

# New Non-Aligned Movement Amid Rising Global Instability

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*This article is an attempt to consider classical models and examples of neutrality and non-alignment for states entering the era of a new multipolarity; key foreign policy principles and objectives for states seeking to avoid being drawn into wars and conflicts, and to preserve their sovereignty.*

*The author tries to identify potential new characteristics and directions for the modernization of the International Non-Aligned Movement in the current political context.*

*Keywords: International Non-Aligned Movement, neutral status, non-bloc status, demonopolization, equal proximity, avoidance of conflicts on the territory of third countries*

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## Introduction

The geopolitical discourse in Europe and Ukraine is still largely built on the basis of a bipolar vision of the world and the system of international relations, in which the confrontation between the US and the USSR during the Cold War was for some time replaced by competition between liberal democracies and authoritarian regimes, and today between the West and the Russian Federation. Such a view is certainly important for the state building on the European continent and for the mobilization of social forces, but, nevertheless, it is not sufficient not only for building effective relations with many states and unions of the state outside Europe, but also for the state strategizing in general.

## **Blocked and unblocked countries in the modernity**

In the context of the growing military and political instability in the world (one of the manifestations of which was the illegal invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine), which marks not only the lack of efficient solutions to the problems of poverty, ecology, inequality in access to resources in the world, but, probably, also the end of the era of geopolitical stability, many states are increasingly facing the problems of national security, sovereignty, non-involvement in military conflicts.

As in the early 1960s – the peak of the confrontation between the West and the USSR, which ended in detente after the “Caribbean crisis,” today many (if not most of) states find themselves in a situation of significantly increased risks of being drawn into a conflict on the side of one of the opposing blocs or unwittingly become the arena (battlefield) of such confrontation. The situation in Ukraine, Syria, Libya, Iraq or Yemen are examples of this.

At the same time, it is necessary to understand that in today’s world, there are not only two most famous military or military-political alliances.

In addition to the most powerful NATO (30 countries) (What is NATO, 2022) and the CSTO (6 countries) (Collective Security Treaty Organization, 2022), there are also AUKUS (Australia, UK, USA), ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, USA), RSS (7 Caribbean countries), Northern European Defense Alliance (Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden), etc. The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and the EU also have military components. In addition, many countries have concluded treaties on joint defense, mutual assistance, or provided guarantees of protection without creating a special international organization. For example, the Inter-American Mutual Assistance Treaty (16 countries), the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and Japan, USA – South Korea and USA – Philippines, the Five-State Defense Agreement (Australia, Great Britain, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore), the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic, the Mutual Defense Treaty between Australia and Japan, the Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support Agreement between Turkey and Azerbaijan, France and Spain guaranteed the protection of Andorra, and the United States – Taiwan, in addition, joint military formations were created between many countries, etc. In general, from 50 to 60 countries of the world are members of military-political alliances; at least 30 have concluded international treaties in the field of security and defense.

At the same time, *most of the world’s countries (out of 197 recognized) are de facto non-aligned or have a “neutral status.”*

More than 120 countries of the world are members of the Non-Aligned Movement, an international organization created on the principles of non-participation in military blocs. The member states of this movement have a combined area of 54.53 million km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 4.44 billion people. This is 36.1% of the habitable area worldwide and 57% of the world’s population (Member states, 2022).



*Map of countries included in the Non-Aligned Movement (Member states, 2022)*

At the same time, the concept of “neutrality” must be clearly distinguished from the “non-bloc status.”

*Permanent “neutrality”* contains three basic prohibitions on the actions of neutral countries: *not to take part in and not to provide armed forces for war between other states or their territory for use by the belligerents; not to discriminate against the belligerents in the supply of weapons and military goods to them* (Melzer, 2019: 34). Neutral countries can deal exclusively with humanitarian and civilian assistance in conflicts of third countries. In the event of a conflict (war), they are obliged to comply with the norms of humanitarian law regarding neutral countries. In economic terms, they are allowed to take full part in international economic relations, but in a balanced way in relation to the belligerents.

The key rights and obligations of a neutral state in international law were for the first time defined by “Convention (V) respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land”, dated October 18, 1907 (Convention (V), 1988), and “Convention (XIII) concerning the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers in Naval War” dated January 26, 1910 (Convention (XIII), 2022) which are still in force. In particular, these conventions forbade the invasion and any use of the territory of neutral states, obliged these states to treat all participants in wars equally, and provided them with the right to armed defense, in the event of an invasion into their territory.

The main feature of “neutrality” is that it is an *internationally recognized legal status*, which some states (international organizations) give to others. *It is not enough to declare oneself “neutral,” it is necessary that this “neutrality” be supported (provided) and recognized by other states.* Moreover – it has to be documented – in the form of an agreement or agreements. Only then can it be considered valid and functioning.

Historically, countries became neutral – by decision/agreement of geopolitical centers, having avoided occupation and got out of the pressure of geopolitical players (having tried to remove themselves from the chessboard), maintaining internal integrity.

“*Non-bloc*” is the self-determination of the state, which does not require international legal consolidation, and can be changed unilaterally. It provides for the *refusal of permanent membership in unions, but does not oblige not to participate in conflicts or conclude agreements with unions*. The non-bloc status does not impose restrictions on the missions of military contingents to the peacekeeping forces of international organizations; it does not prohibit the conclusion of defense agreements with any military alliances and individual states, depending on the situation; does not apply to economics.

“*Non-bloc*,” unlike “neutrality,” does not limit state sovereignty in foreign policy in exchange for promises of security and non-involvement in conflicts, but places the burden of responsibility on the “non-bloc” state, if necessary, to ensure its own security (including by forming a broad system of agreements).

“Non-bloc” countries fight for sovereignty and have a place for political maneuver in a difficult political situation, retain the potential to gain leadership in the regional or global levels, avoid an internal crisis, or are of no interest to anyone.

Non-alignment is like driving a car with its own risks, threats and benefits. While neutrality is the safe presence of the house under the protection of the police or neighbors.

Especially neutral or non-bloc status is important for the countries of the frontiers – located between large competing military blocs. This allows them to move the line of confrontation from your country to the borders of countries participating in military blocs and in the presence of strong-armed forces to avoid conflict like Switzerland during the First and Second World Wars.

### **“Neutral” and “non-bloc” experience of European countries**

In today’s world, non-bloc and neutral states dominate in Latin America, Africa, Asia, but are a minority in Europe and North America.

The peculiarity of Europe and North America is largely due to the two world wars and the long Cold War. Therefore, at the moment, in Europe, only Austria, Ireland, Switzerland, Sweden, Malta, Moldova and Finland adhere to the principle of neutrality or non-alignment. However, this status is realized in different ways.

In particular, Switzerland received a “neutral” status since 1815 – after the Napoleonic wars and by the decision of the “Vienna’s Congress”. Austria was forced to accept neutrality, which ensured the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the country in 1955. Finland became neutral in a similar way – through the Treaty with the USSR in 1948 following the defeat in World War II, which allowed the country to maintain independence and avoid the communist model of government (Neutral European countries, 2022).

Although, today, the Swiss experience of neutrality also has features of “dynamism,” this country joined political and economic sanctions of the European Union against the Russian Federation after the invasion of Ukraine, and 100 years ago supported the sanctions of the “League of Nations.” Switzerland also decided to integrate into the single market with the European Union.

Is “non-bloc status” real? Yes, moreover, most of the countries in the world are de jure “non-bloc states”. Although many of them simply have not yet learned to use the advantages of such a status.

Sweden is a classic example of a non-bloc country. During the Cold War, Sweden’s self-proclaimed status was defined as “Alliance non-alignment in peacetime, aimed at neutrality

in time of war” (Braw, 2022). Sweden’s non-bloc nature has always peacefully coexisted with constant attempts to create regional political, economic, and sometimes even military-political alliances under its leadership. Suffice it to recall Sweden’s attempts to create in 1947-1949 the Scandinavian Alliance, which left only after the accession of Denmark, Norway and Iceland to NATO, activities in the Nordic Council, the Council of the Baltic States, and so on.

Sweden’s non-bloc course was ensured by the creation of a strong army and a guarantee of support for NATO countries in the event of external aggression. For 50-60 years, Sweden has been actively and successfully implementing its military-industrial complex and nuclear weapons program; it has a special position in the European Union, not supporting the idea of a common European defense. At the same time, Sweden is actively cooperating with NATO within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program.

The Swedish experience is quite applicable to most countries in the world, especially large countries with significant military-political and economic opportunities; claim to regional leadership.

Although, as we can see, in the situation of the current European security crisis, provoked by the invasion of the Russian Federation of Ukraine, the government of Sweden also decided to join NATO. Finland made a similar decision.

In the world, there is another interesting experience of non-bloc – Turkmenistan (received the UN decision), and Cambodia and Laos, which also have the internationally recognized legal neutral status, the self-proclaimed status of neutrality have the Republic of Malta, Mongolia, United Mexican States.

In the past, most countries of the world were neutral and non-aligned states, including the USA, China, Britain, India, Ukraine, South Africa and others.

But the *new non-bloc foreign policy strategy* should be based on the principles of *equal proximity* to the influential actors of the international system and regional cooperation in the context of regional concepts of security as a special continental geopolitical system of relations. Namely “equiproximity,” and not “equidistance.” It guarantees for states the preservation of the transit economic potential and the existence of diversified balance sheets in foreign policy. *Demonopolization, equal affiliation, following national economic interests, avoiding conflicts on the territory of third countries, consistency and consistency are the key principles of the new non-alignment.*

Realizing its non-bloc status, such a state can cooperate with all military and political blocs, create a system of intergovernmental and regional agreements that guarantee its security, act as a regional arbiter and guarantor of stability. This will bring not only significant political but also economic dividends: *it will allow access to the maximum number of markets; becoming a real international economic hub and corridor – to modernize the country’s economy and social sphere.*

Being non-bloc will allow maneuvering between the interests of the leading countries of the world and, depending on the real political situation, *using the resources and potential of any of the blocs based only on the country’s national interests.*

Such a status will provide not only external security and economic benefits, but also guarantee internal stability to most societies, which very often have a wide range of views on politics, social and economic groups and minorities trying to “turn the state” in the direction of their interests.

Non-bloc policy corresponds to the principles of equal proximity (in contrast to the “equidistance” of neutrality), pursues national interests, does not prevent from getting as close as possible and actively cooperating with various military-political and economic blocs and alliances, without breaking these vectors, without creating or being drawn into conflicts. *Global countries in the modern world – the United States, the Russian Federation, China and others – just behave like non-bloc countries, guided primarily only by their national interests* (even entering into military and economic unions).

Non-alignment gives countries *hope for internal balance and external security, although it requires diplomatic skills*. And the state’s foreign policy should be based on this principle. It will allow you to soberly look at the world with your own eyes, maintain independence and sovereignty, take responsibility and solve real problems of a political and economic nature, and not be an object of politics in the foreign arena or a field for geopolitical golf, cricket, football or other games.

## Conclusion

It must be recognized that neutrality or non-alignment from any of the countries requires a considerable strain on the resources and political will of the elites, often associated with significant economic costs for the armed forces and social stability. But the strategic prospects and benefits of such a status are undeniable. It is difficult to overestimate the ability to choose the best course for a particular state and people in the context of a constantly changing political context and significant risks of new international wars and conflicts.

In addition, the ability to independently determine one’s own military-political course and one’s own national security remains two key factors that determine the real sovereignty of countries in the modern world. And sovereignty itself is the main “currency” of geopolitics, into which the world is rapidly sinking.

At the same time, interstate or polystate forms of sovereignty will require a new or updated international legal institutionalization, instead of or within the framework of international associations created in the era of classical bipolarity.

Therefore, there is an obvious need to activate, renew and modernize the International Non-Aligned Movement, fill it with new real meanings and goals, and expand instruments of influence in key international organizations not only in the political, but also in the socio-economic and cultural dimension.

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