategy of bandwagoning with the United States in order to balance China?

For the United States, it has enjoyed special relationships with Taiwan under the *Taiwan Relations Act* for almost four decades. If statehood or overseas territory is not on the agenda, any kind of pro-American neutrality is acceptable. If Taiwan stands firm on authentic neutrality, there is no reason for American hostility since this move would only lessen regional tension. The worst scenario would be the case when Taiwan decides to escape from the American sphere of influence and embrace China as its motherland (Fig. 3)

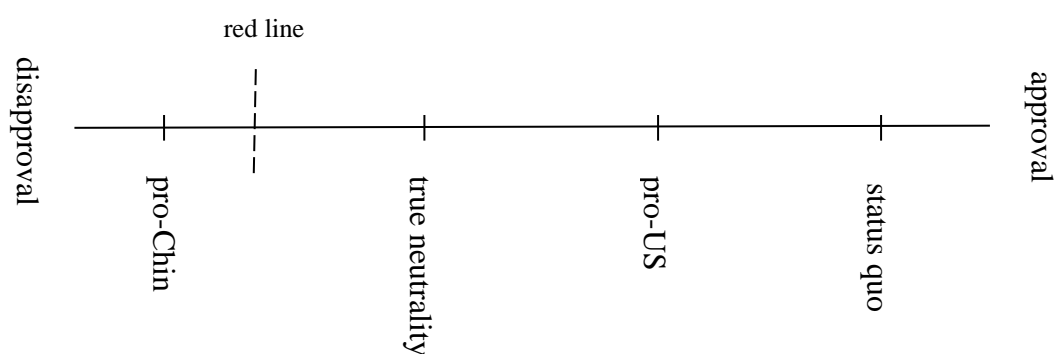


Fig. 3: American Imaginations of Taiwan's Neutrality

For China, as absorbing Taiwan is its ultimate goal, it is unworkable to treat it as junior partner in any type. On the other hand, if Taiwan is refrained from forging military alliance with the United States, formal or partial neutrality is acceptable whether in the form of no-nukes, arms-limitation, arms-control, or disarmament. Even a truly independent line (non-alliance) is endowed with plenty of imaginations better off than the status quo (Fig. 4) .

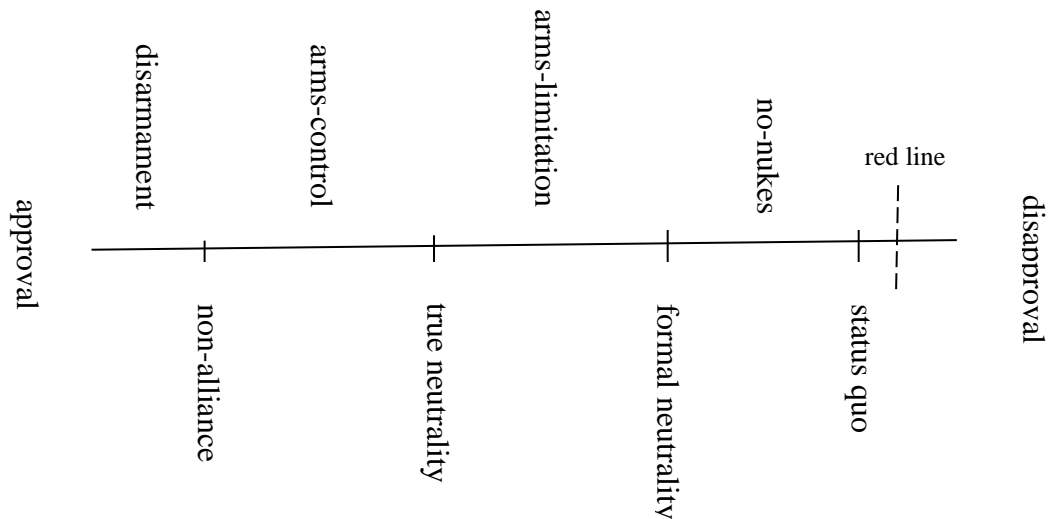


Fig. 4: Chinese Imaginations of Taiwan's Neutrality

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中立的國際觀點

施正鋒

東華大學民族事務與發展學系教授
台灣國際研究學會理事長

大要

中立意旨不干涉其他國家的戰爭或介入國際衝突，是在國際法下的國家地位國家地位，中立政策是一國的外交、戰略、國家利益的選項之一，「中立化」是成為中立國的過程，但常意涵在強權威逼下不得不的讓步行為，如「芬蘭化」。

國際法對中立國在戰時的權利義務有諸多規定，國際關係中主要放在弱小國家如何在強國環伺下求生。二次世界大戰時，全球大概有 10 個中立國，但挪威、丹麥、荷蘭、比利時最終仍被納粹德國入侵，僅有瑞士、愛爾蘭、西班牙、葡萄牙維持中立。戰後聯合國成立，採取集體安全政策，芬蘭、奧地利、瑞典選擇不介入美蘇兩強的鬥爭，保持中立。冷戰結束後，傳統中立國面臨區域整合及全球經濟互賴，開始思索中立的意義與必要性。

台灣人民希望能獲得像瑞士般的中立國地位，但過去從未有政治人物認真看待這件事。本文先討論中立的概念、進而討論其目的與達成的方法。

中立有兩種：戰時中立與永久中立。傳統意涵指的是一國在戰爭時不介入他國的軍事衝突，永久中立指的是在和平時期也保持中立。從嚴格的法理層次來說，一國不是中立就是偏向某方，而從事實面來說，中立國還需保有一定的軍事武力保衛自身安全，更廣義層面來說，中立還要從其經濟整合的狀況來計算。中立並非與國際社會自我隔離的意思，

中立有三大政策目標：安全、利益、認同，小國採取中立政策的目的可以從國際關係三大學派：現實主義、自由主義、建構主義所解釋。實現中立第一個考量是要片面宣布、立法、立憲，或是透過國際條約，也就是法理中立或是事實中立。中立國還需決定是武裝中立或非武裝中立，還有是自願中立或是被迫中立。人們常認為中立地位的確保必須由其他大國所確保，但實證上常非如此。中立並非零和遊戲，在絕對結盟與絕對中立之間，可以有部分中立及有限結盟。

台灣可能有 3 種中立的型態：親美、親中、真正獨立。美國與台灣在「台灣關係法」下維持了近 40 年的特殊關係，任何親近美國的中立都是可以接受的。只要台灣堅持真正中立，美國沒必要反對，最壞的狀況是台灣疏遠美國而擁抱中國。對中國而言，如果台灣不與美國形成軍事聯盟，正式或部分中立是可以接受的。就算台灣採取真正的中立也比現狀好。