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**EUROPEAN UNION'S NEUTRALITY ON  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

The Sino American Conflict

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## Abbreviations & acronyms

EU: European Union

US/USA: United States of American

PRC: Popular Republic of China

USSR: Union of Societ Socialist Rpublics

GB: Great Britain

IO: International Organization

WTO: World Trade Organization

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

EEAS: European External Action Service

UNCLOS: United National convention on the Law of the Sea

ASML: Advanced Semiconductor Material Litography

SMT: Semiconductor Manufacturing Technology

AIT: America Istitute in Taiwan

PLA: People's Liberation Army

RAF: Royal Air Force

RCAF: Royal Canadian Air Force

USAAF: United States Army Air Forces

USUE mission: U.S. Mission to the European Union

CPK: Communist Party Kampuchea

SNB: Swiss National Bank

OSS: office of strategic services

WWI: World War I

WWII: World War II

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

MAD: mutually assured destruction

DS: Dispute Resolution

F.E.: for example

vs: versus

Km<sup>2</sup>: squared Kilometers

m: meters

## Index

I.	Theoretical framework.....	2
II.	EU's current position on the Sino American conflict.....	6
1.	Accusations of espionage.....	6
2.	Unfair trade Competition.....	9
3.	Tariffs and Trade War.....	11
4.	South China Sea and the One China policy.....	11
5.	Conclusions.....	15
III.	Is neutrality possible? If so, perks, drawbacks, and difficulties of pursuing it.....	17
1.	Case Studies.....	18
1)	Switzerland through WWI.....	18
2)	Ireland through WWII.....	20
3)	Sweden through WWI.....	23
4)	Cambodia through the Vietnam War (1955-1975).....	26
2.	Analysis of the case studies.....	30
IV.	EU's neutrality on a hypothetical conflict over Taiwan.....	34
V.	Conclusion.....	38
VI.	Bibliography.....	40

## ABSTRACT.

As for now, there are tensions amongst the 2 superpowers: China and the US. This conflict, due to globalization and interdependence, reflects and has consequences around the globe. On the first place, this study will start by focusing on how the European Union policies have managed this confrontation till present day. **Whether the EU has been more prompt to adopt one of the following positions: being US's ally, being China's ally or being neutral throughout the conflict.** After this information is presented, neutrality as a diplomatic strategy will be the focus of the investigation. This paper will then try to establish what are the **perks, drawbacks, and difficulties that a State could face when opting for this "no-alliance" position. Or even if it is possible to adopt such a position.** To reduce the scope of the investigation, and to reach the answers this paper is looking for, one main example will be used: the Russia vs Ukraine War. Furthermore, the previous information will be used to analyze **the effects, the EU could face, by adopting such position through a hypothetical Taiwan's vs. China war.** Therefore, the goal of this research would be to come up with enough data to **support which strategy would be the best for the EU to adopt on the US vs. China conflict from now on.** One step further, the study will also allow the reader to establish whether neutrality is plausible through the actual international canvas.

KEY WORDS: European Union, Sino American conflict, neutrality, credibility, liberalism, multipolarity, trade, espionage, tariffs, South China Sea, Taiwan, One China policy

## I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The European Union was born from a Kantian liberal conception of the world. Liberals are aware of the existence of an anarchic world, where there is no global authority to govern over all States. Moreover, liberals also assume that humans are rational beings. Based on human rationale, States in the international context seek survivance above all. Thus, in the search of such survivance liberalism requires 3 central elements: Democracy, international trade, and the creation of International Organizations.

On the other hand, neutrality as a political strategy, is rooted on times when realism was the most influential ideology. Between 1648 and World War I, the Westphalian System was on place, and was based on the Balance of Power. Under this conception, national security was seen as a requirement for the survival of the nation-state. For realists, the strengthening of one State was a potential threat to the others. Thus, States could opt between 2 paths to seek their survival:

- i. Coalitions. These types of alliances were formed by either a balancing strategy or a band-wagoning strategy. The first described those occasions in which weak states align with other weak states to create a greater force. The latter was when the state aligned with their threatening actor or when they wanted to get the benefits of a possible victory by such country.
- ii. Self-dependence. Based on the statement “care of yourself cause no one else will”, this approach focused on attaining political independence and territorial integrity. However, not all countries have same capabilities, meaning some of them might be unable to have a strong military and achieve the desire levels of autonomy.

However, when wars started to be fought, mainly throughout WWI, the coalition choice started to show some weakness. Governments realized lots was at stake when their state was in the losing side. Consequently, some countries decided to break the coalition encirclement by acquiring a permanent neutral status. Unlike self-dependence approach, by acquiring neutrality the goal was not to be able to survive conflicts by their own means,

but not to get involved in conflicts at all. Furthermore, it is also relevant to mention that the rights and duties of neutral states were established by the Conferences of the Hague 1899 and 1907. Such conferences, as previously mentioned, took place on a period when realism structured foreign policies. As a result, these documents focused on rights and duties of neutral countries throughout war times. War back then was a normal interaction between states which were trying to increase their power.

Hence, to develop an accurate study on European Union's neutrality, it is mandatory to firstly understand the different approach realism and liberalism take towards state security. Only by understanding what these doctrines understand as national security; we will be able to determine which factors must be present to tag a state as neutral.

Realist concept of security might vary a little depending on which variant of the theory we are considering. However, main elements are common to them all. For this study we will use structural realism's approach and will mainly reference two "*The false promise of International institution*" & "*The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*". Both pieces author being Mearsheimer.

From the first piece, three conclusions must be highlighted and will be now paraphrased:

"The international system is portrayed as a brutal arena where states look for opportunities to take advantage of each other, and therefore have little reason to trust each other. Daily life is essentially a struggle for power, where each state strives not only to be the most powerful actor in the system, but also to ensure that no other state achieves that lofty position. International relations is not a constant state of war, but it is a state of relentless security competition, with the possibility of war always in the background" (Mearsheimer, 1994, p.9)

"The second assumption is that states inherently possess some offensive military capability, which gives them the wherewithal to hurt and possibly to destroy each other. States are potentially dangerous to each other. A state's military power is usually

identified with the weaponry at its disposal, although even if there were no weapons, the individuals of a state could still use their feet and hands to attack the population of another state (Mearsheimer, 1994, p.10).

“The third assumption is that states can never be certain about the intentions of other states. Specifically, no state can be certain another state will not use its offensive military capability against the first. This is not to say that states necessarily have malign intentions. Another state may be reliably benign, but it is impossible to be certain of that judgment because intentions are impossible to divine with 100 percent certainty. There are many possible causes of aggression, and no state can be sure that another state is not motivated by one of them. Furthermore, intentions can change quickly, so a state's intentions can be benign one day and malign the next. Uncertainty is unavoidable when assessing intentions, which simply means that states can never be sure that other states do not have offensive intentions to go with their offensive military capability (Mearsheimer, 1994, p.10).

From “*The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*”, 2 out of the 5 goals states pursue must be highlighted:

- i. Achieving maximum wealth. The increase of wealth is extremely relevant as economic power is the foundation of military strength.
- ii. Achieving Nuclear superiority over their rivals. This goal leads to a world where multiple great powers have the capacity to destroy their enemies. This phenomenon is called mutually assured destruction (MAD).

By interpreting the quotes extracted from these 2 documents we can elaborate a brief scheme of what neutrality looks like from a realist point of view. Structural realism focuses security in two aspects: economics and the military. However, economic is only relevant as the foundation to the second. Moreover, the main way of interaction between states is conflict, and war is always a possibility. Therefore, neutrality by a state will be the no interference of one state into external armed conflicts. Additionally, from the

previous texts from a realist perspective, neutrality shall be deemed as an unstable and unsure reality. As Mearsheimer affirms, states can never trust the other states from not attacking theirs to increase their power, as all states have this same goal. Thus, the lack of trust among states might be an obstacle for neutrality states to arise.

As for liberalism we will use the work “Kant, liberal legacies, and foreign affairs” by Doyle, to determine what neutrality will look like from this theoretical liberal approach.

Under the described circumstances, it is key to adapt the realist roots of *neutrality*, focused on military power; to the liberal conception the European Union holds of the world. If we want to answer if the EU is neutral, then it would be more adequate to take the perspective from which they are considering international relations. Accordingly, and taking into consideration that for liberalism, the military is just one element of national security, and that security is mainly shaped in the form of interdependence created by international trade and the creation of international organization; our study of EU’s neutrality on the US-Chinese will revolve around those areas of their international relations behaviors. Additionally, it will make no sense to analyze the European Union from a structural realist point of view, as such doctrine does not believe in institutionalism. Mearsheimer on his already mentioned work “*The false promise of institution*”, upheld “My central conclusion is that institutions have minimal influence on state behavior, and thus hold little promise for promoting stability in the post-Cold War world” (Mearsheimer, 1994, p.7).

In conclusion, the shift in foreign policies from realism to liberalism, has meant that state’s security is not anymore only dependent on their military. International transactions promoted by liberalism, has turned technology, economy, and trade into key elements of security too. Consequently, when analyzing whether the European Union has been neutral through the different Sino American conflicts, not only military matters will be studied (South-East and Taiwan), but also, confrontations concerning tech, trade, and economics (espionage, barriers, etc.).

## II. EU'S CURRENT POSITION ON THE SINO AMERICAN CONFLICT.

*Has the EU been more prompt to adopt which of the following positions? Alliance towards the US, alliance with China, or neutrality.*

European economies continue to participate with the US in like-minded economic organizations such as the OECD, NATO, the G-7 and the G-20. The US is also Europe's most important trade and investment partner, as well as a critical strategic ally.

Trying to determine the position the EU has been more prompt to adopt, it is mandatory to enumerate the conflicts that have confronted the US and China. To get the EU's most updated tendencies, we will proceed to focus on the US-China conflicts dated in the last decade. Keep in mind that the objective is not to analyze the different conflicts, but whether the EU has get involved in them through its policies. Additionally, if the answer to the previous question is positive, what did the policies adopted by the EU consisted of.

I know proceed to enumerate the last decade main conflicts among the American and Asian superpowers:

### 1. Accusations of espionage

Accusations on Chinese espionage have been brought up by the US numerous times. An example of such allegations was when former US president, Donald Trump adopted measures on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Then, Trump's Administration lunched a campaign warning not to use Huawei (Chinese lead telecom entity) due to espionage of the Chinese government through its 5G networks<sup>1</sup>.

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, Meng Wanzhou, chief financial officer of Chinese telecom Huawei was arrested in Canada at the United States' request. On March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019; while legal

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<sup>1</sup> An example of attempt to espionage had place in 2017, when the Chinese government offered to spend \$100 million to build an ornate Chinese garden at the National Arboretum in Washington DC. Complete with temples, pavilions, and a 70-foot white pagoda. However, the US counterintelligence discovered true intentions behind the Chinese project. The following article focuses on this event: (Lillis, 2022)

proceedings against Meng were taking place, Huawei sued the US. This lawsuit challenged the banning on U.S. federal agencies from using the telecom giant's equipment. Additionally, Trump administration launched a campaign warning other countries not to use Huawei equipment to build 5G networks, claiming Chinese government plausible espionage. The following month, the Trump administration banned U.S. companies from using foreign-made telecommunications equipment that could threaten the security of the nation. Moreover, Huawei enters the Commerce Department's foreign entity blacklist. On November 20, 2020 the Commerce Department adds to this list dozens of Chinese companies (these entities included the country's biggest chipmaker, Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation).

The positioning of the EU over this matter did not took long after US requirement for help, in March 2019. On January 2020, the Cybersecurity of 5G networks EU Toolbox of risk mitigating measures was published by the European Commission. Acknowledging the increasing relevant role of 5G networks in the European Society, the EU wanted to reduce and prevent the risks this could cause. The Commission believed for risks to be more or less likely depending on the individual suppliers of 5G networks. Believing, non-EU members were more suspicious. Thus, they created a list of factors that had to be considered to recognize a non-EU supplier as a threat to EU's security. As an element of the analysis, the Commission required to observe the third's country legislation and democratic status: the risk is higher "especially where there are no legislative or democratic checks and balances in place, or in the absence of security or data protection agreements between the EU and the given third country (NIS Cooperation Group, 2020, p.42). Therefore, even if Huawei's case was not directly addressed by the document, the EU seemed to be more on the American side of the dispute.

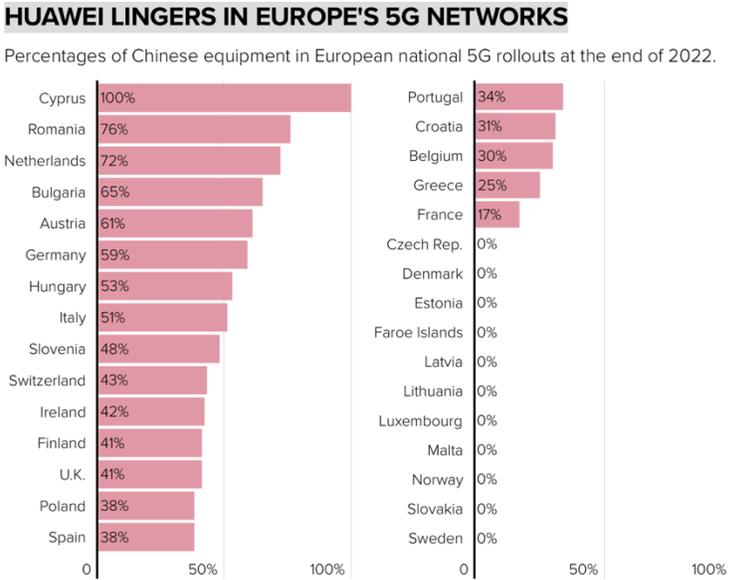
Afterwards, among the EU members national policies different approaches were adopted towards Huawei:

- Policies addressing Huawei's case directly. Baltic countries took direct measures against Huawei. Sweden directly banned the technological entity from operating on their countries.

Denmark Minister of Defense, Trine Bramsen, said that trying to protect the country, they rather contract with 5G suppliers they already had an alliance with. On March 2019, TDC (Denmark’s major technological enterprise) chose Ericson over Huawei as a 5G network supplier (AFP, 2019). Moreover, France has limited the amount of Huawei equipment and establish a de facto ban for 2028 (Rosemain, M & Barzic, G; 2020).

- Policies increasing the government’s and cybersecurity agencies power, to forbid the purchase of Huawei equipment. The Italian government, in October 2020, vetoed telecoms group Fastweb from signing a deal with the Chinese corporation that aimed to buy 5G equipment for Fastweb’s core network.
- Member states reluctant to policies that could endangered Huawei’s dealings on their countries. Portugal, Luxembourg, Austria, and the Netherlands haven’t passed any laws yet. There are even Member States continuing to use Huawei as major 5G equipment supplier. For example, Germany. The German state is the host to Huawei’s European HQ.

This diversity within the European Union remains in 2022, as the following graphic shows



Graphic 1: Huawei lingers in Europe’s 5G networks (Cerulus, 2022).

## 2. Unfair trade competition

As for fair trade competition, the conflict between China and the US can be traced back to March 2012. US trade deficit with China had increased from \$273 to \$295.5 billion in a single year. The US, suspicious of the situation, decided to file a request for consultation at the WTO. Americans questioned whether Chinese restriction on rare mineral exports, was in violation of international trade norms. They believed those restrictions to be forcing multinational entities to relocate to China, violating fair competition principles. Afterwards, the WTO delivered the dispute settlement DS431<sup>2</sup>. On 22 March 2012, the European Union requested the WTO to join the request.

On October 23, 2020; the US- EU dialogue on China came into existence with the goal of discussing full range of issues related to China and common to them both (USUE Mission, 2020). The second high meeting took place on December 2, 2021 (Office of the Spokesperson, 2021). The focus of the meeting was put in 2 mains points:

- The growing list of China's actions that are of concern, including those that breach international law and run counter to the shared values and interests of the United States and the EU
- the importance of protecting and building economic and technological resilience, diversifying and strengthening supply chains, and addressing economic coercion. They reiterated the importance of close U.S.-EU cooperation to uphold the rules-based international order, including securing a level playing field for all countries. They also emphasized the importance of protecting intellectual property rights, critical infrastructure, and sensitive technologies, as well as information-sharing on

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<sup>2</sup> At the DSB meeting on 20 May 2015, China informed the DSB that, according to notices by the Ministry of Commerce and the General Administration of Customs of China, the application of export duties and export quotas to rare earths, tungsten, and molybdenum as well as restriction on trading rights of enterprises exporting rare earths and molybdenum which were found to be inconsistent with WTO rules, had been removed. In that regard, China had fully implemented the DSB's recommendations and rulings. However, the United States could not share China's assessment that it had fully complied with the DSB's recommendations and rulings. On 21 May 2015, China and the United States informed the DSB of Agreed Procedures under Articles 21 and 22 of the DSU.

tools to strengthen economic resilience, reduce loopholes and vulnerabilities, and shield against risks, including from non-market practices.

As for the EU, in November 2022 a proposal of an anti-coercion instrument was proposed. Even though, this type of disputes is usually presented to the WTO, EU members have argued the lack of efficiency of such methods, requiring the EU to create their own. This was the case of Lithuania<sup>3</sup>. “In September 2021, Lithuanian businesses reported that their Chinese trading partners were not renewing their existing contracts or concluding new ones with them and that they were having problems with the supply of some raw materials. Their Chinese providers blamed power cuts for the shortages. Reports surfaced about threats to the future of Lithuanian enterprises in China, refusals of food export permits to Lithuanian firms, and closure of various financial institutions cooperating with Lithuanian exporters. On 1 December 2021, Lithuania disappeared from the Chinese customs administration's country list, which effectively meant Lithuanian exporters were no longer able to file customs paperwork. Lithuania reappeared on China's customs' list a week later, but shipments were still not being cleared and import applications from Lithuania were being rejected. China also started blocking imports from other EU countries that contained components from Lithuania. Beijing denied having launched a trade boycott against Lithuania. The combination of trade and investment sanctions could lead to a drop in Lithuania's GDP by 0.6 % in 2022 and 1.5 % in 2023, and heavily affect some sectors, such as laser production. Medium and long-term effects may be more severe” (International Trade Committee, 2022, p.3).

Under such proposal, one of the elements presented is to increase cooperation with the US and its NATO allies: “could be achieved by integrating the US' and the allies' economies more closely than the integration they have with their principal competitors and coercers. The joint EU-US June 2021 summit statement announced increased cooperation as well as

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<sup>3</sup> Proposed anti-coercion instrument by the European Parliament. While the new framework is primarily designed to deter economic coercive action through dialogue and engagement, it also allows – as a last resort – retaliation, with countermeasures comprising a wide range of restrictions related to trade, investment, and funding. While there is broad support for creating a legislative tool to address the growing problem of economic coercion, opinions are divided as regards the severity of countermeasures and the manner of establishing when they should be imposed. The matter is still under negotiation.

information and expertise exchanges in order to counter economic coercion. Furthermore, one of the priority working groups of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council was tasked with work on common concerns related to economic coercion. Addressing economic coercion has also been discussed at the high-level meeting of the EU-US Dialogue on China” (International Trade Committee, 2022, p.7)..

### 3. Tariffs and Trade War

A massive trade war is taking place between the US and China. Most known practice by both States has been called the tit for tat sanctions. A set of mutual impositions of tariffs and trade barriers on the other countries’ goods/imports. Examples of this dynamic will now be presented:

a. July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018: The Trump administration imposes fresh sanctions totaling \$34 billion worth of Chinese goods. More than eight hundred Chinese products in the industrial and transport sectors, as well as goods such as televisions and medical devices, will face a 25 percent import tax. China retaliates with its own tariffs on more than five hundred U.S. products. The reprisal, also valued around \$34 billion, targets commodities such as beef, dairy, seafood, and soybeans.

b. August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019: After China’s central bank lets the yuan weaken significantly, the Trump administration designates China a currency manipulator. The designation, applied to China for the first time since 1994, is mainly symbolic, but it comes less than a week after Trump announced higher tariffs on \$300 billion worth of goods. That means everything the United States imports from China now faces taxes.

### 4. South China Sea and the One China policy

“Though, the United States does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, we have a robust unofficial relationship”. “Through the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), a non-governmental organization mandated by the Taiwan Relations Act to carry out the United

States' unofficial relations with Taiwan (Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 2022). Additionally, the 96<sup>th</sup> Congress Act of the US, referred as the Taiwan Relations Act, set the basis of the US-Taiwan relations. On section 2b of such document the following was upheld by the American government:

“It is the policy of the United States

- (1) to preserve and promote extensive, close, and friendly commercial, cultural, and other relations between the people of the United States and the people in Taiwan, as well as the people on the China mainland and all other peoples of the Western Pacific area;
- (2) to declare that peace and stability in the area are in the political, security, and economic interests of the United States, and are matters of international concern.
- (3) to make clear that the United States decision to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China rests upon the expectation that the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means.
- (4) to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States.
- (5) to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character; and
- (6) to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan” (U.S. Congress, 1979).

In recent events (August 2,2022) Nancy Pelosi (Speaker of the House of Representatives) visited Taiwan. Media sources presented the contestation of China to such visit “Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi stated <<The U.S. side claimed that China is escalating the situation, but the basic facts are that the United States first provoked China on the Taiwan question and blatantly violated China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.>> The Biden administration argued that the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) military exercises, including sending short-range ballistic missiles over Taiwan, was a manufactured crisis and

an overreaction by Beijing to a normal congressional delegation” (Blanchette & Others, 2022).

As for the EU, the only country in the European Union to openly support Ms. Pelosi’s visit was Lithuania. Gabrielius Landsbergis, said that now that “Speaker Pelosi has opened the door to Taiwan much wider, I am sure other defenders of freedom and democracy will be walking through very soon.” However, the European Union has maintained a policy of non-involvement on this conflict between China and the US. The European Union follows the One China Policy, not recognizing Taiwanese independence from the PRC. Furthermore, European Union relations with Taiwan focus on trade, with no arms or military protection exchange involved. Example of this trade-focus relation was the annual EU-Taiwan Trade and Investment Dialogue on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2022. A brief of the meeting was published by the European Commission: “The EU and Taiwan held discussions on a range of issues related to supply chains, security, and technology, notably in the semiconductors sector, as well as their respective practices with regards to export control and investment screening. The EU and Taiwan also discussed ways to foster their cooperation in Research & Innovation. The EU and Taiwan agreed to explore how to deepen their cooperation in the areas discussed in the dialogue. As regards the semiconductors sector, the EU and Taiwan plan to work together on the monitoring of supply chains, in line with the EU’s plans under the European Chips Act. This will help increase their preparedness, anticipate supply disruptions, and mitigate their negative effects. The EU and Taiwan also discussed other trade and investment matters, with a focus on improving market access for EU agricultural products and the investment environment for EU business in the offshore wind sector” (Directorate-General for Trade, 2022).

Even though, EU’s position seems firm, the US has encouraged the Union and its members to take a harsher stance towards Chinese policies. Americans have particularly used the Russian invasion of Ukraine – including being the largest supplier of weapons and aid for Kyiv – into more concrete support for its policies in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, the US is enforcing same pressure towards China’s policies over Taiwan from NATO members. NATO members include powerful EU components such as Belgium, Denmark, France,

Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, or Spain. On the 30 NATO allies' summit in Madrid in June, a US state department official said, "NATO foreign ministers would address ways to strengthen our resilience and the challenges posed by the PRC [People's Republic of China] at their ministerial meeting in Bucharest, Romania" The official later added "We deeply value and encourage a united European approach to China" (Foy, H. & Sevastopoulo, D; 2022).

As for the South Sea expansionist policy pursued by China, the United States have publicly named those practices as unlawful<sup>4</sup>. American position on the illegality of the Chinese actions was ratified on July 12, 2016, by an Arbitral Tribunal constituted under the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, to which the PRC is a state party. The tribunal rejected the PRC's maritime claims as having no basis in international law. Going one step further, in 2021, the American government allowed for sanctions to be applied to China due to their policies in the South China Sea. Section 2.a.1 of the document allows for the US president to impose sanctions over those Chinese citizens, including high officials, who are "responsible for or significantly contribute to large-scale reclamation, construction, militarization, or ongoing supply of outposts in disputed areas of the South China Sea" (U.S. Congress, 2021).

The EU approach does not differ much from the American South Sea expansionism policies. On the same month the aforementioned document was published, a statement was made by the EU's Spokesperson. In usage of his representative powers, he said: "The EU reiterates its strong opposition to any unilateral actions that could undermine regional stability and the international rules-based order. We urge all parties to resolve disputes through peaceful means in accordance with international law, UNCLOS, including its dispute settlement mechanisms. The EU recalls in this regard the Arbitration Award rendered under UNCLOS on 12 July 2016" (EEAS, 2021). This award was the same referenced by the US. According

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of State released the following press statement on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020: *The United States champions a free and open Indo-Pacific. Today we are strengthening U.S. policy in a vital, contentious part of that region — the South China Sea. We are making clear: Beijing's claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea are completely unlawful, as is its campaign of bullying to control them. In the South China Sea, we seek to preserve peace and stability, uphold freedom of the seas in a manner consistent with international law, maintain the unimpeded flow of commerce, and oppose any attempt to use coercion or force to settle disputes. We share these deep and abiding interests with our many allies and partners who have long endorsed a rules-based international order.* (Pompeo, 2020)

to the High Representative, the EU does not take stands on this type of disputes; however, and as a member of UNCLOS, calls for the fulfillment of their decisions.<sup>5</sup> However, no sanctions have been imposed by the EU to China because of their South Sea attempt of expansionism.

## 5. Conclusions

From the previous analysis important conclusions can be drawn. This first section of the present study asked whether the European Union was more prompt to follow and support the US or China, in reference to the latest conflicts arisen between both powers. By analyzing 3 of those conflicts, it would be correctly to affirm that the European Union positioning has tend to be closer to the American side. However, I believe this statement not to be completely accurate and could even be misleading. Hence, some clarifications shall be made.

Firstly, the EU has not adopted strong and firm positions supporting the US. It is true that in a scale, EU's stands have been more proximate to the American. However, at no time did the EU affirm that behind the adoption of such positions was the goal of defending and supporting the Americans. Additionally, apart from not expressly addressing their support to the US government, the EU positions and policies could be described as extremely weak. The following exemplifications of weakness have been detected on the analyzed conflicts.

- i. EU leaders might have adopted similar dialogues as Americans; however, unlike them, no actions have followed their words. In reference to Chinese aspirations in the South China Sea and its *One China Policy*, both the US and the EU held an opposition towards unilateral occupations damaging a territories stability. However, the follow-up of both powers differs. While the EU has only addressed this issue by words (uphold a no-involvement standing in the Taiwan issue, delegating such disputes to UNCLOS), the United States have followed their words by actions (Ms. Pelosi's visit & the Taiwan Relations Act).

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<sup>5</sup> Press release by the Council of the EU stated "*The EU recalls that the dispute settlement mechanisms as provided under UNCLOS contribute to the maintenance and furthering of the international order based upon the Rule of Law and are essential to settle disputes. The EU also underlines the fundamental importance of upholding the freedoms, rights and duties established in UNCLOS, in particular the freedoms of navigation and overflight*" (European Council, 2016).

- ii. The member states of the EU have not always followed the multinational organization's stances. Great example of this were the different policies regarding the prohibitions on Huawei. Even if the EU created a framework to allow countries to increase their control over foreign technological entities entering their markets, not all member states made use of it. It was clear, the EU was urging and informing its members of the dangers that foreign tech companies, mainly the ones coming from non-democratic territories were, lots of states decided to ignore such warnings. These states followed their own path as they considered the EU policy was not going to be beneficial for them. Therefore, another weakness of the EU is their lack of alignment.
  
- iii. Relating to the above weakness, another one is the influence and dependency of individual member states on IO's different from the European Union. From the studied cases, the NATO power over its European Union members, shall also be considered a weak point. European member states have the right to integrate other International Organizations. It is not arguable that the Union is more powerful than its members individually. So, while the EU has some chances on balancing the powers of other territories, such as the United States; individually, its members cannot achieve the same. This is extremely important. On the studied cases it is possible to observe how the US has pressure the EU to support them and join assets to counteract China. But the US has also been able to apply pressure to EU members individually through NATO. Thus, even if the EU officially can hold firmly against outsider's pressures, practically it cannot. This weakness connects with the previous one, as it is one of the causes behind the dissenting policies among European legislations. To sum up, the weakness consists of the EU not being able to superimpose its policies over the ones enacted by other international organizations, EU members are also part of.

To briefly answer the question formulated at the start of this segment, the European Union has been more prompt to adopt similar positions to the United States. However, even if such positions were similar, at no moment it was affirmed they were taken to support the Americans on their confrontation against the PRC. Lastly, the closer approach to US positioning could be caused by 2 possible factors. On one hand, the weakness of the European

Union, presented as the division among its Member States contradictory policies. On the other hand, China unlike the US has not directly pressured the EU straightforward to ask for their support. Therefore, a question to be asked is what would happen if China started in the near future to apply same pressure.

### III. IS NEUTRALITY POSSIBLE? IF SO, PERKS, DRAWBACKS, AND DIFFICULTIES OF PURSUING IT.

*The next segment of the study will focus on neutrality as a foreign policy strategy. The goal is to determine which countries will try to adopt such positions, and which ones will be successful at trying so. The advantages and disadvantages of being neutral will also be discussed.*

Neutrality derives from Latin *neuter*, which means neither of two. To study this concept the following definition will be used as base: ***neutral diplomacy refers to the coordinated activities of international actors who remain—or try to remain—at a distance from third-party conflicts***<sup>6</sup> (Lottaz. P; 2022). The rights and duties of neutral countries were established by the Hague Conference of 1907 (Annex I). Chapter V of the convention sets forth the agreements that were reached over this subject. Chapter VIII does the same in relation conflicts of maritime nature. However, this document is dated on times when international relations were mainly influenced by realism. Therefore, its content only focuses on the rights and duties of neutral states throughout war times.

Furthermore, countries tend to declare themselves neutral one conflict at a time; however, there are a few, that have declared themselves permanently neutral. Hence, those states become neutral in all conflicts, even future ones. Notwithstanding, a country might decide to break such neutrality whenever they desire. In 2022, permanent neutral countries were Austria (1955), Costa Rica (1949), Finland (1956), Ireland (1939), Japan

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<sup>6</sup> This definition was established by Pascal Lottaz Assistant Professor for Neutrality Studies at the Waseda Institute for Advanced Study, (Waseda University), in Tokyo. He received his MA and PhD from the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (Japan) and specializes on neutral actors in international relations, especially on neutrality during the two World Wars and during the Cold War.

(1947), Liechtenstein (1868), Malta (1980), Mexico (1945), Monaco (1945), Mongolia (2015), Panama (1989), Rwanda (2009), San Marino (1945), Serbia (2007), Singapore (1965), Sweden (1919), Switzerland (1815), Turkmenistan (1995), Uzbekistan (2012) and Vatican City (1929). Moreover, there are other States that despite their intentions of adopting neutrality, failed on their attempt. For example, Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Bhutan, Cambodia, Denmark, Estonia, Ethiopia, Hungary, Iceland, Iran, Italy, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Tibet, Tonga, Turkey, the United States, Ukraine, and Yugoslavia. Therefore, before analyzing the profits derived from neutrality, we shall first study what elements must be present for a country's declaration of neutrality to be solid and viable. To achieve so, on this segment, the context, and characteristics behind attempts of neutrality throughout history will be analyzed. Each of the presented cases will be divided in 3 sets of information:

- a. General data of the territory and its population
- b. Favorable elements: Defense, economy, trade, politics/ideology, others.
- c. Historical events

## 1. CASE STUDIES OF NEUTRAL STATES

### 1) Switzerland through WWII

- a. General data of the territory and its population: located in the Central European Alps. Has a total area of 39,516 km<sup>2</sup> (101st smallest country in the world). Its average elevation is of 1350 m above sea level and is therefore one of the highest countries in the world. It is landlocked territory (no access to the open sea). It has direct borders with Austria, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, and Germany. Furthermore, Swiss populations ethnic groups are German 65%, French 18%, Italian 10%, Romansch 1%; and other 6%. The spoken official languages are German 63.7%, French 19.2%, Italian 7.6%, Romansch 0.6%, other 8.9%.
- b. Capabilities/key facts.
  - i. Defense capabilities. Switzerland increased its defense budget in 1930. When war broke out on 1 September 1939, Switzerland mobilized 430,000 combat troops and 200,000 reserves. Also, Swiss National Redoubt was a defensive plan that started on 1880 and was expanded

on the first years of WWII. It consisted of a set of fortifications that secured its mountainous central part. Their objective was to protect the Alpine crossing between Switzerland and Germany and Italy.

- ii. Trade and economy: Swiss National Bank acted as the main clearing house for Nazi gold. 77% of all the Reichsbank's gold deliveries abroad during the war were carried out through Switzerland. It wasn't until 1945 that the SNB bowed to Western Allied pressure to stop accepting German deliveries. Moreover, from 1940 to 1944, 84% of its munitions' exports went to Axis countries. The rest was split between the Allies and neutral countries. Additionally, trade with Allies was extremely difficult as the country was surrounded by the Axis powers. Thus, exports from Switzerland to the allies amounted to 1/3 of Swiss exports to the Axis. In total, 45% of all Swiss exports were destined for Germany or Italy and mainly consisted of tools, machinery, iron and steel goods, precision instruments, vehicles, and chemicals (Arts.7-9 of the 1907 Hague Convention allows to trade freely with belligerents, including export of weapons, though only by private manufacturers).
- iii. Politics/ideology. The country has been a democracy since 1847. The governments protected free speech and insisted on the right to hold free and open elections. In the 60s, the Spiritual national defense (*Geistige Landesverteidigung*) took place. It consisted of a political-cultural movement promoted by major Authorities which aimed to strengthen the Swiss values and customs. It was a strategy to differentiate themselves and avoid the spread of Totalitarianism ideology on its land.
- iv. Others. First, after Napoleon's defeat, European powers believed that a neutral Switzerland could serve as a valuable buffer zone between France and Austria and contribute to stability in the region. Moreover, on the *25-point Nazi program*, the first stated intention by the party was to attain unification of all Germans in the 'Greater Germany' based on the people's right to self-determination. Swiss population was mainly of German roots. It shall also be taken into consideration that transit rail traffic passed between Italy and Germany via Switzerland. Furthermore, Switzerland was used as a base for espionage by Allies and Axis powers. For example, in 1942, the United States Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was established in Bern. Lastly, Switzerland was used as a protecting power<sup>7</sup> by both conflicting parties.

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<sup>7</sup> Is a neutral state or other State not a Party to the conflict, designated by one of the Parties to the conflict and accepted by the enemy Party. The Protecting power agrees to carry out certain functions assigned to him under international humanitarian law.

- c. History: Switzerland auto-proclaimed neutral in 1674. Notwithstanding, Napoleon invaded the Swiss in 1798 and made it a satellite to his empire. Later, in 1815, at the Congress of Vienna, its neutrality was recognized under international law. In 1920, Switzerland became a party to the League of Nations; however, on February 13 of that same year the International Organizations formally recognized Swiss neutrality. Though, at the start of WWII, Giuseppe Motta, the country's foreign Minister, communicated the withdrawal of Switzerland from the League of Nations. Finally, on July 19<sup>th</sup>, Operation Tannenbaum was drafted by the Axis power. The aim of such mission was to occupy Switzerland. Nonetheless, Hitler never came through, not giving green light to its execution. Since WWII, Switzerland has been taking a more active role in international affairs, mainly by aiding with humanitarian initiatives. The country has never joined the NATO nor the European Union.

## 2) Ireland through WWII

- a. General data of the territory and its population: Ireland are an island of Northern Europe, located in the Atlantic Ocean. Distance between Éire and London is of 490 km; however, only 13 km separate both countries at the narrowest point (North Channel and St. Georges Channel) of the Irish Sea. Notwithstanding, Northern Ireland, to which Ireland has land borders, is a member to the UK (since 1920). On the contrary, 1,545.8 km separate Ireland from Germany, with a large water surface between both territories. Ireland is one of the westernmost points of the European continent. In terms of demographics, there is not much ethnic mixture in Ireland. People has inhabited the country for the last 33 thousand years. Most of its population are considered Irish Gaelic people. Main religion is Catholicism followed by Protestantism. Nonetheless, important political fragmentation is present within its members. Such fragmentation peaking with the creation of the Irish Republican Army in 1922, after the Anglo-Irish Treaty led to the division of former Ireland in two States: The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. While the first achieved complete independence from the Brits, the second remain as a member to the UK. IRA blamed the Anglo-Irish treaty for dividing their nation and opposed any type of British rule over Irish territory. Hence, they fought to remove any king of British control over Northern Ireland.

- b. Capabilities/key facts.
- i. Geographical closeness to UK and internal political issues.

IRA's supporters, believed Germany was predisposed to sympathy with Ireland's struggle. Germans had been subject to the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and the Irish had been subject to the Anglo-Irish treaty in 1921. IRA members saw both events as imposed post-conflict settlements. Irish (pro-IRA) saw Germany as the way to achieve complete autonomy. Moreover, Germany was viewed as a military and economic counter pole to British influence, and the high-quality products of its modern firms were sought for Irish industrialization.

Similarly, thought they could use Britain's neighboring to debilitate them. Thus, they tried to use IRA's anger and uprising on their benefit. Great example such intentions was the S-Plan drafted in August 1938. Just before WWII began. IRA, with the help of O'Donovan, aimed to design a bombing campaign on English soil, for it to be launched the following year. The actual goal was not to achieve the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland, but to bring in attention from Germans<sup>8</sup>.

There is further proof of interaction between both parties. For example, in 1946, testimony of Kurt Haller<sup>9</sup> to the MI5 assured that O'Donovan "...again asked for German support for the occupation of Northern Ireland [...] The Germans tried to stall O'Donovan over Northern Ireland, but did not refuse point-blank, nor did O'Donovan altogether refuse IRA participation in attacks on military targets, but no real agreement was reached on this fundamental point" (O'Donoghue, 2010).

Lastly, Ireland benefited from being far from Continental Europe, separated by a mass of water. As a consequence, the occupation of the territory by the enemy was much more arduous.

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<sup>8</sup> The Irish gave Britain an ultimatum assuring for their country to be bombe if troops were not withdrawn on the following four days. Such deadline being impossible to achieve. Thus, truth intention behind the S-Pan was different from the official one.

<sup>9</sup> German foreign office liaison officer with the Abwehr

c. History:

Ireland auto-proclaimed neutral through the 1930s. Éamon De Valera, Prime Minister of Ireland at the time WWII took place stated several times on his speeches his belief that small states should stay out of the conflicts of big powers. Such thinking was the one followed on Irish foreign policy through this time. The country did not publicly declare its support for either side.

Despite publicly declaring neutrality, certain attitudes throughout led to the Irish neutrality to be questioned on whether it was true or was mere façade. The Donegal Corridor<sup>10</sup> was indeed one of the main factors contributing to such discussion. Moreover, Ireland seemed to benefit the Allied side when it came to prisoners. When Luftwaffe pilots (axis powers) German sailors crashed in Irish territory, they were interned. On the contrary, when pilots from the Royal Air Force (RAF), Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) did the same, they were released on personal assurances and usually allowed to cross the border into British territory (McNamara, 2008). Moreover, around 70,000 citizens from neutral Ireland were volunteers in the British Army Force throughout wartime. This alignment was probably caused by the dependence of Irish trade on the UK. Irish import of Allied goods reaching a base of 70% that was maintained throughout the war, with the export relationship showing 99.9% of goods going to Britain and aligned states in 1942.

Yet, Irish tried to maintain a neutral image. Before the world commenced, Irish government accepted a long list of Hitler's actions as *fait accomplis*<sup>11</sup>. F.e, the German withdrawal from the League of Nations (1933) rearmament, the remilitarization of the Rhineland (1936), and the absorption of Austria (1938). De Valera also floated an arrangement with Germany in 1934 to divide Irish foreign trade evenly between Germany, Britain, and the US. As for wartime, Ireland, unlike other neutral countries, refused to close the German and Japanese

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<sup>10</sup> Narrow strip of Irish airspace that linked Lough Erne to the Atlantic Ocean through which the Irish Government permitted flights by British military aircraft during World War II. To preserve neutrality, the purpose of the flights was officially air/sea rescue exercises.

<sup>11</sup> a thing that has already happened or been decided before those affected hear about it, leaving them with no option but to accept it.

embassies like the rest of countries. However, these armaments and munition came only from allied countries. Thus, the message given was the exact opposite of what it was meant to prove. It was in 1940, that Germans drafted Operation Green, as part of the Operation Sea Lion<sup>12</sup>. Operation Green was meant consisted of the allocation of fifty thousand German troops for the Irish invasion with an initial batch of 4,000 crack engineers, motorized infantry, commando, and panzer units to reach the Irish shore after having launched from France. However, when this plan was brought to Churchill's knowledge, he prevented the invasion through Plan W.<sup>13</sup> Thanks to Churchill's intervention Ireland's neutrality was respected. Still, it is believed that the success of its neutrality had more to do with the little value the territory had for the conflicting parties, than with the policies adopted by the Irish government.

### 3) Sweden through WWI

- a. General data of the territory and its population: Sweden is in the Scandinavian Peninsula, located in northern Europe. Has natural borders with Norway and Finland. Moreover, the country has a coastline of 3,218 km on the Baltic Sea. Population in Sweden at the start of WWI was of 5.7 million. Swedes, as well as Germans, have Teutonic origins.



Image 1. Europe's borders in WWI (Oña, 2016)

- b. Capabilities/key facts:
  - i. Trade and Economy. Due to its geographical position, Sweden was an essential trade partner to Great Britain and to Germany. As for GB, the Entente member had never traded within the Baltic Sea by its own means. Thus, Sweden represented the best manner to provide Russia with goods (munitions, military supply). This fact accentuated even more in winter. As the Gulf of Bothnia froze, the Swedish State Railway was the only way to

<sup>12</sup> German's failed plan to attack and occupy England.

<sup>13</sup> 'Plan W' was a British and Irish unrequired plan to defeat any German invasion of Ireland (mid-1940/1942).

access European Russia. Moreover, the Russians had a really weak navy. For GB, Sweden was also its major provider of pit-props, which were essential for the exploitation of British coal mines. On the other hand, Germany saw Sweden as a giant conduit for overseas goods coming from the Atlantic Ocean.

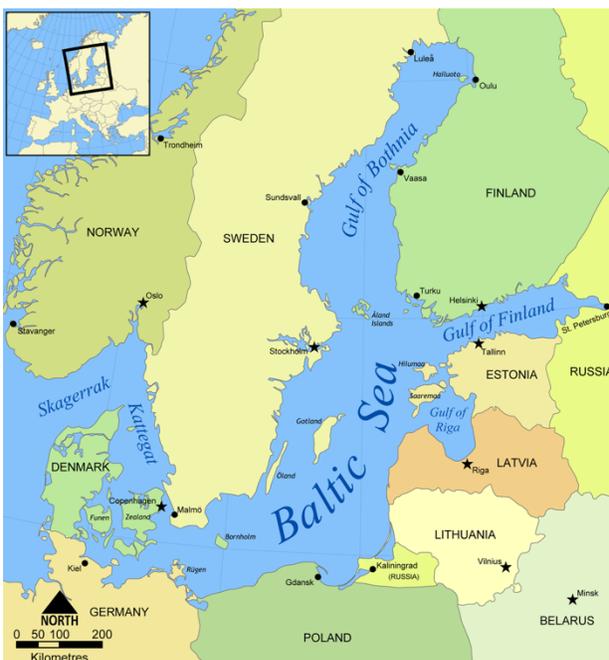


Image 2. Gulf of Bothnia (Einstein, 2006)

- ii. Defensive. In this case Sweden's army during WWI was not one of enormous proportions, on the contrary no single time in the years 1914-1918 did the Swedish army keep more than 13,000 men under arms. However, its location was a defensive tool for Germans as it presented an obstacle between GB and Russia. They could not risk Swedes becoming involved in WWI and turning more favorable to the Entente Powers. Thus, they rather respect their neutrality.
  
- c. History: Before WWI started Swedes looked towards Germany for possible support, caused by its fear of Russia's expansionist policies. Such fear increasing at that time, as the Russian government had reduced Finish autonomy. However, even if they saw Germany as an ally against Russia, UK had been historically Sweden's major trade partner. Just before WWI

burst, 2/3 of Swedish imports came from Entente Powers, and under 1/4 came from Germany. Similarly, 60% of Swedes exports went to the Entente Powers, and only 22% to Central Powers.

Sweden declared its neutrality on two occasions. On July 31<sup>st</sup> in relation to the Austro-Serbian conflict, and on August 3<sup>rd</sup> with the start of German- Russian-French conflict. Both, the UK, and Germany asked Sweden to favor them. Germans asked Swedes to lay mines and dismantle lighthouses and navigational markers to exclude UK naval and commercial vessels from the Baltic. Even Germans, threatened to drove Sweden to participate in the war. GB asked Sweden to cut trade with Germany.

As a response to these demands, at first Sweden accepted the embargoes imposed by GB over certain products destined to Germany, continuing the trade of the rest of goods. However, trying to remain in good terms with Germany, Sweden allowed them to use the Swedish Legations cable facilities to transmit cyphered messages to Berlin via Stockholm (these actions can be argued to be the ones of a neutral State). Notwithstanding, Germany adopted several measures to harm both Sweden and GB. Germany commenced to consider wood products as contraband items. The goal was to hinder Swedish trade with GB (pit props<sup>14</sup> are made of wood). To convince Germany of eliminating such measure, in January 1915, Sweden prohibited the transit of arms, ammunition and goods used in war, across its country. This impeded for these goods to reach Russia from Germany.

Finally, the closure of the Dardanelles left Russia extremely weak. In consequence, the country demanded the Brits to support them with lather, agricultural machinery, and biner twine. Sweden used the desperate situation of Russians by introducing the Compensation System. The system worked as follows. Number of licenses for British products to reach Russia, had to be similar in number to the exceptions granted from Britain to Sweden over the embargo lists on products directed to Germany. The consequence was embargos on coal being lifted and wood products were no longer consider as contraband.

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<sup>14</sup> large piece of wood used to support the roof of part of a coal mine from which coal has been removed.

On 2022, after decades of neutrality, Sweden demanded to join the NATO. This petition came after the invasion of Ukraine by Vladimir Putin's led country. Such invasion was the last straw. The numerous airspace violations by Russian military aircrafts over their territory, plus the mentioned invasion, has left Sweden feeling vulnerable. NATO accession talks were completed on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022<sup>15</sup>. By this action, Sweden will be now required to meet the political, legal, and military obligations including Article 5<sup>16</sup> of its funding treaty, known as the principle of collective defense.

#### 4) Cambodia through the Vietnam War (1955-1975)

- a. General data of the territory and its population. Located in mainland Southeast Asia. Has borders with Thailand (817 km), Laos (55km), and Vietnam (1,158km). Main ethnic group are the Khmer (90%). Was a French protectorate from 1863 to 1945; however, it did not gain independence till 1953. It was not till the 1954 Geneva conference on Indochina, that the French accepted their complete withdrawal. On exchange, Cambodia accepted to remain neutral and not to join military alliances. At this time, Cambodia was ruled by Sihanouk, king of the country and later prime minister. Sihanouk was put in power by the French; therefore, he was not democratically elected. Hence, it is not easy to determine the ideological stance of its population. However, it can be said that a strong Cambodian communist movement emerged because of French colonization. Such movement being heavily influence by North-Vietnamese communists.

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<sup>15</sup> Following the completion of the talks, Finland and Sweden were deemed to meet the political, legal, and military obligations and commitments of NATO membership. Consequently, after signing the Accession Protocols for Finland and Sweden at NATO Headquarters on Tuesday (5 July 2022), such protocols will have to be ratified by NATO members, following their national legislation.

<sup>16</sup> an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.

- b. Capabilities/key facts.
- i. Closeness to Vietnam and existence of an extensive border between them. Due to the intense combat and bombing between the US and the north-Vietnamese, the Asian communist sought sanctuary in Cambodia's frontier territories. For example, the North-Vietnamese created what became known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The closeness of both countries incentivized the Vietnamese to make use of the port of Sihanoukville and its eastern frontier.



Image 3. Ho Chi Minh Trail (Olson, K & Morton, L; 2019)

- ii. Internal political struggles. Sihanouk had to deal with 3 different fronts. First, the Cold War. Even though, Cambodia was formally neutral, he was closer to the communist bloc<sup>17</sup>. Hence, he turned to the Popular Republic of China and the USSR for economic and military assistance. To obtain PRC support, in 1966, Sihanouk and the Chinese government reached an agreement to allow for North-Vietnamese forces to install logistical military bases in Cambodian territory. This harmed relations with the US even more. The US was his second front. Population was divided among those who believed that supporting the US would be more beneficial. Main example of this stance was his minister of defense his pro- General Lon Nol. Thus, the US pushed their Cambodian supporters to act in Vietnam, and to fight

<sup>17</sup> On 3 May 1965, Sihanouk broke diplomatic relations with the U.S. Sihanouk was convinced that the PRC, not the U.S., would eventually control the Indochina peninsula. So, in the long run it was better to have better relations to achieve good terms when the moment came.

against the Viet Cong<sup>18</sup> and the People's Army of Vietnam<sup>19</sup>. Last front Sihanouk face were the insurgent Cambodian communists, the Khmer Rouge<sup>20</sup>, who were aiming to conquer wider portion of Cambodia's territory. In conclusion, society was divided in 3 main groups. Two of them related to Cold War strategic siding (pro-American .vs. pro-Soviet) and the third one had to do with internal insurgencies against the government of Sihanouk.

### c. History.

The Kingdom of Cambodia was constituted as a neutral country through the 1954 Conference of Geneva. However, the Asian country faced pressure to intervene in the Vietnam War from both blocs on the Cold War. At first, even if official neutrality continued, the Cambodian government was more prompt to support the communist side, consequently, the North Vietnamese. Allowing as previously mentioned for them to create logistic basis in their territory. However, when Khmer Rouge initiated its activities and show strong alliances with the North-Vietnamese, Sihanouk trying to weaken his opposition aimed to improve his relations with the other bloc, the U.S. The U.S was not willing to lend Sihanouk its help, without receiving something in exchange. Consequently, Nixon and Kissinger planned the bombing of North-Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia. This was called Operation Menu and took place on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1969. The bombing lasted till May 1970. Nixon claimed he had received tacit permission from Sihanouk; however, the Cambodian leader said he had only given permission for Americans to intensely pursue North Vietnamese troops in remotes areas of the country, and if Cambodians were not harmed. Now, the authentic agreement remains unknown.

Casualties caused by the lengthy bombing increased even more opposition towards Sihanouk's leadership. Consequently, in March 1970 Marshal Lon Nol and other pro-

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<sup>18</sup> Viet Cong (VC), in full Viet Nam Cong San. It refers to the south Vietnamese supporters of the communist National Liberation Front during the Vietnam War. They were allied with North Vietnam and the troops of Ho Chi Minh, who sought to conquer the south and create a unified, communist state of Vietnam.

<sup>19</sup> People's Army of Vietnam or PAVN was the military force of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the armed wing of the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam. Part of the Vietnam People's Armed Forces.

<sup>20</sup> They believed that Cambodia (which was called *Kampuchea* from 1975-79) should be returned to an alleged 'golden age' when the land was cultivated by peasants and the country would be ruled for and by the poorest amongst society. They wanted all members of society to be rural agricultural workers rather than educated city dwellers, who the Khmer Rouge believed had been corrupted by western capitalist ideas.

American associates staged a successful coup d'état. Numerous people suggest the US support this coup to obtain a favorable government in Cambodia. A pro-American government in Cambodia increased their chances of getting the country's support on the Vietnamese War. The Vietnamese War had already been going for 15 years, and the US population anger towards the conflict was stronger than ever. Nixon needed to give a message of hope to his population. However, the American intervention in Cambodia did not turnout the expected way. Instead of winning a new supporter on the conflict, the US led to a civil war in Cambodia.

The Civil War in Cambodia confronted the Khmer Republic Government led by Lon Nol, against the Khmer Communist Party, Khmer Rouge or CPK (pro-communism). The Khmer Rouge support had highly increased because of deaths caused by the American bombings. Plus, former ruler Sihanouk, blaming Nixon on his loss of power started supporting the Khmer Rouge and encouraging his supporters to fight against the new government. Thanks to the former ruler's support, the Khmer Rouge prestige was multiplied by the hundreds, and so were his members. By early 1973, about 85% of Cambodian territory was in the hands of the Khmer Rouge. However, with US assistance, it was able to continue fighting the Khmer Rouge for two more years<sup>21</sup>. The CPK finally seized power in 1975, same time the Vietnamese War came to an end.

During the Khmer Rouge ruling, relations with North-Vietnam were completely broken. The Cambodian new government thought the North-Vietnamese, who had won the war, were planning to create an Indochinese Federation, including such plan domination over Cambodia. As for the politics applied by the Khmer Rouge, a genocide<sup>22</sup> was orchestrated. Nonetheless, Carter's lead US government took little action towards the atrocities performed. After the disastrous defeat in Vietnam, they were reluctant to get involved in the region again.

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<sup>21</sup> From January to August 1973, the Khmer Republic government, with assistance from the US, dropped about half a million tons of bombs on Cambodia, which may have killed as many as 300,000 people. Many who resented the bombings or had lost family members joined the Khmer Rouge's revolution.

<sup>22</sup> Religious and ethnic minorities faced persecution. As the Khmer Rouge placed a heavy emphasis on the rural peasant population, anyone considered an intellectual was targeted (teachers, lawyers, doctors, clergy, people wearing glasses). It is estimated that the total number of victims is between 1.5 to 3 million.

They also feared, that by overriding Khmer Rouge Power the communist Vietnamese would have it easier to spread their ideology. The US not willing to risk such scenario.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDIES

From the above data it is small to medium size territories that more often adopt neutrality in their foreign policies, rather than states of great dimensions. Even though, at times, small states align with one of the conflicting actors in search of protection, they might also decide to opt for a neutral stance. This decision is usually led by either fear of too much influence by the conflicting power, or because involvement is not in the best interest of their nation. Moreover, neutrality from peripheral States is more common, than neutrality from of a neighbor State to the conflicting powers. Nonetheless, neighbor countries do in occasions opt to adopt a neutral position. However, the management and compliance of such neutrality is much more complicated than the one of peripheral countries. Ireland and Sweden are the perfect example. Irish government, even if officially neutral, offer a more favorable treatment to Great Britain. Multiple times it has been questioned whether Ireland can be really considered as a neutral country. The Irish were neighbors to one of the main conflicting parties of WWII, Great Britain. Simultaneously, they were far from the other major conflicting party, Germany. Rim states or boarding states like Ireland, tend to adopt a bandwagon<sup>23</sup> strategy towards the neighbor conflicting power rather than neutrality, as pressure from conflicting powers to join forces is stronger towards closer territories. On the contrary, peripheral States such as Sweden do not experience as much pressure. Hence, adopting strict neutral policies is more plausible for them. As an example, Sweden had no borders with the UK nor Germany.

However, there is a third scenario when it comes to frontiers. This is the case of Buffer States<sup>24</sup>. Switzerland through WWI sets a great example of such circumstances. Buffer States are usually the most threatened ones throughout a conflict. As previously mentioned, conflicting parties tend to put higher pressure on geographically close countries. Thus, a

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<sup>23</sup> Align with the stronger conflicting power, hoping to achieve benefits when such power is victorious in the conflict. Term coined by Quincy Wright (*Study of War, 1942*), and later by Kenneth Waltz (*Theory of International Relations, 1979*). Bandwagon is also described as the opposite of balancing behavior.

<sup>24</sup> Country located between two belligerent states.

Buffer state will receive twice as much pressure in comparison to rim states. In the studied case, it is shown how these states tend to opt for neutrality, shaped into a balancing strategy<sup>25</sup>. These States try to avoid choosing sides, especially when the conflict parties are of similar strengths. They are aware that by entering the conflict, and due to the geographical closeness, there are a few chances for them to avoid the negative impact an international conflict comes with. However, the balance strategy presents important drawback as well. The more balance between conflicting state's capabilities, the more chances of them trying to gain control of the Buffer State, to break such balance. In the Swiss case, the Axis powers had developed Operation Tannenbaum.

To condense the analysis till this point, geographical factors play a key role in the decision by national governments to adopt neutrality, besides having great impact on its triumphant execution. Yet, there are other crucial factors that shall be considered. To be highlighted is the credibility of neutral states. By credibility, we refer to the ability of a State to convince belligerent parties of the seriousness of their neutral status. Multiple intellectuals have described neutrality as a permanent attitude

- "A policy of consistent non-alignment in peacetime, overtly aimed at preparing the ground for neutrality in wartime" (Jervis, p.27,1978)
- "Neutrality rests on the credibility of a state's neutral intentions both during peace and war time" (Tsebenko & Shymchuk, p.54, 2017).

Lacking such credibility, reduces the chances of neutrality being respected. Great examples would be either Ireland or Cambodia. Ireland sided with the GB almost on every single occasion. As for Cambodia, the government changed sides too many times. It must be acknowledged that changing positions, is not a synonym of neutrality. A neutral state does not support either of the conflicting parties, whereas countries like Cambodia, show support to both conflicting parties; however, at different spatial times.

That being the case, it must be addressed how a State's neutrality could achieve credibility. The convincing can be achieved mainly in two ways. Firstly, via the positive component

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<sup>25</sup> Aim of equalizing odds of victory between conflicting powers.

(Tsebenko & Shymchuk, 2017, p.54,). A neutral state might persuade the belligerent parties of the advantages and gains they obtain from the country remaining as neutral. To achieve so, they must exemplify the possible trade-offs the neutrality could bring them. For example, Sweden's neutrality was respected because he had something to offer to Germany and the UK, that the conflicting countries could not achieve by themselves. In the case of GB, Sweden was the main exporter of the wood that was needed for mines exploitation. Also, in winter when the Gulf of Bothnia was not navigable, Sweden was the only way to supply the Russians with arms. Same way, Sweden offer Germany the best option for the arrival of Goods coming from the Atlantic. British had forbidden any imports by Germans, blocking all ships whose destination was the enemy country. Thus, Swedish ships were the ones procuring goods to them. None of the conflicting countries, was willing to risk an attack on Sweden, as they knew that they would suffer heavy consequences that might led them to lose the war. Another great example of this via, was Switzerland in WWII. Switzerland was as a manufacturer of certain units for high-accuracy weapons, they were also the main clearing house of German Gold and railways connecting Germany to Italy passed through their territory. As for GB and France, Switzerland was seen as an obstacle to dictatorships spreading towards the western European countries.

The second possibility to achieve credibility would be through the negative component (Tsebenko & Shymchuk, 2017, p.54-55,). This path had two variants, the offensive and the defensive. The offensive one, consists of striking the belligerent's weaknesses by means different than the military, while the defensive focuses on strengthening the national military capabilities and infrastructures. Via the negative competent, neutral states show their power, to bring awareness of the cost belligerents would face if their neutrality were not respected. Following the offensive path, Sweden tried to hurt England's weakness on their lack of wood. Wood, as has been mentioned on several occasions, was crucial in the mine exploitation on GB. Wood was used to build pit props. In connection with the defensive variant, it is common for neutral countries to increase their investments on defense at times of conflict. Examples of this strategies were Sweden and Ireland. However, these expenses remain much lower than the one of conflicting parties.

Finally, apart from geographics and credibility there is one last relevant factor on whether a neutral State will succeed or not. This element is the International System. On an anarchic<sup>26</sup> International Structure like the one we live in; the system will vary according to the distribution of powers among States. At some points it would be bipolar and at others it will become multipolar. From the above cases, it can be implied that neutrality is harder to maintain at times of bipolarity. During the World Wars, there were multiple powerful countries, Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, Germany, Italy, the United States or Japan. On the contrary, the Cold war was a time were two main superpowers existed and the world was divided in blocs. In this document 4 cases of neutrality were presented. Of those, 3 related to times of multipolarity (WWI and WWII), and only 1 occurred on a bipolar International System (Cambodia). While 2 out of the 3 multipolar cases can be tagged as completely successful (Switzerland, Sweden) and one as partly successful (Ireland); Cambodia's neutrality was a complete failure, ending the country entering not just the Vietnamese War, but also facing an internal civil war.

To sum up geographic, credibility and systemic factors shall be observed to estimate the chances a neutral country has of being triumphant on their journey. Consequently, such elements will be the ones considered in the last section of this document, to address the EU's position on the Sino-American disputes.

On the last fragment of this section, the advantages, and disadvantages of pursuing a neutral status will be displayed. Main advantage is quite obvious. It consists of avoiding the negative consequences any kind of conflict (military, economic, etc.) has over the territory where it takes place. For example, all the above cases were military conflicts. When a country enters a dispute of these characteristics, its economy tends to weaken as their productivity and efficiency is reduced due to the focus on war. A neutral country will not face this recoil. More concrete advantages of neutrality are the possibility of maintaining previous trade relations with all conflicting parties. Even, it allows, by taking advantage of the struggles being faced by involved parties, to increase both the quantities of trade and its conditions (f.e. prices). Not scarifying relations with anyone, something impossible to attain by conflicting powers,

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<sup>26</sup> No existence of a superior common authority that rules over everyone else.

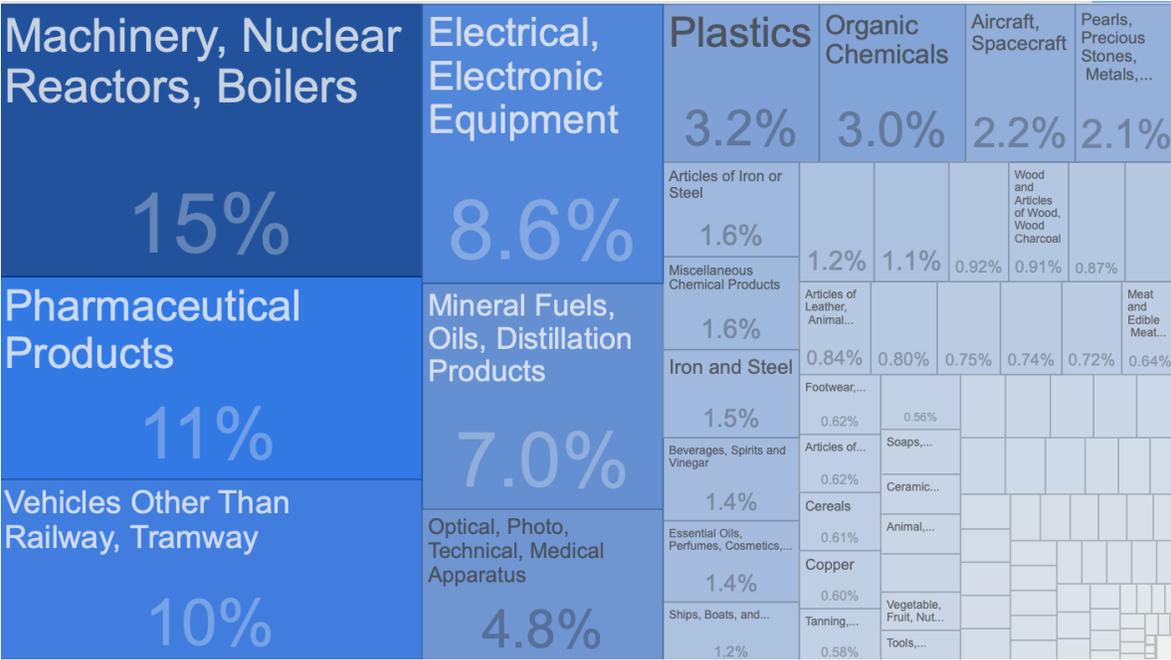
means not facing a reduction of revenues equivalent to what the ex- trade partner represented. In conclusion, neutrality does not just allow to maintain previous benefits/conditions, but it might also allow them to grow. Thus, while a neutral country has great probabilities of growth throughout conflict time, involved parties are most likely to face suffer a recession. Be that as it may, neutrality is still a risky move to take on foreign policies. Successful neutrality does not solely depend on the neutral actor, but also on the attitude of conflicting powers. There is no assurance of their neutral status being respected by others. Considering that neutral countries have lower defense capabilities and are less prepared for disputes, they have few chances of overcoming the conflicting power's attack.

#### IV. EU'S NEUTRALITY ON A HYPOTHETICAL CONFLICT OVER TAIWAN

The end goal of this research was to assess whether neutrality by the European Union was a good alternative for the Sino-American economic war or dispute of any source between both superpowers. Taiwan was presented as a hypothetical scenario for this study as according to the 96<sup>th</sup> Congress Act of the United States, section 2b, any violent intervention of China over Taiwanese territory will lead to the intervention of the US military. Hence, in this hypothetical scenario the EU will have to choose what stance to take: neutrality or involvement. It is important for the EU to fix their position towards this rivalry as soon as possible, as tensions are only increasing. Qin Gang, Beijing's Foreign Affairs Minister, recently affirmed that if the US does not take a step back, a conflict between both countries will be unescapable (Rizzi. A, 2023). 2 days after, on March 21<sup>st</sup> Taiwan President Tsai-Ing announced a 10-day trip to the US. China responded with retaliation threats (Hille. K, 2023).

The previous section presented all the benefits that might arise from choosing neutrality. Consequently, to answer the question of whether neutrality would be a good alternative for the EU, the answer with no doubt is yes. If the EU's neutrality was to be respected, while China and the US will suffer a recession caused by the increased military expenses, cyberattacks, security issues, population opposition, political instabilities, etc.; the European Union could obtain some profit. On 2021 US exports to China were \$151.1 billion and US imports from China were \$506.4 billion. China was the third largest partner of the Americans.

Being the major provider of Textile Products, Furniture, Bedding, Lamps, Toys, Games, Sports Equipment, Paint, and other Miscellaneous Manufactured Items. As for China’s American imports, the main ones in 2020 were electrical machinery, oilseeds and oleaginous fruits (soybeans), machinery, mineral fuels, and optical and medical instruments. In the event of Taiwan’s invasion, US-PRC trade relations might not completely end, but without doubt will suffer an intense decreased<sup>27</sup>. However, both countries will remain in need of someone to provide them those goods. Hence, they will look for new providers in the international market. Major EU exports are represented in the following graphic.



Graphic 2. European Union Exports by Category (Trading Economics, 2022)

Machinery, electrical equipment, mineral fuels, optical and medical apparatus, or miscellaneous chemical products are part of the US-China trade and simultaneously, are some of EU’s major exports. For that reason, if the EU plays well its cards, it could become that new provider for US and China. Moreover, geographic factors also support that opting for neutrality would be coherent. The European Union is located in between the United States and China but has no physical borders with either. It is separated from the US by the Atlantic

<sup>27</sup> Tariff war among both States is already in place. Plus, every time tensions between them have increased, so do the tariff rates and the quotas. Meaning that the deeper the dispute, the more its

Ocean and distanced from China by Russia. Thus, on this conflict the EU position is similar to the one of a Buffer State. These States, as already explained, tend to opt for the balance of power through neutrality. Notwithstanding, international relations are now influenced by liberalism. Consequently, not only conflicts are less likely to occur, but arising conflicts will more likely focus on economic than military matters. This transformation of conflict has turned the geographical factor into one of less importance. Globalization has turned interstate conflicts into a matter affecting all countries.

Moreover, it must be reminded to European leaders, that while a successful neutral stance will bring the aforementioned benefits, a failed attempt on neutrality will be disastrous and extremely harming (take the example of Cambodia's attempt and its consequences). That being the case, it is of high relevance to assess the chances of success EU's neutrality has. The basis of these calculations will be the ones presented in section III of the present document: credibility (positive and negative), and systemic factors.

a. Credibility.

The EU via the positive path would be able to argue multiple examples. Towards the US "Bilateral trade and investment support millions of jobs in the EU and the US. Around 9.4 million people are directly employed. Indirectly, as many as 16 million jobs on both sides of the Atlantic are supported" (European Commission, 2023). As for China, while the US ordered the cease of suppliance to China of equipment needed to produce advance chips, the European Union might be able to provide them with this high tech. In February 2022, the EU announced its commitment to invest €45 billion in microchip manufacturing through the European Chips Act<sup>28</sup>. Business contracts between China and entities such as ASML or Carl Zeiss SMT could be offered.

As for the negative path, the EU, after the Ukrainian invasion, increased its defense capabilities (increased the budget in €200 billion). Additionally, since 1999 there has been an increased on military budget equivalent to 20%. However, this increase is almost

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<sup>28</sup> The plan is to increase the European global production share from 9% to 20% by 2030.

insignificant in contrast with the American (66%) or the Chinese (592%). Military wise the European Union is far behind the rival countries.

In conclusion, EU's neutrality has more options of being respected by conflicting powers if the positive path is followed. However, even if this positive path is pursued, the current European Union internal division will probably cause its neutrality to lack credibility, still leading to its failure. As Section II proved, the Member States are following a unilateral approach when addressing the Sino American conflict. The latest example of this division within the organization has been Chinese weaponry delivery to Russia for its use in the Ukrainian War. The EU condemns these activities; however, the Netherlands, France or Luxembourg adopted a more relaxed and flexible approach. So did Charles Michel, president of the European Council<sup>29</sup> (Sahuquillo, 2023). This division is probably the Achilles point of EU's neutrality. This weakness is a fist-time faced obstacle to attain neutrality. Prior to the EU, only individual States had foreign policy. The European Union has been the first multigovernmental actor on the international arena to create a united foreign policy through the creation of the European Council in 1974. Being a *sui generis* also means facing unknown challenges. In summary, the communitarian element of the European Union turns neutrality into a more complicated matter. Hence, for it to succeed the EU must strengthen the power of its institutions by creating mechanisms that assure Member States followed agreements reached by them. Without achieving a united front, neutrality is not recommended.

b. Systemic factors.

After the Cold War, a multilateral International System was set on place. Plus, liberalism has inspired the system through the last decade. Consequently, not only the number of relevant and powerful countries has multiplied, but so have the interactions among them. International trade, international investment or international organizations play a major role in today's world. This system is much more favorable for the European Union's neutrality success, than a bipolar one. For this exact same reason, it is on the EU's interest to support at all costs a multilateral system. Even though international relations are slowing down the process, data shows how a backward process towards bipolarity has started (Tunsjo, 2018). The closer to

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<sup>29</sup>Collegiate body that defines the overall political direction and priorities of the EU

bipolarity we get, the harder for the EU will be to succeed at neutrality. Problem is that lately EU's actions have been promoting bipolarity rather than the opposite. By supporting most of the times the US (Section I), division in bloc is accelerating. Such event being detrimental to the Union Itself. Hence, the European Union shall avoid taking positions in Sino American disputes if they want to attain true neutrality.

## V. CONCLUSION

Neutrality does come with great benefits such as trade and economic growth, or avoidance of severe economic recessions. However, this position is a risky move in foreign policy, as it is not dependent solely on the actor adopting it, but the respect of outsiders is also needed. In the case of the European Union, the obtention of such respect becomes an even more delicate and complicated matter due to its intergovernmental composition. The European Union member States must show a united front over the neutrality of the Union, to be credible on the International Community's eyes. Since the beginning of disputes between China and the United States until today, the EU has not been able to achieve that unity, as each Member States has decided to publicly show support to whom they individually decided. Additionally, neutrality must be proved on the "daily basis". If the European Union aims to declare neutrality on the future Sino American conflicts, this neutrality should already be put into practice by the EU. Even though, the European Union as a whole, has at no point officially declare its support to the US, percentage wise, it has been more prompt to support the Americans side. Furthermore, the European neutrality will have more chances of succeeding if multilateralism rules the International System, than if a bipolar structure is set in place.

Therefore, if the European Union opts for a neutrality in the Sino American conflict, such stance would only be profitable and thus, advisable, if changes are made within the EU. In the first place and most urgent matter will have to be working on the unity of its members. The European Council shall meet and reach a final agreement on whether to adopt a neutral position or not. Such decision must be taken within this institution and not others such as the Parliament or the Commission. The European Council is formed by the head of states of the member states, these individuals unlike parliamentarians or commissioner, do have an actual voice on the national foreign policy of the member state they belong to. Hence, with their

compromise to assure a unity in this matter, credibility will be easily achieved. Once, such agreement and commitment has taken place, the role of the European External Action Service will be fundamental. The EEAS is the branch in charge of the EU's diplomatic relations with other countries outside the bloc and conducts EU foreign & security policy. The EEAS shall be the single voice of the European Union in this matter. Head of states and foreign affair ministers shall delegate on this body, to avoid possible contradictions or misunderstandings between them.

Moreover, the first mentioned decision on adopting neutrality or not, must take place as soon as possible. Neutrality must be proved on the long run, so the sooner the decision is reached, the sooner they can commence to present a neutral stance. This means the European Union shall be careful not to side with the United States nor with China, even if unconsciously or unofficially. Also, the sooner the agreement is reach, the faster they will be able to decide on how to strengthen their credibility as neutrals (positive, negative or both paths). It must be remembered that every time the EU gets closer to the US, the division in blocs is accelerating and the closer a return of bipolarity. For that reason, if an agreement within the European Council takes much longer, it will be too late for the EU's neutrality to succeed due to the pressure that would be applied by the bloc leaders, almost impossible to resist by the EU. Prince Sihanouk once said "We do not want to become Red. But someday we will have to accept it because we will be unable to avoid it"

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