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## Switzerland's Policy of Neutrality

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### Why in News

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Recently, Switzerland's Ambassador said that its traditional foreign **Policy of Neutrality (Swiss Neutrality)** has become **attractive again because of the changing political reality** in the world.



### Key Points

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- **Policy of Neutrality:**

- It is a foreign policy position wherein a **state intends to remain neutral in future wars**. A sovereign state that reserves the right to become belligerent if attacked by a party to the war is in a **condition of armed neutrality**.
- A permanently neutral power is a sovereign state which is bound by international treaty, or by its own declaration, to be **neutral towards the belligerents of all future wars**. An example of a permanently neutral power is Switzerland. Other being Ireland, Austria, etc.

The concept of neutrality in war is **narrowly defined and puts specific constraints on the neutral party** in return for the internationally recognized right to remain neutral.

- **International Day of Neutrality** is a United Nations recognized day held on **12<sup>th</sup> December** each year to raise public awareness of the value of neutrality in international relations.
  - National policies of neutrality are aimed at promoting the **use of preventive diplomacy**, which is a core function of the **United Nations**.
  - **The term "Preventive diplomacy"** refers to diplomatic action taken to prevent disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of conflicts when they occur.

- **Swiss Neutrality and its Evolution:**

- Switzerland is renowned for its neutrality, but this should not be confused with pacifism. The country **maintains an army**, including obligatory conscription for men, and did so throughout both World Wars.
- The last time Switzerland (Swiss) fought a military battle was **500 years ago**, against the **French** (the Swiss lost).
- In 1783, Switzerland was **acknowledged as a neutral state** in the **Treaty of Paris**.

The Treaty of Paris was signed in Paris by Great Britain and the United States of America and Canada on 3rd September, 1783, and it officially ended the **American Revolutionary War**.

- Switzerland maintained its impartial stance through **World War I (1914-18)**, when it mobilized its army and accepted refugees but also refused to take sides militarily.
- In 1920, meanwhile, the newly formed **League of Nations** officially recognized Swiss neutrality and established its headquarters in Geneva.
- A more significant challenge to Swiss neutrality came during **World War II**, when the country found itself encircled by the **Axis powers**. However even then Switzerland maintained its independence by promising retaliation in the event of an invasion.
- Since World War II, Switzerland has taken a more active role in international affairs by aiding humanitarian initiatives, but it remains fiercely neutral with regard to military affairs. It has never joined the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** or the **European Union**, and only joined the **United Nations** in 2002.
- In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Switzerland is again becoming a destination for dialogue on difficult issues.

Discussions on Syria, Libya and Yemen were held in Geneva.

- **Significance for India:**

- India's policy of **Non-alignment** and **Switzerland's traditional policy of neutrality** have led to a close understanding between the two countries.
- In 1948, a **Treaty of Friendship** was concluded between both the countries. Both believe in the spirit of **democracy and pluralism**.

## **Non-Aligned Movement**

- **About:**

It is a **forum of 120 developing world states** that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc.

- **Origin:**
  - The group was **started in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1961.**
  - It was created by Yugoslavia's President, Josip Broz Tito, **India's first PM, Jawaharlal Nehru**, Egypt's second President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah, and Indonesia's first President, Sukarno.
  - The most important antecedent to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement was the **Bandung Conference of 1955.**
- **Objectives:**
  - It has sought to "**create an independent path in world politics that would not result in member States becoming pawns in the struggles between the major powers.**"
  - It identifies the right of independent judgment, the **struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism**, and the use of moderation in relations with all big powers as the three basic elements that have influenced its approach.
  - At present, an additional goal is facilitating a **restructuring of the international economic order.**
- **Principles:**
  - Respect for **fundamental human rights** and of the objectives and principles of the Charter of the **United Nations.**
  - Respect for the **sovereignty and territorial integrity** of all countries.
  - Recognition of **equality among all races** and of **equality among all nations**, both large and small.
  - **Non-interference or non-intervention** into the internal affairs of another country.
  - Respect the **right of every nation** to defend itself, either individually or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
  - **Non-use of collective defence pacts** to benefit the specific interests of any of the great powers.
  - Refraining from acts or threats of aggression and use of force against the territorial integrity or **political independence** of any nation.
  - Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means.
  - Promotion of **mutual interest and cooperation.**
  - Respect for justice and international obligations.

**Source: TH**