

Neutrality as a Foreign Policy Principle: A Historical Evaluation of the Swedish Posture

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Abstract

The main objective of this essay is to examine, analyse and give an in-depth study of the policy of neutrality as a principle of foreign policy using the Swedish posture as a case study. Essentially, basic clarifications will be made on this principle itself, while attention will be paid to the historical evolution of this policy from the 1820s up till the end of the Second World War in 1945 and thereafter. Basically, Swedish neutrality serves as an important element in the maintenance of European peace and security, for by opting out of alliances generally pre-suggests the outright rejection of war. Reasonably from the foregoing, there is no cause for doubting that Sweden will not live up to its demand and expectation for neutrality in event of a conflict near her. But how realistic this proposition is especially in the contemporary international system is still questionable and rather arduous to achieve. Therefore, in spite of the strict adherence of Sweden to this line of policy for such a long period, this work still pre-supposes that neutrality as a foreign policy goal is not realistic. The prospects however, for this policy demands a new kind of realism and probably even greater insight and understanding into the limitations of this policy. This is because many factors underplay the workability of this principle such as great power policies, the balance of power between belligerents and their will to accept not to intervene in the activities of the neutrals and such other external provocations, which may necessarily bring about conflicts. Taking as a whole, the policy of neutrality continues to remain a subject of concern not only to the realization of Swedish foreign policy goals but to the entire human race as long as conflict situations continue to characterize the very nature of the international system.

Keywords: Neutrality, Sweden, Foreign, Policy.

Research Objective

The objective of this essay is to examine, analyze and give an in-depth study of the policy of neutrality as a principle of foreign policy using the Swedish posture as a case study. Essentially, basic clarification has been made on this principle itself, while attention was paid to the historical evolution of this policy. Attempt was equally made to answer such questions as to how credible Swedish neutrality is, what motivations were behind the adoption of such a policy line in her foreign policy stance and finally attempt was made to assess Swedish neutrality in its external relations and international co-operation, particularly in Africa.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the Normative Theory. Most literature in strategic studies tend more to give concern to Normative Theory. This is largely because of the post-Second World War experiences in which a number of political realists were pessimistic of controlling the war-like tendencies of nations. However, this does not demean the significance of the Normative theory in strategic studies. The major concern of Normative theory is how to attain a relaxed or stable world order based on the ethical values or dilemmas of the individual strategists and the community it serves.¹

Normative theory is an issue of value judgment. While admitting the reality of conflict or war in our world community, normative theorists make a case for the control and regulation of conflicts or wars so as to save mankind of unnecessary waste in technological, economic, ecological and human resources. Since it is a moral derivation, normative theory has tried to focus on war crimes, human rights, preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peace enforcement and peace building. This theory may be associated with the liberal theory which believes that countries are capable of finding mutual interests and cooperating to achieve them, by forming ties between countries and also by working together for the common good through international organizations and international law.²

Essentially, with the relaxation of the Cold War particularly since the 1990s, the Normative theory has become more pronounced, imposing a new world order of non-confrontation and peace initiatives and non-military hegemonies. Some scholars have even argued that even laws of conflict management and resolution, disarmament, arms control and difference have the value elements of Normative Theory.

Related to the above theory and equally useful to this work are two other distinct but interrelated analytical frameworks - national interest and ideology. Since Neutrality is understudied here as an aspect of Swedish foreign policy, it is generally believed that the formulation and execution of foreign policy is determined, to a large extent, by the national interest of a nation. Kaplan (1967) for instance, defines it as the interest which a national actor has in implementing the needs of the national system of action.³ As Joseph

Frankel has pointed out “National interest is the sum-total of a nation’s interests and values.”⁴ These involve self-preservation, sovereignty and independence standing in the world, glory and prestige, world peace and stability, socio-economic wellbeing and a host of others. While Morgenthau conceives of it as simply power among power,⁵ Jones (1970) asserts that national interest is a term used in political debate within a country to signal the case that the item of policy suggested will bring benefits not merely to proponents but also to its opponents.⁶ To achieve all these parameters, Swedish has over the years managed to adhere to her neutrality ideology in relation with other nations.

Ideology is hereby perceived as a self-contained and self-justifying belief system that incorporates an overall world view, and provides a basis for explaining what the unit states perceive to be realities. Beginning with certain postulates about the nature of man and his place in the world, “it develops from this a moral code, a sense of mission, a sense of vision and a programme of action.”⁷ It is imperative to point out here that the issue of ideology complements that of national interests in the Swedish neutrality stance and posture in her relation to other places. Professor F.S. Northedge refers to ideology as the prevailing orthodoxy of a state.⁸ Michael Oakeshott, however, merged politics with ideology and so defines political ideology as a system of ideas abstracted from the manner in which people have been accustomed to go about the business of attending to the arrangements of their society.⁹

Normative theory, on the whole, irrespective of the various definitions in addition to the concepts of ideology and national interest as espoused, has been used to portray Sweden’s neutrality as motivated and nourished over the years.

Research Methodology

This work is a historical analysis of the policy of neutrality and the evaluation of its evolution and growth over the years, drawing out interpretation to the study. The research has therefore employed the use of content analysis primarily based on data collection techniques involving research bulletins, journals and newspapers. It also utilized a critical review of extant studies both theoretically and empirically and supporting all available and reliably coded assumptions on Swedish policy of neutrality by other scholars. All these have been complimented with interviews from experts on the subject matter.

Statement of Hypothesis

In view of the nature of the problem being enquired into in this study as mentioned above, we shall hypothesize that given the character of the contemporary international system, neutrality as a foreign policy goal is non-existent.

Literature Review

Quite a number of valuable research work has been done on Swedish neutrality, albeit, from scholars of Swedish origin. The first real scholarly work done by a Nigerian is that of Adele L. Jinadu,¹⁰ which tries to see the Swedish foreign development policies towards Africa as a whole as based on idealism and pragmatism. This work clearly points out quite clearly that Swedish foreign policy towards Africa is guided by its neutrality policy even though it is pragmatic. However, the focus on “Neutrality, as a principle of foreign policy” has not been seen as a whole except when considered in relation to a particular event. Of particular importance, Adele pointed out that the infusion of ideological consideration into the Swedish development policy debate came close to assuming cold war dimension. He noted:

“The conservatives and liberals on the one hand opposed what they viewed as an attempt by social democrats to redirect aid to communist or Marxist inspired regimes since these tended to be more radically committed to income equalization and social development. On the other hand, the social democrats and other left wing parties did not want aid channelled to reactionary, Petit bourgeois regimes which had shown little or no interest in economic and social development.”¹¹

These debates reflected and indicated the politicized dimension which development policy had progressively assumed in Sweden’s political economy. Another imbalance according to Adele, is the apportioning of embassies in Africa. According to him, “of the nineteen Swedish Embassies in Africa four (Abidjan, Bissau, Lagos and Monrovia) are in West Africa, five (Algiers, Cairo, Rabat, Tripoli and Tunis) are in North Africa and nine (Addis Ababa, Dar-es-Salam, Gaborone, Kwashasha, Luanda, Lusaka, Maputo, Nairobi, Pretoria and Salisbury) are in East and South Africa. There seem to be need for increased diplomatic representation in West and Central Africa”¹².

Nils Andren in his assessment of Swedish Neutrality has noted, “with the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, Sweden entered into a period of peace that has lasted up to the present day” but that it was not until World War 1 that neutrality emerged as a full blown doctrine of foreign policy. He is of the opinion that the

transformation of Swedish foreign policy derives from a number of causes, some of which merits particular attention; (i) that an altered international balance of power had undermined the basic for any 'match politik' on Sweden's part, (ii) secondly, that the course taken by events abroad had served to build up a position of relative security. Thirdly, that Sweden did not represent a point of friction between rival great power interests¹³. He further asserts that on the home front, developments moved more or less smoothly in the direction of greater prosperity and that Sweden was not tempted to enlarge resources to economic growth by embarking on foreign expansionist ventures, but rather on a stronger defensive policy.

Marquis W. Childs' book, "Sweden: The Middle Way on Trial"¹⁴ points out that Sweden has always sought for a middle way "neutrality in war and aid to those who need it in peace time." He contends that even though preachments on Swedish foreign policy have sounded self-righteous, yet abroad as well as at home, it has been determined to live up to the standards set in arriving at a middle way. He claims Swedish aid to Africa as well as to other developing countries has been extra-ordinary citing the instances. His conclusion, therefore, is that the idealism of neutrality and of co-operation is manifest to take a hold of Third World countries for the need to close the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

W.M. Carlgen in the book, *Swedish Foreign Policy during the Second World War*¹⁵ also reviews the course of Swedish neutralist policy throughout the Second World War. He highlights that geography played a dominant role in the formulation of Swedish foreign policy. He poses the question: Was Sweden really less attractive to the great powers than other Northern European countries during the Second World War? He asserted that throughout most of the war years, Germany controlled not only Norway and Finland, but also the entire Baltic East Coast, which meant that Sweden was not of sufficient interest to occasion military intervention which would give a better return in other quarters provided of course that she suitably met the demands and desires which the great powers considered appropriate. He concludes that the policies of the great powers toward Sweden during the war years had widely different points of departure but that yet it was possible to discern a similar pattern that bordered on the occupation or her participation in the war as essential to victory.

Professor Erik Lonroth in his article, *Sweden's Ambiguous Neutrality 1939-49*¹⁶ contends that the concert between the great powers of Europe, in spite of basic differences in opinion and on some occasions, open conflict functioned as a factor of peace in Sweden in numerous precarious situations. He is of the opinion that the advantages of a policy of neutrality to Nordic countries were obvious; it would not benefit them to participate in a war fought by the major powers, but that they did have prospects of great profit when these powers attacked each other. The more respect that could be instilled to the combatants, the greater the profit would be. Stewark Oakley in his book, "The Story of Sweden"¹⁷ gives a historical account and therefore posits that "so much of what makes Sweden what it is today lies deeply rooted in her past in which there has been no sharp break." Something of the isolation which dogged her when she was accounted among the proper countries of Europe has remained with her.

Other scholarly work of relevance are those drawn from more recent researches and published for the Swedish Institute series,¹⁸ which are truly worthy of mention for their contribution to the study of neutrality as a policy. Krister Wahlback in a classic contribution, "The Roots of Swedish Neutrality"¹⁹ an important precise historical account traces the roots of neutrality from the earliest periods of Karl Johan in the eighteenth century, down to the formation of the United Nations and the cold war. He asserts that the lessons learnt in the Second World War were particularly fresh when Sweden decided in the late 1940s to continue with a policy of neutrality, even though, he is cautious to point out that events of earlier periods also played a role in Swedish thinking. The above work is complemented by another short work called "Sweden's policy of Neutrality,"²⁰ based on a lecture given by Sverker Astrom in 1976 in Stockholm. His emphases are on the basic principles of the policy and the limits of the concept are highlighted. This work concludes with a recommendation of how neutrality could be seen in its external context and in a changing world. Another scholar Gunnar Jervas²¹ examines such questions as what is the actual nature of the military threat against neutral Sweden? "Has Sweden's neutrality policy been overplayed to the extent it must now be replaced by something else? In his conclusion, he considers which problems should be tackled to ensure Sweden's security and autonomy in the future which amongst others is that of maintaining a balance in its relations with all nations.

In the final analysis, Carl Hallendorf and Adolf Schuck have opined that "still clearer must it appear to us that all states with truly neutral inclinations and ideals must make the greatest efforts to promote a true spirit of reconciliation between peoples as to ensure their neutrality."²² This is a truism which is demonstrated by neutral Sweden.

Thus, in spite of the reasonably abundant literature on the subject of Swedish neutrality, the bulk of the analysis have focused on its historical evolution and/or considered in relation to a particular event such as the wars of the 17th and 18th centuries or the World War 1 and 2. Contrarily, this present work attempts to rectify the situation to some extent by specifically departing from others by examining generally from a historical point of view and interpreting the growing trend of Swedish neutrality, raising further questions on its credibility, as well as providing some understanding to the underlying motive factors of national interest and ideology. Over and

above all, Swedish neutrality is seen basically as a principle of foreign policy and ascertaining its effectiveness or workability as an instrument/tool of foreign policy in the international comity of nations.

Organization of the Study

The work is divided into four parts each with its subdivision except for the final section which is the summary of findings and conclusion and therefore not subdivided. The first section has six divisions and deals with such specifics as (i) literature review, (ii) research objective, (iii) theoretical/conceptual framework, (iv) research methodology, (v) statement of hypothesis, and (vi) the organization of the study.

The second section provides a general survey of the policy of neutrality and some basic clarifications on the principle. This part also further delves into the historical development of this policy.

The third part considers the various reasons and motivations for the adoption of such a policy line in Sweden. The credibility problem attempts to analyse how acceptable and credible this policy really is in spite of criticism from observers at home and from external observers. This section also incorporates the external application of Swedish neutrality in its relations and co-operation to other states. Finally, the conclusion of the work which assesses the principle in general in light of the evidences drawn from the body of the work.

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Basic Clarifications on Swedish Neutrality

The Debate on "Neutrality"

The history of neutrality reveals the natural influence and close connection between two other cognate concepts – the "status of national sovereignty" and the "status of war." Therefore, to question the status of one is to question the other. However, an answer to the above question is to be found in human nature itself and could therefore be equated with a similar question on why people go on committing crimes in spite of prohibition by law of such acts? Why do nations go to war against each other in spite of the fact that war has been outlawed by the combined effect of the Kellogg-Briand pact and the U.N. charter?²³ These questions will continue to bother men's mind. Once war has been recognized as necessary condition of international life and granted a status of legitimacy, the same must go with neutrality. Since the concept of neutrality is inextricably linked up with the concept of a shooting war and keeping a state's sovereignty, the subject of neutrality will continue to remain a serious concern for the human society, they will cease to concern us only when wars cease to exist.

In trying to define neutrality, the Oxford Concise Dictionary describes it as "occupying a middle

position between two extremes belonging to a power which remains inactive during hostilities or exempted from the sphere of war-like operations.”²⁴ Karl Birbaum has this to say, “in general usage, neutrality may convey rank indifference as well as calculated detachment or rationally controlled impartiality.”²⁵ In ‘Macbeth’ William Shakespeare, used the expression ‘Neutral’ to describe an attitude or state of mind in which one does not portend to support any party to an action, while Ancient Swiss language speaks of ‘Neutrals’ as those who ‘sits still’ and watch while others fight.²⁶ The term neutrality, however, has its origin in the Latin word ‘Neuter’ which literally translates ‘neither’. As applied to the field of politics or international relations, one of the original meanings of the word ‘Neutral’ is of course, of rulers and states, not assisting either party in the case of a war between other states.²⁷ All in all, the above definitions seem to qualify or confirm the fact that neutral nations are “Islands of Peace” in a world potentially or actually in conflict.

Strictly speaking, the usage of the term neutrality to describe a country’s foreign policy principle is rather ambiguous. This is because in the first place, neutrality should be something which exists only in war time conditions. As Gunner Jervas has opined, “It is strictly wrong to claim the neutrality of a country or nation in a situation where there is no on-going war in a relative close surroundings.”²⁸ Secondly, in another sense, **William L. Pouty** has pointed out that the traditional meaning of the term neutrality is legal in nature²⁹ – that neutrality is more often referred to as an aspect or doctrine of international law than of a foreign policy stand as the present work upholds. From the above assertions two important issues are raised – (i) in light of the initial definitions, how justifiable is it then to lay claim to policy of neutrality especially in the absence of war? Is ‘neutrality’ a misleading expression therefore to describe Sweden’s present and past positions? Secondly, of what relevance is Swedish neutrality to international law since Pouty has pointed out earlier, that the traditional meaning of neutrality is legal? Are there any legal implications or obligation for neutralist Sweden especially in her foreign policy stand?

Gunnar Jervas in an effort to clarify the above issue-posers has this to say; “Swedish Neutrality has special characteristics”³⁰ The thought behind the definition and/or the term neutrality was and is still that credible neutrality supposes freedom from any kind of treaty agreements in any direction and as such has no legal implication. This should not however constrain our progress and our understanding on this subject as these questions have received adequate attention elsewhere by many scholars of Swedish history.³¹

However, in a not too precise sense, a country which intends to keep out of war potentially in peace time or in actuality is called a neutral country. And, as far as legal relevance is concerned, Sweden’s policy in a formal sense differs from the legal variation (which shall soon receive the attention of this work) in as much as it is based neither on international nor on national constitutional understandings. Sweden’s policy of neutrality is purely politically based on nationally adopted measures to enhance its position. It therefore follows that the term neutrality aptly used to describe Sweden’s foreign policy is never misleading. However, another way of viewing this policy of neutrality, more accurately is as a political philosophy and/or ideology in their foreign stance. Even then, that Swedish neutrality is not legally binding to any national or international law does not presuppose that it has no relevance to international law.

Hugo Crotius, author of the first book on the system of international law calls the chapter of his work dealing with neutrality “*De his qui ibeto medii sunt*”, - of those who in war are between the belligerents”, and he says in his text that neutral nations “are those who are outside the hostilities” (*qui extra bellum sunt*). In his work, he laid down the foundation for the modern doctrine of neutrality and two general laws. The first rule is that a neutral state should do nothing which may strengthen a belligerent whose cause is just. The second rule is that in a war in which it is doubtful whose cause is just, neutrals should treat both belligerents alike as who has waged an unjust war. On the contrary, it is under a duty of absolute impartiality in relation to a belligerent who has waged an unjust war, on the contrary, it is under a duty to discriminate in favour of the victim of aggression and against unjust belligerent. However, scholars and lawyers of more recent decades have rejected this distinction and upheld the unfettered right of neutral to determine the merits of the respective causes of the belligerents and steadfastly cling to the duty of absolute impartiality on the part of the neutrals.³²

Therefore, the above brief reference to international law background of this concept, is tantamount to the fact that neutrality as represented in law has some relevance with Swedish brand even though this latter brand has no enforcement clause. However, it should be made clear and emphasized that Swedish neutrality is originally based on a strict legal interpretation of the concept of neutrality as defined mainly in the Hagues Convention of 1807, “The legal position of this other neutral states Ghil, T. has observed, “however does not seem to constitute a major difference in practice to Swedish neutrality.”³³ To uphold this principle and live up to the expectation of these other neutral states and the international scene generally, Sweden has always insisted on creating credibility by her own policies, i.e. avoiding all legal commitments to or guarantees from other powers avoiding situations in which other countries by reference to such legal provisions could claim a right to influence Sweden’s behaviour one way or the other. Most importantly is the fact that Sweden is not aligned to any of the power blocs that emerged after the Second World War in 1945 – the NATO and/or Warsaw pact.

In order to fully understand Swedish neutrality, it is pertinent to make a clear distinction between the

concepts of non-alignment and neutrality. Truly, these words are confusive in their usage atimes, but nonetheless not contradictory. Hamilton, F. Strong has stressed that neutrality and non-alignment each mean different things in different places and at different times. They can even mean different things in the same place and at approximately the same time.³⁴ Vincent Bakpetu Thomas has however noted that these two concepts have similar meanings and the one has often been confused with the other.³⁵ He endeavours to make a major distinction between neutrality and non-alignment as concepts. "Neutrality" he maintains, involves contracting out of world conflicts either for internal safety or not to incur the displeasure of a big nation or for other reasons such as smallness in size. While non-alignment means participation in world affairs with a view to influencing the two standing blocs in the cold war to modify their outlook.³⁶

Thus, to further clarify the difference between the two principles, while non-alignment is generally applied to the outward foreign policy of many colonial (now developing countries), neutrality is found among the developed European nations such as Austria, Ireland and Sweden. Secondly, whereas 'neutrality' tends to be more static and passive, making implicit or explicit promise to be non-belligerent in time of war, the non-alignment movement does not make such guarantees and more so tends to be more active and revisionist but variable in taking their stands. K.P. Misra, has briefly and succinctly pointed out that the ideological bases of non-alignment may be understood in terms of five 'Ds' which are inextricably interwoven being, Decolonization, Disarmament, Development, Détente, and Dissemination.³⁷

Many scholars, it must be pointed out have written on the non-alignment movement as well as dimensions of non-alignment, however, one cannot go into all these as this work is mainly concerned with the European brand of non-alignment.³⁸ It is pertinent to note however, as a saying goes that, "words have no meanings except by usage," both concepts of non-alignment and neutrality share the same views albeit from different realms, purposes and background. The above assertion is supported and confirmed by the fact that neutral nations of Europe support and share the aspirations of non-alignment, while this their recognition is reciprocated by the non-aligned movement by giving them observer status in all their meetings. The confusion that the two concepts may bring is however a regrettable confusion but typical for the handling of concepts regarded as charged with positive political values. The glaring difference is that while non-alignment is associated with countries of the Third World or South-South Cooperation, Neutrality as a principle has been a clear patronage of the more advanced countries of Europe whose posture was adopted as a result of their refusal to participate in any conflict nor support either of the belligerents.

Having distinguished between non-alignment and neutrality, it will further the interest of this essay to clarify the types, forms or the variations in which the neutrality principle may come. Basically, there are three brands of neutrality. The first is the neutrality in a specific instance which is also often termed 'Ad hoc' neutrality. A good example of this type will be the neutrality followed by the United States in the early stages of the First World War. United States however intervened in the war in April 2, 1917 on the pretext that Germany had violated U.S. neutrality by sinking her passenger ships which the German's correctly claimed carried war materials aboard these passenger ships for the British. As President Nixon pointed in a speech of 1969, "This position was more of insidious form of self-deception overlaid with sanctimony scornful of the cynical politics of Europe, where we did not hesitate to impose our will on weaker nations."³⁹ This brand of neutrality is 'situational and specific' only in a particular war and therefore is not permanently adhered to.

Another variation of this concept is the 'permanent or perpetual neutrality' which also is sometimes referred to as the 'institutionalized' neutrality. This variant is exemplified by Switzerland and is frequently recognized in some legal form. In Europe, two countries are neutralized by international agreement of Vienna Congress in 1815 and the latter by international law and recognition by the United States, Britain, France and Soviet Union after its adoption by the parliament in 1955.⁴⁰

In Asia as well, there have been at least two internationally recognized and neutralized states. These are Laos and Cambodia which are forbidden by the Geneva Armistice Agreement of 1954 from entering military alliances or allowing foreign military bases on their territory while Finland has been neutral by law since the end of the World War II. She (Finland) could not however, effectively assert this posture until the return of the naval base at Forkala near Helsinki to her. Ireland's neutrality could be traced back to the return by Britain in 1938 to her the three parts retained under the 1921 treaty.⁴¹

The last type or variation (our subject matter of discourse) of neutrality is spectacular and unique for the circumstances bringing about its permanency. In a sense, Swedish neutrality has been maintained over the years that such a trend requires an in-depth consideration. As Kristar Wahlback opines, "it is not easy to give a clear answer when Sweden truly began to follow a neutral foreign policy."⁴² "A Swede is not able to point to a similarly obvious date of birth for his country's policy of neutrality."⁴³ However, Alan Kaastrup has pointed out that "many of the principles essentially to present day Swedish neutrality policy were in fact formulated as early as 1830s by King Karl XIV. Johan, who earlier as Marshall Bennadotte of France (Napoleon's deputy in chief) had been elected heir to the Swedish throne, in 1810. Karl Johan created the practical conditions for Swedish neutrality policy."⁴⁴ This, as the next sub-heading considers, have ever since matured to become a permanent

principle of foreign policy.

Historical Development and Justification of Swedish Neutrality

The year 1815 marked a turning point in Sweden's history with the end of the Napoleonic wars, apart from transient exceptions, she withdrew from her 17th century role as a great and dominant power in the Baltic region as well as great power politics. Whereas in earlier epochs, the security of the realm had to a large extent been sought in alliances with and subsidies from great powers it now became based on a policy of freedom from alliances, on efforts to avoid being drawn into continental conflicts again.

During the earlier part of this period however, foreign policy was not marked by a conscious quest for "neutrality." Nils Andren points out that "Sweden attempted to safeguard her national security by orientating herself in turn to different great powers; first Russia, later Britain, and towards the end of the nineteenth century, it was Germany."⁴⁵

It is pertinent to note at this point, that Karl Johan became the first Swedish statesman to describe neutrality as an enduring ambition for Sweden. He therefore laid the foundation for the present day neutrality policy of Sweden. Ingvar Anderson and Jorgen has also stressed his importance to the study of Swedish neutrality, for from his archives comes a couple of documents written by him on the pre-history of this policy.⁴⁶ The first of this document is a confidential memorandum dated 4 January, 1834, presented on Karl Johan's instruction to the British and Russian governments. This action was prompted by a crisis in the Middle East which was generally believed might lead to war between British and Russia. Eventually war did not break out however Karl Johan thought it wise to give, well before any conflict might begin, what he called a formal explanation of strict and independent neutrality.

The basis for this Swedish neutrality was provided by the country's geographical position and the real national interests suggested by its internal conditions. She had renounced all the thought of regaining her provinces lost during the Napoleonic wars, and now centered her efforts on instilling confidence in Sweden's fair and disinterested attitude among the two powers which were most important to her. In Karl Johan's words:

*We cannot have any other desire than to be ourselves when we determine our policy to be ourselves when we assert our independence and to speak out minds clearly, precisely because we do not have any private mental reservations.*⁴⁷

He confirmed with the secret committee of his parliament that his memorandum was well received in London and Petersburg, (Britain and Russia being the major powers around her then). He emphasized that Sweden had important interests to defend in her relations with both these great powers:

*In the case of Russia, we must take into account her close proximity to us, her greatly superior strength and certain trading interests. We are linked to Britain through our whole industrial and commercial system and by naval considerations.*⁴⁸

Thus, from the above, one can infer that the cautious and conscious considerations for the national interest played a major role in Swedish thinking for her neutrality. Karl Johan therefore rallied for support from his people as a simple declaration of neutrality was not enough, unless there was a firm will to uphold and defend it adequately. The need for a strong defence policy and funds to support neutrality was as well important. Though, war did not break out in 1834, it created the arena for the expression of Swedish position between the East and West. In terms which recall George Washington's farewell address, Karl Johan declared:

*Separated as we are from the rest of Europe, our policy and our interests will always lead us to refrain from involving ourselves in any dispute which does not concern the two Scandinavian peoples.*⁴⁹

Thus, Karl Johan's contribution to the development of Swedish neutrality was unparalleled even though he was not sufficiently remembered. This is probably so because 'neutrality' as a principle of foreign policy had not then matured, as he did not speak of neutrality as principle of foreign policy even, except of those occasions as 1834 when he thought the outbreak of war was imminent. Instead, he described his foreign policy in peace time as one of "balance between the great powers and non-involvement in continental dispute."⁵⁰

Secondly, Johan found it difficult to accept an excessively passive and modest role on the European scene. As such, he enunciated conflicting proposals to his set out principles. He also felt restless impulse as former leading actor in European politics to intervene in international crises as a mediator or adviser, and strict restraint in this respect has long been regarded as a necessary constituent in a policy of neutrality. For these and other reasons, some have not always regarded Karl Johan as the author of Swedish neutrality. It must be emphasized however that the history of Swedish neutrality cannot be written without a worthy tribute to Karl Johan for his contributions until 1844 when he died never changed in his policy line. The foundation laid by Karl Johan was not yet sufficient for permanent neutrality. For soon, this neutrality policy was put to test as "three short wars"⁵¹ on the shores of the Baltic which saw Prussia become the most powerful state on the continent.

Rivalry between Russia and France led to the Crimean war of (1854-1856), which involved Anglo-French naval operations in the Baltic, and in which would have spurred Sweden into the war. Left to the initiatives of the Kings that reigned after Karl Johan, Oscar I 1844-1859 and Karl XV 1859-1872, would have de-neutralized Sweden. There were so numerous divergences in the principle of neutrality during these periods that it would have been natural to later observers to choose some other point as the starting point for Sweden's neutrality. However, in 1864, Sweden was restrained only by her own weakness from helping Denmark against Prussia and Austria. This image was not too good for the growth and striving of neutrality in Sweden.

However, this image changed in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71, as Sweden's neutrality was self-evident. The war however dealt a hard blow to Sweden's Karl XV, who had thought contrarily that France will emerge victorious, but much to his own dismay and for France as well, the German empire emerged the victor. This was not all, the liberal opinion in Sweden was as well hurt for these Swedes were reluctant to abandon all ambitions that Sweden might yet again play a prominent role in international affairs.

Twenty years of adventure, (i.e. 1844-1871), a return to the traditional cautious foreign policy of Karl Joan XIV was resorted back to in view of certain changes in the balance of political forces at home. Oscar II (1872-1907) resolved to improve Sweden's relations with St. Petersburg and especially with Berlin, and was ultimately successful in achieving both these objectives. However, it should be pointed out again that at the tail end of the century again both the external and the internal pre-conditions for the successful pursuit of a policy of neutrality deteriorated. Karl Johan had been able to rely on a remote and cautious Britain to provide a counterweight to Russia. This however, became more difficult now that equilibrium between the great powers in Northern Europe had to be maintained with the impatiently ambitious Wilhelmine German as a third and increasingly important player in the game. The presence of both a German and a Russian giant on the shores of the Baltic involved a risk of conflicts into which Sweden could be easily drawn into. Another important development, was that the coming of railways and modern warships reduced the importance of the Scandinavian Peninsula's remote and semi-insular geographical position which Karl Johan had so frequently relied on.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Sweden's policy of neutrality enjoyed less credibility abroad than was desirable. This was much so because Sweden had just emerged from a protracted crisis in her domestic politics. In February 1914, Gustav V (1907-1950) had publicly demanded that the government should rapidly decide to extend the period of military service. As a result, the liberal ministry had resigned and a government of conservative civil servants had been appointed. The new government had dissolved the second chamber and the ensuing election campaign presented the outside world with the spectacle of political parties in profound disagreement with each other over not only constitutional questions but also defence and foreign policy. During the first days of the war, an official statement and declaration of neutrality was issued, but the foreign minister seemed to have made a number of equivocal statements as to whether the Germans would accept Sweden's neutrality or compel them to go to war on their side or bear the consequences. A defeat of Russia, some of the ministers considered was vital to Swedish interests as such their neutrality could be titled to favour Germany.

After considerable success for Germany, first in the West and then in the East, Berlin threw out repeated feelers to Stockholm for alliance without which brought attractive gains for Sweden at Russia's expense – the Aaland Islands, a dominant position in Finland and in the small countries south of the Gulf of Finland. This offer had strong advocates in Swedish royal courts – Queen Victoria (daughter of Grand Duke Frederick of Baden and Louise daughter of Kaiser Wilhelm I, but with Hjalmar Hammarskjöld as Prime Minister and Wallenberg, a prominent banker as Foreign Minister. Sweden stood firm by the neutrality declared at the beginning of the war. Thus, after the four years, neutrality had gained a special glamour in Swedish eyes – a guarantee of escaping the havoc of a major war. But intermittently at any rate, it had also been seen as something transcending Sweden's own interest for it had prepared the ground for Sweden's contribution to the service of a higher and more universal good. Even though, the country's survival at times came before principles, yet Hammarskjöld declaration on the neutral's mission to safeguard for future generation essential rules of international law, won approval in many quarters.

It must be noted that during the 1920 and 1930s, various Swedish governments professed adherence to neutrality aim more or less consistently and in the general haze of the League of Nations, they departed at least on the face of it. In step with ever increasing fear of fresh war between the great powers of Europe, international solidarity more and more became a side issue. However, initiatives for a joint Nordic or more accurately Swedish-Finish defence policy also remained on paper, once again in the shadows of a threatening storm neutrality became the guiding star of Swedish foreign policy.

During the Second World War (1939-45), the faith of 'Neutrality' as guiding the policy in Sweden was clearly of advantage to the government in its effort to build a national unity around its foreign policy which according to a declaration issued on the first day of hostilities aimed at complete neutrality. Her own determination to keep herself out of war or the great power tussle was not sufficient as throughout most of the war years, Germany controlled not only Norway and Finland but also the entire Baltic East. The chances of

extricating herself from this German grip depended therefore on the victory of Germany's opponent. In 1940-41 and in 1944-45, when the balance of power was upset, Sweden's room for manoeuvre was extremely limited. The veil which the rules of neutrality drew over various moves dictated by political reality was thin and sometimes rent. However, in general, the Swedish authorities believed that prospects of preserving her neutrality in the event of the world war were fully fairly good, as such the major political parties supported neutrality.

Thus, by the end of the Second World War, little substance was left to the acclamation of a strong neutrality policy. This was an outcome rested on certain guiding principles, neutrality in relation to great power conflicts, a strong defence, active participation in international organizations and co-operation in general, even though, there have been divergences yet as Hansson has pointed out:

On each occasion, our overriding aim was to keep Sweden out of the war, if this could be done without loss of independence. It is clear that we could not ignore the realities of power in this connection. It has not been possible to follow a strict policy - what country has incidentally been able to do that - and we have had to judge each time what was compatible with our essential objective.⁵²

The primary instrument of post war security policy remained – non-participation in alliance in peace time aiming at neutrality in the event of war was defined over the following years. The basis having been laid by her (Sweden's) experiences during earlier phases in the history of her neutrality as has been shown so far. The lessons drawn from the past sometimes varied from one individual or strand of opinion to another. The collective experience of a nation cannot be defined with all certainty, however, the fact that Sweden has been able to remain at peace for a hundred and seventy years is a basis for their continued pursuance of the policy. In conclusion, the words of Osten Unden, Foreign Minister in 1945, in a reassuring declaration of Sweden's stand:

The Swedish people must for their part earnestly desire – both because of their own vital interests and for idealistic reasons – that a political division of states into mutually hostile groups from neutrality to the degree that its charter requires. However, if against expectation a tendency for the great powers into two camps manifests itself within the organization, our policy must be to avoid being drawn into any bloc or groups.⁵³

Thus, it can be seen that the objectives of the neutrality policy has been for the fulfilment of the national interest, goals and ideals of the Swedish people and much more a product of historical circumstances which has become a sort of traditional symbol, national myth with ideology consciousness.

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31. Hugo Crotius, See *De Jure Belli Ac Pacis* Bk. II. Sec. II, Chap. XXII, Secs. VIII-XII, published in 1625 – The first comprehensive treaties on International Law, English translation can be found in *The Classics of International Law*, Vol. III, No. 3, (London, 1923).
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36. Ibid.
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Motives for Adoption of Neutrality

The foreign policy of any country has some goals to achieve, and as a tool for the realization of particular objectives for which it is adopted. These goals are directed towards the realization or non-realization of national objectives or interests, depending upon how and to what extent they are pursued. Therefore, as Hans Morgenthau has opined, "no nation can have true guide as to what it must do in foreign policy without accepting national interest as that guide."⁵⁴ Therefore, with this basic ideology and framework, one can proceed to consider Swedish motivations for adopting and sticking to this line of policy over the years. As would have emerged from the historical evolution of this policy highlighted in the last section, it will be seen that the policy of neutrality covered all measures which served to keep Sweden out of war, security and various factors which on the whole scored the interest of the nation. Karl Birnbaum has posited that "the possibilities of a country to pursue a successful policy of neutrality are not only affected by the balance of power and a strong defence but also on whether the country in question enjoys a high degree of economic independence and possesses a differentiated industry and commerce"⁵⁵ - therefore interplay of factors, some of which are considered below are responsible for its adoption of Neutrality.

Firstly, one important motive for the adoption of Swedish neutrality has to do with Sweden's geographical and strategic position in Europe. Sweden happens to be a medium sized democratic country in Northern Europe⁵⁶ with strong economic ties with the Western world, at the crossroads between major strategic interests and in the immediate proximity of areas of vital demographic economic and military importance to one of the super powers U.S.S.R. Being so situated, it stands to reason that Sweden should have two aims; the one to avoid coming under the influence of the nearby super power and the other to avoid becoming the menacing outpost of the other super power. A policy of neutrality is therefore the answer in order not to be strangled by these two super powers. In the words of Sverker Astrom, "the content of this policy is decided from case to case in the light of the main purpose of our security policy - to strengthen the safeguards of our national independence and our democratic society, to preserve and if possible, improve the chance of saving Sweden from war."⁵⁷ Therefore, the first important motive for the adoption of Swedish neutrality is for security purposes to safeguard her national independence.

Secondly, this policy is not only for war time use. It is also relevant in peace time and in this respect, aims at preserving the Nordic area as a whole quiet corner of the world. Even though, security is a basic motive, yet another secondary fact is that this policy has given Sweden a particular profile on the international scene and makes it easier for her to pursue an active independent, co-operation, environment, laws of war disarmament as well as acting as international peacemaker and mediator. Neutrality inspires a certain confidence in Swedish, independent judgment and these 'spin-off' affects according to Astrom Sverker are all to the good enhancement of the value of our neutrality.⁵⁸

Economically, Swedish free trade policy is adopted along lines of her neutrality policy. Sweden is dependent on outside sources for raw materials, fuels and a great range of finished goods as such the policy makes her open to a wide variety range of markets without bias to any of the power blocs. She has systematically avoided commitments that may impinge on her policy of neutrality in trade relations as well. Finally, the Swedish neutrality policy as this essay has shown so far must be seen in the context of Swedish history. The adherence to this policy line has saved her from two major World Wars as well as other minor ones. Obviously, neutrality alone cannot account for this safety, but also strategic and political circumstances and advantages, yet neutrality prevailed as the requisite for keeping Sweden out of these wars. Instinctively, after the Second World War, the Swedish felt neutrality represented as a 'safety belt' and a guarantee of peace for them. For the fact that this policy has been a source of strength and has never failed since its adoption, more so, in addition the

overwhelming support by the Swedish people to the government for adoption of neutrality has made it come to stay to the benefit of all – the national interest of the country.

Defence of Credibility of Swedish Neutrality

In light of the evaluation so far, the credibility of Swedish neutrality principle has become a major bone of contention and controversy amongst scholars as well as observers in the international scene. There have been divergent criticisms and variants of opinion internally and externally as to how credible Swedish neutrality really is to either of the power blocs or to the world as a whole. As Gunner Jervas has pointed out, “There appears to be a tendency to attribute to Swedish neutrality policy some kind of intrinsic value, in fact, some would even seem to consider it sacrosanct.”⁵⁹ Taking into consideration, the fact that Sweden has remained outside the two major wars, the question of consistency seems to hold, but putting out imagination to the test, one is forced to make re-evaluations, examine the norms, departures and divergences by Sweden from the principle as such deem it as not entirely sacrosanct.

Criticisms focuses mainly on the divergences from the rules of neutrality, some support the departures on the ground that the credibility of this policy is not dependent on international guarantee or constitutional legislation and/or that Sweden alone decides what requirements its policy of neutrality entails.⁶⁰ Critics on the other hand have simply condemned these divergences out-rightly irrespective of their importance or of the circumstances in which they occurred.⁶¹ In their own view, a neutral country was simply obliged to observe the rules of neutrality as prescribed by international law, whatever the risks that great power might attack. Some Americans after they were drawn into the Second World War claimed that neutrality was “immoral” and that Sweden should have chosen a policy other than neutrality.⁶² Other further question the empirical foundation or basis for such a policy at all, arguing that in an increasingly interdependent world no nation can really be neutral even so in their foreign policy. Even though, events of the First and Second World War may have made it seem so, there were still evidence of divergences drawn from the Second World War where Sweden titled her neutrality to sooth her purposes and especially Germany.⁶³ A fact upheld by this work.

But as Gunnar has pointed out in his defence of Swedish neutrality, “The critics of our neutrality policy were not opposed to neutrality as such, all they wanted at any rate was for Sweden to follow a neutrality policy of such as unbending variety; a policy which would have involved exposing Sweden to the full horrors of war, even though, no vital Swedish interests were involved.”⁶⁴ Gunnar further points out that small states cannot be asked to risk their existence for the sake of some uncertain calculation about their role in the global struggle between the big wigs.⁶⁵ Gunnar Jervas on his part maintains that neutrality is not in itself an end but a rational means which has been and is still is considered effective towards the attainment of Swedish security objectives defined by the government aimed at maintaining the country’s independence.⁶⁶

At this point, it should be stated that the premise on which Swedish neutrality is therefore based is that it is a line of foreign policy independently chosen by the government which in principle is open to modification at any given time or moment.⁶⁷ The condition which in theory enables the government to change Swedish neutrality policy at any given time does imply that this is always practicable. This line of policy however creates a platform from which Sweden enters the international scene an extra-ordinary advantageous position enabling independent stands and active participation in areas of great importance.

Whatever consideration may therefore be argued, either for or against the principle of neutrality as practiced by Sweden is less to be desired. To what extent, Swedish neutrality appears credible to other states – the decisive factor would depend on a number of circumstances. As earlier mentioned, freedom from alliances creates a kind of automatic involvement mechanism. On this point, Sweden fulfils expectations reasonably well as was not tied to either of the world blocs, NATO or the Warsaw pact during the cold war period. Secondly, it has long been considered that neutrality policy must be backed by a relative strong defence and that it should be organized in such a way to guarantee continued supply of at least basic necessities in case of war. It is often believed that strict neutrality is a guarantee against aggression, this is not true in all its entirety, for even if a nation fulfils all condition imposed by international law on neutral countries, this does not furnish any kind of guarantee against attack. Neutrality indeed is an important form of protection, provided there is no race situation, if there is such a situation, it therefore means that neutrality is not practicable.

Gunner Jervas has posited that “claims by one side that Swedish neutrality fails to fulfil reasonable demands need not necessarily be genuine or well founded.”⁶⁸ This as he pointed out is because tactical motivation may just as well be the underlying factor, i.e., purposeful intentions to provoke reactions to favour their sides of interest. Criticisms of Swedish policy does come from both East and West even though it has different characteristics. From the Soviet bloc then, the message usually was that Sweden does not show sufficient impartiality but tends to lean westwards. It was asserted that Swedish decision makers have more contact with their West counterparts. And that weapons are supplied by the U.S. to a considerable degree to Sweden. Another criticism is that which claims that military defence of a small state is increasingly impossible today and that Sweden should therefore adopt a neutrality policy which downgrades the military versus the

political factor. That in essence, Moscow would wish Sweden to limit relations with the West and embark on a more active neutrality policy – adopting an attitude similar to that of Finland.

Even after the cold war, criticism from the U.S. is somewhat different. Washington claims that Swedish defence investments are too small relative to Soviet build up and that as such she is obliged to the latter. The U.S. can envisage helping her with modern technology as long as this is not re-exported to the Russia. Thus, Washington wishes Sweden to strengthen her defence hopefully through U.S. co-operation in order to avoid what to them appears a dangerous slide. If one is then to weigh the quantity of criticism against Swedish neutrality from different directions, one will notice that more comes from the Moscow. However, one would think that the less criticism from any side – the better. This is not so certain, because there is also the risk that a well meant attitude more or less free from criticisms by one side can be utilized by the other as proof of the lack of impartiality. Even a total lack of criticism may be preferable, but since this is not so possible, then it may supposedly be better for a neutral state to receive about the same amount from both sides therefore creating a kind of intrinsic balance. However, the idea that Sweden might be forced to opt for one of these alternatives on a more permanent basis seems rather rigid. It would be more plausible to imagine development whereby as a result of Soviet power extension, Sweden will begin to accommodate Eastward pressures, though there will be sharp criticisms at home – Sweden. It seems however more realistic for the policy to be firmly anchored, whilst making adjustments in both directions. For example, as regards the U.S., Sweden tends to comply more strictly with their petitions not to re-export advanced technology to the Russia as the case may be. Russia as well in reaction also advocates for a nuclear free zone as example of a more active neutrality policy.

On the whole and from a wider perspective, one can probably claim that Swedish appeasement measures to both blocs are marginal. But the realization of neutrality as a principle of foreign policy, if not myth taking the nature of the international system will require a lot of both human and material input. A cautious balance has to be presented such that in spite of criticisms, either from east or west, internal or external belief in its credibility will be strengthened.

Sweden's Neutrality and International Relations

After the Second World War, one immediate question that arose was that of Sweden's membership of the United Nations since somehow joining this organization seemed obvious, because the organization had collective security and peaceful co-operation on its programme. But somehow, the organization charter seemed incompatible with a policy of neutrality. The policy of neutrality aimed at prevention from being drawn into war between the great powers and since the two powers must be in agreement before the Security Council could make a decision on applying military or other sanctions, Sweden therefore ran no risk of being ordered by the Security Council to declare war on either of them. Thus on this premise, Sweden could become a member of the United Nations Organization.

On joining the U.N., Sweden's policy of neutrality continued to have great bearing on her role. On the one hand, difficult considerations of non-alignment and international solidarity have led to be weighed against one another whenever certain situations of wide import have arisen in the U.N. – the Korean War of 1950-1953 and/or the Lebanese crisis 1975-76. However as a rule, these problems have been resolved in clear favour of non-alignment. On the other hand, the consistent application of this policy has gained acceptance for Sweden as an uncommitted state with no axe to grind in bloc infested conflicts. Sweden is therefore considered very useful for mediating tasks or roles ever since Folk Bernadotte was sent to Palestine in 1948 for holding offices in World body.

Secondly, Sweden's other important function in the U.N. has been to urge the super-powers to use their superior resources in such a way that the interests of the weaker nations are taken into full account. Sweden's active participation is exemplified by the fact that she has taken more part in peace-keeping operation than any other country. Over 40,000 Swedes have served with the U.N. forces around the world.⁶⁹

The policy of neutrality is also reflected in Sweden's attitude towards regional co-operation in Europe. When the council of Europe was formed in 1949, she did not hesitate to join as it was well suited to states who did not want to commit themselves to far reaching European integration or to accept the authority of supra-national bodies. The council was empowered only to advice and not to make binding decisions on questions of military and security policy which lay outside its purview. Sweden did not however, join the NATO, but she is one of the leading spokesmen for free trade, EFTA as well as a comprehensive free trade agreement with the EEC⁷⁰ considering the fact that a close relationship with the EEC was thought as very important. On grounds of trade policy, the stand taken by Sweden may be said to show that the country's economic interests are subordinated to those of its neutrality principles.

One important part of Swedish foreign policy is the very close co-operation with other Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway. Even though, these countries have decided in favour of other national security solutions than that of Sweden. For example, Denmark and Norway plays a prominent role in NATO while a special relationship exists between Finland and the Soviet Union. However, far-reaching practical co-

operation is carried on. The Nordic countries as a whole have a tradition despite any alliance or non-alliance in the field of developmental assistance. Continuous Nordic consultations take place in the field of multilateral as well as bilateral development co-operation. In the latter field, collaboration is demonstrated by jointly financed Nordic developmental projects in Tanzania, Kenya and Mozambique.⁷¹

The formation of the United Nations Organization necessarily brought in a large number of new and uncommitted states into focus and limelight. The entrance into international politics presented new challenges as well as new scopes for manoeuvre between the power blocs. Sweden however, was guided by the resolutions of the U.N. on the Middle East issue from the position plan of 1947, the creation of Israel to resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Sweden sees the fulfilment of the national rights of the Palestinian people including the rights to establish a state of their own living at peace with Israel as another basic element of a durable peace.⁷²

Sweden further paid increasing attention to the needs of developing countries for assistance in line with their humanitarian traditions and to help with another objective of Swedish foreign policy and thereby foster international solidarity and continued peaceful development. Neutrality with the absence of an embarrassing colonial past give Sweden a good spring board for gaining the confidence of developing countries. It also heightens her responsibilities and opportunities for providing assistance. Unlike some of the aids from the super powers which are devised to promote their own general strategic interests, Sweden has avoided making her help conditional refraining from attaching strings to it, rather it is directed to serve the cause of improved relations. In 1977, Sweden magnanimously wrote off more than £300m sterling of state loans to poor countries to reduce their debt problem.⁷³

Commitment to the liberation of coloured peoples⁷⁴ is another aspect which has given considerable concern on Sweden's position. Sweden has stated that U.N. Security Council must decide on economic sanctions against South Africa whose apartheid is seen as a threat to international peace. While awaiting such decisions, Sweden seeks to influence other countries to exert pressures on the South African government, and in 1979, the Swedish government enacted a law prohibiting new investments in South Africa before the majority rule was established.⁷⁵

Within this framework, Sweden granted considerable humanitarian assistance to South African and Namibian refugees and to the liberation movements ANC and SWAPO in that period⁷⁶. Whatever the nature of the aids and line of policy actions, the postures have been nicely adjusted so as to make clear Sweden's determination to avoid siding with or against the great powers before the termination of the cold war then.

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73. For more details, See Editorial Opinion *New Nigeria*, October 18, 1977: 1. The Debt Problem of Africa is the major theme in this work.
See “Whys and Whats of Aid” in the *Journal of Contact with Sweden*, August Issue, 1980: 20. See also Article in *Nigerian Standard*, June 6, 1977, “Envoy Lauds Africa’s Liberation War.” See also Dagunduro Sehinde, *Sweden Declares Stand on African Struggle*, *New Nigeria*, June 6, 1977: 16.
74. Swedish Perception on African Struggles for Liberation – A deepening concern over the plight of blacks in South Africa.
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Summary of Findings and Conclusion

All along, this work has sought to examine the principle of neutrality as practiced and upheld by the North European country of Sweden. The study has been able to establish that the chief objective of her neutrality has been to preserve the country’s freedom of action in foreign affairs, so that the policy will not be visited in advance in the event of war. As will have emerged from the essay so far, the intermediate position that this policy has placed or conferred on Sweden has enhanced her potential for playing an active mediatory role in the international stage. As should also be noted this policy is an important element in the effort to maintain peace and security throughout the European Continent, because the very orientation of this policy itself is a rejection of war as a means of resolving international problems, an emphatic refusal to have anything to do with such a policy.

Sweden’s freedom to act in principle as reflected during the First and Second World Wars (even though titled at times to suit prevailing realities) as well as her post-war postures has just been restricted as if her neutrality were guaranteed or imposed by international treaty or even by their constitution. The prospects of this principle especially in an age of increased international interdependence however demands a kind of realism and probably even greater insight into the outer most limits of her ability to act as an international performer. New choices should be weighed carefully to decide on courses of action to take in her role between the blocs in the United Nations Organization as well as her negotiation and relations with the developing countries. Altogether, these courses should fit in with her non-alignment principles which also underline the conduct of an active foreign policy in peace time.

Reasonably, from the foregoing, there is no cause for doubting that Sweden will not live up to the demands of neutrality in the case of conflict near her surrounding but to what extent could she ward off aggressors who do not feel obliged to respect her neutrality is a question yet to be answered. This is because as Alf Johansson and Norma has pointed out “the possibilities for a state to maintain the status of neutrality in time of war may to a considerable extent be regarded as a function of great power policy.”⁷⁷ The balance of power between the belligerents and the will of the two to accept that they will not or cannot attack the natural state.

One other important fact that could justify this posture is that of striving to make her neutrality more credible, which will depend on her will to continually fulfil such demands and capacity to convince potential aggressors that an attack on her cannot be expected to be advantageous. This will go a long way in allowing her to maintain the needed balance. Thus, as Gunnar Jervas has observed, the implication of this as a general position is that “Neutrality for a country occupying a strategically important position within an area dominated by great power interest such as Sweden is only feasible so long as it provides adequate safeguards”.⁷⁸ Safeguards in this sense, would practically interpret to the fact that they must actually be prepared for war through acquisition of stand-by ammunitions and combat ready military setup at any given time. More so, the realization of her objectives and motivations will depend on her ability to distinguish more clearly between real and tactical criticism of her policy.

Finally, this must however be complemented in the language of Morgenthau, by the fact, “that the national interests, goals and ideals of a nation for survival and upholding political morality can be fully realized if the nation is conscious not only of its own interests but also those of other nations.”⁷⁹

The bottom line, therefore, of the Neutrality principle of foreign policy as the statement of hypothesis has sought to prove then is that there may be no perfect state of Neutrality for any country of the world including that of Sweden which may be subject to attack as Adolf Hitler did on September 1, 1939, an event which led to the Second World War.

As Grant and Temperly have noted:

The first phase of the war began with the invasion of Poland and ended with the fall of France. It began without declaration or formality with the attack by German Air Force on the 1st September on Polish military targets, airfields, military bases, training centres and railway functions and with the march of the

German Army at the dawn of the same day. The declaration of war by Britain and France two days later did not save Poland.⁸⁰

Here is a food for thought—what if such an attack had been directed to Sweden? A country may declare itself a “neutral” but when it is subjected to a sudden attack, must fight back!

END NOTES

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I want to give special tribute to the Information Department of the Swedish Embassy, Lagos, Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Stockholm for the release of the Historical Fact Sheets which aided this work to its conclusion; Prof. Adele Jinadu of Babcock University, Ogun and Prof. Babatunde Owoeye of Lead City University, Ibadan.

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